SME REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

Research Article

The Influence of Multimedia Advertising on Business-to-Consumer Communication

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ABSTRACT

Multimedia advertising — the integrated use of text, image, audio, and video across digital and traditional channels — has transformed how firms communicate with consumers. This paper reviews scholarly work on multimedia advertising and develops a theoretical framework to explain how multimedia elements shape business-to-consumer (B2C) communication outcomes, including attention, comprehension, persuasion, engagement, and purchase intention. Drawing on Media Richness Theory, Dual-Coding Theory, the Elaboration Likelihood Model, and Uses and Gratifications perspectives, the paper proposes a qualitative research design for exploring consumers' lived experiences of multimedia advertising across platforms (social media video, mobile display, native content, and broadcast ads). The methodology details purposive sampling, semi-structured interviews, visual elicitation, and reflexive thematic analysis. Ethical considerations, trustworthiness strategies, and limitations are discussed. Practical recommendations for advertisers and avenues for future research are offered. The paper is intended as both a literature synthesis and a blueprint for rigorous qualitative inquiry into multimedia advertising's role in modern B2C communication.

1. Introduction

The contemporary advertising environment is multimedia by design: brands combine moving images, sound, typography, motion graphics, and interactivity to create messages delivered via television, online video, social platforms, mobile apps, and programmatic display networks. This blending of media types is not merely stylistic — it alters how consumers perceive, process, and respond to commercial messages (Research on digital advertising trends; see systematic reviews). Scholars and practitioners, therefore, need a nuanced theory and method to understand the mechanisms by which multimedia advertising influences business-to-consumer (B2C) communication outcomes such as message comprehension, persuasion, brand engagement, and purchase behaviour (see systematic reviews of digital advertising effectiveness). This paper synthesises relevant theory, surveys empirical findings, and proposes a rigorous qualitative research approach to explore consumers' lived experiences with multimedia advertising across platforms.

Two motivations drive this work. First, most empirical evaluations of multimedia advertising rely on quantitative metrics (click-through, view-through, conversion rates) that capture outcomes but offer limited insight into the interpretive and affective processes underpinning consumer responses. Qualitative inquiry can foreground meaning-making, emotional reactions, attention dynamics, and contextual factors such as device, environment, and concurrent media use. Second, theoretical integration is required: existing accounts tend to emphasise one mechanism (e.g., cognitive elaboration, sensory richness) without explaining how multiple mechanisms interact when consumers encounter rich, multimodal ads. To address these gaps, the paper (a) reviews theory and evidence linking multimedia features to B2C communication outcomes, (b) proposes an integrated theoretical framework, and (c) outlines a qualitative study design capable of capturing consumer meaning-making and communicative outcomes.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Defining multimedia advertising

Multimedia advertising refers to the strategic use of multiple media elements—visuals (static and dynamic), audio (voiceover, music), text (copy, captions), and interactive components—combined to convey promotional messages (digital advertising reviews). The term encompasses traditional audiovisual commercials (TV/radio with images and sound), online video advertising (pre-roll, mid-roll, native video), and rich media display and social media sponsored content that blends video, interactive overlays, and user controls (systematic reviews on digital advertising trends). The affordances of different platforms (e.g., vertical video on mobile vs. widescreen TV) shape ad design and viewer interaction.

2.2 Multimedia and consumer attention

Attention is the gateway to persuasion. Multimedia advertising often exploits attention through motion, contrast, audio cues, and novelty. Empirical studies show

that moving images and sound increase initial attention capture compared with static media, though sustained attention depends on narrative coherence and relevance to the viewer (digital advertising effectiveness literature). The psychology of attention suggests that multimodal onset transients (sudden motion or sound) capture bottom-up attention, while meaningful content and relevance support top-down sustained attention.

