

Ad Lib: WHEN CUSTOMERS CREATE THE AD

**Pierre Berthon
Leyland Pitt
Colin Campbell**

Traditionally, organizations have created advertisements, and customers consumed them. The intentions of advertisers have been reasonably clear: Organizations use these messages (mostly in broadcast or print media) to inform, persuade, or remind present and potential customers of their offerings or of the organization itself.¹ Consumers, on the other hand, have been passive recipients of the communication, reacting to it either by becoming aware, or by being swayed to do something they might otherwise not have done, or by having their memories jogged and reinforced. Most of the time they will simply ignore the advertisement's message. However, things have begun to change. Now customers are crafting ads and broadcasting them. The creation of advertisements is no longer the prerogative of the organization or its designated ad agency, and the consequences are significant.

Whereas the early promise of technology was to give marketers power over consumers by using, to the firm's benefit, all the information that had been gathered and processed on these consumers,² recent evidence suggests that the opposite is occurring. Indeed, as Deighton and Kornfeld assert, "it's the consumer who runs the show for the most part, not the marketer—in fact, forget the 'consumer' label altogether."³ Technology is enabling consumers to perform for themselves and others many of the marketing tasks and functions (the well-known "4 Ps") that were previously the prerogatives of organizations. Web sites such as eBay have enabled consumers to buy and sell to each other. Firms such as Betfair, the world's largest sports betting exchange, permit customers to make, rather than have to take, their own prices (in the form of betting odds),

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