

**Considering a General Theory of Creativity in Advertising:  
The Case for a Socio-Cultural Model**

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**Abstract:**

While previous advertising and marketing literature has looked at specific elements of creativity in marketing communication, in reality creativity is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. By reviewing articles from other disciplines, this essay will examine creativity not from the perspective of individual process or potential but rather as an end product. From this viewpoint, a general theory of creativity will be established utilizing a socio-cultural model, one that requires interaction between three sub-systems: creator, domain, and field.

**Introduction**

Ever since Zinkham in the *Journal of Advertising* (1993) called on researchers to more fully explore creativity, there have been numerous articles published within the scholarly literature. However, within this work, there is little agreement on the application, or definition of the term. One researcher used role-based models (Hirschman, 1997); another looked at originality (El-Murad & West, 2004); others examined varying client and agency perspectives (Hogg & Scoggins, 2001; Koslow, Sasser & Riordan, 2003); while another group used divergence and relevance as key factors in discussing creativity (Smith & Yang, 2004).

In reviewing this body of work, a passage from the *Handbook of Creativity* (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999) seems appropriate. In the text, when the researchers Wehner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Magyari-Beck examined 100 dissertations on creativity, the authors noted that many scholars from varying fields (i.e. psychology, business, history) used different terms to describe the same basic phenomenon. This “parochial isolation,” as they called it, reminded the authors of the story of the blind men and the elephant: a tale where each blind man would touch a different part of the same animal and come up with a distorted image of the whole.

The elephant is like a snake, said one man holding the tail. While another pointing to the flanks would say, this animal is like a wall (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999, p.9).

This same distorted view can be applied to much of the recent literature mentioned earlier on creativity. While offering different perspectives on the phenomenon of creativity, the research rarely considers the whole. Creativity in marketing communication, as with other paid artistic endeavors, is complex and does not function in isolation (Sawyer, R., 2006). A painter produces a canvas but it is a gallery

owner who decides if the work should be exhibited. A screenwriter thinks he or she has a wonderful script but it is the studio executive who decides if it has merit; can make money at the box office. Creatives in advertising (copywriters, art directors, and creative directors) are no different. Their work relies on others; it must be reviewed and accepted by account executives, creative directors, and clients before an audience ever sees it.

In a functional sense, this end product produced by creative art directors and copywriters must be deemed acceptable; be considered “tenable or useful by a group” (Amabile, 1993, p. 38). To put the work in a business context, creativity in advertising “is the result of economic decisions made by individuals and groups regarding how much human and material capital and time they are willing to invest” (Rubenson and Runco, 1992, p. 381).

Based on this, creativity in advertising (be it web, print, television, radio, or collateral) is judged in a subjective manner. And this subjective determination is based on two important criteria: a cultural aspect that is a domain and a social factor, which is a field (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). Therefore, this essay will not address quantifying creative potential or personality. Rather, the focus here will be on: first, establishing the basis for a socio-cultural model; second, explaining how it applies to creativity in advertising; and third, exploring how this model fits within the current advertising and marketing literature.

With this focus, educators, students, and scholars will develop a better insight into how creativity in marketing communication works today; that this system approach is better at replicating the actual dynamics of advertising creativity, one that requires interaction between domain, field, and creator.

### **Previous Literature: A Historical Perspective of Creativity**

To begin a discussion of creativity, it helps to see how the meaning of the word has changed considerably over time. For the early Greeks and Romans, creativity was a term reserved for the divine. In the writings of Homer and Plato, creativity was used in describing loftier pursuits (e.g., poetry as being inspired by Muse), while the vocations of painting and sculptor were seen as skilled crafts (Weiner, 2000). The Latin definition of the verb create supports this interpretation, as to “inspire” and “breathe life into,” as a higher force breathing life into man (Sawyer, R., 2006, p. 12).

Latter, in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, creativity moved away from being just a religious expression to also include reproductions of natural settings and portraiture. During this period, creativity was considered an imitation or re-creation of man (Collingwood, 1958).

