

## **INTRODUCTION TO DON E. SCHULTZ'S "MANIFESTO"**

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While listening to my great friend Professor Don Schultz during his Keynote Address at the Beijing Conference of the American Academy of Advertising (May 2009), I felt that the content of his address was so remarkably clear, relevant and significant as to constitute a true "Manifesto". First of all, as a way to renew research and teaching in the field of advertising in particular and that of business communication in general, but also for a practice in this field that will satisfy the numerous and differentiated needs of a world not made up only of the most highly developed Western countries.

We need only recall a statement at the opening of the Manifesto to fully grasp its incisiveness.

"The author contends the teaching of advertising around the world is caught in a time warp, *i.e.* old concepts which are no longer relevant in a dramatically changed and changing world".

The thoroughness of the analysis leads specifically to the revelation that "the gap between what is being taught and what is being practiced, was the result of the type and level of advertising research being conducted by educators around the world".

Again the author affirmed "the kinds of research and teaching being conducted in academic institutions around the world, because of their research focus, may have become irrelevant and restrictive in the rapidly changing global marketplace that exists today".

The observations quoted above focus on two basic considerations:

- the different cultural models that distinguish the various countries where research and teaching are conducted;
- the rapid and far-reaching changes – in technology as well as much else – affecting the present times that will certainly continue to be of primary importance also in future.

These considerations are not new in the work of Professor Schultz who, with reference for example to the teaching models currently proposed, had already questioned their relevance on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the American Academy of Advertising.

“Most advertising education”, he observed on that occasion, “assumes a Western cultural model which may or may not be relevant in the rest of the world. Are we doing students from other countries a disservice by holding them to our cultural standards, media models and creative concepts in our research and teaching? While other cultural views are creeping into the Convention content, most likely include a western cultural bias”<sup>1</sup>.

True, but we shall return to the research activities, which Professor Schultz was specifically dealing with, and which also, as an emerging strand of studies is revealing<sup>2</sup>, is influenced by cultural models in different countries.

Now, following over a decade of activity at the Research Laboratory I direct at the Università Cattolica (Research Laboratory on Business Communication), it appeared clearly that an evolution of communication truly adapted to the times and the challenges that face businesses calls for an immense effort on a number of levels:

- first of all on the level of the business users of communication and, specifically, their communication culture;
- again, on the level of the theory of business communication, so as to enable it to investigate the still unexplored or poorly explored fields of the potential of communication;
- finally, on the level of research into communication, to ensure it really absorbs the acquisitions of theory and in fact promotes them, abandoning methods

<sup>1</sup> D.E. SCHULTZ, *Addressing the Cusp of Change*, American Academy of Advertising, 50th Anniversary Newsletter 1958-2008, March 2008, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> E.T. BRIOSCHI - G.E. MIRACLE, *A comparison between European and US advertising research paradigm*, in K.B. SHEEHAN (ed.), “Proceedings of the American Academy of Advertising Conference”, Burlington 2007; E.T. BRIOSCHI - G.E. MIRACLE, *A comparison between Japanese, Korean and US advertising research paradigm*, in Y.K. CHOI (ed.), “Proceedings of the American Academy of Advertising Asia-Pacific Conference”, Seoul 2007; G.E. MIRACLE - E.T. BRIOSCHI, *Culture and advertising research paradigms*, in “Proceedings of 2008 Global Marketing Conference”, organized by the Korean Academy of Marketing Science, Shanghai, 2008.

now superseded, critically examining the instruments that are still being used and, what counts most, courageously testing new methods and instruments. In the end there remains one underlying question. Is there a unique approach to the study and consequent implementation of advertising or can there be a number of approaches? "Clearly", maintains Professor Schultz, "cultural differences abound today. The western advertising model may or may not be relevant in much of the world, particularly in emerging economies. We must learn, not simply assume, whether what has been developed over the past 50 to 75 years is the only relevant advertising model... The manufacturer-based approach of the 20<sup>th</sup> century may not be the only relevant way to understand advertising, not just in a post-modern society, but, those that are emerging around the world as well. If our current model is no longer relevant, it must be changed". And, within the process of change "The American Academy of Advertising should lead the way".