Understanding Advertising Creativity

How perceptions of creativity influence advertising effectiveness
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Erik Modig
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To

Science and creativity
Foreword

This volume is the result of a research project carried out at the Marketing and Strategy department at the Stockholm School of Economics (SSE).

This volume is submitted as a doctor’s thesis at SSE. In keeping with the policies of SSE, the author has been entirely free to conduct and present his research in the manner of his choosing as an expression of his own ideas.

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Göran Lindqvist                   Richard Wahlund
Director of Research             Professor and Head of the
Stockholm School of Economics    Marketing and Strategy Department
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Stockholm, October 22, 2012

Erik Modig
Contents

ADVERTISING CREATIVITY AS A FIELD OF RESEARCH ................................................. 1
  Purpose of the Thesis ..................................................................................................... 3
  Academic Relevance of the Thesis ................................................................................. 4
  Practical Relevance of the Thesis .................................................................................. 6
  Outline of the Thesis ....................................................................................................... 9

UNDERSTANDING ADVERTISING CREATIVITY ......................................................... 11
  Definition of Creativity ................................................................................................ 11
  Academic Perspectives on Advertising Creativity ....................................................... 13
    Directions in advertising creativity research ............................................................. 14
    Production-oriented, place—where creative advertisements are produced ............... 19
    Production-oriented, person—who produces creative advertisements .................. 20
    Production-oriented, process—how creative advertisements are produced ............ 21
    Response-oriented, place—responses to a creative advertising medium .................... 23
    Response-oriented, person—differences among audiences ......................................... 24
    Response-oriented, process—how advertising creativity works ............................... 25
  Towards a Better Understanding of Advertising Creativity ......................................... 33
    Who Should Judge Advertising Creativity? ............................................................... 33
    What’s in Advertising Creativity? .............................................................................. 34
    Effects of Advertising Creativity ............................................................................. 34

INTRODUCING THE ARTICLES .................................................................................... 37
  Methodology ................................................................................................................ 38
  Article 1: What if advertising creativity is for everyone? ............................................. 39
  Article 2: Does it matter what you look for? ............................................................... 41
  Article 3: Consumer-perceived signals of “creative” versus “efficient” advertising ..... 43
  Article 4: Think Outside the Ad ................................................................................. 45
  Article 5: Advertising artistry and brand evaluation ................................................... 46

DISCUSSION ..................................................................................................................... 49
  Contribution to Advertising Research .......................................................................... 50
    Synthesizing Advertising Creativity Research ........................................................ 50
Judges of advertising creativity .......................................................... 51
Definition of advertising creativity ...................................................... 52
Effects of Advertising Creativity ........................................................ 53
Contribution to Advertising Practice ................................................... 55
Creativity as an advertising strategy ..................................................... 55
Using the “right” judge of advertising creativity .................................... 55
A common language for advertising creativity ....................................... 56
Who can benefit from advertising creativity? ........................................ 56
Limitations ......................................................................................... 57

REFERENCES ..................................................................................... 59

WHAT IF ADVERTISING CREATIVITY MATTERS TO EVERYONE? ...... 71
DOES IT MATTER WHAT YOU LOOK FOR? .......................................... 97

CONSUMER-PERCEIVED SIGNALS OF “CREATIVE” VERSUS
“EFFICIENT” ADVERTISING ................................................................. 113
THINK OUTSIDE THE AD ................................................................... 141
ADVERTISING ARTISTRY AND BRAND EVALUATION ....................... 173
Advertising is defined as “the activity or profession of producing advertisements for commercial products or services” in order to “describe or draw attention to (a product, service, or event) in a public medium in order to promote sales or attendance” (New Oxford American Dictionary, 2010, online access August 2012). In 2010, total spending on advertising worldwide surpassed USD 442 trillion and is projected to increase by 5% until 2015 (PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2011). Research testifies that advertising has a direct effect on firm performance, such as sales (Leone, 1995), profit (Erickson and Jacobson, 1992), brand equity (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1998), and firm value (Joshi and Hanssens, 2004). Indirectly, via increased brand equity, advertising spending can lead to increased price premiums and lower price sensitivity (Ailawadi, Neslin, and Lehmann, 2003; Kaul and Wittink 1995; Sethuraman and Tellis, 1991), contribute to greater product differentiation (Kirmani and Zeithaml, 1993), and work as a protection against substitute products (Mela, Gupta, and Lehmann, 1997).
However, research show that advertising effectiveness, estimated by advertising elasticity (the effect of an increase or decrease in advertising spending on the market share or sales) is as low as zero to 0.2, meaning that not all advertising is beneficial for the firm (Vakratsas and Ambler, 1999; Tellis, 2009). One reason might be that the amount of advertising consumers are exposed to have increased markedly and consumers pay less attention to ads and often hold a negative opinion about advertising in general (Grusell, 2008; Rosengren, 2008). Advertisers face the challenge of securing advertising effectiveness by producing advertisement that gets the consumers’ attention and shape their attitudes and behavior.