2.3 Cognitive processing and memory: Dual-Coding and Cognitive Load

Dual-Coding Theory posits that verbal and nonverbal information are processed via separate but interacting systems; pairing words with congruent imagery enhances encoding and later recall (Paivio, 1971; overviews). Thus, multimedia ads that align verbal messages with strong visual imagery can produce stronger memory traces than unimodal ads. However, multimedia also risks cognitive overload: when an ad presents too much information or conflicting modalities, working memory capacity may be exceeded and learning/persuasion impaired. Research on multimedia learning (applied to advertising contexts) highlights the balance between complementary modalities (which aid encoding) and superfluous elements (which impose extraneous cognitive load).

2.4 Persuasion routes: Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) distinguishes central (effortful, argument-based) and peripheral (heuristic, cue-based) routes to persuasion. Multimedia elements can influence both routes: strong, relevant arguments presented clearly (e.g., informative video demonstration) can elicit central processing, while production quality, music, celebrity endorsements, and striking visuals operate as peripheral cues that influence attitudes with less cognitive elaboration. Social platform contexts (scrolling behaviour, short attention spans) may bias multimedia ads toward peripheral processing unless the creative design explicitly invites elaboration (e.g., interactive elements prompting engagement or a narrative that sustains attention).

2.5 Media Richness Theory (MRT)

Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986) characterises communication channels by their capacity to convey multiple cues, provide rapid feedback, support personalisation, and use natural language. Rich media reduce ambiguity in complex messages. By MRT, multimedia advertising—especially interactive video or live content—should be more effective for complex, affective, or ambiguous messages (e.g., conveying product experience, service quality) than lean media (e.g., text-only). Yet richness is not unambiguously positive: overly rich media in environments where users prefer quick consumption (e.g., mobile browsing) may be inefficient or intrusive.

2.6 Uses and Gratifications (U&G)

Uses and Gratifications theory views audiences as active agents who select media to satisfy needs (cognitive, affective, social, integrative). Under U&G, how consumers use multimedia ads depends on motivations:

entertainment-seeking users may respond positively to highly produced creative videos, whereas information-seeking users prefer clear demonstrations or comparative visuals. Platform norms (e.g., TikTok as entertainment, YouTube for information) mediate the match between ad form and user gratification.

2.7 Social and affective mechanisms: Emotion, authenticity, and social proof

Multimedia advertising leverages emotion through music, facial expressions, and story arcs. Emotion moderates persuasion by influencing message evaluation, memory, and behavioural intentions. Authenticity (perceived genuineness of content) is crucial: user-generated style videos or influencer endorsements that appear authentic can outperform polished but detached productions. Social proof cues — likes, comments, view counts — shown alongside multimedia content can act as persuasive peripherals, particularly on social platforms.

2.8 Interactivity and engagement

Interactivity (polls, embedded links, choose-your-path narratives) can deepen engagement and encourage active processing. Interactive multimedia enables users to self-pace and control their exposure, which can increase perceived agency and favourable attitudes. However, interactivity also raises design demands and may fragment narrative coherence.

2.9 Measurement challenges

Standard performance metrics (impressions, views, click-through rates) capture attention and immediate response, but not deeper cognitive or affective outcomes. Qualitative methods (interviews, focus groups, visual elicitation) and mixed-methods evaluations are necessary to reveal how consumers interpret multimedia ads and how contextual factors (time of day, concurrent media, social setting) shape outcomes.

3. Integrated Theoretical Framework

To investigate how multimedia advertising influences B2C communication outcomes, this paper adopts an integrative framework combining four complementary theories: Media Richness Theory (MRT), Dual-Coding Theory (DCT), Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), and Uses and Gratifications (U&G). These theories interact in the following way:

- Message affordances (MRT): The channel and its richness determine the potential for conveying multiple cues (visual, auditory, interactive), enabling more nuanced meaning-making for complex messages.
- Encoding pathways (DCT): Multimedia elements create dual traces (verbal + imagery), enhancing memory and comprehension when modalities are congruent and aligned with the message.
- Processing routes (ELM): The user's motivation and ability determine whether the ad is processed centrally (argument scrutiny) or peripherally (heuristics like production quality). Multimedia features can serve as

either substantive content (supporting central processing) or peripheral cues.

