

# Does advertising communicate competence in B2B? A content analysis in the fashion industry

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## **1. Introduction**

Competence-Based Communication (CBC) is a recent stream of research developed to explain the particular marketing communication that occurs in the Business-to-Business context (Golfetto, Mazursky, 2004; Golfetto, Zerbini, 2005). In the B2B environment, a business customer certainly seeks for a product of good quality, but above all it searches for a partner, a reliable competence provider, that is a supplier of solutions, a firm that has the capability to align its offer to the specific needs of the customer, a supplier that has the skills to be a valid reference for the customer's problems. That is particularly true for relevant and new purchases, but it is valid for routine purchases as well.

Competence is a wide concept, not easily classifiable. As Foss (1996a, 1) points out, "By 'competence', we understand a typically idiosyncratic knowledge capital that allows its holder to perform activities – in particular, to solve problems – in certain ways, and typically do this more efficiently than others". Adding the supplier-customer perspective, what might be specified around this definition is that the problem solving process can be applied to a customer, rather than an internal process. The supplier can act as a problem solver for a client, thus 'externalizing' its competence.

We can distinguish between transfer of competencies and communication of competencies, concerning respectively actual customers or prospects. As to the former, competencies are transferred through the actual and ongoing business relationship between supplier and client. A current customer, that already entertains a business relationship with a supplier, knows the competencies of the seller, thanks to the experience that has been developed. The supplier does not

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have to communicate its competencies, already embedded in the running relationship under the form of product and services.

On the contrary, facing a prospect, the supplier cannot transfer competencies, but it can only communicate them. The supplier that faces a prospective customer cannot rely on previous knowledge and he should speak about his competencies in order to transform the prospect into an actual customer. The first set (actual supplier-customer relationship) is a transfer of competencies that is at the core of the B2B studies. Literature and practice do not put the same attention to the second setting (supplier-prospect communication), where competencies should be communicated, rather than transferred. They partially refer to the delivery of customer value. How a supplier can communicate his competencies is a partially answered question.

The work firstly discuss the CBC's main tenets, showing its originality of approach with respect to RBV and marketing theories. Then the possibility to communicate competencies is analyzed. An empirical study is then conducted on print advertisements. While trade fairs and other experiential communication channels are quite natural for CBC, advertisement – particularly print – may be at odds with CBC. Therefore technical reviews are a challenging context where to test CBC.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 CBC and the transfer of competence**

The preliminary issue to be addressed is whether competencies can actually be transferred and communicated. Unlike assets, competencies are intangible, deeply embedded in the organization's routines. They are "hard to trade" (Foss, 1996a, 2). Resource-Based View (RBV) claims that a distinctive resource or competence is such if it is valuable, rare, non-substitutable and inimitable (Barney, 1991; Grant 1998). The last feature is often connected with the firm's tacit knowledge and embedded routines. The more defensible competencies and those that better assure firm's competitive advantage are the tacit and uncoded ones. A competitor can experience serious troubles in understanding the source of the firm's competitive advantage, due to its tacitness. This causal ambiguity, as described by Rumelt, hampers the imitation of the firm's competence. It is a communicative insulation of what distinguishes the firm from the others. A codified knowledge should be preserved by trademarks, patents and other legal arrangements designed to protect knowledge available to everyone; a tacit knowledge defends itself thanks to its impossibility to be systematically described.

Bringing this tacit dimension into the customer realm, the same insulation that works against competitors should hold also for customers, hampering communication. The tacit ness and embedded ness of the firm's competencies that preserve it from competition might obstacle

communication towards customers. If this is true, the only competencies that a supplier can communicate to customers are the (codified) competencies. For instance, a firm can easily communicate the layout of a newly discovered chemical process: this competence is codified into projects and patents (and eventually solidified into actual machinery).

The communication, however, is more difficult when it involves routines, tacit knowledge, intangible competencies. For instance, a supplier cannot easily communicate the high level of innovativeness of its research center, since the creativity and capability to innovate is not codifiable and it is only partially contained in tangible elements like products. Intangible competencies cannot be easily communicated or at least they can be communicated through socialization or direct contacts between the parties. Even the management of the company can have hard time in identifying the competencies of their own organization. Some intangible competencies are also the more relevant for a supplier, due to their strength towards competition and to their sophistication. The interpretation of the firm as a stand-alone “repository of competencies” (Foss, 1996a, 2) does not support a marketing and network perspective, in fact:

- Competence-based literature discards the role of the customer. The client shapes the competencies that the firm should have, thus RBV should leave its privileged focus on competitions. Bogner and Thomas (1996) notice that the strategic literature, where RBV developed (drawing from economics), fails in acknowledging the central role of the customer. The internal view of the firm is well developed in RBV, while “the same detail of the demand side is missing” (Bogner and Thomas, 1996, 105). Yet they do not go along with their reasoning since they suggest a model where the exchange between firm and customer is based on the attributes of a product; they do not consider the transfer of competencies.

