

ABSTRACT

Measures of the effectiveness of marketing communications have traditionally focused on the verbal components of the message. In recent years researchers have recognized that nonverbal messages are at least as important, and sometimes more important, than the verbal message. The present paper provides an overview of research on nonverbal communication, with special emphasis on advertising and personal selling.

It's More Than What You Say: Assessing the Influence of Nonverbal Communication in Marketing

David W. Stewart

University of Southern California, Los Angeles

Sid Hecker

Young and Rubicam, New York

John L. Graham

University of Southern California, Los Angeles

Traditional measures of the effectiveness of marketing communications are based on verbal reactions to written questions. Much of the extant research on marketing communication and its influence on consumers focuses on the verbal elements of the message. Marketing professionals, particularly those charged with advertising and personal selling functions, have long been aware that other, nonverbal

elements of the message are at least as important as the verbal message. But until very recently these elements have received little attention from marketing researchers. Many early attempts to measure nonverbal aspects of marketing communication have suffered from the dissimilarity of the stimulus presented to the respondent and the reaction elicited from the respondent; i.e., the communication is at least partially nonverbal, but the questioning technique is verbal.

The decade of the 1980s has seen an important shift in research on marketing communications, however. The dominance of verbal measures of response has given way to a more balanced perspective that includes a concern for affective and behavioral responses to marketing stimuli as well as verbal or cognitive responses. Changes in technology and expansion into international markets are also fostering an interest in nonverbal communication. According to a recent publication of a survey research organization (Roper Organization, 1987), the current challenge for advertisers is to make their message seen in order to overcome commercial "zapping" by viewers. Visual recall is becoming increasingly important, and corporate symbols and advertising will need to be stronger and even more eye-catching to capture consumer attention. Nonverbal communication will not only become a means for drawing attention to a verbal message, but it will also become the message itself in many instances.

As markets have become more global, there has been an increasing recognition that nonverbal cues are important sources of information. It has also become increasingly clear that such cues do not always carry the same message from one culture to another. This recognition has led to both an increase in sensitivity to nonverbal cues in interpersonal selling and intensified training programs for sales personnel who will be working in other cultures.

The present paper is designed to summarize what is known about nonverbal communication in a marketing context. It is organized into four parts. The first section of the paper offers a general review of the literature on nonverbal communication, raises issues associated with defining the phenomenon, and introduces four theoretical perspectives in nonverbal communication. The second part of the paper deals with nonverbal communication in the media, specifically advertising. Since work on nonverbal communication in advertising is of relatively recent origin, this section deals more with conceptual and methodological approaches to the study of nonverbal cues in advertising. The third section of the paper deals with nonverbal communication in interpersonal interaction, particularly personal selling and service delivery. Study of nonverbal communication in interpersonal settings has a somewhat longer history, and more is known about it in such situations than is the case for advertising. The

fourth and final section of the paper considers applications of knowledge of nonverbal communication and identifies areas in need of further research.

INTRODUCTION

Nonverbal communication is ubiquitous. It occurs simultaneously with much of verbal communication through body language, gestures, and facial expressions, and it occurs in the absence of verbal communication through symbols, social and physical cues, and the structure of the environment itself. Studies of nonverbal communication in interpersonal situations suggest that a half or more of the variability of response can be attributed to nonverbal factors (Mehrabian and Ferris, 1967; Imada and Hakel, 1977; McGovern, 1976; Young and Beier, 1977; Edinger and Patterson, 1983; Neu and Graham, 1987). The importance of nonverbal communication is obvious.

The study of nonverbal communication has a rich tradition in the social sciences (cf. Hinde, 1972; Mehrabian, 1972a,b; Siegman and Feldstein, 1978; Rapoport, 1982; Sheikh, 1983; Key, 1982; and Druckman, Rozell, and Baxter, 1982). Several theories of nonverbal exchange have also been proposed (see, for example, Patterson, 1982a,b; Firestone, 1977; and Wiener, Devoe, Rubinow, and Geller, 1972). Discussions of nonverbal communication in marketing, on the other hand, are rare (but see Hulbert and Capon, 1972; Bonoma and Felder, 1977; Alesandrini and Sheikh, 1983; and Hecker and Stewart, 1987, for notable exceptions).

