

Elements of Creativity:

A Study of the Dimensions that Make for an Effective Advertisement

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Abstract

The advertising world is made up of many facets, such as creativity, networking, and thought leadership. At the center of these processes lies advertising creativity, a term used to describe an ad or element of an ad that is particularly novel and noteworthy. The contents of this thesis address the challenges academics and professionals have with establishing criteria to measure creativity, while considering the value of evaluating creative ability through a variety of processes. To do this, three case studies of award-winning advertisements were conducted in order to develop a profile of an effective ad. Results indicate that successfully creative ads contain elements of cognitive dissonance, relevancy, and clear communication. These techniques can maximize an advertisement's creative potential in the marketplace. By implementing these characteristics, advertisers have the potential to gauge the effectiveness of an ad prior to publication and optimize the results of their campaign.

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Introduction

Creativity is one of humanity's most subjectively judged actions. In his lecture, "Scientific Creativity," Eyring (1959) described the genesis of creative thinking as the moment when a person "comes up against glaring inconsistencies which bring his conceptual worldview into question" (p.1). As a response to these inconsistencies, people attempt to resolve two opposing ideas through an act of creative contemplation. Whether or not this results in a tangible product or solution, the person has exercised his or her mind's creative functions.

In the professional world, one of the applications of this creative thinking is advertising. By developing intriguing ways to present a brand's message through copy and graphics, advertisers tell a visual story. For the purpose of this paper, the term "advertiser" refers to the role of a creative director. This position involves overseeing every aspect of the campaign and ensuring that the client's vision is being executed to his or her satisfaction (Duncan, 2016). They touch every point in the creative process and provide guidance to their team.

An advertiser is trying to capture the target audience's attention amongst the millions of other messages they are exposed to every day. Whatever the campaign message or strategy may be, the ultimate mission remains the same: increase sales. This is done by compelling the viewer of the ad to take an action. Although an ad can be considered successful by the amount of sales it generates, the challenge comes when

trying to evaluate whether or not the ad can be categorized as creative in the eyes of the viewer.

Attempting to establish measurement criteria for works of art and other creative processes seems counterintuitive. The whole point of creativity is that it manifests itself in a different manner each time it is practiced. However, there must be some criteria for measuring the creative effectiveness of an ad, as a primary part of the marketing process is defining clear and measurable goals for the campaign. What constitutes the intersection of a truly creative ad and an effective ad, and what differentiations can be made between the two?

Without some sort of methodology in approaching the evaluation of creativity, the advertising community loses an opportunity to improve its designs and techniques. Studying what creative processes evoke the desired response from a viewer is a powerful tool in marketing. While everyone's opinion of art and beauty is different, there are some characteristics that denote an ad that is particularly creative, and recognizing these factors is important when formulating a successful ad campaign. In order to determine these factors and measure the response of consumers, an analysis must be done of what it means to be creative in the first place.

Defining Creativity

In order to evaluate what makes something creative, there must first be a clearly defined meaning of the term "creativity." From a broad perspective, any original idea can be called creative simply because it was not in existence prior to its inception. If all conclusions were based on this definition alone, then there would be no standards of what constitutes a valuable new idea.

One definition labeled creativity as divergent thinking (Reinartz, 2013).

According to this definition, when we are critically thinking and drawing our own conclusions we are exercising our creativity. Bringing a new perspective to the table and looking for alternate options to a common viewpoint can be valuable when everyone is coming to the same conclusion.

This idea is reined in slightly by an alternate definition given by creativity researchers, stating that creativity is “the result of the combined effects of multiple factors including personal attributes, social influences, environmental constraints and cultural values” (Candy, 2007, p.1). This adds in the importance of the holistic feature creativity possesses. Any combination of external and internal factors can inspire someone at any time, and it is the product of that combination that results in the unique expression of each individual’s viewpoint.

This definition also takes into account the multitude of influences that affect the inception of something creative. It is not solely dependent on the inner workings of some great creative genius to develop the next greatest work of art, but rather a mixture of talent, environment, passion, and time. When all of these influences come together in just the right way, a great work of creativity can take place.

