

The strategic thinking. An interdisciplinary perspective. *El pensamiento estratégico. Una perspectiva interdisciplinar.*

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The strategic thinking.

Abstract: The accelerated technological development, the fragmentation and variety of types of public, the changing market conditions, the rise of new ways of publicizing messages, etc., have made the connection between the consumer, the message and the brand more difficult. In this process the account planner or the account planner takes part in English, a figure that emerged in the mid-sixties with the idea of being a support for the advertiser, a link with the creative department and the “representative” of the consumer when developing a communication strategy in an advertising agency. Today, talking about strategy necessarily leads us to refer to one of the articulating axes of the advertising communication process, from which the actions that later reach the target audience emerge, and which allows reaching the proposed objectives and building a brand. Therefore, the account planner has the responsibility to know the variables involved in this process (competition, market, consumer, brand, trends, etc.) in order to make the decisions that help him to propose the most appropriate strategy.risus.

Keywords: Strategy; strategic thinking; account planning; advertising

Resumen: El acelerado desarrollo tecnológico, la fragmentación y variedad de tipos de públicos, las condiciones cambiantes de los mercados, el auge de nuevas formas de publicitar los mensajes, etcétera, han hecho más difícil la conexión entre el consumidor, el mensaje y la marca. En este proceso interviene el planificador de cuentas, o el account planner en término inglés, una figura que surge a mediados de los años sesenta con la idea de ser un apoyo para el anunciante, un enlace con el departamento creativo y el “representante” del consumidor al momento de desarrollar una estrategia de comunicación en una agencia de publicidad. Hoy, hablar de estrategia nos lleva necesariamente a referirnos a uno de los ejes articuladores del proceso de comunicación publicitaria, de donde se desprenden las acciones que luego llegan al público objetivo, y que permite alcanzar los objetivos propuestos y construir marca. Por lo tanto, el planificador de cuentas tiene la responsabilidad de conocer las variables que intervienen en este proceso (competencia, mercado, consumidor, marca, tendencias, etcétera) para poder tomar las decisiones que le ayuden a plantear la estrategia más apropiada.

Palabras clave: Estrategia, pensamiento estratégico, planificación de cuentas, publicidad

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INTRODUCTION

Advertisement agencies and their clients are motivated for the needs and wishes of consumers, understanding that they can change according to the experience they are living in a specific social environment. At the time of making advertising it is necessary to have comprehension of the culture that allows advertisers and publishers to get closer, in an effective way to the target that it is wanted to be impacted through a message.

The arrival of the account planner or *planner* to advertisement in the middle 60's of the past century reflects the change of thinking in the traditional way of doing advertising, in which, the brands didn't allow the consumer to make part of the internal process, but being presented like an observer, with out voice or vote in a brand's decision making. New technologies, globalization, increasing competition and life in the city gave the planner a chance to seek till the deepest part, the consumer and their interests, supporting the investigation in the knowledge of disciplines like psychology, anthropology, sociology, economy, neurosciences, philosophy or communication, among others. Without leaving aside the strategic and business vision needed for the customers and the agency itself. Small, medium and large advertising companies have included the account planner in their processes perceiving necessary, the dissemination of knowledge of this profile to the academic field for the education and training of future account planners.

INTERDISCIPLINARITY AND ADVERTISEMENT STRATEGY

Advertisement as a discipline that traditionally is supported in knowledge fields of the social sciences like psychology, sociology, anthropology, statistics, philosophy and economy, now finds the opportunity of expanding its limits of knowledge with the technological advances and contributions of disciplines like medicine, biology or cognitive psychology.

In an interdisciplinary dialog, is necessary a discipline that allows a respectful relationship between the different knowledges. But in this relation among disciplines "no es suficiente aludir a principios de unas disciplinas para dar cuentas de otras. Es preciso analizar profundamente la integración que se pretende hacer entre ellas y atender a los datos provenientes del ámbito de la investigación para esclarecer el vínculo entre el procesamiento de la información" (Fraga, 2007, p.40) On the other hand, the excess of information can also become a problem, the more knowledge we possess. When there is an attempt to establish conceptual relations between advertisement, psychology and mind sciences, cognitive psychology acts like a intermediary discipline.