It was not until the late 1800s that the concept of originality was first linked to creativity, as in newness and truth of observation (Weiner, 2000). During this period, the idea of industrial design (architecture and engineering) was added to the realm of creativity joining the traditional arts of painting, sculpture, and dramatic theater (Weiner, 2000). At the same time, the Eastern view of creativity emphasized a state of higher individual fulfillment, or what Hindus called a state of spiritual expression (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999, p. 340).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some researchers began to suggest creativity was in fact a socially recognized achievement. Amabile in her seminal text *The Social Psychology of Creativity* (1983) was the first to formalize this approach. The author noted, after reviewing creativity testing of the 1950s and early 60s that determining a person's creative potential was largely subjective. In fact, this evaluation was really interpretive, requiring outside raters and independent observers who used their own individual criteria values and experience. This conclusion led to her consensual definition of creativity:

“A product or response is creative to the extent that appropriate observers independently agree it is creative. Appropriate observers are those familiar with the domain in which the product was created or the response articulated. Thus, creativity can be regarded as the quality of products or responses judged to be creative by appropriate observers, and it can also be regarded as the process by which something so judged is produced” (Amabile, 1996, p. 33).

Later in the same text, the author added a conceptual definition, one that is widely accepted among creativity researchers today (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Sternberg, 1999, Kaufman & Steinberg, 2006).

“Creativity is (a) both novel and appropriate, useful, correct or valuable response to the task at hand, and (b) the task is heuristic rather than algorithmic” (p. 35).

In the 1990s, the eminent researcher Csikszentmihalyi expanded on this idea of social judgment. He maintained that creativity was not solely of the individual but instead was the property of societies, culture, and historical periods (1999). In discussing his approach, Csikszentmihalyi created a socio-cultural model, a system where domain, field, and creator interact (*see figure 1 below*). In this framework, the person is the source of the innovation; the field (comprised of experts or intermediaries) passes judgment on the innovation; and the domain (which provides information and stimuli to the creator) houses the innovation.

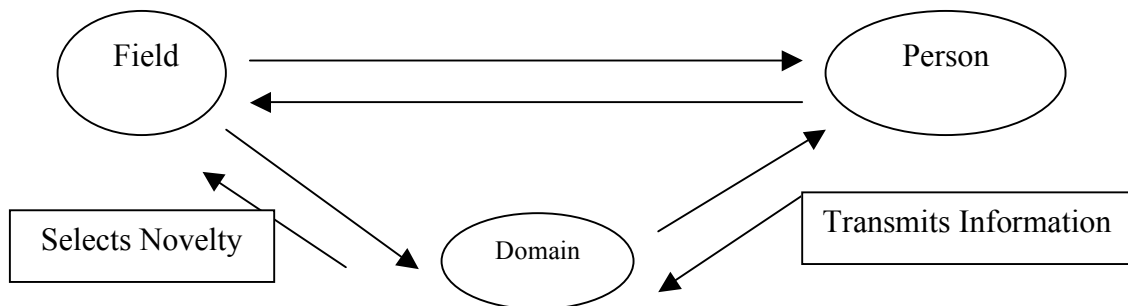


Figure 1. Adaptation of Csikszentmihalyi Model (1999, p. 315)

To help explain this concept further, Csikszentmihalyi used Darwin's approach to evolution as an analogy.

“Evolution occurs when an individual organism produces a variation which is selected by an environment and transmitted to the next generation. The variation that occurs on the individual level corresponds to the contribution that a person

makes to creativity; the selection is the contribution of the field, and the transmission is the contribution of the domain” (p. 316).

Based on this explanation, a domain is necessary because it represents the previous patterns, rules, conventions, language, and symbols of a particular discipline. Therefore, each domain is distinct because it requires different skills and specialized training. Areas such as arts, crafts, and sciences, along with professions such as advertising all have specific domains, their own body of disciplined knowledge (Gardner, 2001).