Another characteristic of creativity is the intentionality behind the act of creating. “Chance alone is not creative,” and there must be some level of effort that is expelled in the development of the product (Sinott, 1959, p. 26). Sitting down with a purpose in mind, no matter how vague, is key in this viewpoint of creativity. The careful combination of knowing the target audience while introducing a new idea takes talent, not just happenstance. To sum it up, creativity is using an original idea to introduce a new

perspective on a chosen item or topic with a purpose in mind. Keeping these definitions in mind, we will begin to look at the creative process and its origins.

Creativity in Regards to Advertising

While creativity is certainly present in nearly all aspects of society, this paper will be focused on its place in the advertising world. As Reid states, “Creativity is at once the least scientific aspect of advertising and the most important” (1998, p.1). Strategic planning and market analysis are valuable, but without something that makes an ad unique, their impact is severely limited. There may be tried and true formulaic methods of setting up the graphic components of an ad or techniques that make the copy pop off the page. But when it comes down to truly grabbing the audience’s attention, a creative method of communicating is what will really make them remember the message.

What separates advertising from art is its persuasive nature. Advertising creativity requires us to “think differently, be imaginative, yet to be artistic and remain on strategy while employing novel approaches and ideas” (Sasser, 2012, p.191). A creative and novel advertisement should, in turn, be one that is effective at introducing a brand or reassuring its viewers that the company being advertised is worthy of their time and money. This is communicated through the use of both the visual and literary components of the ad (in other words, the combination of graphics and copy).

The financial success of an advertisement can be measured by the number of new customers created and purchases made, but long-lasting change is made when someone sees an ad and thinks, “Wow, that’s clever. And that must mean this company is clever too.” Building strong positive feelings toward a brand is what separates a consumer who

can be swayed by other factors, such as price and convenience, from those who are truly loyal to the brand.

This leads to the viewer of the ad actually responding to the call of action in an advertisement. Brand advocacy is the ultimate goal of marketing, and arises when someone actively talks about and promotes a brand to his or her friends because they have bought into the message and mission of a company (Mahoney, 2017). Strategic ads that are also creative give consumers a reason to remember the message and share it with their peers. Once someone becomes a loyal customer, keeping them dedicated to the brand is the best way to remain successful.

A successful ad is one that achieves the ultimate goal of the company, whether that be positive brand feelings, awareness, or increased purchases. One definition states that advertising creativity is “an execution that surprises and provides insight to its intended audience, with the goal of supporting an intended campaign strategy” (West, 2013, p. 213). When it comes down to measuring the success of advertising creativity, the ad succeeds by presenting the message in an unconventional way and correctly portraying that message in a way that resonates with the consumer.

A truly effective advertiser is one who is “both an artist and concurrently realistic, market-oriented, and commercially driven” (West, 2013, p. 221). It is the marriage of both of these qualities that takes art and makes it relevant to consumers. Advertising is art with a goal, whether that be an uptick in sales, a change in opinion, or simply increased awareness.

Tools for Measuring Creativity

When it comes to evaluating creativity, there must be some objective guidelines in order to prevent an individual's bias. Two key factors in measuring creativity are an idea's sense of novelty and an idea's usefulness (Green, 2016). The initial novelty is what draws the consumer in to the message and captures his or her attention. But usefulness is what compels him or her to remember the message for an extended length of time and recall it later on. The methods explored below are some of the existing ways that professionals use to evaluate advertisements from a third-party point of view.

Monetary Results

The most tangible and unbiased method for measuring the success of an ad campaign is through the company's subsequent sales performance. The major flaw with this method is that an increase in sales does not necessarily equal creativity. The world's most basic, standard advertisement may result in an increase in sales, simply because the product advertised is one that people cannot live without. On the other hand, a very niche product may be advertised in an ingenious way, yet not produce many sales.

Every advertising campaign is going to have a different combination of desired outcomes. Some brands seek increased awareness, improved brand perception, or more followers on social media. However, every business's desire is to sell something in the end. Because of this, sales are an important factor in to the evaluation of every ad's success.

