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Creativity in Advertising and Promotion

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This chapter aims to make sense of creativity within the context of marketing management and marketing communications. Moreover, it specifically addresses the topics of advertising and promotion. In the first instance, it takes creativity to mean the 'big idea' in marketing management, then it tackles creativity in the production and translation of images and other creative materials used in advertising. These two interpretations of creativity make up what is referred to as the 'the creative platform' in advertising and promotion, often-times known as 'the creative', or simply as 'the creative treatment', especially amongst agents and practitioners designing, developing and producing creative marketing materials.

Why does creativity in advertising matter?

Advertising matters because, according to a recent report by Deloitte (2013), it fuels the UK economy. Annual advertising expenditures of £16 billion, Deloitte says, supports the creative industries and associated employment. For example, there are the TV and cinema screens as well as the pages of newspapers and magazines, and the space on billboards and in social media. Alongside which there is also the presence in web searches. Within the digital economy, advertising funds the majority of content and services, supporting online consumer research and boosting e-commerce. However, the impact, arguably, stretches across the economy, because it also enables markets to be more efficient. For instance, advertising is at the core of the cycle of competition, innovation and

businesses. An increase in advertising spend elevates competition, improving quality and pricing for consumers. Thus, Deloitte's evaluation of UK firms spending £16 billion on advertising has resulted in a figure of £100 billion being the contribution to GDP for 2011. Hence 'advertising does pay' (2013).

One of the essential points in how well advertising may or may not work, is the notion of creativity, which according to Smith and Yang (2004) is a key factor on how effective your advertising can be. The authors assert that creativity contributes to the above-effectiveness equation. As well as advertising paying, as outlined above, there are several other variables that are known to drive advertising effectiveness. For instance, we know how persuasive a selling message can be, along with the fact that the larger your market share is the more likely your advertising is going to perform. And we also know that the execution and delivery is important, for example, media choices, timing and resources. And so, the question is, what contribution does creativity make to the advertisement and does creative advertising matter?

Dahlen et al. (2008) carried out an experiment where they exposed over 1000 consumers to a variety of different creative treatments of the same advert. The most creative of these adverts were selected and agreed as best practice exemplars by an expert panel of advertising executives. Results showed that the consumers who had been exposed to these creative exemplars perceived the brand to be of a higher quality, the sender (firm) to be smarter and the proposition to be superior, and that the firm was much more likely to develop more interesting products in the future.

Therefore, creativity can be seen as a further driver of advertising effectiveness. It is a multiplier in its effect. Dahlen et al (2010: 319) quotes the American Association of National Advertisers as saying that the "selling power of a creative idea can exceed that of an ordinary idea by a multiple of 10". And they describe people's reactions to ads as a continuum from a "Ha!", to an 'Aha!' to an 'Ah!'.¹ This expression of evaluating creative advertising is summarised below as:

Table 8.1: Dahlen's Response Continuum

Ha!	Aha!	Ah!
That's original	Aha, so that's what it means	Ah, that's clever

Source: Dahlen et al (2010: 319); and see Lehnert et al (2014: 275)

1 See Kounios, J. and Beeman, M. (2009). The Aha! moment: the cognitive neuroscience of insight. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. 18 (4) 210-216. The authors underpin the science of the eureka moment which forms the basis of development of Dahlen's approach to evaluating creative advertising using a response continuum.

Defining a creative advertisement

Thus, an effective creative advert is defined as:

“A creative ad is perceived by its audience to be novel and different, and whose central message is interpreted meaningfully by, and connects with its audience.” Ang et al. (2007: 232).

In dictionary terms, to create something implies making something new by way of a form which requires imagination and skill. The ideal is that the onlooker responds to it positively. This is underpinned by two approaches to creativity: one is about newness and imagination and the second is about appropriateness and/or solving an issue.

■ Characteristics which determines advertising effectiveness

Two dimensions are noted: *divergence* (new, novel, unique) and *relevance* (important, of value and appropriate) as being the two main determinants of creativity in advertising (Smith & Yang, 2004). This is interpreted and summarised in Table 8.2:

Table 8.2: Determinants of advertising effectiveness

<p>Divergent - Ad contains 5 elements that have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Originality = novel, unique, surprising • Flexibility = able to switch perspectives/ viewpoints easily and quickly • Synthesis = able to integrate and blend easily with other ideas/platforms • Artistic Value = able to express richness in humour, colour, fantasy and artistic impressions, & aesthetic representations • Elaboration = able to extend above & beyond 	<p>Relevance - conveys meaningful info:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ad-to-consumer: stimulus elements of the advert which create a meaningful link, e.g. music, voice-over, touchstone or situation linking to Generation X for instance. • Brand-to-consumer: stimulus elements and/or useful information attained from the ad which creates & reinforces deeper meaningful links, e.g. Twiggy in M&S ads shows Baby Boomers how to wear the garment/what you would look like, or Apple's iPod showed audience how to dance and have fun with its new music technology.
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Thus far, advertising creativity is **different** and **meaningful**. An additional point, which adds some depth to the discussion, is noting that creative ads, along with being novel (divergent), and meaningful (conveying information relevant to the product) must also be able to **connect** with the audience. (Ang et al., 2007: 232; Lehnert et al., 2014: 275). In this context, the authors have added a sub-text to the point of relevance, as illustrated in Table 8.2. What they suggest is that connectedness goes beyond relevance as being meaningful. It does this