Álvarez del Blanco talks about it when he firms that: "durante las últimas décadas, especialistas de distintas disciplinas han obtenido ideas de la psicología cognitiva para determinar cómo las personas toman sus decisiones, responden ante ciertos estímulos o placeres estéticos". (Álvarez del Blanco, 2010, p.93) Camargo also sustains:

Com o crescimento da necessidade do marketing, de ser cada vez mais contábil, o que fez surgir a disciplina de "accountable marketing" e amparada na combinação de novas tecnologias e interdisciplinaridade das ciencias biológicas e sociais, a pesquisa de mercado e mais especificamente a de comunicação passa a ser vista pelas empresas do mundo todo como fonte imprescindível de informação para entendimento do comportamento do consumidor. (Camargo, 2009, p. 75).

Interdisciplinary work is not a new matter in advertisement, in 1917 Prat Gaballí mentioned the importance of making experiments in psychology labs in order to understand the consumer in a better way. Prat Gaballí didn't consider advertisement like an exact science, for the contrary, he was convinced that the object of the advertisement "es el espíritu humano, y que siendo en extremo movibles, variados y complejos los estados accidentales del mismo, las previsiones y los cálculos no pueden proporcionar otros resultados que fórmulas aproximadas". (Prat, 1917, p.17)

Since many years, it has been found that interdisciplinarity in the scientific field favors the appearance of innovative products. Davis and Scott point it when they suggest that: "si continuamos reuniendo científicos de distintas especialidades en una situación de trabajo, el factor creatividad será mayor que cuando mezclamos en una tarea común a científicos de las mismas especialidades". (Davis y Scott, 1980, p. 35) The above takes us to think that interdisciplinarity of knowledge gathers a topic or object of study that interests many disciplines where "sin desconocer los límites propios de cada ciencia o disciplina, se buscan factores de unidad". (Bernal, 2006, p. 49) Braidot, for example, considers that "un horizonte temporal completamente diferente sugiere la necesidad de contar con herramientas interdisciplinarias porque las "nuevas competencias" no están fuera, sino dentro de cada uno de nosotros". (Braidot, 2008, p.28) A more advertising vision is offered by Sánchez when he suggests that:

El desarrollo cualitativo de la publicidad con la perfección técnica que hoy ha alcanzado en la elaboración de sus mensajes y en la elección de sus vehículos de difusión, se debe, en gran medida, a las relaciones que mantiene con algunas disciplinas de las que extrae sus más importantes elementos y métodos de investigación. (Sánchez, 1993, p.41)

Different communication strategies look for brands to stay engraved in the brain as much time as possible. The technological advances in neuroscience, like investigations in cognitive psychology, are helping scientists in different fields to understand some of the human brain performances. These new scientific contributions are being studied in order to see if its application is pertinent for advertisement. Nowadays, studies that talk about neuromarketing, neuroeconomy, neuropsychology, neurolinguistics, neurophilosophy and neuroart have been published, trying to know more about human being's nature.

For advertisement it has always been a challenge to know what happens in consumers' minds. Steel confirms it when he says: "la perspectiva central es la del consumidor, pues es en su cabeza donde debe actuar la publicidad". (Steel, 1998, p.2) But little has been deepened in the knowledge of the account planner from the scope of how he thinks or structures his ideas for the development of communication proposals. Understanding the account planner's mind from other disciplines contributes to the growing comprehension of the advertising activity, because "uno de los aspectos más presentes en el intelecto y el pensamiento humanos es el de la capacidad para generalizar a partir de experiencias específicas y para formar conceptos nuevos y más abstractos". Álvarez del Blanco, considers that when different disciplines are gathered around a project: "se pone en marcha una gran coordinación, conocida como "convergencia de tótems", para la conceptualización de nuevas estrategias de marca y el uso no sólo de prototipos, sino también de metáforas, analogías e historia". (Álvarez del Blanco, 2009) The concept of strategy contemplates the variables that influence the brand, the environment and the market, and that's why "el pensamiento estratégico se utiliza en muchas disciplinas y áreas