Sales performance is often determined by the positioning and budget level of an advertising campaign. So, in theory, a poorly crafted ad that is well-placed could easily yield a higher return-on-investment than a beautiful ad that is not as strategically placed.

Consumers generally perceive highly advertised brands as higher quality brands, so we cannot directly relate the monetary performance of a brand to the creativity of an advertisement (Buil, 2013). This increase in sales performance and positive perceptions could be related to the level of exposure they received rather than the quality of the ad itself.

The challenge with using sales as a primary indicator of an ad's success is that this form of evaluation lacks insight into the details of the advertisement's performance and gives only a small picture of its success. While this is an important factor to take into account when analyzing the measure of effectiveness, more weight should be placed on disaggregate measures that make up a more holistic evaluation, such as brand preference and emotional reactions.

An important takeaway when considering monetary results is that perceived advertising spend actually can have a minor effect on consumer's perceptions (Buil, 2013). Using creative advertising strategies should lead to positive perceptions of the brand, so if negative feedback is occurring, the ad is not effectively creative. While monetary results are important, they are not the only aspect that should be considered when evaluating creativity.

Tests

Similar to something like the Bechdel Test in literature, there are methods of evaluation that have set defined criteria for creative thinking in advertising. One of these is adapted from the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT), which evaluates creativity in the world of business and education (Sternberg, 2006). It scored participants on their responses through four scales:

- Fluency- the total number of interpretable and meaningful ideas generated in response to the stimulus
- Flexibility- the number of different categories of responses
- Originality- the uniqueness of the responses
- Elaboration- the amount of detail provided in the responses

The Torrance Test continues to be one of the most widely used forms of measuring creativity and has brought a great deal of attention to creative fields since its creation in 1974.

This test was then adapted by Werner Reinartz and Peter Saffert in the 2000s to more specifically measure advertising creativity. Based on the factors of originality, flexibility, elaboration, and synthesis and artistic value, advertising campaigns were rated on a scale from 1-7 and then considerations were made for budget and sales effectiveness (Reinartz & Saffert, 2013). They found that the money invested in an ad that was more highly ranked according to their criteria was nearly double in comparison to the money invested in a noncreative campaign.

These kinds of tests can be used to estimate the impact of particular choices made during the creative process. This does not help actually come up with the initial creative ideas, but can give a good prediction of which creative option is best to pursue. For example, Reinartz and Saffert (2013) found that originality was the factor most prevalent in successful ads, but it was only in the combination of other creative dimensions that this success was visible. Using a method like this can be an effective preliminary tool in deciding the potential strength of a campaign and what, if any, elements should be added or reworked.

Competitions

A very public method for evaluating the effectiveness of an ad is through the results of an advertising competition. Awards like the Cannes Lion, ADDYs, and EFFIEs recognize advertisers on the performance of their campaigns based on different criteria, such as effectiveness, originality, innovativeness, and overall idea. Winning one of these helps establish credibility within the advertising community and provides an opportunity for agencies to showcase their best work.

Understanding the factors that go into an award-winning campaign can be helpful in determining what to focus on in future ads. Each award show's judging criteria covers a wide spectrum, but for the purposes of this paper, the CLIO Awards will be used as a baseline for advertising award evaluation.

Case Study: CLIO Awards

The CLIO Awards is an annual award series founded in 1959 that recognizes creative excellence in the field of advertising (About CLIO). It is described as the "world's most recognized international awards competition for advertising, design, digital, and communications" (Tuttle, 2014). According to its website, judging criteria are based on creativity and originality. After a preliminary round of judging to narrow down the submissions, there is a final round that determines which award is given to each piece. Some examples of the questions the judges are asked to think over while evaluating the pieces are:

- Is this work creative? Original? Inspiring?
- Is this work brave? Bold? Innovative? (About CLIO)

In order to get a better picture of the dimensions that make for a creative ad, the past three years of CLIO Awards will be analyzed to determine what consistent factors, if any, are found amongst the three. These three print ad campaigns won the CLIO Grand award, meaning they were the top award winner in their category that year.