One suggested way to reach these objectives is creativity. Both influential advertising professionals such as David Ogilvy (Ogilvy, 1983) and Bill Bernbach (Danc 1965; Andrus, 1968), and industry awards such as the Clio (www.clioawards.com) and One Show (www.oneclub.org) support the notion that what makes advertising effective is creative excellence. This is an opinion that is shared in today’s advertising industry as advertising agency professionals see creativity as the best tool for achieving advertising success and believe that creativity is what really works in advertising (Nyilasy and Reid, 2009a). Two of the leading advertising effectiveness reports—The Gunn Report and the IPA Effectiveness Report—estimate that campaigns that are awarded for creativity are on average eleven times more efficient (higher impact on market share for additional advertising spending) compared to non-awarded campaigns (Gunn et al., 2010). Academic research also indicates that a higher level of creativity has a positive impact on advertising effectiveness (e.g. Smith, Chen, and Yang, 2008; Dahlén, Rosengren, and Törn, 2008). To summarize, creativity is one important tool to achieve advertising effectiveness. This thesis sets out to review the academic research on advertising creativity, to contribute to a theoretical understanding of the concept. In so doing, it plays a part in advertisers understanding and use of advertising creativity.
Especially, this thesis aims to answer a reoccurring plea within the field of advertising research for more contributions about advertising creativity (White, 1972; Zinkhan, 1993; Sasser and Koslow, 2008). One specific gap in advertising creativity research to date is that studies have predominately focused on issues regarding the production of advertising creativity (Sasser and Koslow, 2008). Current research need to better understand the response to creative advertisements by documenting how advertising professionals and consumer assess and value creativity (Bernardin and Kemp-Robertson, 2008; Sasser and Koslow, 2008). This seems especially important as empirical studies to date reveal that advertising professionals seems to have no formalized understanding about how advertising creativity work (El-Murad and West, 2004; Nyilasy and Reid, 2009a). In addition, research has predominately used an information processing perceptive in explaining the positive effects of creativity advertising (Sasser and Koslow, 2008). To fully understand the effects advertising creativity has on consumers, current research should initiate in new perspectives and new theories about how advertising creativity might work is needed (Sasscr and Koslow, 2008). In the next sections I will specify in more detail the purpose of the thesis and its academic and practical relevance.

**Purpose of the Thesis**

The purpose of this thesis is to improve the understanding of the role of creativity within advertising. More specifically, the goals are to: a) increase knowledge how different judges of advertising – researchers, consumers, and advertising professionals – perceive creative advertising, and b) investigate how these perceptions affect advertising effectiveness. I do this in six studies. The first two studies investigate the two perspectives of consumers and advertising professionals. The following four studies
investigate how perceptions of advertising creativity can influence advertising effectiveness. The findings are presented in five articles.

**Academic Relevance of the Thesis**

Each single article is communicating within a specific area of academic research and the main focus in each separated article might be outside the boarders of advertising creativity and the scope of this thesis. Their separate contributions to other areas of research can be found in each article. However, in this section I will present their relevance for advertising creativity research. This overall contribution and relevance of the articles and the seven studies can be summed up in four different aspects.

First, this thesis takes the opportunity to summarize current academic research about advertising creativity and thus participate in the academic perspective on advertising creativity. As such, one intended contribution of this research lies not only in the empirical investigations but also in the review of existing literature. To my knowledge the only similar review of the research area was presented by Sasser and Koslow (2008), who reviewed 66 academic articles. This thesis offers academic relevance by including additional articles (in total 107) in the academic review and thus find new potential research agendas and update our current knowledge of advertising creativity.

