Chapter 2
Embedding Virtual Reality and Artificial Intelligence in Integrated Marketing Communications

Mónica Ferreira
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8362-4430
Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL) and Business Research Unit (BRU/IUL), Portugal

Fábia Patrícia Fidalgo Fino
Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), Portugal

ABSTRACT

Emerging technologies like Virtual Reality (VR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) have been receiving much attention in the Marketing field as a new way to attract customers and enrich their experiences with brands. This chapter investigates the current state of these technologies in Business and discusses how the technologies are connected to the Integrated marketing communications. The chapter suggests several managerial implications on how to apply these technologies in an integrated marketing communication (IMC) plan. The conceptualization of VR and AI, further research, suggestions for further reading, Glossary of Virtual Reality Experiences, and IMC definitions over time are also provided.

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INTRODUCTION

Virtual Reality (VR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) have benefited from a constant presence in the front stage of the top technological breakthroughs due to their potential contribution in a vast range of areas, going from healthcare to business and industry innovation. Even though healthcare and manufacturing industries have been the early adopters of both technologies, there is a growing interest to understand the potential of VR and AI in the field of Marketing, as a new way to attract customers and enrich their experiences.

With the emergence of a digital world, a greater number of new marketing tools (e.g. mobile and social media) has appeared. Recent reports document that it is more and more challenging for brands to be different and to gain competitive advantage (Batra & Keller, 2016; Kotler & Keller, 2012). Therefore, it is shown that experiences are being incorporated as the new marketing branch to attract customers, in which technological experiences are getting a lot of attention (McCarty & Wright, 2004). Actually, experiences with the support of VR and AI have provided some of the most successful experiential marketing campaigns, leading to growing adoption of these technologies in brands’ marketing strategies.

However, the opinions found about the potential of VR and AI in this field differ. A problem which many business leaders are interested in is to figure out if both technologies are just a trend or can be considered as a sustainable marketing tool like social media already is. Also, most of those who agree that we are on the verge of immerse change, are struggling how VR and AI contents fit into their future campaigns (Dell Technologies, 2018).

One way to understand the influence of these technologies in marketing outcomes is to get, as much possible, a complete perspective of the consumer behavior when confronted with all touchpoints with a brand (Kotler & Keller, 2012). In fact, there is an extensive literature on how to better select the most appropriate combination of media choices along the consumer decision journey, thus building the most efficient Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) plan (Batra & Keller, 2016; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Nonetheless, Virtual Reality and Artificial Intelligence are still reasonably new concepts for most the marketing professionals, and, little has been reported under their effectiveness in marketing strategies. The researchers, usually from consultant or technology firms as Accenture, Sage, Business Insider, Core Sight Research, Dell Technologies, Ericsson Consumer Lab, Google, Microsoft, PWC, among others, are more focused on the technological, political, economic and social impact that these technologies will most likely proliferate in the next few years.
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