Systematic research on nonverbal communication is only about 20 years old (Patterson, 1982b). Among the reasons researchers have come so late to this area of endeavor, two are paramount. First, unlike most verbal messages, nonverbal messages are most often encoded and decoded unconsciously. For example, Ekman and Friesen (1975) report that facial expressions of emotion are almost always displayed and often interpreted below interactants' levels of awareness. Or, a client's sigh may signal it's time for a sales interaction to end, without either client or sales representative being conscious of the signal. Consequently, the standard tools of marketing research—cognitive responses to verbal questions—are not necessarily effective.

The second reason is the complexity of nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication can take many forms and tends to interact with context and situations as well as verbal messages. For example, a smile when approaching another individual often means something quite different from a smile while backing away. Profes-

sionals who are involved in cross-cultural marketing often become acutely aware that particular gestures, symbols, or facial expressions have different meanings in different cultures and that the situation-specific meaning of a particular nonverbal cue may be quite different from one culture to the next. Even defining a nonverbal communication is problematic.

DEFINING NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Virtually anything other than words, including the way words are used, has the potential to be a nonverbal cue. This does not mean, however, that every nonverbal stimulus is a nonverbal element in communication. Communication requires something more than a stimulus. Communication implies a socially shared signal system (a code), an encoder who makes something public via that code, and a decoder who responds systematically to that code (Harper, Wiens, and Matarazzo, 1978). Verbal communications are relatively easy to identify. The encoder is identified by an unambiguous action, speech, or writing; that a code is present is clear, since words are spoken or written, and it is usually possible to readily identify the decoder who is the target of communication. Things become much more complicated with nonverbal communication. There are many nonverbal signs or behaviors that are not communication. A nonverbal sign implies only that a decoder has made an inference about behavior or attached significance to behavior; nothing is implied about the encoding end of the process.

The number of nonverbal signs is legion. Consideration of only those signs that are clearly within the definition of communication does not do much to make the task of enumerating signs easier. Researchers in the area of nonverbal communication have attempted to develop various classification systems for nonverbal communication. Among the more frequently identified classes are (1) paralinguistic phenomena (how something is said) and the temporal characteristics of language, (2) facial expression, (3) body movements (kinesics), (4) gestures, (5) spacing (proxemics), (6) eye movements, (7) touch, (8) pictures (pictics or vidistics) and symbolic artifacts (such as the gavel given a new presiding officer of an organization). Each of these broad classes contains numerous elements that may, in turn, differ with respect to a number of dimensions. The complexity of these systems is well illustrated in a paper by Mehrabian (1969), who identified 12 dimensions of posture (body position) alone! The development of a dictionary of nonverbal language would obviously be a herculean task. Furthermore, such a nonverbal language is of

necessity far more complex than a verbal language because, as we noted above, nonverbal stimuli often interact in subtle ways.

The situation and the context in which a nonverbal sign occurs radically alter the meaning of the sign. It is apparent from much of the research on nonverbal communication that the meaning of nonverbal cues cannot be understood outside of context. This poses problems that are not present in the analysis of verbal communication. Although it is certainly true that the meanings of some words change with context, such changes tend, on the whole; to be subtle. Most words (verbal codes) have a meaning apart from context. This is often not the case for many nonverbal codes.

APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

In a selective review of the literature on nonverbal communication, Patterson (1982b) identified several approaches for examining nonverbal communication: (1) descriptive approaches, (2) role or situational approaches, (3) ecological approaches, (4) functional approaches, and (5) experimental approaches. These approaches are not mutually exclusive, of course, but they do represent somewhat different perspectives on the problem. We will briefly consider each approach in turn.