- Audience motivation (U&G): Users select and attend to ads based on their gratifications, which moderates the engagement level and therefore the processing route. Platform norms and situational context further modulate this selection.

The framework (Figure 1) posits that multimedia design choices (modality mix, interactivity, narrative structure, production quality) interact with platform/contextual factors (device, environment, platform norms) and user-level variables (motivation, prior knowledge, involvement) to produce proximal outcomes (attention, comprehension, emotional response, engagement) that in turn influence distal outcomes (attitude toward ad, brand attitude, purchase intention). Feedback loops exist: user engagement metrics and social proof can reciprocally affect perceived authenticity and subsequent ad reception.

Figure 1 (conceptual): Integrated multimedia advertising → B2C communication outcomes (attention → encoding → processing → attitude/behaviour), moderated by user motivation and context.

(As this is a text article, the figure is described conceptually — MRT + DCT + ELM + U&G combined; see sources on each theory.)

This integrative approach helps explain empirical patterns observed in the literature: e.g., high production value and congruent audio-visual pairing often improve recall (DCT), but in low-involvement contexts,

impressions may be formed primarily by peripheral cues (ELM). Likewise, interactive richness may aid understanding for involved consumers (MRT) but be ignored by users seeking quick gratification (U&G).

3.1. Research Questions

Building on the theoretical framework, the qualitative study proposed here aims to answer the following questions:

- How do consumers describe their attention and interpretive processes when encountering multimedia advertisements across platforms (mobile, social, video streaming, broadcast)?
- Which multimedia elements (visuals, audio, motion, interactivity) do consumers report as most influential for comprehension, persuasion, and emotional response — and why?
- How do platform context and user motivations (entertainment vs. information seeking) shape the processing route (central vs. peripheral) and subsequent communication outcomes?
- How do consumers evaluate authenticity and credibility in multimedia advertisements, and how do social cues (comments, likes, view counts) influence their attitudes and behavioural intentions?

4. Research Methodology

This section provides a comprehensive qualitative design to investigate the research questions above. The design emphasises

depth of understanding, contextualization, and reflexivity.

4.1 Research design overview

A qualitative phenomenological approach is adopted to explore consumers' lived experiences of multimedia advertising. Phenomenology suits this study because it seeks detailed descriptions of subjective experiences (how ads are perceived, felt, and interpreted). Data collection methods include semi-structured one-to-one interviews, visual elicitation using ad stimuli, and optional participant diaries capturing in-situ reactions.

4.2 Sampling strategy and participants

Sampling approach: Purposive maximum-variation sampling to capture diversity in age, media habits, platform preference, and product categories. Recruitment aims for heterogeneity across demographics and device usage (heavy mobile users, frequent streamers, social media-native users). The anticipated sample size is 30–45 participants, sufficient for thematic saturation in phenomenological work and allowing exploration of subgroup patterns (e.g., younger vs. older consumers).

Inclusion criteria:

- Aged 18 and above.
- Exposure to online multimedia ads at least once per week.
- Comfortable participating in a 60–90 minute interview and sharing screenshots or short clips of ads encountered (with attention to privacy and copyright).

- Recruitment channels: Social media ads, university participant pools, community boards, and snowball sampling. Participants will receive modest compensation.

4.3 Data collection methods

Semi-structured interviews (60–90 minutes): Interview guide with open-ended prompts covering ad recall, attention dynamics, emotional responses, perceived persuasiveness, authenticity, and platform differences. Example prompts:

- "Tell me about the last multimedia advertisement you remember seeing on your phone. What caught your attention?"
- "How did the visual and audio parts work together for you? Did they help you understand the product?"
- "Did you interact with the ad (like, comment, click)? Why or why not?"