Second, in addition to the academic and the more commonly used advertising professional perspective, this thesis offers new knowledge on how consumers assess advertising creativity. Thus, this thesis answers to the call for more studies on the consumer perspective of advertising creativity (Bernardin and Kemp-Robertson, 2008; Sasser and Koslow, 2008). This might be of particular interest as research suggests that
consumers have become more advertising savvy and are able and inclined to assess the value of single advertisement (Dahlén and Edenius, 2007; Dahlén, Granlund, and Grenros, 2009). You could argue that consumers have in one sense become advertising mediums themselves, as the use of their “own” brands on blogs, Twitter, or Facebook has increased exponentially (Nielsen, 2011, 2012). Their presence in social media and in channels such as YouTube has given consumers a behind-the-scenes look into advertising and how it work. This might affect how they judge and value advertising creativity. By including the consumer perspective this thesis aims to add new insights about how advertising creativity might work.

Third, this thesis present one of few studies that compares advertising professionals and consumers assessment of advertising creativity and related concepts such as divergence, relevance, craftsmanship, humor and advertising effectiveness. Thereby contributing to the current research stream about how audiences respond and evaluate advertising creativity (Smith et al., 2007; Yang and Smith, 2009). Especially the findings expand the literature that has studied the differences between consumer and advertising professionals assessment (White and Smith, 2001; Koslow, Sasser, and Riordan, 2003; West, Kover, and Caruana, 2008). The findings show that advertising research might need to re-assess which factors that explain consumers and advertising professionals’ judgments of advertising creativity. In addition, findings suggest that research need to further develop the understanding on how advertising professionals differ in their view of advertising creativity relative to advertising effectiveness.

Fourth, academic research has predominately used an information processing perspective to explain the positive effect creativity has on advertising effectiveness (Sasser and Koslow, 2008). Previous research have focused on how a creative advertising increase processing, which in turn lead to a stronger impact on classical hierarchy-of-effects measurements such as ad attitude, message recall, brand attitude and
purchase intention (see Smith, Chen, and Yang, 2008; and Sasser and Koslow, 2008 for review of previous studies). This thesis complements and contributes to this stream of research in three ways. First it expands the literature about signaling effects of advertising creativity (Dahlén, Rosengren, and Törn, 2008). Findings show that award winning creative advertisement signals more perceived sender effort and expense, compared to non-award winning advertisements, which in turn has a positive effect on brand evaluation. This finding contributes by strengthen the notion that the positive effect on brand evaluation might not only be explained by increased processing but could also be explained by signal theory. Second, this thesis employ what can be called an out-of-the-box thinking when it comes to potential effects advertising creativity might have. By showing that advertising creativity can enhance the perceived and real creativity of the audience (the reader of the creative advertisement) it contributes to existing theories on how advertising creativity work. Finally, the last study highlights how advertising creativity relates to other areas of research (in this case the artistic style of images in advertising design) in an attempt to find similarities and opportunities for theoretical synergies as well as new ways of thinking about advertising creativity.

**Practical Relevance of the Thesis**

Both industry reports and academic articles clearly tell that creativity is beneficial for the success of advertisements (e.g, Gunn et al., 2010; Smith, Chen, and Yang, 2008) Findings indicates that advertising creativity has a positive effect on purchase intentions (Smith et al., 2007; Smith, Chen, and Yang, 2008) and has a direct impact on the financial performance of firms (Im and Workman, 2004). Research also shows that advertising creativity has a positive impact on brand attitude and interest (Smith, Chen, and Yang, 2008; Dahlén, Rosengren, and Törn,
2008), which indirectly affects firm performance (e.g., Aaker 1996; Keller 1998). Consequently, these arguments should be sufficient to demonstrate the practical relevance of advertising creativity, and thus this thesis. At the same time, however, advertisers find it difficult to manage creativity within the advertising planning process (Kover, Goldberg, and James, 1995; Hackley, 2003). In that sense, this thesis can be seen as one step in an attempt to increase the understanding and use of advertising creativity and thereby potentially milder those difficulties. I will present this practical relevance by highlighting four different areas in which this thesis contributes to advertising practice.

First, advertising professionals, who are largely responsible for allotting advertising funding, have no unified theories on how creativity can be used to increase advertising effectiveness (El-Murad and West, 2004). Even though they believe it works, advertising professionals believe the only relevant rule for creativity is that there is no rule (Nyilasy and Reid, 2009a). In this regard, there is a potential value of reviewing and summarizing existing literature on advertising creativity in order to help bridge the gap between academia and practice. The literature review in this thesis could expand the knowledge of advertising creativity, and provide advertisers and advertising agencies with tools that will enable them to more effectively develop and evaluate advertising strategies. This could potentially improve firm competitiveness.