- RBV is at odds with the recognized phenomenon of firms embedded into networks of other firms and actors. The exchange of competencies should be hypothesized, since strong alliances and outsourcing projects cannot be interpreted as made by insulated actors; somehow an exchange of competencies has to be hypothesized, otherwise the theory of contract would be the only viable theoretical framework for networking activities.

On the other side, marketing literature has tried to make a convergence between competence perspective and customer. Day (1994) with his market-driven capabilities has signed a fundamental step forward, but also in his approach, the competence is seen as an internal process that draws on a capability (internal too) of understanding the market and linking with it. The market-driven

organization seems not to differ much from an organization that has the market orientation theorized by Kohly and Jaworsky (1990). In both the view, the customer is 'out there' and the company should dutifully study its market and then deploy a viable product or service.

Among intangible resources conceived by marketing scholars, a particular position is occupied by relational assets. They are a step further towards competence transfer. Relational assets are the competence to establish a long-term oriented and satisfying relationship with the customer, cultivating trust, reputation and customer's perceptions about the firm. They are external intangible assets (Vicari, 1995; Srivastava et al., 1998) that are not owned by the firm nor fully controlled by it, since they reside in the relationship with the customers (and other stakeholders as well). The intangibility of this competence is paired with the necessity by the customer to actually experience the relationship with the supplier in order to understand and appreciate the competence. Day (1994) mentions the "linking capabilities" as fundamental in denoting a market-driven organization. The relational competencies are particularly relevant in the B2B environment. The origin of relationship marketing within the B2B literature (Grönroos, 2000) shows that.

While relational assets are close to CBC, they do not match with it, since they do not reside in the customer. Moreover, due to its intangibility and the necessity to actually experience this competence by the customer, relational competence should be particularly difficult to communicate, but it should be directly experienced.

CBC is at the verge of RBV and marketing. RBV and marketing have substantially failed in merging together their assumptions and acquisitions. RBV on one side does not study the process through which internal resources are transformed into something valuable for the customer. On the other side, marketing applies RBV concepts, but "bereft of any reference to RBV" (Srivastava et al., 2001, 778). "In short, the tenets, intent, and assertions of RBV to date have largely avoided direct contact with the concept, intent, and prerequisites of marketing" (*Ibidem*). The contribution by Srivastava *et al.* (2001) is one of the first in addressing the issue of how to merge together such relevant but unconnected worlds. Yet, they locate their contribution within the traditional view that focuses on the value extracted from resources and then delivered to the customer. In fact, their questions are on the value issue: how value is extracted from the resources? Is the value created inside or outside the firm?