Much of the research on nonverbal communication over the past 20 years has been descriptive and has tended to concentrate on a single, or at most a few, nonverbal elements (Knapp, 1978). Such research has frequently taken the form of descriptions of events in various social interactions such as greeting behaviors, courtship, and so forth. Generally, one type of nonverbal behavior will serve as the focus of such research; for example, distance, touching, or facial expression. An example of one stream of such research is Ekman's work on facial expressions (Ekman and Friesen, 1975, 1976; Ekman and Taussig, 1969). This stream of research has sought with considerable success to develop reliable codes for facial expressions that convey various emotional responses. This work has also been extended to include descriptions of cross-cultural similarities and differences.

Other research programs have examined nonverbal communication from somewhat different perspectives. Goffman (1959, 1961, 1963, 1967, 1970) has been more concerned with the role of nonverbal communications in role relationships. In this approach, descriptive analysis focuses on social behavior. The individual or actor is deemphasized; the situation and social structure, or "frame"

in Goffman's terminology, is the unit of analysis. The emphasis of this approach is the way in which nonverbal elements regulate social interactions. A somewhat similar approach is Barker's ecological psychology (Barker, 1968). Barker is also concerned with understanding the interaction of situational factors and nonverbal elements, but his emphasis is not understanding social roles but rather understanding the impact of environment, including the social environment, on behavior. Both Goffman and Barker place much emphasis on the description of behavior, including nonverbal communication in naturalistic settings as opposed to laboratory settings, in order to assure a minimum of reaction to researchers.

More recently there has been an increasing concern for discovering the "function" of nonverbal communication. Just as Goffman suggested that nonverbal cues may facilitate role relationships, so have others suggested other purposes. The functional approach to the study of nonverbal communication has arisen with the recognition that nonverbal communication is purposive. The central tenet of this approach is that nonverbal communication cannot be understood without an understanding of its function. Patterson (1982b) identifies a number of classes of functions for nonverbal communication: (1) providing information, as in a gesture or nod of agreement, (2) regulating interaction such as through a decrease in the loudness of one's voice or termination of a gesture, (3) expressing intimacy, as in the physical distance established between individuals or the time spent gazing at another, and (4) social control, as in a look of disapproval. Purpose cannot readily be discovered by observation alone, so this approach must rely on techniques—such as introspection, role playing, or self-reports—to supplement pure observations.

Although observation would appear to be a rather straightforward approach to the study of nonverbal communications, it is not as simple as might be imagined. Knapp (1978) suggests that, in order to understand the full meaning of nonverbal cues offered by one individual, the research must include (1) all simultaneous and proximal behaviors of the individual, (2) any concomitant verbal behavior, (3) the setting in which the cues are offered, (4) the physical characteristics of all interactants, and (5) the verbal and nonverbal behavior of all other persons. This is difficult to accomplish even with the aid of cameras and video recorders. Research on the use of cameras suggests that how an event is filmed, the lack of the total context and potentially some interactants, and the intrusiveness of the camera itself may influence the interpretation of signs, the nonverbal signs emitted, or both (Ekman and Taussig, 1969). Furthermore, regardless of the method of observation, there are problems associated with determining the appropriate unit of analysis and the

optimal level of precision in categorizing behavior (Ekman and Friesen, 1968). Frequency of recording is also a problem, since anything short of continuous recording is likely to result in the loss of some potentially important information.