### **A system approach to creativity**

In 1913, the mathematician Poincaré stated, “To create consists of making new combinations of associative elements which are useful” (Greenberg, 2004). Thus, new creative ideas come from previous ones, ideas that have not been associated to one another, or are considered strangers to one another. Any new idea actually comes from a creator’s experience and understanding of what existed before, what had previously been known in a domain. Thus, if one is to make a new creative combination, there must be knowledge of what has gone before it. Thus, in order for something “new” to come into a domain, it must refer to something from the past, the “old.”

To illustrate this point, let us examine two creative forms: music and art. Western music shares a common language with a 12-note scale. So, a Rock song of today can share a chord structure to the past with Schubert or Bach. As another example, one could find a correlation between the found objects of the 20s Dada movement to the 60s Andy Warhol’s soup can (White, 2006). While these links help to illustrate how the new has a connection to the old, they also help illustrate how a person today must be fluent in the history, language, and tools of the past; that this specific knowledge is essential to creating in a domain — whether you are a molecular scientist, or a new advertising student (Purto, 2004).

But there is another important step to consider for creative work. Before the creative end product can be seen in a domain, a field (a social organization that serves as intermediaries) must review it and recognize its worth. This group must make a determination if the creative end product is appropriate and novel. These intermediaries are made up of individuals who practice or support the domain. For some fields, this may mean a few hundred representatives (scholars who study Irish oral traditions), or for others a hundred thousand (advertising). Recognition by these members is based on their individual judgment. And, this subjective view is influenced by personal experience, training, biases, values, and idiosyncratic preferences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999, p. 314). Without the approval of these members of a field, the work is not seen, distributed to the domain. This acceptance by a field becomes the truth test of creativity. In the end, creativity cannot be considered useful, valuable, and novel if these intermediaries do not recognize its value. The creator alone is not the sole determinant; it is the gatekeeper who decides. As an example, a comparison can be made to a submission to this scholarly journal: an author may find his or her work valuable and novel but it is the editors and peer reviewers who ultimately decide if the research has merit, that the work should be published and distributed to the domain.

In many cases, a field can also affect productivity. When it is too open and accepts too

much novelty, the domain risks losing its credibility. If there is a lack of creativity, the field may be imposing too many limits. Or, in some cases, the culture might be highly resistant to change (Sawyer, K. R. et al, 2003). Another point to consider is how culture can affect creativity, and in turn creativity can help shape culture (Sawyer, K., 2003). Every culture has instructions for behavior, organized into rules, common ways people think or act. Within these cultures, most human activities are generally stable and passed on from one generation to the next. However, when creators suggest something new — e.g., songs, methods of computing, fashions — and this is deemed better or novel, the change will be accepted and passed along to the domain

But, as discussed previously, novelty in and of itself is not enough; there must be value, one that is recognized by a field. To help illustrate this concept, consider how a painting by a four-year-old can be seen as novel. But, within the art world, most intermediaries would see no value (a view not necessarily shared by the artist's parents). But even here, there are exceptions. Consider how Mozart and Picasso, even as youngsters, had their work celebrated.

For a mass-market product, the field might also include the public. As an example, if *New Coke* is not part of our culture, although it passed the evaluation of a small group of corporate believers (field), it failed to pass the ultimate test, the public's taste (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). Thus, in some domains, the question of creativity is not whether the work is accepted or rejected by a field but how it is accepted within a larger group. In domains such as movies, television, music, and advertising, the size of an audience can directly affect what is deemed creative. If many people go out and buy Hip Hop recordings, then more music of this type is produced and released. If people like Rocky I, then Rocky II, III, IV, and V are produced. These illustrations help show us that past performance can have a large influence on what creative work is accepted by gatekeepers for the future.

At the same time, as this new work is embraced and accepted as part of the culture, over time it can be viewed as old and staid, and thus can eventually be rejected. With this changing view of "what is" and "what is not" creative (novel and appropriate), the domain is ever changing. It is never static because the content and conventions continually change over time.