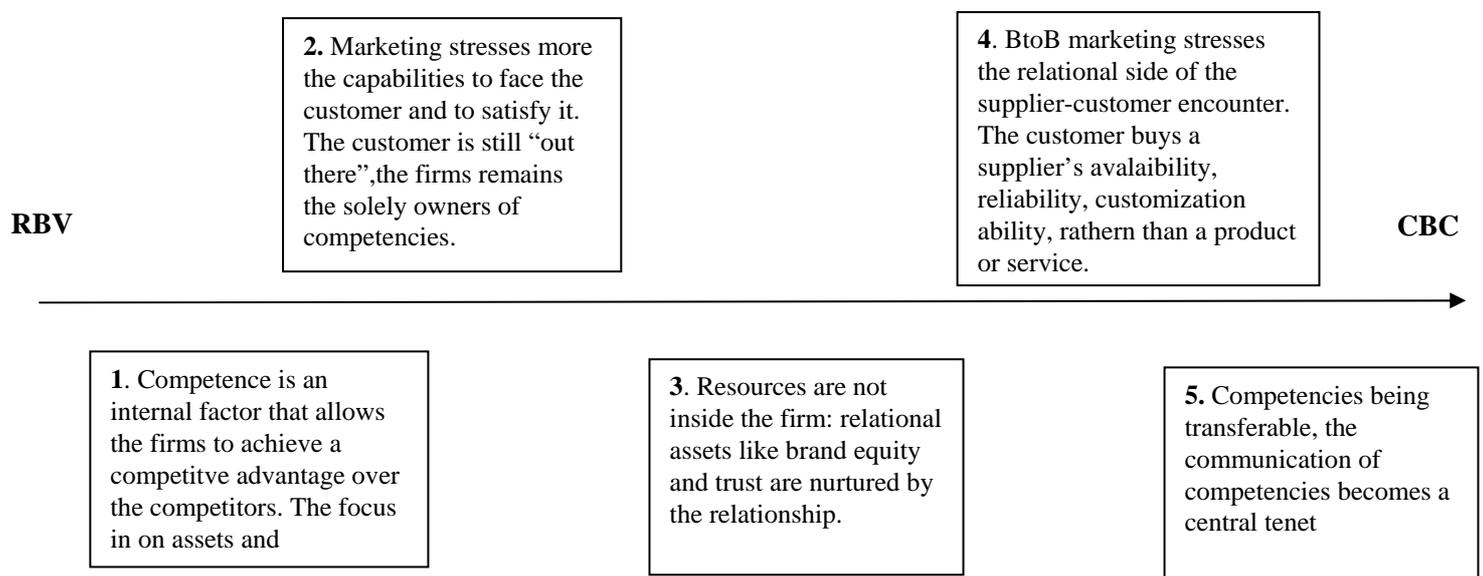
CBC takes a step further: its focus is not on the extraction of value from the competencies of the supplier, rather on competencies' transfer from supplier to customer. This transfer has not been conceptualized since it is less relevant in BtoC contexts, where the company and the customer are two different kinds of entities. For instance, an airline company cannot transfer its competencies to

its passengers. It would be incongruous to say that the company enables the customer to fly. In the BtoB context, on the contrary, this transfer can apply. A dyeing machines manufacturer is at the same level of its customers: both are businesses, both have knowledge of the industry; when the supplier develops new competencies, it can transfer it to its customer.

In summary, various disciplines have built the competence perspective (Foss, 1996b), starting from economics (Nelson, Winter, 1982), going through the strategic literature (Lippman, Rumelt, 1982; Wernerfelt, 1984) to arrive to more management-oriented and practical application (Prahalad, Hamel, 1990). What is less involved in this scientific discussion is marketing, but it is this last one to have the opportunity to innovate competence-based view considering the role of customer not only as a receiver of product/service, but a receiver of competencies, both in its pure form (a consultancy activity for instance) or through a product intended as bundle of enabling competencies (a machine enables the business customer to make previously impossible actions).

We can sketch a sort of four-stages history of the development of the competence-based discussion, including the actual emerging path of CBC as a further step (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: The steps of the competence based discussion**



*Source: Our Elaboration*

## 2.2 Competencies' Taxonomy

In order to measure how competencies are communicated, an inventory of competencies should be defined. RBV has been criticized for its reluctance to provide a clear and final definition of what is a resource or competence; “one reason why marketing scholars have not adopted RBV more vigorously perhaps resides in the absence of any general accepted delineation and classification of

resources” (Srivastava *et al.*, 2001, 779). Dealing with communication of competencies towards customers, it seems natural to refer to the conceptualization that marketing literature gives to the competence concept. According to the general marketing literature (not directly referred to the BtoB context) the competencies that a supplier would wish to communicate to its customer reside in three main categories: product development, supply chain management, customer relationship management. These competencies are customer-based and they are focused “upon the development and delivery of products or solutions” (Srivastava *et al.*, 2001, p. 783). In a BtoB context one should stress the word “solution”, rather than “product”, due to the mentioned relevance of service and relationship between parties.

The market-based assets developed by Srivastava *et al.* (1998) have opened the RBV to an approach that does not bound the resource and competencies to the firm’s edges, but it finds them on the relationship that the firm has with the external environment (see also Vicari, 1995). This literature is relevant for the CBC, since it is plausible that the supplier would communicate only the competencies that can be effectively exploited by the customers, not the internal and hidden competencies that are less customer-valuable. The market-based assets are relational and intellectual ones. The former springs from the relationship that a firm has established with its customers and other key stakeholders. Brand equity and channel equity are two expressions of such assets, since they represent the ties that the company has with relevant external actors. Intellectual assets are represented by the knowledge of the firm regarding the environment, the industry, the competitors and all the drivers that must be managed to reach the success in the activity. Also in this case, the asset is developed through a relationship with the external environment. In both cases the assets are a source of value for the firm’s customers in various forms: lowering the customers costs and enhancing its productivity, attaining premium prices thanks to the market-based assets provided by the firm, generating competitive edge. The origin and the goal of these two assets are the external environment, namely the market.