All of the approaches that rely on naturalistic observation for studying nonverbal communications suffer from an inability to make statements of causality. Although this may not be necessary for certain types of inquiry, statements of causality are required in order to make use of nonverbal communications in such applications as the design of advertising campaigns or the development of negotiating strategies. Statements of causality can only be identified by means of experimentation, and a number of researchers have sought to use experimental approaches for extending the understanding of nonverbal communication. Early experimental studies tended to concentrate on a single nonverbal cue and its influence on some dependent variable. More recent research has tended to be more complex. Furthermore, there has been a growing appreciation for the fact that laboratory studies and the results they produce are context bound and may have little to say about how nonverbal communication actually influences behavior in natural settings. These problems have led researchers in the field to suggest that rigorously designed experiments be carried out in realistic settings (Aigyle, 1972). This may be accomplished in a number of ways: (1) through field experiments on unsuspecting subjects, (2) through laboratory experiments that replicate real-life situations, and (3) through role-played laboratory experiments. There are, however, relatively few such examples to cite. This has led Siegman and Feldstein (1978) to criticize much of the experimental work on nonverbal communication for being too artificial. Stewart and Furse (1986) and Stewart (1987a,b) have criticized much of advertising research for failing to provide realistic tests of advertising effects. Research on the influence of nonverbal cues in advertising and personal selling are even more likely to suffer from criticisms of artificiality if it is not carried out with stimuli and in settings that closely approximate actual advertising or personal selling situations.

The artificiality of much of the experimental work on nonverbal communication grows from several sources. First, much experimental work has had difficulty in dealing with the interaction among multiple dependent variables. Although interactions among independent variables are commonly hypothesized and reported, the problem of interacting dependent variables has received scant attention. A more distal outcome, such as purchase, may be influenced by factors both proximal and distal to an advertisement. The final outcome is not simply the result of the advertising message

but also a function of responses set in motion by the message and a variety of situational and individual difference variables.

These several approaches to the study of nonverbal communication have given rise to different theoretical perspectives. Before turning our attention to issues specific to marketing, we will briefly review these perspectives.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE STUDY OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

At least four theories of nonverbal communication have been proposed. Birdwhistell (1970) has suggested a classification and model of body motion designed to offer a nonverbal body code that parallels language structure. This theory appears to have been particularly useful for cases where body motion is closely tied to the verbal stream (Harrison, 1973). Ekman and Friesen (1968, 1969) examined the origin, usage, and coding of nonverbal behaviors and distinguished five key classes: (1) emblems, intentional communicative signs that have widely shared meanings, the most direct counterpart of verbal symbols; (2) illustrators, actions that accompany verbal behavior; (3) regulators, actions that help manage the flow of conversation; (4) affect displays, behaviors that reveal or portray feelings; and (5) adaptors, behaviors that began as useful manipulations of the self, objects, or others but that may now have additional informative value. Mehrabian (1970, 1971, 1972a,b), in contrast to the two previous theories, sought to develop a dimensional system of nonverbal communication. He has sought to define a nonverbal counterpart to Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum's (1957) dimensions of verbal symbols. Although verbal signs can be located in a semantic space defined by evaluation, potency, and activity, Mehrabian suggests that nonverbal behaviors reveal a communicator's stance on liking, potency, and responsiveness. The fourth theorist, Patterson (1982a), has taken yet another approach to nonverbal communication by focusing on the functions served by nonverbal communication.

Although each of these theories approaches the study of nonverbal communication from a somewhat different perspective, there are significant similarities between the several approaches. First, all place considerable emphasis on the use of observational techniques. The emphasis is on what the communicator does and how the receiver responds. Although observation is not unknown in marketing research, it has, at least until very recently, been secondary to verbal self-report measures. Second, these approaches place significant

emphasis on the study of the communication stimuli as well as the response to those stimuli. This is in marked contrast to much of the recent research on marketing communications, which has tended to emphasize response to the near exclusion of the stimulus. Stewart (1987a,b) has offered a rationale for placing greater emphasis on the stimulus side of the marketing communication equation. Among the reasons for examining stimuli is the need to assure that receivers are actually responding to the hypothesized stimulus event rather than some other aspect of the communications stimulus or situation. The need for such assurance appears to be particularly critical for the student of nonverbal communication because of the subtleties and nuances that exist in such communication. Finally, these theories all emphasize the need to understand the complementary roles of verbal and nonverbal communication. Marketing and advertising researchers have long sought to understand the influence of verbal communication without adequate attention to nonverbal factors. This approach appears destined to reveal an incomplete, if not misleading, understanding of communication.