Finally, it is important to remember that in some cases validation by intermediaries (the field) is not always immediate. A case in point, Van Gogh's greatness was not recognized during his lifetime. Only after his death did gallery owners and critics begin to recognize the merits of his work. What this demonstrates is that evaluations and standards can change with time; that the views and opinions of a field are not permanent or fixed.

### **An advertising model of creativity**

When considering a model for advertising, again it is important to begin with creator, domain, and field. In advertising, the *Creator* traditionally includes an art director, copywriter, and sometimes a creative director (*see figure 2 below*).

The *Field*, a social organization serving as gatekeepers and supporters, includes individuals from the advertising agency (account services, account planning, research, creative director or chief creative officer) as well as the client (research, brand

managers, category managers, marketing directors, and a chief executive officer) and in some cases the audience (the people who buy a product or service). All of these individuals in the field help guide and pass judgment on a particular creative project or campaign. The *Domain* for advertising is where all the current communication exists for a particular product or service, along with its competition, as well as all the other marketing communication that has been produced over the years.

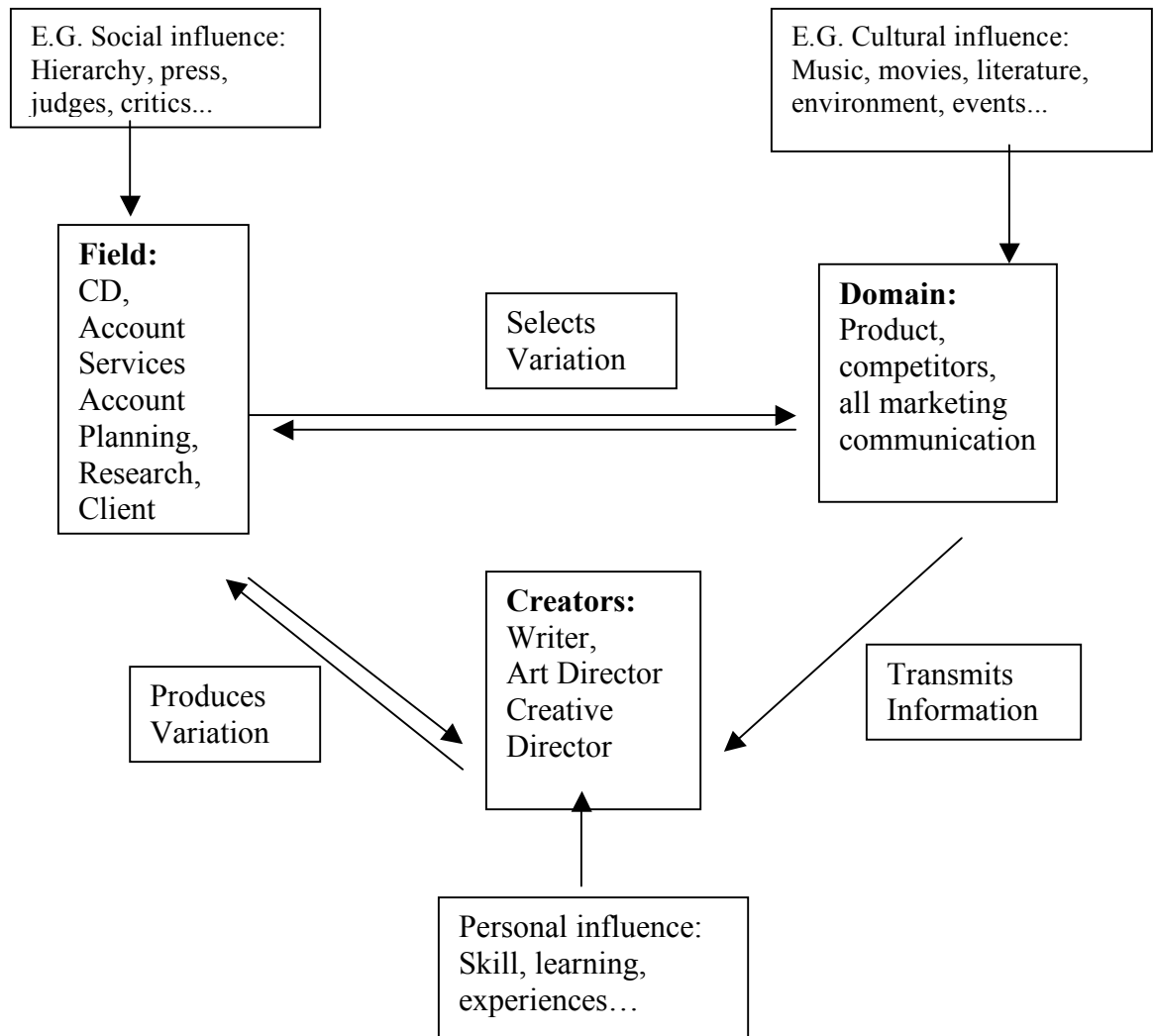


Figure 2. Advertising Model

The starting point for creativity within this social-cultural framework is really arbitrary). One would think it is with the creator but, in fact, the system is really rather fluid. As an example, an assignment for a print advertisement, television commercial, or a direct mail may start with a client (field) who comes up with a new marketing strategy. Or, the work may come as a response to what the competition is doing (domain). Then, as another option, a creative director (creator) may see an opportunity in the marketplace (domain) and suggest a new idea to a client (field).

As with other creative and artistic endeavors, each area (creator, domain, and field) affects the other and, in turn, can also be affected by them. In this dynamic relationship, each part will have an influence over the whole.

And, as discussed previously, an idea from a creator is actually a combination of information that has already been present in the domain, sometimes even before the creative person arrived on the scene. It was information that had been stored in the domain as symbols, language, or practice of the culture.