What CBC adds to this literature is the focus on BtoB context and the communication, rather than transfer of competence. Moreover, the market-based assets are not an actual transfer of competence.

The types of competencies of interest according to CBC in the BtoB environment are three, drawn from Möller and Törrönen’s (2003) contribution:

- Efficiency: it is the alignment of the supplier with the customer’s needs, the capability to adapt the product and process to its specific requirements. It is the “ordinary supply of competence”. “A gain in efficiency results in lower production or transaction costs” (Möller and Törrönen’s 2003, 111).

Efficiency can be transferred to the customer in solid or fluid form. The former is the competence under the form of a product, the latter is the competence in itself, not embedded into a good. A supplier that adopts a just-in-time logic is providing its customer with efficiency fluid competence since the client can speed up and make more flexible its manufacturing process. Instead, supplying a machine that elaborates more pieces per hour is an instance of solid competence.

- Effectiveness: it is the extraordinary supply of competencies, when the supplier provides the capability to innovate the customer's process beyond the strict current situation. Also in this case, competence can take solid or fluid form, but the fluid one is more frequent.

- Networking: it refers to the access that the customer have to other clients, institutions, business actors thanks to the relations with the supplier.

Actually the two authors deals with value delivery rather than competence transfer. In fact they aim to provide a framework that the customer can use to assess the value it can receive from a potential supplier. Indeed value is a measure and an effect of the competence transferred, it is the "bottom line" of competence, also in literally terms, since value is often measured in monetary units (Möller, Törrönen's, 2003; 110), while competence is hardly measurable.

### **2.3 CBC's position within the communication field and tools for communicating competencies**

Once assessed the possibility to communicate competencies, the second step is to analyze the features of CBC. The most relevant features of competencies (intangibility, tacitness, embeddedness) push toward an experiential communication of competencies. Trade fairs, open houses, personal selling and other experiential and direct tools are the preferred way to communicate competencies. Advertisement seems at odds with the competence communication.

In this section the work illustrates the position of CBC within the different communication branches of marketing; then the tools suitable for CBC are analyzed, assessing the advertising relevance for CBC.

Communication studies are increasingly emphasizing the role that intangible themes can play in company's messages. Corporate communication (Argenti, Forman, 2002) is a branch close to CBC, yet not perfectly overlapping with it. Corporate communication focuses on the reputation of the company, that can be interpreted as a bundle of distinct competencies. It is aimed at all the stakeholders. The boundary between corporate communication and CBC sometimes appears fuzzy, when referred to actual ads. Usually competencies are spread all over the company, therefore

communicating them implies a communication that deals with the company as a whole, like in corporate communication.

A form of competence communication can be noticed in the crisis communication management, a particular part of corporate communication. In crisis situations (accidents, dangerous products' flaws, malevolent act) the company must communicate its ability to react to a situation of harm for its business and for the customer, the competence in facing the extraordinary circumstances (Coombs, Holladay, 2001; Coombs, 2000). In this communication the theme is not the product anymore but the response competence of the company in times of crisis.

CBC – although quite different from other types of communication - merges together marketing communication and corporate communication. Its target is, like in marketing communication, the customer; on the same time its content is close to corporate communication, since competence is the specific subject of communication.

As to communicative tools (trade fairs, advertising and so on), competence communication requires a deep interaction between supplier and prospective customer. Due to the intangible nature of competencies, socialization (Nonaka, 1994) and experiential tools are the best way to communicate. A sure communication channel for competencies is represented by trade exhibitions and sale force: these rich and experiential communicative methods suit the complexity of competencies that the supplier wishes to express. Competencies are quite complex and intangible. An interactive communication like that of a sale representative or a product at work can convey the rich competencies that a supplier have. The same holds for trade exhibitions, with the further feature of the comparison that the customer can make among the different suppliers.