Much of the theoretical work on nonverbal communication in other disciplines is rather primitive relative to what is typically considered theory in the field of marketing. The theories of nonverbal communication are largely concerned with classification and place little emphasis on causal mechanisms at this point in their development. These are attempts to build theory from the ground up, based on an empirical foundation, and with emphasis on capturing the phenomenon in its natural complexity. This is in stark contrast to the borrowing of theories designed to explain other phenomenon that has characterized much of the prior work in marketing. Since the meaning of nonverbal communication exists only within context, simplicity is not a virtue in building a theory, because the phenomenon itself may disappear as simplification occurs.

Given the work in other fields and the strength of the influence of nonverbal communication on behavior, it is surprising that so little research has focused on this aspect of marketing. Theories of communication are necessarily incomplete without an explicit consideration of nonverbal factors. The design of research without a consideration of nonverbal variables risks confounding and loss of internal validity.

Such study of nonverbal communication as has occurred in a marketing context has taken different forms. Advertising research has tended to emphasize measurement of outcomes or responses that are produced by nonverbal cues. When the focus has been on interpersonal communication, such as personal selling, negotiation, and service delivery, the emphasis has been more process oriented. The

differences in focus are, no doubt, the result of the differences in nature of the impersonal communication of advertising and personal communication of direct selling. Although the focus is different, each offers a unique and useful perspective. Because of the differences in perspective, we will summarize research in each area separately and then bring together common themes in the final section of the paper.

MEASURING RESPONSE TO NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN ADVERTISING

The past several years have seen an increasing interest in nonverbal communication among advertising researchers. Much of this interest appears to arise from the increasing use of "image" advertising, in which nonverbal cues often play a critical, if not exclusive, role in carrying the advertising message. At the same time, there has been an accumulation of evidence that traditional approaches to measuring response to advertising may not be fully appropriate for image-based advertising (cf. Haley, 1985). Indeed, there is something strangely incongruous about measuring response to a nonverbal stimulus by means of verbal instruments. The meaning of nonverbal communication is frequently better portrayed than explained, and understanding is often less important than feeling. This is not to suggest that nonverbal stimuli do not elicit verbal or cognitive responses, but it does raise the question of whether verbal response measures are adequate for fully capturing the effect of nonverbal communication. Research on nonverbal communication in advertising (see, for example, Hecker and Stewart in press) seems to suggest that nonverbal stimuli often elicit responses that respondents do not consciously recognize. Many nonverbal stimuli elicit affective responses and evoke unconscious value systems. Furthermore, Haley (1985) reports empirical results that suggest that nonverbal cues may be more highly associated with persuasion than the verbal message. Some of the reported associations are also negative, suggesting that advertisers may be obtaining unintended effects!

There is almost certainly a need for measures that complement traditional verbal responses. Such measures may well include projective techniques that have not seen wide-scale use in marketing research for over 20 years. Holbrook, and Batra 1987 have developed a measure of affective response, but even their measure is essentially verbal, one in which respondents are asked to label what they feel. The idea that affective responses may exist independent of cognitive responses, and may, at least in some circumstances, domin-

ate cognition, is a relatively new idea among contemporary marketing researchers.

The measurement of affective responses to advertising has been the focus of numerous other publications (see, for example, Tybout and Cafferata, 1987; Peterson, Hoyer, and Wilson, 1986), and we will not dwell on it here. Affect is but one type of response that may occur as a result of exposure to nonverbal cues. Cognitions may also occur, although such responses may have nothing to do with the content of the message itself. Behavioral responses may also occur.