Burger King (2017)

Image located at: <https://bit.ly/2wLw44y>

This ad, designed by the company DAVID, depicts a Burger King that has erupted into flames. Firefighters are still on the scene and the fire is clearly going strong, but at first it is not clear whether this is a real picture or an edited one. There is minimal copy, which allows viewers to draw their own conclusions based on the image in front of them, rather than explaining exactly what is happening.

The headline reads, “Flame-Grilled Since 1954,” which leads the viewer to believe that the reason the Burger King has gone up in smoke is because the company cooks their burgers over an open flame, rather than on a standard grill like its competitors (Day, 2003). In the bottom left corner, a date and location are listed, verifying that this was in fact a real fire. The images are not digitally edited, but real photos of Burger Kings that burnt down because of the cooking methods used.

This campaign gave Burger King the chance to embrace a negative situation and present it in the most positive light possible. They took an unfortunate incident and used it to promote the importance they place on the quality of their food. In this age of consumers who seek transparency, sharing a company’s worst moments allow them to truly connect with their audiences through an open dialogue (Nudd, 2017). The

authenticity of the campaign and tongue-in-cheek sense of humor can be a way of inviting the audience to take a closer look at the culture of the company.

Getty Images (2016)

Image located at <https://bit.ly/2KousQ6>

Getty Images used this print ad to demonstrate the extensive collection of photos it holds, showing that “with 80 million high-quality images, you’ll certainly find what you need” (Endless Possibilities, 2016, p.1). It took photos from its database and used them to recreate pictures of recognizable figures, such as the Pope and Gandhi. This campaign took the primary goal of the company (providing a database of pictures to its consumers) and gave a compelling practical application of its services.

Getty’s goal was to showcase the extensive potential it holds for its consumers by using its own image service to construct portraits of famous people from a variety of pictures. As a result, there was a 34 percent increase in users accessing the Getty Images Site and a 20 percent increase in image sales (Endless Possibilities, 2016, p.1). Similar to the Burger King ad, what makes this advertisement effective is the fact that it takes a second glance to fully understand what makes it unique.

28 Too Many (2015)

Image located at <https://bit.ly/2KZ4Ni5>

28 Too Many is a British company founded with the goal of ending female genital mutilation in Africa and other places where the practice still continues (It Happens Here, 2015). This ad uses images of six European flags that were mutilated and then stitched back together to illustrate that this form of brutality is still prevalent in Europe.

Compared to the two previous ads, this clearly contains a much heavier emotional component. It also has simple text that gets to the point and must be read in order to understand the full message of the ad. This engages the audience with both the visual and textual components of the piece.

Common Factors

The purpose of these case studies was to look at any apparent similarities to determine what characteristics make for a successful and creative advertisement. Three important elements were shown to be consistently present in these award-winning ads.

Dissonance. One quality that makes all these ads stand out is the unexpected shock value when the viewer realizes the true message or composition of the ad. At first glance, the piece seems normal and it is only upon taking a closer look they realize something is different. This brings into consideration the impact of dissonance.

Dissonance is the “mental discomfort arising from conflicting beliefs or attitudes held simultaneously” (Graham, 1999, p.148). When the copy of the ad reveals something about the image that gives it a meaning that is inconsistent with the viewer’s initial interpretation, they experience dissonance. This can lead to a more engaging viewing experience as they attempt to reconcile the two conflicting ideas.

Being faced with an idea that is inconsistent results in the viewer actively engaging their mind to reduce this dissonant tension (Garnett, 2009, p. 94). Embracing the uneasiness that is felt when experiencing cognitive dissonance and using that to develop a new solution is a practice that creative people should become comfortable with. Creating an advertisement that causes the viewer to experience this phenomenon engages them with the content in an unusual way.