Second, advertising professionals face the question of whether consumers are able to judge the creativity of an advertisement and if their judgments influence advertising effectiveness (White and Smith, 2001). Both within advertising research and practice there is a history of relying on the judgment of advertising professionals when assessing advertising creativity (Dahlén, Rosengren, and Törn, 2008). As previously stated, current research calls for more studies on consumer response to advertising in order to better understand how advertising really works (Bernardin and Kemp-Robertson, 2008; Sasser and Koslow, 2008). This research contributes to advertising practice by showing that consumers
are indeed able and willing to assess the creativity of an advertisement and that those assessments have impact on advertising effectiveness. It also shows that consumers – compared to advertising professionals – value humor, craftsmanship and relevance to a higher degree in their assessment of creativity. This gives the advertising industry directions for the planning of creative advertisements.

Third, research shows that successful planning of creative advertisements is dependent on a “creative code” within each agency (Stuhlfaut, 2011). This means that the “collection of implicit theories about an advertising agency’s creative product that are held by people within a creative department” influence the success of the agency (Stuhlfaut, 2011, pp. 283). This is of particular interest as research indicate that advertising professionals share little consensus about what constitutes creative advertisements (West, Kover, and Caruana, 2008) and that few have a formal definition of advertising creativity (El-Murad and West, 2004). Thus, by documenting consumers’ and advertising professionals’ different ways of evaluating creative advertisements, this thesis can offer one first step in an attempt to construct a more coherent “creative code” within the advertising agencies. That could potentially be helpful in the production of creative advertisement and improve advertising planning and success.

Fourth, by applying an out-of-the-box perspective on the potential effects of advertising creativity, this thesis shows that advertising creativity is not only a mission for the advertising industry but also beneficial to the individual consumer and owners of media vehicles (publishing houses, TV channels etc.). This could in turn affect the interest and planning of creative advertisements as the positive effects benefit additional stakeholders. This could transform advertising from a “natural evil” to a common good, which could potentially benefit advertising professional both on a professional and a private level.
Outline of the Thesis

The remainder of this thesis is divided into three parts. First, I summarize what is already known about advertising creativity with the help of a 3P-framework (place, person, and process, cf. Sasser and Koslow, 2008). This section offers a deeper understanding of advertising creativity and serves as a roadmap for my investigations. Based on the questions derived from this review and the potential gaps found in previous research, I formulate a research agenda for my own studies. In the second part, I present my methodology and studies, and explain how they are relevant to the research questions. The results are then presented in a brief introduction of the five articles. The third and final part consists of a general discussion based on the findings of the studies. In this section, I tie the five articles together and summarize the thesis’ overall contribution to academic research. I then provide suggestions for advertising professionals and marketers with the aim of helping them to better understand and utilize advertising creativity to improve their advertising planning. I also point out limitations with the current research and potential directions for future research.
Chapter 2

UNDERSTANDING ADVERTISING CREATIVITY

Definition of Creativity

The academic interest in creativity began with J. P. Guilford’s 1950 address to the American Psychology Association where he initiated the call to define, measure and improve creative ability (Guilford, 1950). Since then there has been significant efforts in defining what creativity is and how it should be measured (Meusburger, 2009). In the New Oxford American Dictionary (2010, online access August 2012) creativity is defined as “The use of the imagination or original ideas”, thus, highlighting the importance of doing something original (i.e., something that is not dependent on other people’s ideas, and is inventive and unusual) in order to be creative. This definition is dominant in traditional tests of creativity, such as the “unusual uses” test, which mainly focus on the ability to engage in divergent thinking (Meusburger, 2009).

A more elaborate definition is offered by Oldham and Cummings (1996, p. 608), “Products, ideas, or procedures that satisfy two condition: (1)
they are novel or original and (2) they are potentially relevant for, or useful to an organization”. This definition, with small differences in the words used, has become dominant throughout academia and in textbooks on creativity (Meusburger, 2009). It refers to an original idea as something divergent (tending to differ from the norm or develop in a different direction), and highlights that creativity combines both divergence and relevance (closely connected with or appropriate to the matter at hand). However, what is defined as divergent and relevant may be in reference to the creator, society, or the domain within which the creation occurs (Meusburger, 2009), meaning that what is defined as creative or not is in relation to a specific field, person or culture.