The easiest way to define the field is to consider all those who can affect the structure of the domain. This would include both those who support the creativity (i.e., giving direction — client and agency) as well as gatekeepers (determining if the work is novel and appropriate — agency, client, and possibly audience). When you look at the possible gatekeepers, it is important to remember that each person has a unique perspective based on their varied interests, values, and experience.

But there are other factors to consider. As Klebba and Tierney found (1995), there are organizational, social, and individual characteristics to consider (*see 3 figure below*). While the authors listed these influences only for the creators, they could also be considered appropriate for the field as well. As an example, within a company (agency or client), there are also factors of hierarchy. In this structure, one executive must try and anticipate (guess) what his or her boss will think. As an example, how will a decision from an assistant brand manager be viewed by a supervising manager, a category manager, or even a marketing director (Klebba & Tierney, 1995)? This review can cause many executives to think twice about their own personal beliefs, and instead focus on what the next person up the chain of command may be thinking, an approach that in the end may leave everyone guessing (Ljungquist, 2007).

Organizational — E.G., agency structure (hierarchy, centralization account assignment) procedures, resources/task constraints
Social — E.G., agency/client cohesiveness, evaluation, conflict norm, supervision
Individual — E.G., intrinsic motivation, knowledge, personality, abilities, experience, background

Figure 3. Klebba & Tierney (p. 35)

At the same time, there are also external factors to consider that can influence the agency and client decision-making process (Ewing, Pinto & Soutar, 2001). It is important

to remember that trade groups (e.g., American Association of Advertising Agencies); government organizations (e.g., Federal Trade Commission); distribution networks (e.g., standards and practices at NBC or CBS); industry trends (e.g., *Advertising Age* or *Brand Week*); award shows (e.g., *One Show* or *Cannes*); as well as recent business developments (e.g., *New York Times* or *Wall Street Journal*; or (as this author found), even what a C.E.O.'s spouse might think, can all affect the outcome of a decision. All of these external factors can influence a decision; help shape what the decision makers (field) will think is appropriate and novel.

Other outside influences can also affect the creators. As Kelly, Lawlor, and O'Donhue (2005) documented in their ethnographic study of agency creatives, cultural references of music, film, and literature can have a profound effect: popular rock music appears in commercials; a famous rap musician endorses a liquor brand; a blockbuster movie helps shape a promotion.