In recent years a number of researchers have attempted to assess nonverbal response nonverbally, using methods that range from the assessment of completely involuntary responses (brain waves, galvanic skin response, voice pitch analysis), to methods based on high-tech electronics or distraction techniques (cf. Graham, 1980a). In the advertising domain, a number of commercial copytesting firms have added methods for capturing nonverbal responses. The value of these methods varies, depending on the objective of the advertising and of the research. Such measures generally take the form of continuous measures of attention or of a general evaluative response, often followed by a debriefing with respondents designed to elicit reasons for responding in a particular fashion or to identify specific stimuli to which they were responding at a given point in time.

Haley (1985) summarizes several efforts to develop a reliable coding system for nonverbal cues in advertising, including one of the more comprehensive efforts to examine music. Stewart and Furse (1986) also developed an elaborate system for coding nonverbal, as well as verbal, cues. These efforts have focused less on developing new measures of response to advertising than on trying to clearly define nonverbal elements of advertising that can be related to measures of advertising effectiveness. Such research recognizes that nonverbal stimuli have not been well defined and require a descriptive system of their own. Thus, in advertising there has been an emphasis on both the stimulus and response side of the equation. On the one hand, researchers have sought to more carefully identify what nonverbal communication is and the nature of the individual elements that contribute to it. On the other hand, there has been a search for new measures that capture responses to advertising that are missed by more traditional measures. These are complementary approaches, of course, and taken together should serve to increase understanding of nonverbal communication.

In many respects the research on, and measures of, nonverbal communication in advertising are quite primitive relative to the work that has been carried out in the personal selling arena. This is not surprising, since research on nonverbal communication in personal

selling is a more natural extension of the basic research that has occurred in other disciplines, where the focus has most often been interpersonal interactions.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN PERSONAL SELLING AND SERVICE DELIVERY

A decade ago Bonoma and Felder (1977) introduced the marketing discipline to the then extant literature on nonverbal interpersonal communication. They concluded that although much of the methodology employed in prior studies of nonverbal communication in interpersonal communication was potentially useful, the generalizability of prior studies was suspect because their focus was on non-marketing situations and the populations studied were typically American college students. Generalizations to other populations and settings then are questionable, particularly in light of research that suggests that nonverbal communication may be situation and population specific. For example, differences in nonverbal communication behaviors have been found across cultures (Graham, 1985; Bond and Iwata, 1976; Ekman, 1973; Birdwhistell, 1970; Klineberg, 1940; LaBarre, 1947; Mead, 1975), across socioeconomic status (Swanson and Miller, 1960) and race (Ekman, 1977), between age groups (Benjamin and Creider, 1975; Janovic, Devoe, & Wierner, 1976), and between the sexes (Benjamin and Creider, 1975, Ekman 1973; Neu, Graham, and Gilly, 1987).

Since the publication of the Bonoma and Felder paper, there has been research that has examined nonverbal communication in situations that are specifically related to marketing activities. Graham (1980a,b, 1981) has examined the influence of nonverbal communication in sales negotiations, paying particular attention to facial expressions. His work appears to support earlier findings regarding the importance of facial expressions in communication. In a review of research on interpersonal communication, Harrison (1976) states, "The face is perhaps our most powerful nonverbal communicator" (p. 217), and Mehrabian (1972b) has even gone so far as to suggest that 55% of interpersonal communication is via facial expression. In his research on the facial expressions, Graham relied on the Facial Action Coding System (FACS) developed by Ekman et al. (Ekman and Friesen, 1976; Ekman, 1980). FACS is a method for describing facial movements based on an anatomical analysis of facial action. FACS provides a reliable and comprehensive system for coding all possible visually distinguishable facial movements.

Using the FACS approach, Graham (1980b, 1981) coded the interactions between Japanese and American businessmen who were participating in a simulated negotiations exercise. He also coded the amount of time participants in the exercise spent gazing at one another's faces. Facial expressions and facial gazing were then related to a variety of group process and outcome measures. On the basis of this study, Graham concluded that (1) higher frequencies of brow wrinkles are inversely related to the efficient reception of information during negotiations; (2) higher frequencies of brow wrinkles and facial gazing by bargainers are associated with poorer negotiation outcomes, such as expressed satisfaction with the outcome and lower profits; and (3) higher levels of shared facial expressions precede higher joint negotiation outcomes. Ekman (1980) reports somewhat similar results in other settings and with other populations.