de la actividad humana en las que existen competencia y entornos variables, como lo son, por ejemplo, el terreno militar, los juegos, los deportes, las empresas o la publicidad, entre otros". (Solanas y Sabaté, 2008, p.79)

It is important to remember that the strategic management (long term planning) depends of an environment that changes quickly and unpredictably. Each time its thought strategically, the account planner must confront a different environment that necessarily influences in the development of communication strategies of the brands. The changing context forces the account planner to develop thinking skills that should adapt quickly as well to the different needs of the brands. A better understanding of the cognitive processes would help this professional to maximize their own cognitive abilities and be prepared to respond to the movable world of the advertising communication.

Strategic thinking involves many disciplines of knowledge, and its study from these perspectives will help to a better understanding of the advertisement strategic process. Prahalad confirms it at saying that: "El campo estratégico plantea numerosos aspectos que pueden estudiarse desde múltiples puntos de vista. No es necesario limitar el número de enfoques". (Prahalad y Hamel, 2008, p.30) This way of approaching the strategic thinking from the vision of other disciplines allows the account planner to develop a particular way of thinking. Solanas and Sabaté refer to this aspect when they establish that:

La planificación de cuentas en publicidad implica adoptar un sistema propio de planificación y aplicarlo a la publicidad. Forma parte del servicio a los clientes. Desde una perspectiva más amplia, se trata de una forma de enfocar y estructurar el pensamiento estratégico publicitario de modo que pueda ser aplicado al conjunto de acciones de comunicación publicitaria que la agencia idea, planea y realiza para un cliente. (Solanas y Sabaté, 2008, p. 193-194)

It can't be ignored the fact that this variety of different points of view about strategy "es precisamente una gran ventaja, puesto que permite el diálogo entre saberes, el debate y la crítica como medios para la construcción interdisciplinaria de nuevos sentidos que sustenten el conocimiento mismo". (Madariaga, Abello y Sierra, 2003, p.27) As Cleary also explains:

La capacidad de mantener diferentes puntos de vista de la realidad sin interferencia mutua es no sólo un avía para adquirir una capacidad intelectual superior, sino también un método fundamental de autodefensa contra las vulnerabilidades originadas por la ignorancia, la ceguera y el prejuicio sentimental. (Cleary, 1994, p.27)

So far, we find authors who believe that strategic thinking involves a particular way of thinking, this particularity can also be applied to advertisement through the account planner.

CONCLUSIONS

- Thinking is a complex mental process because it integrates other processes such as: perceptual, motor, communication and language, monitoring tasks, memory, attention, etcetera, all of them contained in something more complex known as the mind.
- Faced with this difference of concepts, talking about the thinking of the strategist or tactician's mind involves referring to two different but complementary aspects. Strategic thinking is the way how the account planner interprets the world of the

brands from his experiences if his previous life and the information that perceives through senses.

- The account planner's mind involves, not only the processes of thinking, but also the emotions, sensations, perceptions, memory and desires.
- In Colombia, the account planner emerges at the beginning of 2006 with professionals coming from areas like Communication and *management*. Years later, psychologists and anthropologists will be occupationally linked to advertisement agencies with the function of presenting communication strategies. Nowadays, it is unknown the amount of account planners in Colombia. There are no guilds that gather them neither information that characterize this professional profile. The above could be explained because there is no one that seizes and lead these professionals. This is where the academy can enter to support as a mediator to consolidate a profile that is very important in countries like: United Kingdom, Spain, United States, Mexico and Argentina.

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