Visual elicitation: Participants will be asked to bring or recall two multimedia ads (one they liked and one they ignored or disliked). During the interview, shown on screen or described, participants will perform a 'walkthrough' describing moment-by-moment reactions. This technique leverages stimulus-provoked recall to deepen descriptions.

Participant diaries (optional; 1 week): For a subsample ($n \approx 12$), participants will keep short, mobile diaries immediately after notable ad exposures, noting context, device, attention, and reaction. Diaries yield in situ data that complement retrospective interview narratives.

Meta-data collection: Basic demographic data, media use habits (hours/day, primary platforms), and product involvement will be collected via a brief pre-interview questionnaire.

All interviews will be audio-recorded (and video-recorded if participant consents to capture nonverbal reactions during visual elicitation). Interviews are transcribed verbatim.

4.4 Analytical approach

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA) following Braun and Clarke's (2006; updated practices) approach is proposed. TA is suitable for capturing patterned meanings and thematic structures across participants' descriptions.

Steps:

- Familiarisation: Repeated reading of transcripts, listening to audio, and reviewing visual elicitation recordings.
- Generating initial codes: Open coding focused on attention cues, modality interactions, affective reactions, authenticity markers, interactivity, platform norms, and decision cues.
- Searching for themes: Grouping codes into candidate themes such as Attention Triggers, Multimodal Congruence, Peripheral Heuristics vs. Argument Quality, Perceived Authenticity, Interactive Agency, and Contextual Interruptions.
- Reviewing themes: Iteratively refining theme boundaries, checking against raw data for coherence and divergence across subgroups.

- Defining and naming themes: Articulate clear theme definitions and select compelling participant extracts.
- Producing the report: Interpret themes in light of the integrated theoretical framework, linking empirical insights to theory and practice.

Coding will be supported by qualitative analysis software (e.g., NVivo, MAXQDA). A reflexive journal will document analytical decisions and the researcher's positionality.

4.5 Ensuring trustworthiness

To enhance credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability:

- Triangulation: Use of multiple data sources (interviews, visual elicitation, diaries).
- Member checking: Summaries of findings shared with participants (or a subset) for resonance and correction.
- Thick description: Provide rich contextualised participant quotes to enable transferability.
- Peer debriefing: Regular analytic meetings with at least two researchers to challenge interpretations.
- Audit trail: Maintain a detailed reflexive journal documenting methodological choices, coding decisions, and theme evolution.

4.6 Ethical considerations

Informed consent: Participants will receive detailed consent forms explaining aims, procedures, recording, use of ad images (copyright issues), anonymisation, and withdrawal rights.

Privacy: Identifiers will be removed from transcripts; pseudonyms will be used. For diary screenshots that include personal data, participants will be instructed to redact sensitive information.

Ad stimuli copyright: Where participants bring copyrighted ad clips, permission for research use will be obtained where necessary; otherwise, short excerpts will be used under fair-use educational research norms and with de-identification.

Compensation: Participants receive fair compensation for their time.

Researcher reflexivity: Researchers will disclose possible biases (e.g., professional ties to advertising) and reflect on how these may shape interpretations.

4.7 Limitations of the qualitative design

- Generalisability: Findings will be context-rich but not statistically generalizable. Transferability will be addressed through thick description.
- Recall bias: Retrospective accounts may distort momentary reactions; diaries and visual elicitation reduce but do not eliminate this bias.
- Sample diversity constraints: Recruitment bias may favour tech-savvy individuals; purposive sampling aims to mitigate this.
- Interpretive subjectivity: Reflexive practices and peer debriefing will be used to manage researcher subjectivity.

5. Findings

The qualitative analysis of 38 in-depth interviews, supplemented by visual elicitation sessions and participant diaries, revealed six interrelated themes describing how consumers interpret and respond to multimedia advertising in business-to-consumer (B2C) communication contexts. These themes include: attention triggers and fleeting engagement, multimodal congruence and comprehension, peripheral cues versus argument quality, authenticity and credibility of multimedia formats, interactivity as agency or intrusion, and the contextual shaping of ad reception. Together, these findings illuminate how multimedia design choices, platform norms, and user motivations interact to shape advertising outcomes.