### *A test of the advertising model in action*

To demonstrate how all these various components inter-connect; consider for example how one television commercial for Hanes underwear was created, a project this author contributed to.

The creative personnel at the agency were participating in what was called a “jump ball.” Everyone, from the most junior art director to the most senior creative director, were all compelled to compete against one another to come up with a winning television commercial. For all the creatives involved, several factors were important to consider: what type of creative ideas had the chief creative officer accepted or rejected in the past (for this account as well as the others — he preferred stories with surprising endings and did not like slice of life); what ideas had the client found acceptable (previous two attempts by the agency had failed adding considerable pressure to please the client); the limitations of budget (small by industry standards); as well as timing and location (the commercial could only be shot during the basketball off-season and had to be done in Chicago, even though the client and agency were based in the southeast).

After several rounds of creative presentations by twelve teams (a total of 30 people) to the chief creative officer, one idea emerged to be presented to the client. The concept was simply Michael Jordan walking through a park. As he passes two women, they ask, “boxers or briefs?” The premise of the ad was not original. Michael Jordan was under contract and had appeared in numerous campaigns and in various settings. The other part of the concept was based on a story being passed around the agency at the time: how one could tell the character of a man simply by the underwear he wore, a cultural reference. In combining these ideas, the commercial, in reality, was an amalgamation of previous ideas that had existed for some time in the domain.

The field, comprising agency, and client personnel included a large number of players: a creative director, chief creative officer, account director, account manager, planning director, assistant brand manager, brand manager, category director, marketing manager, chief executive of Hanes, as well as Michael Jordan's agent and manager. All these individuals were involved in the approval process. And, all had to deal with an unusual problem that influenced the creative end product: how to use Michael Jordan in the commercial when he would not be shown using the product — appearing in his underwear.

The creative team, a writer and art director, along with the supervising creative director, first proceeded to show the storyboard to an assistant brand manager, then a brand manager, on to a category manager, and finally the marketing director and chief executive at Hanes. After each meeting, the team was asked for revisions to the original script. After getting final approval from all parties concerned, the creative team was allowed to shoot the television commercial. However, as in most commercial productions, there were changes on the set by the director and actors, which required the creative team to modify the script and get approval from the clients present. After the commercial was shot and edited, the approval process began anew. In the end and after six months of presentations and revisions, the commercial aired and became part of the domain. And, referring back to our model of advertising creativity, the commercial went into the domain becoming fodder for future creative ideas.

### **A socio-cultural model within the current literature**

#### *Creators: where divergence needs convergence*

One question to consider at this point is how do art directors or copywriters come up with work that can be seen as appropriate and novel? And, as discussed earlier, a creator must first learn the skills, history, and language of a domain. So, it follows, a physicist studies Einstein and a sculptor Moore, thus a student of advertising must learn about Bernbach and Burnett. But there is another important factor to consider. A creator must have access to a domain.

As with other artistic endeavors, creativity in advertising exists within an organized structure, a framework where one individual is not solely responsible for the end product. A screenwriter needs a production studio; a writer needs a publisher; a composer needs an orchestra. In all these cases, the end product exists within a system, one that requires collaboration. In advertising (as discussed with the Hanes example), it generally starts with a creative team, consisting of an art director and copywriter. While these individuals work together to create, they also serve as their own gatekeepers, accepting some ideas and rejecting many others. Osborn in 1953 was the first researcher to describe this approach as “brainstorming,” a process where ideas are generated, evaluated, and then discarded. Campbell in another article builds upon this notion with his “selective retention” theory (1960). Here, the variety of potential solutions is of little value if the product is not judged against criteria, which eliminates the majority of possible solutions. Within this task of generating and evaluating ideas, there is both divergent (the ability to create multiple solutions) and convergent thinking (the ability to come up with one right answer). In order for an idea to move forward, it must be evaluated against many possible solutions. In the case of advertising, these decisions are based on each team member’s history, knowledge, values, and personal experience. And, as they work together, each creative team member must trust and believe in the other’s unique abilities and perspective (John-Steiner, 2000).