Advertising, on the contrary, may be at odds with competencies. Advertising has three distinctive features that seemingly make it less suitable for competence communication: it is a one-way communication, it is a mass communication and it has a lower richness compared to the above-mentioned experiential tools. That might imply that advertising can meet difficulties in conveying the supplier's competencies.

*- One-way communication*

Interaction is not allowed in classical advertising,<sup>2</sup> while socialization implies a strict connection between the parties, not the far-fetched advertising communication.

*- Mass medium*

Competencies are industry-contingent. What is central for a high-tech environment, for instance, may not fit with other contexts. In a marketing view, competencies are customer-based, since they

should be adjusted to the specific requirements of the single customer in a fine tuning process whose aim is to tailor the supplier skills to the customer's needs. This may make advertising a too broad communication mean, able to convey only generic competencies, rather than specific ones.

- *Low richness*

Let us compare a picture of an industrial machine and the live description of it provided by a sale representative and the product itself. Clearly the two ways to communicate the same content are quite different in richness and complexity. This is emphasized for intangible competencies. Competencies are bundles of routines and processes leveraging on company's assets or bundles of competencies that result from the process of transformation by the supplier. Their intangible nature and the complexity of this interrelated network of processes cannot easily be explained in the limited space of a print advertisement or in the few seconds of a TV spot. This is particularly true for print advertisements: "print is a less viable medium for the creation of emotional and experiential advertisements" (Gilliland, Johnston, 1997, 19).

The observation that advertisement suits less the competence communication does not necessarily imply that advertisement is not employed in CBC. Advertisement may be useful for general and more simple competencies, while deeper and more complex ones may be communicated through more experiential media. The aim of this work is to explore the use of CBC in advertisement.

Literature on BtoB advertisement implicitly assumes that the subject of an ad is the product sold by the company. Therefore studies are preferably addressed at layouts and styles that would better reach the intended effects, whether "to introduce a new product, create awareness, or serve as a reminder" (Bellizzi, Hite, 1986, 118). Gilliland and Johnston (1997) suggest a balance between rational and emotional calls according to the specific position and involvement of the ad's readers. Soley (1986) finds that a long copy attract more attention and interest by the readers compared to a shorter one. Colors employed, length of headlines, illustration size are other dimension studied to assess the best advertising layout. Belizzi and Hite (1986) distinguish between different styles of copy (straight exposition of the product's benefits, testimonial style, provocative style).

This literature provides a complete framework to convey the idea behind the advertisement through efficient layouts, colors and other tools. Yet, it does not address the question of the theme: competence or product? CBC acts on the upstage phases of the advertisement preparation, when the supplier should choose

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<sup>2</sup> Internet is developing new forms of advertising in which the receiver can interact with advertisements (see Center for Interactive

### 3. Research Method

A previous research devoted to the measurement of CBC has applied semiotic interpretation (Rinallo, Borghini; 2003) to the exhibitors' booths in a textile and fashion trade fair, a typical experiential communication that suits CBC. The specific units of study were the booth's design and the windows displays. The results found by the two authors show that the exhibitors communicated competencies specific to the industry.

This study would like to expand on that first measurement of CBC, focusing on the advertisement of the same industry, in order to better compare the results. Fashion is a central industry for the topic raised. It involves many different competencies, since creativity and productivity should be well merged together. Actually it is a macro-industry that comprehends many specialized activities. In a purely service industry a firm would be compelled to communicate competence, due to the lack of any product. In an industry like that of fashion there is space for both product and competence communication.

The method applied in the present study is content analysis. It is a method that traditionally fits with the advertisement communication. Content analysis can be defined as a method that classifies the communication content in an objective, quantitative and systematic manner (Berger, 2000; Gunter 2000). Marketing studies have developed content analysis starting from the theorization provided by Kassirjian (1977). While that study was a complete framework about an increasingly applied method in BtoC communication, content analysis has been less employed in the BtoB context.

The concept of competence, as above illustrated, presents some complexity in its definition and recognition. A reliable measurement of competencies is the final test that RBV's supporter must face in order to show the validity of their theory. The scientific debate around the measurement is currently quite vivid, due to the difficulty of such a challenge. Among the works that have attempted a measurement, that by Henderson and Cockburn (1994) significantly puts the question mark after the expression "measuring competence" in their title. The two authors employ the number of patents as a proxy for innovative competence.