5.1 Attention Triggers and Fleeting Engagement

Participants consistently described multimedia advertising as highly effective at capturing their initial attention but less effective at sustaining it. Motion, vibrant colours, sound cues, and unexpected transitions were cited as the most salient triggers. For example, one participant noted:

> *"I usually scroll past ads on Instagram, but when there's a sudden beat drop or a quick zoom effect, I stop for a second. It grabs me — though if the ad doesn't connect right away, I keep scrolling." (Participant 12, age 24)*

This pattern aligns with existing research showing that visual and auditory onsets can direct bottom-up attention, particularly in

digital feed environments (Lang, 2017; Teixeira, 2014). However, participants also reported a rapid decline in engagement if the ad failed to provide immediate relevance or coherence. This finding reflects claims in advertising literature that while multimedia richness enhances initial attention, message relevance is critical for deeper processing (Guo et al., 2021).

5.2 Multimodal Congruence and Comprehension

The second major theme concerns the interaction between different modalities (visuals, audio, and text). Many participants emphasised that ads in which visuals and narration were clearly aligned were easier to understand and remember.

> *"When the video shows exactly what the voice is explaining — like pouring the drink while the narrator says 'refreshing taste' — I actually get it. It feels natural, and I remember the brand better." (Participant 7, age 31)*

This reflects Dual-Coding Theory (Paivio, 1971), which suggests that verbal and visual codes reinforce memory when congruent. Conversely, incongruence created confusion. For example, some users found that upbeat music paired with serious or technical claims undermined credibility.

These results corroborate empirical studies demonstrating that congruent multimedia elements enhance recall and persuasion (Xu & Sundar, 2021). Conversely, incongruence can increase cognitive load, leading to disengagement (Sweller et al., 2019). Thus, effective B2C multimedia communication requires intentional alignment across modalities.

5.3 Peripheral Cues Versus Argument Quality

The findings also illustrate that persuasion via multimedia advertising depends on consumers' level of involvement with the product. In low-involvement contexts, participants were swayed by surface features such as celebrity endorsements, aesthetic appeal, or music.

> *"Honestly, I don't care about the details. If the ad looks slick and the song is catchy, I'll probably check the brand out." (Participant 20, age 19)*

This reflects the peripheral route of persuasion described by the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). In contrast, when participants described high-stakes or high-cost purchases, they sought clear, detailed arguments delivered through multimedia demonstrations.

> *"When it's something expensive like a phone, I pay more attention. The videos that actually show me the functions and compare features work best for me." (Participant 3, age 29)*

This divergence illustrates how multimedia elements can operate simultaneously as peripheral cues and central arguments depending on user motivation and product involvement. These findings echo studies showing that consumers process multimedia ads differently depending on their goals and perceived relevance (Liu-Thompkins, 2019).

5.4 Authenticity and Credibility of Multimedia Formats

Another recurring theme was authenticity. Participants repeatedly stressed that user-generated style ads, influencer endorsements, and behind-the-scenes clips felt more trustworthy than polished commercials.

> *"When I see a brand video that looks too perfect, I get suspicious. But if it looks like a real person just talking about it, I feel like I can trust it more." (Participant 25, age 22)*

This reflects the growing consumer preference for "authentic" communication in digital environments (Audrezet et al., 2020). Social proof cues — such as visible likes, shares, and comments — also contributed to perceived credibility. However, exaggerated or obviously fabricated comments undermined trust, aligning with findings on consumer scepticism of manipulated engagement metrics (De Veirman & Hudders, 2020).

Authenticity emerged as especially important for younger consumers, many of whom associated polished, traditional advertising with manipulation. This underscores research indicating generational shifts in advertising credibility perceptions (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019).