Contrary to this approach, Smith and Yang in *Toward a General Theory of Creativity in Advertising* (2004) suggest a model of creativity in advertising that utilizes Guilford’s divergent thinking theory: an assessment based on one’s ability to think up as many original, diverse, and elaborate ideas as possible. But when comparing this theory from the 1950s with the current literature of today, you will find there is no correlation between high scores in divergent thinking and real-life creative output. After almost 30 years of

research, “most psychologists agree that divergent thinking is not the same as creativity” (Sawyer, 2006, p. 45).

In the same article, Smith and Yang also suggest a series of “determinants of divergence.” Examples provided by the authors include everything from fluency and flexibility to elaboration and expression. However, as discussed with Amabile (1993), these factors of divergence would require subjective reasoning by outsider reviewers. And, here again, these outside raters pass judgment based on cultural, historical, and societal factors, personal influences that vary from one observer to another. So, within this context, divergence and creativity, according to Smith and Yang’s interpretation, is very much “in the eye of the beholder,” a view that supports a socio-cultural model based on a creator, field, and domain.

*Field: where relevant is appropriate*

As the market researcher Stein noted, intermediaries in a field generally accept a few new ideas and reject many others. He classified these intermediaries as “gatekeepers” (1963). While these gatekeepers provide emotional and financial support, they also serve as transmission agents who disseminate work to the public. They are experts, authorities, critics, gallery owners, salesmen, advertising agencies, publishers, bookstores, and opinion leaders. It was Csikszentmihalyi who later referred to this group as a “field” (1999). And, as discussed previously, the field in advertising includes both agency (creative directors, account executives, account planners, account supervisors, management directors) and client personnel (brand managers, category managers, marketing directors).

The field’s determination of “what is” or “is not” appropriate and novel can be an elusive one. As Kover, Goldberg and James found (1995), even among trained advertising professionals there is a lack of agreement, one that creates a struggle between those who create and those who manage. In one article, Young (2000) found even copywriters and art directors had differing views. Part of the problem can be traced to the difference in priority for the various parties involved. Hirschman (1989) found that most account executives are focused on a client’s goal (an ideal of appropriateness) while creatives seemed more interested in artistic expressions (novelty). The author also noted clients were more concerned with strategic questions of appropriateness rather than issues of novelty. And for these clients appropriateness was viewed in several different ways. Besides referring to strategy and sales, appropriateness for them could also mean effectiveness, time and money, as well as corporate values. In light of these differing views, it is easy to see why only a fraction of the creative work presented ever sees the light of day (Vanden Bergh, Reid & Schorin, 1983).

Again from the Smith and Yang article (2004), with regard to the concept of appropriateness, the authors chose the term relevant. But even with this word, the decision of the gatekeepers (client, creative director or account executive) is still based on an individual’s perspective of what is and is not relevant — again a highly subjective interpretation. To help illustrate this concept, when an account executive tries to determine what creative product to show a client, he or she is using subjective reasoning, attempting to predetermine what the client will think. In truth, the account executive is trying to anticipate what the client will consider appropriate: how the proposed creative work will meet the intended objective. David Ogilvy, in describing this scenario, called it highly charged and felt the conflict it presented demonstrated an

inequality between account and creative services within an agency (Vanden Bergh, Smith & Wicks, 1986).

*Domain: where original is novel*

As previously suggested, creativity in advertising, as with other domains (e.g., archeology, music, movies), is based on a body of knowledge. It has patterns, rules, conventions, language, and symbols. And, as discussed with Poincaré, creative ideas are really novel, representing associations between thoughts or images that were well known but generally considered strangers to one another. Leo Burnett, when talking about creativity, supports this contention. He did not use the word original when talking about creativity. Instead, he referred to making meaningful relationships between previously unrelated thoughts in ways that were relevant, believable, and in good taste (Burnett, 1961). But the views of Burnett and Poincaré are in stark contrast to some scholars (e.g., MacKinnon, 1965; Young, 1985; Runco & Charles, 1993; White & Smith, 2001; El-Murad & West, 2004). These researchers prefer the word “original.”