This difficulty in competence measurement is exacerbated with content analysis. What is particularly relevant in this research method is a careful operational definition of the concepts searched. Any category employed for the classification should be defined in a way that would allow independent coders to reach the same result applying the same protocol. The concept of competence cannot easily be defined in operational terms, this is why the focus chosen is what refers as "not product". Competence is such a broad concept that it cannot be directly referred to specific statements or pictures in a print advertisement. As Kassirjian (1977) notes, in content analysis

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Advertising at <http://www.ciadvertising.org/ciad>. Some companies, like IBM, currently receive, lots of orders through their website.

validity and reliability are in a trade-off relationship. Focusing too much on validity, the researcher would develop coding categories that would precisely catch the concept to measure, but negatively impacting on objective replication of the coding protocol, thus on reliability.

The unit of analysis chosen is the theme that emerges both from the text and from the picture of the print advertisement. While syllables, words, characters and other elements of a message can be analysed, theme is the most frequently employed unit of analysis for advertising studies (Commuri et al., 2000; Suzuki, 1980, 65). This is particularly true for the competence concept, that cannot be fully conveyed through units of meaning like single words, or even single statements. In one of the most recent applications of content analysis to ads, Fay (2003) analyses the change of the content of New Zealand food ads, employing several categories. In the Fay's study the content of the ad is captured both through the counting of text components and the appreciation of the entire ad (picture and words). In the present study interpretation is necessarily employed, since the theme is the unit of measure; on the same time the interpretation of which theme emerge from the ad is quite strictly led by the interpretation grid provided.

### **3.1 The sample**

The population studied is composed by the full page print ads appeared during different years on the issues of a technical review of the Italian fashion industry. It has been chosen the review "Industria Laniera, Tessile e Abbigliamento", that is addressed to the Italian and international companies (each issue has a double format: Italian and English) that act along the different stages of the final apparel manufacturing, from yarns production, to fabrics, to garment finishing. Choosing one comprehensive review that covers the entire process should allow to catch the variety of CBC communication, both in the up-stream stages of the production and in the down-stream phases. The necessity to communicate competence should be more intense in the up-stream stages of the production (Golfetto, Mazursky, 2004; Golfetto, Zerbini, 2005), while efficiency and product-related features should be more evident in the communication of down-stream companies. Sampling ads in different review's issues along many years allow to appreciate possible change in the CBC. We can expect that CBC's use is growing together with the literature's sophistication on BtoB marketing and the professionalism of companies' and their advertising agencies. The fiercer competition and the awareness of competence relevance also in communication should have pushed forward the use of CBC.

## **4. Preliminary findings**

As first research phase, following Arndt and Bigelow (2000), a coding grid has been developed through an iterative process between the advertisements and the CBC theory; a process that, observing the ads, let categories and themes emerge, placing them into the grid. A print advertisement is made by two main elements: illustration and text. Distinguishing between these two components as they were independent would be a mistake. They interact between them both structurally and substantially. As to the former, researches shown that the layout has effect on various ad's effectiveness. For instance, an ad where the text wraps around the illustration can be more effective (Lohtia *et al.*, 1995). Substantially speaking, an illustration of a product can be quite mute, in the sense the picture that – as the name in itself indicates – simply depicts an object, without emphasizing neither the efficiency nor the effectiveness. This role is given to the text that puts the object in a context where the reader can catch the meaning of what he sees. For instance, the same machine's picture can be captioned as a newly made expression of the innovation propensity of the supplier (effectiveness), as the solution for customer's productivity problems (efficiency) or as an installed machine in a supplier's existing and successful customer. By this way one can notice the strict interaction that is at work between text and illustration. The illustration is useful in defining whether the ad is solid or fluid-based. An ad that would show a product or a portion of the current catalogue would convey solid competence. More creative ads that do not explicitly show a product would communicate more fluid competence, not linked to a specific product. The text can be further divided into headline and copy. The first step of the research is the distinction between fluid and solid competence (independently from the kind of competence communicated). An ad depicting the product of the supplier can be classified as solid competence, while other subject should considered a proxy for fluid competence. In some ads, the picture of the products cover a minor portion of the page. In order to roughly measure how much the subject illustration cover the page, for every ad it was calculated the fraction of the page covered, from less than 1/4 to more than 3/4. Referring to Figure 2 (in Appendix), the ad would be classified as a page that depicts a product that covers less than 1/4 of the page. The preliminary results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Ads divided into those that depicts products or other subjects**

Ad with Product Picture	Ad with Picture of Other Subjects	Mixed
12	19	2
Portion of the page		
<1/4      3		
1/4 - 3/4    3		
>3/4        6		

The 19 ads that do not depict product are quite creative and make the advertisement similar to the BtoC communication habits.