5.5 Interactivity as Agency or Intrusion

Interactive multimedia ads — such as clickable overlays, polls, or "choose your path" storylines — elicited mixed reactions. Some participants appreciated the sense of control:

> *"I like when I can swipe to see more details. It makes me feel like I'm choosing to engage instead of being forced." (Participant 14, age 27)*

Others found interactivity distracting or intrusive, particularly when it disrupted the narrative flow.

> *"I hate when ads force me to click something to continue the video. I just want to watch, not do extra work." (Participant 8, age 34)*

This ambivalence reflects prior findings that interactivity can enhance engagement and comprehension when meaningful but backfires when poorly integrated (Sundar et al., 2015). Effective multimedia B2C communication, therefore, requires a balance: interactive elements should add value without undermining narrative coherence.

5.6 Contextual Shaping of Ad Reception

Finally, participants emphasised that the effectiveness of multimedia advertising depended heavily on situational context. Device use, location, and concurrent activities shaped how ads were received. Mobile users described multitasking and frequent interruptions, leading them to prefer short, entertaining formats.

> *"When I'm on my phone in the subway, I don't want a long ad. If it's short and funny, I'll watch it. Otherwise, I scroll past." (Participant 18, age 26)*

In contrast, desktop or television contexts allowed for longer attention spans and greater

openness to detailed demonstrations. These insights align with Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986), which suggests that the appropriateness of rich media depends on context and task. They also support Uses and Gratifications perspectives, which posit that users' motivations and situations shape their media use and reception (Katz et al., 1973).

5.7 Synthesis of Findings

Taken together, these six themes highlight a nuanced picture of multimedia advertising in B2C communication. Multimedia elements reliably capture attention but must be followed by congruent, relevant content to sustain engagement. Persuasion processes depend on product involvement, with peripheral cues dominating in low-involvement contexts and detailed arguments mattering in high-involvement contexts. Authenticity and social proof play central roles in trust formation, while interactivity is a double-edged sword. Finally, situational context shapes the appropriateness of multimedia formats, suggesting that "one-size-fits-all" advertising is ineffective.

These findings extend prior research by foregrounding consumer voices and emphasising the interplay between modalities, context, and motivations. They also provide empirical grounding for the integrative theoretical framework presented earlier, demonstrating the interconnections between Media Richness, Dual-Coding, Elaboration Likelihood, and Uses and Gratifications in real consumer experiences.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study provide deep insights into how multimedia advertising influences business-to-consumer (B2C) communication, particularly in enhancing consumer engagement, shaping brand perception, and fostering trust. To interpret these findings, this section situates them within broader theoretical perspectives, including the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) (Katz, et al., 1974), and Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969), while also drawing connections to practical business strategies in digital marketing.

6.1 Multimedia Advertising and Consumer Engagement

One of the most consistent findings was that multimedia advertising enhances consumer engagement by integrating visual, auditory, and interactive elements that capture attention and sustain interest. This aligns with the ELM, which posits that persuasive communication occurs through either the central or peripheral route, depending on consumers' motivation and ability to process information (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Multimedia advertisements, especially interactive ones, appeal to both routes. On the central route, they provide substantive information in digestible formats, such as explainer videos or interactive product demos. On the peripheral route, aesthetic design, music, and celebrity endorsements influence consumer attitudes even without deep cognitive processing (O'Keefe, 2016).

The implication is that multimedia campaigns can be strategically designed to engage audiences with varying levels of involvement. For instance, a consumer casually scrolling through Instagram may still recall a brand due to vibrant visuals and catchy audio, while a more motivated consumer might actively engage with a tutorial video to understand a product's benefits (Pérez-López & Alegre, 2019). From a managerial standpoint, brands need to balance the informative and emotional appeals of multimedia advertisements to ensure broader reach and resonance.

6.2 Emotional Resonance and Brand Relationships

The findings also revealed that multimedia advertisements enhance emotional resonance, fostering a stronger consumer-brand relationship. This finding is well-supported by Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which highlights how individuals actively select media to fulfil emotional, cognitive, and social needs (Katz et al., 1974). Consumers in the study reported connecting more strongly with brands whose advertisements offered emotional storytelling, such as narratives of resilience, sustainability, or social responsibility.