Relevancy. As mentioned previously, just because something is creative, it does not make it effective advertising. This form of creativity is tied to “creative strategy formation and involves intimate knowledge of the target segment” (Sasser, 2012, p.195). The appropriateness of an ad concept in relation to its purpose is key in determining that an ad is creative.

Staying on top of trends and pop culture is also important when developing an effective ad, as certain comments or phrases may have different meanings depending on the time period. Remaining up to date while still creating timeless content is an important balance to find in developing advertisement material. This allows current viewers to see the ad as relevant while not being so trendy that it will alienate future viewers.

Clear Communication. Another common component to successful ads is succinct and engaging copy. Each of the ads above feature 20 words or less, demonstrating the power of efficient text. Although there are circumstances where a larger portion of text is necessary, such as in health care advertising, words should be used with purpose regardless. In the winning ads the text gives the reader just enough information to then interpret what is taking place in the visual component of the advertisement. Text and visuals should complement each other so that each contribute to the narrative of the ad without becoming redundant.

Factors Influencing the Creative Process

There are many angles from which to approach the task of creating a campaign. A classic planning method like the traditional SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis can be used and target market research conducted to

hone in on the advertiser's desired audience. But there are many other elements that can influence the approach taken by an advertiser.

Creativity & Risk Theory of Output

Creating something great often comes at the cost of failing many times before reaching the final success. Allowing a business team to try new ideas that are potentially risky may lead to an even bigger payoff than simply playing by the rules. Risk occurs when there is an uncertainty as to whether or not potentially significant or disappointing outcomes will be realized (West, 2012). In advertising, a campaign may successfully relate to the target audience, or potentially alienate a group that does not approve of the path taken.

The penchant for taking risks and persevering is a common characteristic of innovative individuals. Albert Einstein's peculiar lifestyle is an example of the benefits of taking risks. Although he could not swim, one of his favorite pastimes was sailing. His peers recalled having to repeatedly rescue him if the water was rough, but he never gave up (Kotler, 2012). This translated into his work life, as he persevered in his contributions to math and science.

"We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them," says Einstein (Sasser, 2012, p. 191). And as someone who ended up solving many mathematical problems, Einstein is a great example of this. Divergent thinking is a risk because suggesting something that may not sit well with others or seems impossible can affect the way you are viewed in society. However, taking these risks can be what is necessary to make progress, as shown by Einstein's many scientific achievements.

Creative people face failure often. They are not afraid of trying again and again, thus not limiting their potential to grow. This kind of lifestyle often flows into and between their creative process and day-to-day activities. People who are more likely to step out of their comfort zone in real life situations are also more likely to explore ideas that others would call crazy.

In *Einstein at the Beach*, Kotler (2016) explains that what really sets a creative person apart is the *volume* of ideas they are able to produce and the quick turn-around rate at which they can produce one new idea after the other. These people are described as quick on their feet and open to a challenge. When faced with a problem, their first reaction is typically to seek out the best solution amongst a myriad of options they have already considered.

Considering the psychology of failure, people also get used to loss more quickly than they do gains (West, 2012). This is one of the reasons why people who play the lottery or gamble continue to play even when they do not win. They have already lost so much that the amount they are paying now seems trivial in comparison to the amount they could potentially gain. While gambling may be a negative example, taking a gamble in the creative world is often needed to reach a truly great idea.

There is inherent risk in suggesting and advocating for an idea that could fail and impact the lives of others monetarily. Creativity “requires making public those bets first placed by imagination” (Kotler, 2012, p.2). But this risk is necessary, and the more risks we take the more our brains are being trained to find and create new solutions. Whether or not these ideas always end up with successful results, the path to creating something new often requires taking a risk.

Focus Groups

The feedback from a focus group can significantly influence the final form of an ad campaign. A focus group can be defined as “a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher” (Morgan, 1996, p.1). Before releasing the work to the general public, it is valuable to get fresh feedback from someone who is not emotionally invested in the project. Knowing how a selection of members from the advertiser’s target audience will react to an ad gives a clearer picture of the effectiveness of the campaign.