Facial expressions represent only one type of nonverbal communication channel in interpersonal situations. There are numerous others. Prominent among these is interactional synchrony. Condon (1968) and others have reported that a speaker's body movements are coordinated with one another and coordinated with the articulation of speech. Moreover, these movements manifest a hierarchical organization parallel to that of speech. That is, minor body movements may be associated with phrase transition within sentences, whereas grosser body movements may be associated with thematic transition within a conversation.

But even more significant is the finding that listeners' back-channel verbal responses and body movements (e.g., the use of the word "yes" or head-nodding to indicate comprehension) are also coordinated in the same hierarchical way with the articulation of another's speech. Interactional synchrony has been defined as the isomorphism of verbal and nonverbal behaviors between speaker and listeners (i.e., "the precise 'dance-like' sharing of micro-body-motion patterns of change between speaker and listeners"; Condon and Saito, 1974). These mutually known rhythmic patterns of interaction are learned during socialization and have been shown to be culture specific (Condon, 1968). Additionally, researchers have suggested that synchrony patterns vary with status, role, and interaction strategy. Thus, although the phenomenon itself appears to be universal, the specific elements and meaning assigned these elements appears to differ from one setting to another.

The implications of these latter findings regarding synchronization are quite significant for marketers. Difficulties in synchronization appear to be associated with difficulties in cross-cultural and cross-ethnic communication (Condon, 1974; Gumperz, 1978). When participants in cross-ethnic conversation were asked to view video-

tapes of their own interactions, they were able to identify the boundaries between synchronous and asynchronous phases of the interaction (Erickson, 1976). However, when the participants were asked to interpret "what was going on" during the asynchronous phases of the conversation, their interpretations tended to differ. In other words, ideas were not shared during the periods of interactional asynchrony: evidence of lack of mutual understanding.

Facial expressions and interactional synchrony are not by any means the only nonverbal cues in interpersonal communication. Even simple changes in the intonation of a voice may carry considerable information and may be the source of considerable confusion.

Gumperz (1978) reports that differences in intonation of interactants are one of the causes of interethnic frictions:

In a staff cafeteria of a major London airport, newly hired Indian and Pakistani women were perceived as surly and uncooperative by their supervisors as well as by the cargo handlers they served. Observation revealed that while relatively few words were exchanged, the intonation and manner in which their words were pronounced were interpreted negatively. For example, a person who had chosen meat would have to be asked whether he wanted gravy. A British attendant would ask by saying "Gravy?" using rising intonation. The Indian women, on the other hand, would say the word using falling intonation: "Gravy" (Gumperz, 1978, p. 7).

It was determined that "Gravy" said with a falling intonation was interpreted as an announcement, rather than an offer, by the British customers served. This misinterpretation led to unanticipated and unfriendly responses from the customers and associated claims of ethnic discrimination by the Indian and Pakistani women. Once this difference in communication style and concomitant interpretation had been discussed with and demonstrated to the women and their supervisors, a distinct improvement in the attitudes of the Indian and Pakistani workers was reported.

Erickson (1976) collected data on interracial junior-college counseling sessions and job interviews. Nine dyads (three each black/white, black/black, and white/white) were analyzed applying the interpretative methods (cf. Graham, 1980b). The analysis revealed significant differences in listening behavior of the two racial groups:

In the white system for listening behavior, eye contact is always necessary during active listening response (and before it), while in the black system, eye contact is optional. In the black system, if the listener had not previously been looking at the speaker, he could provide active listening response simply by raising the eyes and gazing at the speaker. In the white

system, gaze involvement by itself is not "enough"; verbal and/or non-verbal response is required (Erickson 1976, p. 43).