While original and novel may seem quite similar, the distinction is an important one. Novelty, as used by creativity researchers in psychology, applies to being different, the quality of being new. Originality, on the other hand, means existing first from the beginning, or being completely new. Therefore, as demonstrated with music and art, creativity in advertising while appearing to be original is in fact novel.

From Bill Bernbach’s 1960s Volkswagen “Lemon” to the Crispin, Porter and Bogusky’s 2005 Subservient Chicken, creativity in advertising combines previous images, words, or thoughts in new ways. Combinations when examined closely are really innovative but not original. With the example of the Volkswagen print advertisement, the idea of a car being a “lemon” had existed for some time but had never been seen as a positive point of distinction. The concept of a character representing a brand, as with the Subservient Chicken, is not original. This idea can be traced to other brand executions including the *Jolly Green Giant*, *Tony the Tiger* and the *Pillsbury Dough Boy*.

However, this shared knowledge of previous work cannot always be assumed. As Haberland and Dacin found (1992), students lack the same expertise and background as agency practitioners. But there was another group who may surprise you by their lack of history. When Harrison (2005) conducted an informal survey of marketing executives in the UK about previous advertising, out of 100 respondents no one was able to answer more than one or two questions correctly.

This knowledge gap in the history of a domain could explain why many clients have difficulty in judging novelty when it comes to their brand’s own creativity. In order to evaluate a creative message, it helps to know what work has preceded it. Thus, without a sense of history, it is rather difficult to judge what is really novel. And this could help explain why Hirshman found most clients were focused on factors of appropriateness (1989). For them, it was much easier to deal with something that they were familiar with (i.e., strategy or sales) as opposed to the unfamiliar (the novel creative executions).

### **Implications for future research**

As noted by Koslow, Sasser and Riordan (2003), there has been a great deal of

frustration among researchers on creativity as they have tried to quantify it, qualify it, and even prescribe a personality type to it. But, creativity is one of the most complex of human behaviors to describe (Gross, 1967; O'Connor, Willemain, and MacLachlan, 1996).

Within the marketing and advertising community, there is a considerable amount of consternation and confusion about this term. For many clients, "good" creative simply means delivering against ROMI, or return on marketing investment. On the other hand, for many advertising agencies, good is reserved for their creative work that wins national and international awards.

In a functional sense, the determination of what is or what is not good is based on context and criteria (Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). That is why a socio-cultural model can offer a better way to understand the complexity and confusion of creativity in advertising. With this framework, there is a more holistic, multi-dimensional view. In the advertising industry, as with other artistic businesses, there is a dynamic interplay between domain, field, and creator, one that a system approach helps explain. Here, the end product of a creator is reviewed and judged by gatekeepers before an audience ever sees it. The creativity must be approved before it is distributed to the domain. Accordingly, by considering a social-cultural model, scholars, students, educators, and practitioners will have a better context of how creativity exists in the advertising marketplace today. To that end, further research should be considered in the following areas:

- *Who knows what?* Do conflicts arise because of varying bodies of knowledge between clients and agency, creator, and gatekeeper?
- *What is appropriate?* What different criteria do agencies and clients use in determining what is appropriate, and to what extent?
- *Why is something novel?* How do creators and gatekeepers view rules and conventions? What is more important to whom and why?
- And finally, *where do culture, society, and history come into play?* How do these influences affect creative decisions at agencies and clients?

These areas are just a beginning for discussion. It is important to remember that creativity in advertising is ever changing. With user-generated content (e.g., You Tube, My Space and Face Book), there are many other topics to be considered. But, even within these new creative opportunities, outside the current agency and client structure, there are still social and cultural factors to be explored.

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