As they relate to creativity, focus groups can be one of the critical moments in the creative process where the advertiser may have to change something about the ad that they feel strongly about in order for it to be more fitting for the target audience. This is where the advertisers turn their piece over to an outside audience and get a more diverse opinion of their work. It can be a delicate balance between listening to the select sample of people chosen for the focus group and remaining true to the original intent and heart of a campaign.

Some challenges when working with focus groups are the tendencies for people to attempt to appease the moderator and participate in groupthink. Groupthink is when a group makes decisions based on the pressures of efficiency, appeasement, and common moral judgment. It is driven by an overwhelming desire for unanimity that overrides their motivation to seek other courses of action (Shirey, 2012). This can be seen when everyone in a group begins to turn over to one side without much discussion, or when comments like “I don’t really care” or “It doesn’t matter to me” are expressed. When

participants try to give the response they believe the moderator is seeking, they are missing a valuable opportunity to share their perspective.

Knowing ahead of time that feedback from a focus group may present these biases is important in the way their suggestions should be considered. While they can give a great projection of how the message will be received, it is often not necessary to change an entire campaign based on one person's opinion. Focus group comments are primarily great jumping-off points for conversations within the media team.

Conditions for Creativity

Creativity is not something that can be forced to manifest itself instantaneously. A variety of factors come into play during the creative process, each possessing a large influence on the productivity of an artist. J. K. Rowling and Jerry Seinfeld write every day, a common practice among authors (and comedians) who recognize that sheer repetition allows a large volume of work to be collected which is likely to produce something of value. Different individuals often require different kinds of settings to produce their work effectively and if these conditions are not met it may hinder their creative output.

Although those are specific examples, there are a few universal conditions that must be met in order to form a sound environment for creativity. Of these the primary two are psychological safety and psychological freedom (Rogers, 1959). The perception of safety and absence of evaluation at the inception of the creative idea removes the fear of judgment.

Barriers to this creative process and divergent thinking are fear of failure and fear of rejection. Facing these emotions, an individual is not free to safely explore their ideas

because their own worries are holding them back. A test of creative ability is how long someone can continue to wrestle with an idea and strive to reach a conclusion, even amidst ambiguity (Miller, 2015). Resilience in the face of creative block demonstrates the persistence of the individual.

Perceived psychological safety is important in order to give people the initial confidence to share their ideas. This is why having individual brainstorming sessions can be so important, as one study found that individuals are more likely to generate a higher number of original ideas when they do not interact with one another (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2015). This is not to say that group brainstorming is not effective in most cases, only that the implied social pressure to come up with the best and most accepted idea can stifle some from sharing their truly unique thoughts.

Psychological freedom is best described as the being given the ability to do whatever needs to be done to achieve the end goal. This “complete freedom of symbolic expression” represents an acknowledgement that there is no one right way to develop the answer and that the individual creating can take full responsibility for their actions (Rogers, 1959, p.79). Regardless of time constraints and deadlines, giving someone the ability to explore their idea within those parameters is the best case scenario.

Once these conditions are met, they have the opportunity to freely explore their ideas without fear of judgment. This gives them the freedom to try things and fail, learning from their mistakes every time, rather than being encouraged not to make them. Sometimes it is not possible to offer these conditions, especially under time constraints. But in an ideal world, every advertiser would be able to construct their plans in this kind of workspace.

Profile of an Effective Advertiser

If the ideal advertiser were to exist, what would that person look like? Unique experiences are what differentiate people from one another, so it is clear that no individual can be deemed a “perfect advertiser.” However, there are environmental factors and personality traits that lend themselves to developing the creative advertising individual.

The idea of uniqueness is a constant pattern throughout the discussion of creativity. This is because a creative person contributes something that is not common knowledge or able to be thought of by just anyone. As Tellis (2004) explains, “it arises from “illogical, divergent, or lateral thinking” that takes a traditional perspective and flips it on its head (p.6). Introducing an idea that will make the brand stand out from the competitors is the entire goal of purposeful advertising.