In two cases, the product and the creative part of the ad are simultaneously present, with a portion of the page devoted to the creative representation, while the product is shown elsewhere in the page. These results show that the ads are not a mere catalogue of the supplier's product, rather they adopt a more attractive communication strategy.

Table 2 shows the codification grid that can be employed for the analysis.

**Table 2: Codification grid**

	Solid Competence		Fluid Competence	
	Headline/Copy	Illustration	Headline/Copy	Illustration
Efficiency	“L’innovazione è il nostro punto di partenza”	<i>Depicts the product of the company</i>	Flessibilità operativa, razionalità gestionale, utilizza anche i filati più difficili, prestazione, prodotto, affidabilità	<i>Other subjects, no product</i>
Effectiveness	“L’innovazione è il nostro punto di partenza”	<i>Depicts the product of the company</i>	Flessibilità operativa, razionalità gestionale, utilizza anche i filati più difficili, prestazione, prodotto, affidabilità	<i>Other subjects, no product</i>
Network		<i>Depicts the product of the company</i>		<i>Other subjects, no product</i>

The distinction between fluid and solid competence is measured through the illustration. If the illustration depicts a product The reliability of the grid has been tested submitting to an independent coder a portion of the sample made by ten ads.

Really, in the CBC approach, the distinction between product and competence is not a dichotomy, but a continuum. Il modello di sopra può essere messo a questo punto. The product is a solidified competence in which the skills of the supplier are synthesized and made concrete. On the other end, the benefits that the customer draws from the product are a broadening and an enrichment of its competencies. Still they are expressed as competencies of the customers rather than belonging to the supplier, therefore we can consider the ads focused on the product as opposed to a pure CBC.

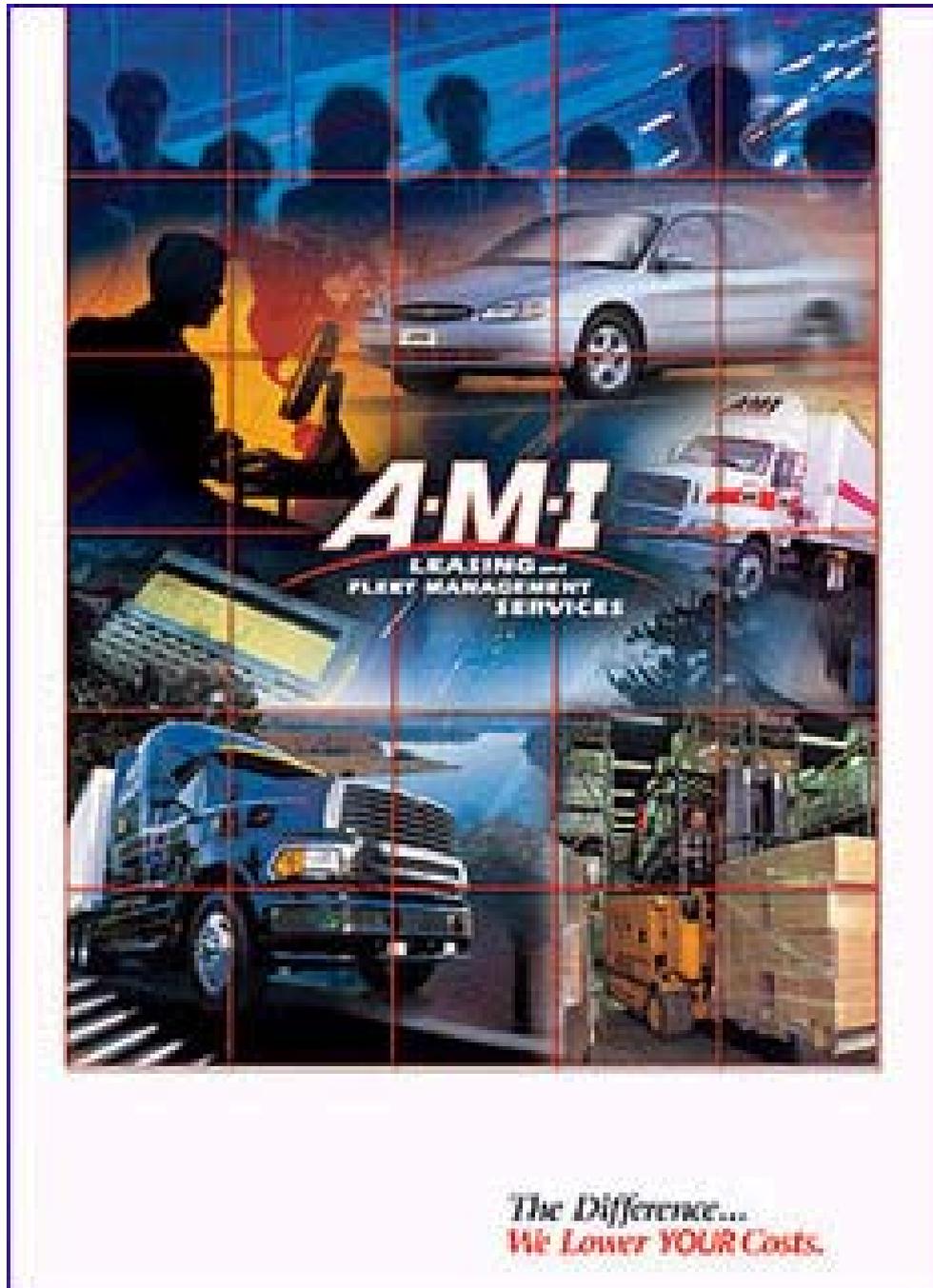
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## Figures

