

## The Role of Creative Thinking in Advertising Design

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### Abstract:

Advertising industry is growing as a result of economic development; it has dynamic changes, and these changes good in terms of technology advancement, medium and more methods to attract consumers, while consumers are becoming savvier about the products and services. The qualitative differentiation of products has become minimal, so that companies look after alternative methods to highlight their offer and to attract the attention of consumers. One of the solutions is the creative communication strategies to achieve differentiation through promotion. Creativity is to create something new, unique, extremely attractive and appealing to the consumers. Creativity in advertising is usually linked to originality, flexibility, elaboration, synthesis, and artistic value. The role of creativity in the advertising industry is to pursuit the sellout of products or services as well as empowering brand awareness, thus being considered a targeted applied creativity. A creative advertising can put the brands on the right course. Great advertising builds the brands and some advertising sells brands. Creativity makes advertisement popular among the consumers and motivates them to purchase specific products or services. Creative advertising allows companies to communicate a message to a large group of consumers faster than any traditional forms of communication, creative advertising will make a sense of urgency for the consumer, honest awareness and accurate that there are products, places, styles or sensibilities that cry out for attention or action.

The objectives of this paper are to find out the role of creativity in advertising design, also to improve the understanding of how advertisers can create distinctive effects through creative dimensions especially in today's media landscape. The major results are: nothing is more efficient to motivate consumers to purchase specific products or services than creative advertising, creative advertising is more memorable and longer lasting, originality, flexibility, elaboration, synthesis, and artistic value are effective dimensions to assessment advertising creativity, creative advertising builds strong relationship between the consumer and the companies.

### Keywords:

*Creativity*  
*Creative Thinking*  
*Creative Designers*  
*Dimensions of Creativity*  
*Torrance's Assessment*

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### 1- Introduction

Advertising industry is growing and expanding as a result of economic development in recent decades, it has experienced dynamic changes, and these changes have been good in terms of Technology advancement, Medium and more methods to attract consumers, while consumers are becoming savvier, with growing expectations about the products and services offered by companies. Through the context of global economy, qualitative differentiation of products has become minimal, so that companies look after alternative methods to highlight their offer and to attract the attention of consumers. One of the solutions adopted by more and more organizations to address this situation is to place an emphasis on creative communication strategies in order to achieve differentiation through promotion. Thus, the number of ads worldwide has increased exponentially in recent decades, one person being

exposed to hundreds or even thousands of promotional messages daily. (*Shapiro & Nielsen, 2013*)

A creative advertising can put the brands on the right course, but in a world filled with distractions and clutter companies must develop communications that capture consumer attention and interest. Great advertising builds the brands and some advertising sells brands. Creativity makes advertisement popular among the consumers and motivates them to purchase specific products or services. It is known fact that there should be creativity in advertising. This creativity is to create something new, unique, extremely attractive and appealing to the consumers. In fact, advertising itself is a creative process.

### 2- Objectives

The objectives of this paper are to find out the role of creativity in advertising design, also to improve

the understanding of how advertisers can create distinctive effects through creative dimensions especially in today's media landscape where advertisers find it even more challenging to break through the clutter of competing ads in order to shape consumers attitudes and intentions.

### 3- Statement of the Problem

As a result of excessive advertising clutter, consumers have developed protective mechanisms in the form of cognitive schemas that help to identify and to avoid the unwanted advertisements messages. (Maria Jurca, 2013)

Consequently, the effectiveness of traditional advertising has experienced a sharp decline in recent years. Thus, the creative advertisings have become increasingly attractive, as they are more effective in attracting attention and delivering the message to the target audience.

*The problem of this paper can be formulated in the following questions:*

- How does creative thinking affect in advertising design?
- What are the creativity dimensions in advertising design?
- What are the factors influencing creative advertising development process?

### 4- Hypotheses

- The use of creative thinking in advertising design can give brands the required thrust to explore new heights.
- Creative advertisings grab the target audiences' attention better than traditional advertising.

### 5- Methodology

This paper follows the descriptive method to describe the role of creative thinking in advertising design, and analytical method to analyze chosen examples of creative advertising campaign.