The 3Ps Theory of Advertising (Person, Place, and Processes) states that the combination of traits that make for a creative person are a passion for what they are doing paired with expertise in the field (Sasser, 2012). There are myriad ways that people have attempted to classify creative individuals, including IQ tests, charts, and biological predispositions. However, there are some observable characteristics that lend themselves to an effective advertising professional, and that is what we will be focusing on.

Cultivating Creativity

What is it that sets a creative person apart? A study from Stanford that began in 1921 examined the connection intelligence has with being successful and creative. By analyzing the long-term behavior patterns of the 1,000 children with the highest IQs in California, Lewis Terman developed the Threshold Theory of Creativity (Jolly, 2008).

This theory states that above a certain level, intelligence has no impact on creativity. So once an individual meets this minimum intelligence level, their creativity is dependent on the amount of work they put in and skills they take the time to hone.

A study from Michigan State University also found that regularly participating in arts and crafts as a child may lead to an increase in patents, innovations, and the chances of starting a business as an adult (Bergland, 2013). People who own businesses or patents typically received up to eight times more exposure to the arts as children than the general public. Exposure to the arts at a young age often leads to an individual who is more likely to express their creative processes in a tangible way.

Social scientist Howard Gardner suggested several principles in his Five Minds Theory that illustrate the habits of a creative mind, which can be used in the process of determining when creative thinking is taking place (Miller, 2015). The creating mind:

- Poses unfamiliar questions
- Arrives at unexpected answers
- Considers multiple angles
- Devises ingenious solutions
- Shifts frameworks
- Takes interpretive risks

Having the foreknowledge that this is what a typical creative person does may allow for these traits to be more recognizable in individuals. In school we are taught to seek after the right answer, and although that is definitely important, we may benefit from being encouraged to practice the entire creative process, rather than simply finding a quick solution.

Practicing Creativity

The idea of teaching creativity can seem counter-intuitive. What makes creativity effective is the unique perspective each individual has the opportunity to express. And while it is true that there is no sure-fire way to directly teach someone to be creative, there are ways to encourage and develop someone's creative potential.

Research supports that certain routines encourage creativity. In his experiments, Epstein concluded that practicing four key skill areas led to the production of more novel ideas. These areas are capturing or recording ideas at the moment of inception, seeking challenging tasks, broadening the collection of knowledge on the topic, and being surrounded with interesting things (Novotney, 2016). Through comparing a set of employees results at a creativity training seminar before practicing these tasks to their performance after working on these tasks for eight months, Epstein saw an increase in idea creation by 55 percent. He also found that supplementing these with rest and a healthy lifestyle allowed for the creation of more solutions and ideas.

In a study conducted at a Yale summer program, students were given a pretest that measured their ability in the areas of analytical thinking, creative thinking, and practical thinking, and then randomly placed in different seminars that focused on the areas listed above with the addition of memory (Sternberg, 2006). Later these students were given a post-test that tested all of the abilities again.

The students who were in a seminar that matched their strength outperformed the students who were in a random seminar. When considering creative students, the encouragement of creative thinking that provides an outlet for them to explore their ideas can aid them in processing other types of information as well. This is important, because

if creative students are not given the opportunity to practice their strengths in a structured school setting, they are missing out on a place where they could be honing their craft and preparing for the professional world.

Schools have the ability to contribute to this practice by facilitating activities that involve creative habits of mind. Higher-order thinking and problem-solving exercise the brain and are helpful in encouraging students to think for themselves. By strengthening their desire to learn and discover, teachers can set up their students to be more comfortable with trying new things and tackling complex problems.

Resolving Challenges in Measuring Creativity

For the purposes of this paper, the issue of resolving challenges in the measurement of creativity will be specifically looked at within the realm of advertising. This is because “the creation of art and conduct of business have very different work processes and very different criteria for judging value of work outcomes” (Wright-Asak, 2012, p. 421). Although there is plenty of room for overlap, the methods for evaluating creativity in the business realm are more direct than in the art community.