Figure 1



The ad refers to efficiency of the supplier. In fact, the tag line is “The Difference... We lower your costs”. At the center of the page there is the logo of the company and its core service: fleet management. No other indications are shown. On the visual side of the page, the advertiser shows the different vehicles that it can manage and that presumably are in its portfolio. Some portions of the pictures are apparently devoted to the business customer, but they are not focused on some specific function. This ad can be classified with reasonably confidence as efficiency communication.

Figure 2



Figure 2 refers to the effectiveness dimension. The tag line states: “very so often something happens to change a Profession forever. This is the moment for yours”. The name of four version of a product are then visible in the inferior part of the page. Clearly what is stressed is the radical innovation that the supplier would provide. As tot the visual side of the ad, it shows a profile of a product for optical purposes. It is shown almost with ‘shyness’, soliciting some mystery and interest. Many other examples can be shown. The issue is how to claim in a reasonably reliable way whether and which competence is communicated.

## Appendix

**Table 3: Summary table of some ads analysed.**

“Industria Laniera, Tessile e Abbigliamento” Anno 117, N. 6, November.December 2003					
Page	Company	Product	Headline/Copy	Illustration	Competence
Cover	Avantec	Dyeing machine	“L’innovazione è il nostro punto di partenza”	Product, >3/4	Solid Effectiveness
Rear Cover	Maibo	Dyeing machine	Captions of the products shown in the picture	Product (7 machines), >3/4	Solid Efficiency
459	Zonco	Finishing	“Siete sicuri che nulla riesca più a stupirvi?”/ Automatizzata, semplice gestione, manovrabile anche da un ufficio, facile manutenzione	Creative: a PC with a machine instead of a monitor	Fluid efficiency
460	CIMI	Fixing, Laundring	“Non lasciamo niente al caso”/ Pronti a risolvere i problemi dei nostri clienti, a soddisfare tutte le loro esigenze, lavorare insieme, leader da 40 anni	3 Pictures of products and a project sketch, Picture 1/2	Solid efficiency
461	Tecnomeccanica Biellese	Fibre Blending, Cadr Feading, Air Filtering	“Just a Minute! Thats’ not what we mean by ‘High Quality’”/Customized machinery, certified quality and no catches	An empty shape of a sheep and a vividly coloured sheep over it. No product	Fluid Efficiency
464	Promatech	Loom	“Leonardo Silver di Promatech. Il vostro asso nella manica”/Flessibilità operativa, razionalità gestionale, utulizza anche i filati più difficili, prestazione, prodotto, affidabilità, si vince sempre	A ace in a tuxedo’s sleeve. Picture of a product (<1/4)	(Fluid) Efficiency
466	Burocco	Valves	“Innovative, versatile, reliable valves... The Quailty image”/ Technical description of the valves	Product (various valves), >3/4	Solid Efficiency