### 6- Theoretical Framework

#### Definition of Creativity:

"Creativity is seeing something new when you look at something old; it is all heart of civilization and is the driving force of revolution" David Ogilvy. The conceptions of creativity are constantly changing and have done so over the centuries, they depend on many varieties as for instance culture and context but many of the conceptions of creativity have been misleading and some are even believed to be common sense. (Sawyer, 2006, p. 18)

When looking up the word creativity in Longmans Dictionary of Contemporary English, the following is used to describe it: "Creativity is producing or using new and effective ideas, results

etc." (Longman dictionary of contemporary English 2000) Whereas the Danish dictionary "Nudansk Ordbog" has this definition on creativity: "Creativity is an ability to develop new ideas and implement them" (Becker-Christensen, 1999). So it seems as if there is a general attitude towards "creativity" containing something that is novel. Creativity is the ability to produce work that is novel, original and unexpected. But originality is not enough for a work to be creative. The work should be appropriate and useful. (El-Murad, J. & Douglas, W. 2004, 189). Creativity is defined also in most literature as problem solving, where solution to the problem involve insight and clarity. (El-Murad, J. & Douglas, W. 2004, 188)

Creativity comes mainly in order to solve a given problem. Media planners, market researchers, copywriters, and art directors are all looking for new idea (Moriarty, Mitchell & Wells 2006, 257). Therefore, creativity is a problem solving, a way of thinking of generating new ideas with the respect of originality, uniqueness and relevance. According to Handbook of creativity, which includes the studies of several researchers, most definitions of creativity contain these two components:

1. **Originality** (divergence, novelty, newness etc.).
2. **Appropriateness** (relevance, usefulness etc.).

These two components together are what creativity consists of, but it is important to realize that only one of them is not sufficient when labeling a product or idea creative. One simply cannot survive without the other. Other components have been related to creativity over the years as for instance high quality (Kaufman & Sternberg, 2007).

#### The Different Approaches to Creativity

Although the various researchers of creativity agree upon the basic definition of creativity which states that "creativity involves the creation of an original and useful product", there are many ways on how to study creativity. The following will give a brief overview of some of these approaches (El-Murad, J. & Douglas, W. 2004, 190)

- **The mystical approach:** Creativity is believed to be based on divine intervention meaning that the individual is inspired by external factors as a muse or a spiritual force.
- **The psychodynamic approach:** Creativity is a result of the conflict between the conscious and subconscious. Freud among others studied this approach.
- **The psychometric approach:** This approach study creativity among ordinary people and has made use of divergent-thinking tests in

order to do so.

- **The cognitive (experimental) approach:** This approach investigates the creative process, and one of the proposed models is the Geneplore model by Ward, Smith and Finke.
- **The socio-cultural (contextual) approach:** This approach believes that individual creativity needs to be understood together with culture, history and context because they are important variables and affect the individual.

### Advertising Creativity

A number of definitions found in the literatures are mentioned, of which the most comprehensive is the one belonging to Leo Burnett (1968) who considered advertising creativity as "the art of establishing new and meaningful relationships between previously unrelated things in a manner that is relevant, believable, and in good taste, but which somehow presents the product in a fresh new light" (*El-Murad, J. & Douglas, W. 2004, 188*)

Creativity as a tool is important in advertising, and brand cannot exist without creativity. Creativity is the core of branding and advertising. (*Allen, O'Guinn & Semenik 2006, 343*)

Advertising creativity is different from creativity in the arts because of its purpose. In advertising creativity, success is achieved firstly, when the advertising is noticed (attention) and secondly, when it has a specified effect on the audiences (intention) (*El-Murad, J. & Douglas, W. 2004, 190*)

*Relevance* is a must within creative advertising, and it contains elements that are meaningful, useful, or valuable to the audience. This can be achieved in two ways:

1. **Ad-to-audience relevance.** It refers situations where the ad contains execution elements that are meaningful to the audience.
2. **Brand-to-audience relevance.** It refers to situations where the advertised brand is relevant to potential buyers.

Creative Thinking in Advertising Design or "big idea" as it is called in advertising field has many definitions. But the most simple and comprehensible one is that creative thinking in advertising design is only there when there are originality, novelty and appropriateness.