One of the goals with this thesis is to contribute to the definition and understanding of creativity within the field of advertising research. In terms of an initial viewpoint, this research relies on the opinion each individual holds about what is—or is not—creative, regardless of previous definitions or which reasoning each single individual use to arrive at their final opinion. As such, the thesis follows the psychological research that relies on “laymen theory” in defining a concept (Elsbach and Kramer, 2003; Puccio and Chimento, 2001). In other words, if a person says something is creative, then it is creative for that person.

I have chosen this approach for three reasons. First, as divergence and relevance may both relate to the creator and to the field in which they create, it is impossible for more than one person to share the same underlying definition of creativity. In other words, each individual has his or her own perceptions about what is divergent or relevant, which means that defining creativity on the basis of these concepts can, at best, give us a good estimate. Second, research has shown that respondents use other factors besides divergence and relevance in their definitions of advertising creativity (e.g., West, Kover, and Caruana, 2008). Only by not limiting my view to these two elements can I find new perspectives. Third, one of the main goals of this thesis is to document how different audiences perceive advertising creativity and how their perceptions
differ. If I were to use a formal definition, I would limit the studies contained herein before they began. This method of relying on each individual subjective definition of creativity allows for the study of how different respondents assess creativity.

Academic Perspectives on Advertising Creativity

The first academic article about advertising creativity, entitled “The Dilemma of Creative Advertising” was published by Politz (1960) in Journal of Marketing. Since then, the stream of new articles on the subject has been steady, with a peak in 2008 when the Journal of Advertising devoted a special issue to the subject (Journal of Advertising, 2008, issue 4). In order to investigate the researchers’ perspective and to document and summarize what is already known about advertising creativity, and to set a direction for my own research, I carried out a content analysis of all academic articles addressing advertising creativity.

In my search for articles, I used Stewart and Lewis’s (2009) classification of the fifty highest-ranked journals in marketing academia (Stewart and Lewis, 2009). The list is an aggregate ranking of marketing journals based on 13 earlier rankings, making my search highly relevant for the academic field of marketing and advertising. Initially, I considered only searching for potential articles in journals that explicitly address advertising. However, as important articles about advertising creativity are published in broader marketing journals (e.g. Marketing Science), I decided to use this wider perspective for my search even though the majority of articles are published in the core advertising journals Journal of Advertising, Journal of Advertising Research, International Journal of Advertising. In the second step, I used the Business Source Premier database to search each journal for articles that included the words
“creativity/creative” and “advertising” in their headline, abstracts, or keywords. The last search was performed on September 11th, 2012. I cross-checked the list against previous listings of articles about advertising creativity (e.g., Michell, 1984; Sasser and Koslow, 2008; Smith et al., 2008). The additional articles found as a result of this cross-checking were added to my list. This search resulted in a list of 146 articles. Following this search, I read all of the articles to assess whether they dealt with advertising creativity, a process that narrowed the list to 107 articles (see Table 1). A similar approach was employed in Sasser and Koslow (2008), which review the content of 66 articles. The additional 41 articles in this review are derived from 30 articles originated from the years 2008 to 2012, two additional articles from the years 1960 and 1972 (before the start of Sasser and Koslow (2008) review), and nine articles that were from journals not included in their search. Michell (1984) reviewed the role creativity has in the client-agency relationship and as such it predominately used references on the client-agency relationship and not necessarily on advertising creativity. In addition, Michell (1984) also included articles in popular press (e.g. Advertising Age) and text books in the review. I have excluded popular press articles and text books in this review, because they are not a part of the academic perspective that I want to investigate in this study.

**Directions in advertising creativity research**

In order to orient and classify the 107 articles, I distinguish between articles that are production-oriented and those that are response-oriented in their view of advertising creativity (Sasser and Koslow, 2008). Production-oriented articles investigate how the production of creative advertisements can be optimized, whereas response-oriented articles deal with how people react to creative advertisements. To further assess the various perspectives researchers have used within these two streams of research I will classify articles into a “3Ps” framework of place, person, and process (Sasser and Koslow, 2008). This framework has previously
been applied to advertising creativity by Sasser and Koslow (2008). Production-oriented articles can be classified in terms of whether they concern the places in which they produce creative advertising, the person who creates advertisements or the processes they use in developing creative advertisements. In the same sense, response-oriented articles can use place, person, and process to document how different creative media are perceived, how different audiences respond to creative advertising, and which processes audiences use when responding to creative advertising.