One of the main challenges in evaluating creativity is the lack of information and research about it in comparison to other topics. According to one research study, in a search of academic publications there were only 850 articles on marketing creativity, while there were 89,500 articles on the topic of marketing analysis (Reinartz, 2013). Looking for ways to categorize and measure creativity without a lot of practical application to build from can be difficult.

Because of this, recent creative research is introducing new understandings of what to consider when evaluating these processes. As described earlier, creativity is an

expression of divergent thinking. However, it is becoming more apparent that convergent thinking is also needed in the creative process.

Convergent thinking is the ability to determine the correct and reasonable answer to situations not requiring a significant amount of creativity (Cropley, 2008). When used in terms of metacognition, or an individual being self-aware of their thought processes, artists are able to look at the practicality of what they are creating. In regards to advertising, this is very helpful in the tangible creation of an ad, as “without such control, novelty that is generated may be restricted to pseudo-creativity or quasi-creativity” (Cropley, 2008, p. 358). Without a clear goal in mind, an artist could be working on a piece for their entire life and never decide that it is complete.

In light of this, what are some ways we can more accurately pinpoint and recognize creativity in the present?

Impact

Impact is also an important factor to consider when evaluating creativity. This can be determined by looking at the amount of new material or change in thought an individual contributes to the field. What are the creative contributions an individual has the opportunity to make in this situation? How effectively did they achieve some sort of movement in the right direction?

One author states that “a creative contribution represents an attempt to propel a field from wherever it is to wherever the creator believes the field should go” (Sternberg, 2006, p. 95). This determination of some sort of movement or propulsion relates to the element of planning that must come before a truly creative act. Tripping and falling into some paint that then spills onto a canvas is not creative—it is an accident.

Making the most of the situation shows that an individual can think beyond the basic constructs of productivity to stretch their resources to produce the best possible outcome. Being aware of what is going on opens the door for improving society through problem-solving. One study found that problem-finding scores were significantly related to creative performance (Mingxin, 2012). This is different from problem-solving, as problem-finding addresses the ability to even recognize that there is an issue in the first place.

Solution generation then arises when an individual is able to seek out and take advantages of the resources available to solve a problem. In advertising, this happens every time an advertiser comes up with a novel way to market a product. But true impact takes place when the ad is unique enough to stand out amongst all the other competitors and external noise.

Consumer Response

One person can attempt to evaluate and determine an advertisement's creativity and effectiveness on their own. However, it is the collective response of the public that judges whether or not an ad is truly achieving its goal. Seeing how the ad truly performs in the marketplace determines its effectiveness much more accurately than a committee's decision. Of course, this is looking at advertising creativity as something that is both inherently novel and practical.

Determining how much of an impact the advertisement had can be challenging because people buy products for different reasons, including previous satisfaction with a purchase, word-of-mouth recommendations, and the products' sales price (Tellis, 2004). There is no way to truly know what factor most encourages them to purchase something

without doing survey research. This factor also takes sales into consideration as a means of evaluating success. Positive consumer feedback should encourage an increase in sales performance as a result.

Conclusion

Creative expression comes from a variety of sources and takes shape in each individual differently. In the realm of advertising, creativity can be measured by the way the target audience responds to the campaign and whether or not the advertiser made a unique contribution to the marketplace. This also involves ensuring that the initial goal set by the company was achieved in a new and novel way.

Looking at the commonalities between successful ads, it is apparent that some use of dissonance, relevancy, and clear communication is effective in achieving the goal of the campaign. The purposeful combination of text and visuals, married with the elements explored above, is effective in engaging the viewer with the advertisement.

To study creativity is to know that each encounter will be different and that if it were completely explainable it would no longer have its magnetic appeal. By being aware of what characteristics and practices are typically recognizable in a creative individual, we can help foster and point out those traits in others.

Throughout this look at the factors that make up creativity and the methods that could aid in cultivating this ability in others, it is apparent that creativity is not a stagnant phenomenon. Creativity is so valuable because of the way it cannot be pinned down with well-constructed sentences and statistics. However, by looking at what elements make for a successful creative ad, creative directors can take these basic principles and adapt them to maximize the impact of their campaign.

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