Another point of view which seems to be very relevant to this subject is point of view. They have stated that creativity must have an impact, quality, style and relevance. To be useful as solutions to marketing problems, ideas must be new, unique, and relevant to product and to the target audience. In order to have impact creativity should embrace three qualifications: newness, uniqueness,

relevance. Thus, creativity is present only when an ad is new, unique and relevant. (*El-Murad, J. & Douglas, W. 2004, 189, 190*)

Creative thinking in advertising design is the ability to stretch beyond the ordinary, to be original, innovative, and flexible in one's thinking. Other aspects of creative thinking are: (*Landa Robin, 2011, Page: 68, 69*)

- > **Associative thinking** (recognizing commonalities, common attributes)
- > **Metaphorical thinking** (identifying similarities between seemingly unrelated things)
- > **Elaboration and modification** (working out details and being able to propose alterations)
- > **Imaginative thinking** (forming images in one's mind and imagining the unlikely)

### Characteristics of Creative Advertising Designers:

Certain characteristics are markers of creative advertising designers:

- > **Courage:** Fear quashes creative risk taking and supports playing it safe. Courage coupled with intellectual curiosity fuels creativity.
- > **Receptiveness:** Being open to different ways of thinking as well as constructive criticism allows embracing possibilities and new ideas.
- > **Flexibility:** Not only do an agile mind and flexible personality allow keeping up with the times, they allow bending with the path of a blossoming idea or let go of a path that is not fruitful.
- > **Being Sharp-eyed:** Paying attention to what see every day (shadows, juxtapositions, color combinations, textures, found compositions, peeling posters, etc.) allows you to see inherent creative possibilities in any given environment, to notice what others miss or do not think noteworthy.
- > **Seeking and Recognizing Connections:** Creative people are able to bring two related or unrelated things together to form a new combination; they arrange associative hierarchies in ways that allow them to make connections that might elude others.

### Assessment of Advertising Creativity:

- **Overview of Advertising Creativity Dimensions:**

The dimensions of advertising creativity were identified and described, of which **novelty** and **relevance** are the most important and, in fact, widely accepted in literature. In addition to novelty and relevance, two other dimensions can be identified in the literature: **humor**, and **well craftiness**. Novelty refers to how different an execution is compared to other ads in the same

category and is considered by some authors the basic criteria in determining the level of creativity. Through relevance, creativity adds value to the execution, transforming novelty into something meaningful for consumer, in the context of the ad. Regarding the well craftiness of an ad, there are several studies that included this aspect among the determinants of creativity; based on the importance of aesthetics in assessing creativity in the arts. As for humor, it can also be considered a determinant of creativity, showed that the sample of consumers used, also mentioned humor among other characteristics when asked to define advertising creativity. (Koslow, S., Sasser, S., & Riordan, E. 2003).

### Torrance's Assessment for Creative Thinking in Advertising Design:

Ellis Paul Torrance, an American psychologist, who developed the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT). Torrance determined five dimensions in Creativity Assessment:

- **Fluency**
- **Originality**
- **Elaboration**
- **Abstractness**
- **Resistance to premature closure**

**Fluency** refers to the number of relevant ideas proposed in response to a given question (such as "list as many uses as you can for a paper clip"), and **Originality** measures how uncommon or unique the responses are.

**Elaboration** refers to the amount of detail given in a response.

**Abstractness** measures the degree to which a slogan or a word moves beyond being a label for something concrete.

**Resistance to premature closure** measures the ability to consider a variety of factors when processing information.

In the early 2000s Torrance's measures were adapted for advertising by the Indiana University communications researcher Robert Smith and his colleagues. (Werner Reinartz & Peter Saffert, *Harvard Business Review*, Issue 2013).

They adjusted the definition of creativity to refer to: "The extent to which an ad contains brand or executional elements those are different, novel, unusual, original, unique, etc."

Their goal was to measure creativity using only those factors most relevant to an advertising context. They came up with five dimensions of advertising creativity. Briefly, we can measure creativeness of advertisements according to those dimensions: **Originality, Flexibility, Elaboration, Synthesis, and Artistic Value.**

#### 1- Originality

"An original ad comprises elements that are rare or surprising, or that move away from the obvious and commonplace. The focus is on the uniqueness of the ideas or features contained in the ad. An ad can diverge from norms or experiences by applying unique visual or verbal solutions, for instance. Many advertising campaigns are anything but original."

Three questions to help us to assess a range of originality:

- *Is the ad "out of the ordinary"?*
- *Does it depart from stereotypical thinking?*
- *Is it unique?*

#### 2- Flexibility

An ad scoring high on flexibility smoothly links the product to a range of different uses or ideas. Three questions to help us to assess a range of flexibility:

- *Does the ad contain ideas that move from one subject to another?*
- *Does it contain different ideas?*
- *Does it shift from one idea to another?*

#### 3- Elaboration

Many ads contain unexpected details or extend simple ideas so that they become more intricate and complicated. Three questions to help us to assess a range of elaboration.