In my efforts to find gaps within advertising creativity research this framework offers direction for uncovering potential research questions for my own studies. One initial observation is that production-oriented issues have attracted the most attention (81 articles, 76%). One reason for the lack of response-oriented research on creativity might be that advertising research has centered on the advertising professional instead of the consumer, resulting in a natural avoidance of response-oriented studies that take the opinions and responses of customers into account. This lack of a consumer focus has been highlighted by other authors, who call for more customer/response-oriented articles (West, Kover, and Caruana, 2008; Sasser and Koslow, 2008). Thus, this thesis will focus on the response-side of advertising creativity in order to answer to this lack of research and recurring plea. The next sections review each of these six different perspectives. However, the first three sections that discussed production-oriented research will thus mainly report previous findings. The following sections about response-oriented research will in more detail describe and discuss existing theories. After that I will present my intended contribution towards a better understanding of advertising creativity.
Table 1. Academic articles about Advertising Creativity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Journal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anderson</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Creativity: A Function for Computers or Decision?</td>
<td>Journal of Marketing</td>
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<td>Matthews</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>A Two-Cornered Survey of Creative Country</td>
<td>Journal of Advertising</td>
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<td>Polizzi</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Creativity and Imagination</td>
<td>Journal of Advertising</td>
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<td>Rank and Settliffe</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>The Ydsse Advertising Agency</td>
<td>Journal of Advertising</td>
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<td>Michel</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Agreement and Discord in Agency-Client Perceptions of Creativity</td>
<td>Journal of Advertising Research</td>
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<td>Michell</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Agency-Client Trends: Partitioning versus Fragmentation</td>
<td>Journal of Advertising Research</td>
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<td>Hischean</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Relational Models of Advertising Creation and Production</td>
<td>Journal of Advertising Research</td>
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<td>Burke et al</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>A Knowledge-based System for Advertising Design</td>
<td>Marketing Science</td>
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<td>West</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Corporate Creative Personalities, Prospects, and Agency Philosophies</td>
<td>Journal of Advertising Research</td>
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<td>Koon and Goldberg</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>The Crows-Copywriters Play: Conflict, Quasi-control, A New Approach</td>
<td>Journal of Advertising Research</td>
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<td>Murphy and Meany</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Using Judgment Profiles to Compare Advertising Agencies and Clients' Campaign Values</td>
<td>Journal of Advertising Research</td>
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<td>Reid, Whitaker King, and Deemme</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Top-level Agency Creatives: Look at Advertising Creativity Then and Now</td>
<td>Journal of Advertising Research</td>
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<td>West</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>300 of Creative Risk</td>
<td>Journal of Advertising Research</td>
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<td>West and Reid</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Advertising Agency Philanthropy and Employee Risk-taking</td>
<td>Journal of Advertising Research</td>
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<td>Aspinall and Waterman</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Market Orientation, Creativity, and New Product Performance in High Technology Firms</td>
<td>Journal of Marketing</td>
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<td>Sukhodol and Abornstein</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>A Model of Marketing Information Flow</td>
<td>Journal of Advertising Research</td>
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<td>Hanky</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>The Changing Architecture of Advertising Agencies</td>
<td>Marketing Science</td>
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<td>Koslow, Sasse, and Riordan</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Do Marketers Get the Advertising They Need or the Advertising They Deserve?</td>
<td>Journal of Advertising Research</td>
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Response-oriented: Place Focus

Dahlen, 2010. The Medium as a Contextual Cue Journal of Advertising
Dahlen, 2010. Entering the Creative Media Choice Journal of Advertising

Response-oriented: Person Focus

Kroeber, James, and Song, 1997. To Whom do Advertising Creatives Write? An In-depth Analysis Journal of Advertising Research

Response-oriented: Process Focus

Hobart and Dacin, 1992. The Development of a Measure to Assess Viewers’ Judgments of the Creativity of An Advertisement: A Preliminary Study Advances in Consumer Research
Kroeber, Goldberg, and James, 1995. Creativity vs. Effectiveness Journal of Advertising Research
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Buuck, Wilson, and Till, 2008. Creativity and Memory Effects Journal of Advertising
Smith, Chen, and Yang, 2006. The Impact of Advertising Creativity on the Memory Effects Journal of Advertising
Production-oriented, place—where creative advertisements are produced