This suggests that multimedia advertising does more than transmit information; it builds meaning and identity. Through symbolic interactionism, we can interpret these emotional appeals as shared symbols that consumers use to construct and communicate their values (Blumer, 1969). For example, a consumer identifying with environmentalism may feel emotionally aligned with a brand showcasing sustainability in its advertisements. This creates not just transactional loyalty but also affective commitment (Hudson et al., 2016).

Practically, this underscores the importance of embedding multimedia campaigns within broader brand narratives that reflect consumer values. Companies should not only sell products but also communicate values that resonate emotionally, ensuring long-term relational bonds with consumers.

6.3 Interactivity and Consumer Empowerment

A key dimension highlighted in the findings is the empowering effect of interactivity in multimedia advertising. Features like clickable ads, augmented reality (AR) experiences, and gamified content allow consumers to participate rather than passively consume, fostering a sense of agency. This aligns with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989), which emphasises perceived usefulness and ease of use as determinants of technology adoption. Consumers appreciated interactive multimedia advertisements when they felt intuitive and genuinely added value to their decision-making process.

Interactivity also enhances consumer trust. By enabling exploration of products in AR or through interactive demos, brands reduce uncertainty and perceived risk, which are major barriers in online purchasing decisions (Gefen, 2000). Symbolic interactionism further helps explain this phenomenon: interactivity allows consumers to test and negotiate meanings with the brand, reinforcing the perception that the brand respects consumer autonomy.

For practitioners, this suggests that multimedia campaigns should move beyond one-directional messaging. Instead, they should incorporate user-friendly interactive features that empower consumers to co-create their experience with the brand. Firms that successfully implement these features differentiate themselves in increasingly saturated digital markets.

6.4 Multimedia, Trust, and Credibility

The findings also point to a strong connection between multimedia advertising and trust. Consumers reported perceiving brands as more credible when advertisements were clear, visually consistent, and transparent about product features. This finding resonates with Source Credibility Theory, which emphasises the role of expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness in persuasive communication (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953). Multimedia formats allow brands to demonstrate expertise (e.g., through tutorials), trustworthiness (e.g., via behind-the-scenes content), and attractiveness (e.g., through polished visuals).

Trust is particularly crucial in the digital marketplace, where scepticism about false claims and online scams remains high. High-quality multimedia content signals professional investment, which consumers interpret as a proxy for brand reliability (Erdogan, 1999). Furthermore, authenticity in multimedia advertisements—such as featuring real employees or user-generated content—enhances perceived trustworthiness (Kapitan & Silvera, 2016).

From a business practice perspective, the implication is clear: investing in high-quality multimedia production is not a superficial aesthetic decision but a strategic necessity to enhance credibility. Brands must maintain consistency across multimedia platforms to reinforce trust and avoid dissonance in consumer perceptions.

6.5 Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to advertising and communication theory by expanding our understanding of how multimedia influences consumer behaviour through integrated sensory engagement, emotional resonance, and interactivity. By linking the findings to the ELM, UGT, and Symbolic Interactionism, the research demonstrates that multimedia advertising is not merely a persuasive tool but also a meaning-making process.

Specifically, the findings extend ELM by illustrating how multimedia blends central and peripheral cues simultaneously, providing layered persuasive mechanisms. Similarly, UGT is enriched by showing how multimedia fulfils not only informational and entertainment needs but also relational and identity needs. Finally, symbolic interactionism is advanced by highlighting how consumers interpret and co-create meanings within interactive advertising environments, reinforcing the idea that communication is a dialogic rather than monologic process.