These differences in listening behavior led white speakers to believe that the black listeners were not paying attention or understanding. The white speakers' response to this apparent lack of interest or comprehension was to hyperexplain the idea. Hyperexplanations involve several repetitions of the same point using different and progressively more simple terminology. The blacks' response to this hyperexplanation was an expressed feeling that they were being "talked down to" or even misinformed. Interpersonal friction and communication interferences resulted. Such findings have implications for service delivery as well as for personal selling. Indeed, any product/service that requires interaction between people presents a situation in which nonverbal communication may influence the perception of the product or service and the customers' level of satisfaction.

Nonverbal communication in service delivery has been virtually ignored by marketing scholars and practitioners alike. Yet, it may be even more important than nonverbal communication in advertising or personal selling, particularly in an economy dominated by service industries. The few studies cited above suggest that nonverbal factors have the potential to determine the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of customers receiving service products.

FUTURE APPLICATIONS AND RESEARCH ON NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

It is certainly safe to conclude that nonverbal communication plays an important role in marketing and deserves the attention it is now beginning to receive. The area of marketing activity that has already incorporated much of what is known about nonverbal communication is the personal selling and negotiation function. Sales training programs, particularly those of larger organizations, and organizations that sell across cultures, often include a strong emphasis on recognizing and using nonverbal cues. Many sales are closed by assumption, rather than a specific request to buy, and sales personnel must learn to recognize those cues that suggest the potential customer is ready to close: a nod, a smile, relaxation, facial expressions, and so forth. Nonverbal cues often provide information about when information is understood or confusing and how the recipient feels about the sales presentation. Yet, much of this training remains at an intuitive and experiential level. Making explicit what is known

about the meaning of nonverbal cues, and the ways in which meaning changes from situation to situation or culture to culture, remains an important endeavor for researchers.

Advertisers have long recognized that consumers respond to images, symbols, pictures, music, and gestures. Yet it has been the verbal message of advertisements that has most often the focus of research by advertisers. The increasing use of image and entertainment advertising to overcome advertising clutter and similarity of product benefits has increased the import of nonverbal cues. Yet, there is evidence that the current use of such cues may not only be ineffective but actually harmful to the persuasiveness of advertising. If advertisers are to use nonverbal messages, they must have a better understanding of how to do so effectively.

Finally, we noted earlier that very little was known about the impact of nonverbal cues in service delivery and subsequent customer satisfaction with service products. It is well known that the perception of service providers influences customer satisfaction. This has been well demonstrated in service industries ranging from banking, to health care, to automobile repair. What is not well understood are the particular cues that customers use when assessing their satisfaction with the interpersonal elements of services.

Finally, the globalization of marketing has brought to the forefront the importance of nonverbal cues and the differences in their meaning across cultures. Although verbal product messages often fail to translate well from one culture to another, nonverbal messages appear even more susceptible to misinterpretation when taken across cultural or even subcultural boundaries. Thus, firms that wish to engage in international marketing will be forced to confront the issue of nonverbal communication directly. Understanding and cataloging cultural variations in nonverbal communication is an important task for the future.

CONCLUSION

It appears clear that the role of nonverbal communication is an important element in the behavior of consumers. There is even some evidence to suggest that it may be more important than verbal communication. Certainly it is not less important. Unfortunately, the study of nonverbal communication presents methodological problems that are not found in the study of verbal communications. These difficulties may be one reason for the relatively little research on nonverbal communication in marketing. Research is more difficult and understanding of the phenomenon

appears to come in smaller pieces. Yet, a firm foundation for future research has already been established. Theories and methods exist to guide future work. It remains for marketing professionals to apply these theories and methods to the systematic study of marketing-related phenomena.

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The authors gratefully acknowledge the support of the School of Business Administration of the University of Southern California and Young and Rubicam, New York.

Requests for reprints should be addressed to David W. Stewart, Department of Marketing, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California 90089.

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