- *Does the ad contain numerous details?*
- *Does it extend basic ideas and make them more intricate?*
- *Does it contain more details than expected?*

#### 4- Synthesis

An ad that is creative along this dimension blends normally unrelated objects or ideas. Three questions to help us to assess a range of synthesis:

- *Does the ad connect objects that are usually unrelated?*
- *Does it contain unusual connections?*
- *Does it bring unusual items together?*

#### 5- Artistic value

Ads with a high level of artistic creativity contain aesthetically appealing verbal, visual, or sound elements. Their production quality is high, their dialogue is clever, their color palette is original, or their music is memorable. As a result, consumers often view the ads as almost a piece of art rather than a blatant sales pitch. Three questions to help us to assess a range of artistic value:

1. Is the ad visually or verbally distinctive?
2. Does it make ideas come to life graphically or verbally?
3. Is it artistic in its production?

#### How Creativity Affects in Advertising:

Creativity should focus the attention of the

customer on the product and he must feel the urge to have that product for some benefit and to achieve this target the creative advertising needs to be intelligent, sharp, imaginative to the point and extremely catchy. It must motivate people to purchase advertisement products or services. The message and appeal made should be able to make a positive impact on the consumers. The creativity develops new useful ideas which further fulfill the desired requirement. This suggests that creative advertising should be able to create demand for the product when it is introduced for the first time. Some of the distinct creative ads impacted hard. The advertising strategies are changing but should not leave a question mark on the sustainability of creativity and also not to overlook consumer's intelligence.

### **The Creative Advertising Development Process**

Creative advertising development process is conducted through many meetings from discussion of the creative brief until ad evaluation. The process is characterized by a lot of debates, long discussions and arguments. (*Hackley 2010, 120*)

The main steps in advertising development process are: first, the creative brief that prepared by the creative designers to summarize the basic marketing and advertising strategy. It gives direction to the creative team as they search for a creative concept. The formats of creative briefs vary, but most combine the basic advertising strategy decisions: the problem to be solved, the objectives, the target market, the positioning strategy, the type of creative strategy, the selling premise, and suggestions about the ad's execution. Second step is message execution: Execution is the form in which the ad's message is presented. Therefore, creative teams will spend a lot of time to compare and test different options before to reach the final version. The execution details are the specific about how the message will look in its final form. At the end comes managing the global creative strategy when most of advertising agencies focus on tracking and evaluating ad effectiveness. Every advertising agency around the world follows the same process only management differs. However, it is difficult to explain for advertising agencies their own working process. Even though, good experience and high skill advertising professionals do not know how to explain their own work. (*Hackley 2010, 108*)

### **Outcomes of Advertising Creativity**

How the audience perceives the creative advertisement, the product advertised or the brand,

is one of the most researched issues regarding the processing of creative advertisements. General studies on the effects of advertising follow a hierarchy scale, where creative advertisements first attract the attention of the audience, then cognitive processes take place, leading in turn an emotional and attitudinal change (*Yang and Smith, 2009*). This scale of effects is a general expression of the hierarchy of effects models.

Creative advertising's positive effect has been observed by many studies on ad attitude and brand attitude, brand salience, brand trust, ad recall and purchase intention. Most of these studies explain the positive effects of creativity by using information processing theory. That means that creativity is explained in terms of cognitive processes, which lead to increased attention, greater motivation, arousal, affect.

These hierarchic processes are responsible for the attitude creation toward the advertisement and the brand. There are not many alternative theories on how creativity in advertising works. One exception comes from *Heath, Naim, and Bottomley's (2009)* study which suggests that creativity does not increase viewer's level of attention, but that the emotional stimuli in creative advertisement leads to increased arousal, which in turn leads to decreased attention and counter arguments, thus postponing the wear-out effect and prolonging the ad effectiveness.

### **7- Analytical Study:**

- The analytical study uses the updated version of Torrance's Assessment for Creative Thinking in Advertising Design (TTCT), which adapted by the Indiana University communications researcher Robert Smith and his colleagues.
  - The analytical study presents number of chosen advertising design examples applying the five dimensions of advertising creativity: **Originality, Flexibility, Elaboration, Synthesis, and Artistic Value.**
- 1. Originality Dimension:**
- Examples of creative advertisements that achieved originality:
  - **Talking Heads Video Chat Mobile Campaign:** Talking Heads is the name of the new advertising campaign for T-Mobile, which humanizes video chat. Video Chatting with T-Mobile is like having a conversation face to face anywhere you are. This campaign strongly achieved the originality dimension of advertising creativity as it comprises elements

and surprises the audiences with new, creative, and unique visuals.