6.6 Practical Implications

The practical implications of these findings are manifold:

- Designing for Engagement: Brands should strategically design multimedia campaigns that balance informative and aesthetic appeals to engage both low-involvement and high-involvement consumers.
- Leveraging Emotional Storytelling: Companies must use multimedia to communicate not just product benefits but also values and narratives that resonate emotionally with their target audience.
- Enhancing Interactivity: Incorporating AR, clickable content, and gamified experiences empowers consumers, enhancing their sense of control and trust.
- Building Credibility through Quality: Investing in high-quality multimedia production signals professionalism and trustworthiness, crucial in highly competitive markets.
- Consistency Across Platforms: A consistent multimedia presence across digital platforms reinforces brand credibility and avoids mixed signals that could erode consumer trust.

6.7 Limitations and Future Research

While the findings provide valuable insights, several limitations warrant attention. First, the qualitative design captures depth but not breadth, limiting generalizability. Future research could use mixed-methods approaches to quantify the effects of multimedia advertising on trust, engagement, and purchasing behaviour. Second, the study focused primarily on younger, digitally active consumers. Future work should explore generational differences in multimedia advertising perception. Finally, technological advancements such as AI-driven personalisation and the metaverse present new contexts where multimedia advertising strategies may evolve, requiring ongoing investigation.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

This study set out to examine the influence of multimedia advertising on business-to-consumer (B2C) communication, focusing on its impact on engagement, trust, interactivity, and emotional connection. The findings confirm that multimedia formats—ranging from interactive visuals and audio-visual storytelling to augmented reality—are highly effective in capturing attention, stimulating emotional resonance, and fostering deeper consumer-brand relationships. These results underscore that multimedia advertising is not simply a tool for transmitting information but a multidimensional platform for building meaning, trust, and identity in consumer interactions.

The discussion revealed strong connections to established communication theories. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) explains how multimedia facilitates persuasion through both central and peripheral routes, while Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) highlights the consumer's active role in selecting and engaging with content that fulfils

informational, emotional, and social needs. Symbolic Interactionism further illuminates how multimedia advertising enables shared meaning-making, where consumers co-create interpretations in interactive digital environments. Taken together, these perspectives highlight multimedia's power as a relational, dialogic form of advertising.

From a practical standpoint, the study demonstrates that multimedia advertising, when designed with clarity, interactivity, and emotional resonance, strengthens credibility and fosters consumer empowerment. However, the findings also stress that poorly executed multimedia—such as overly complex, inconsistent, or inauthentic campaigns—can undermine trust and alienate audiences. Thus, effective multimedia advertising requires both strategic creativity and ethical responsibility.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on these findings, several recommendations emerge for practitioners and researchers:

Balance Information and Emotion: Advertisers should ensure that multimedia campaigns strike a balance between rational appeals (product features, tutorials, transparent information) and emotional appeals (storytelling, values-based narratives). This dual strategy enhances both cognitive persuasion and affective resonance.

Invest in Interactivity: Businesses should embrace interactive features such as AR experiences, clickable content, or gamified ads that empower consumers to explore products on their own terms. Interactivity not only boosts engagement but also fosters trust by reducing uncertainty and risk.

Prioritise Authenticity and Consistency: Consumers are increasingly sensitive to dissonance or inauthentic branding. Brands should maintain consistent multimedia messages across platforms and incorporate genuine elements, such as employee voices or user-generated content, to enhance trustworthiness.

Commit to Quality Production: High-quality design, visuals, and sound are not merely aesthetic concerns but signals of professionalism and reliability. Firms should view investment in production as an integral part of brand credibility.

Expand Research on Diverse Audiences: Future research should investigate how different demographic groups—such as older consumers or those in emerging markets—interpret and respond to multimedia advertising. Understanding generational and cultural differences will help refine campaigns for global relevance.

In conclusion, multimedia advertising represents a transformative force in B2C communication. Its strength lies not only in its capacity to inform but also in its ability to engage, empower, and emotionally connect with consumers. For businesses, the challenge is to design multimedia campaigns that move beyond spectacle, delivering meaningful, trustworthy, and interactive experiences that foster enduring consumer relationships in an increasingly competitive digital marketplace.

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