Figure 1

**Flexibility Dimension:**

Examples of creative advertisements that achieved flexibility:

- **Faber Castell True Colors Campaign:** Faber Castell True Colors Campaign are given visual presence in a series of retouched photographs from Germany, featuring pencils melded with a fire truck, eggplant, dachshund and shark. This visual metaphor is to show that the purple, eggplant color of the pencil is very close to the color of the vegetable. Perhaps

even as bright and vibrant as the actual skin of the vegetable. Also the silver shark color of the pencil, the red fire truck color of the pencil and the brown dachshund color of the pencil are very close to the real elements. This campaign strongly achieved the flexibility dimension of advertising creativity as it produced a range of different uses of ideas, it moves smoothly from one idea to another, and it shifts from one idea to another.



Figure 2



Figure 3

## 2- Elaboration Dimension:

- Examples of creative advertisements that achieved elaboration:
- **Climate Change Awareness Campaign:** Climate change isn't inevitable. All over the world people have woken up to the threat, and are working to reduce the use of fossil fuels, stop rainforest destruction and get power from clean energy. Still much more needs to be done. This Campaign are given visual presence in a series of ads describe the negative effects of climate change on all creatures especially the animals. This campaign achieved the elaboration dimension as although it contains a lot of details it's very clear and understood, it used a basic idea and extend it without intricate.

## 3- Synthesis Dimension:

- Examples of creative advertisements that achieved synthesis:
- **Impossible Is Nothing Campaign:** A great brand or a company slogan lays out the complete brand philosophy in just one small phrase: it should explain what is the reason behind the very existence of a brand. It was not until 1974 that Adidas got associated with the slogan, "Impossible is Nothing" that is actually taken from a quote by Muhammad Ali. This campaign achieved the synthesis dimension of advertising creativity as it gave a visual presence connections to objects that are usually unrelated, it also bring up unusual items together in a creative design.



Figure 4

## 4- Artistic value Dimension:

- Examples of creative advertisements that achieved artistic value:
- **Curtis Tea New Flavor Campaign:** Fruits have very recognizable smells and tastes that are refreshing and satiating. Those advertisements for tea brand Curtis takes advantage of the sensation of smell and taste that can come with looking at a piece of fruit.

This campaign achieved the artistic value dimension of advertising creativity as it is in a high level of artistic creativity contain aesthetically appealing visual, also it visually represented the new flavor of the tea as cup or pot. It used a visual metaphor in a high level of images manipulations, also the nature colors of elements and the use of lightings and shades.



Figure 5

## 8- Results

- 1- The creative advertisements are more attractive than traditional advertisements, as they are more effective in attracting attention and delivering the message to the target audience.
- 2- Creativity of advertisements can be measured according to those five dimensions: Originality, Flexibility, Elaboration, Synthesis, and Artistic Value.
- 3- Creativity in advertising increases the brand value and can give brands the required thrust to explore new heights.
- 4- The creative thinking in advertising design develops new useful ideas which further fulfill the requirement from the entire campaign.

## 9- Discussion

Advertising creativity is crucial for any advertising campaign since it has an enormous impact on sales and on hiring and firing of advertising agencies. Creativity covers different interpretations and definitions. Generally, creativity is linked with art and therefore its frequent definition is linked to uniqueness, artistry, imagination or even unexpectedness. Creative advertising allows companies to communicate a message to a large group of consumers faster than any traditional forms of communication. It allows them to truly connect

with their consumers; it gives them the opportunity to develop an ongoing relationship between the consumer and a brand. At its best, creative advertising will make a sense of urgency for the consumer, honest awareness and accurate that there are products, places, styles or sensibilities that cry out for attention or action.

## 10- Conclusion

In the light of this paper, creative thinking in advertising design is usually linked to originality, flexibility, elaboration, synthesis, and artistic value. The creative thinking in advertising design plays a great role in each advertising campaign, as the creative advertisements can easily deliver the message; promote a product to the target audiences, empowering brand awareness, and it can put the brands on the right course.

The certain characteristics are markers of creative advertising designers are courage, receptiveness, flexibility, being sharp-eyed, seeking and recognizing connections.

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