As creative production requires a dynamic organization open to ideation and artistic expression (Sutton and Hargadon, 1996), and given that companies’ own efforts to promote creativity usually fail (Amabile, 1996), creative campaigns are regularly handled by advertising agencies (Horsky, 2006; Sasser and Koslow, 2008). Thus, research on the place has focused on how client-agency relationships (e.g., Hackley, 2003), agency organization (e.g., Bursk and Seth, 1976) and culture (e.g., Stuhlfaut, 2011) impacts on creative production. One reoccurring topic is the tension between clients’ more systematic approach to advertising planning and creativity, compared to agencies’ more intuitive, spontaneous approach (Andrus, 1968; Michell, 1984; Hackley, 2003). If not handled properly the client–agency relationship can negatively influence agency creativity (Koslow, Sasser, and Riordan, 2006), which in turn affect campaign outcomes (Li et al., 2008). Some research suggests that professionals that might lack an understanding of creative ability might benefit from using a more systematic approach (Keil, 1975, Matthews, 1975; Burke et al., 1990) or that the client–agency relationship negotiate and uses similar theories of how creativity works (Stuhlfaut, 2011). One suggested route is to use an in-house agency as this could increase the perceived advertising creativity (Bursk and Seth, 1976), if the firm has internal creative abilities (Horsky, 2006). Research has also documented differences in the view of advertising creativity within an agency, which potentially lead to tension (Vanden Bergh, Smith, and Wicks, 1986; Hirschman, 1989; Kover and Goldberg, 1995; Sutherland, Duke, and Abcnettly, 2004). Some articles have introduced managerial
strategies and methods to handle these differences in the view on
creativity (Frazer, 1983; Hill and Johnson, 2004; Verbeke et al, 2008;
Stuhlfaut, 2011). This might be of particular interest to international
networks as there are differences between the view and use of creativity
in different countries (Benedetto, Tamate, and Chandran, 1992; Taylor,
Hoy, and Haley, 1996; West, 1993). As research show that there is a
positive linkage between risk-taking and creativity (El-Murad and West,
2003), research have documented how agencies can plan and control the
necessary risk (West, 1999; West and Berthod 1997; West and Ford,
2001).

To sum up, agencies need to handle the tension, both with the clients
and within the agency, which arises from different approaches to
advertising creativity. One suggested way is to negotiate a common
creative code in order to minimize tension and optimize creative
performance.

Production-oriented, person—who produces creative advertisements

Creative advertisements are evidently the result of the skill of a creative
person. Ever since Guilford (1950), researchers in various fields have
tried to pinpoint characteristics and skills that are associated with
creative ability (Kilgour, 2006; Sternberg, 2006). To sum up what makes
a person creative, besides environment (place), thinking style and confluence
(process) research on creativity in general highlight that creative persons
have intelligence, personality and motivation (Sternberg, 2006). Within the
field of advertising, articles about the creative person have used two
different perspectives. First academics have showed that individual traits
such as ability for problem solving (Andrews and Smith, 1996), intrinsic
motivation (Andrews and Smith, 1996) and risk taking (El-Murad and

The second stream of person-oriented research has focused on how different stakeholders in the production of advertisements view advertising creativity. Research shows that the advertising professionals consider creativity to be one of the most important concepts within advertising production (Kover, Goldberg, and James, 1995; Nyilasy and Reid, 2009a; Ashley and Oliver, 2010). However, their assessment of what is creative differ depending on if they are client or agency (Devinney, Dowling, and Collins, 2005) or on their position within the advertising agency (Vaughn, 1982; Young, 2000; Koslow, Sasser, and Riordan, 2003). For example, account executives judge “strategy” as the most important component of creative advertising, while creatives emphasize the importance of “artistry” (Koslow, Sasser, and Riordan, 2003). Research also shows that these divergent beliefs are usually a source of conflict (Hackley, 2003; Hackley and Kover, 2007).

To sum up, research shows that within advertising production, creativity is viewed as one, if not the most, important component of successful advertising (Nyilasy and Reid, 2009a). However, what constitutes a creative advertisement is dependent on individual assessment and still subject to ongoing debate and differs depending on agency and person (Stuhlfaut, 2011).

Production-oriented, process—how creative advertisements are produced

The majority of research suggests – contrary to advertising professionals (Nyilasy and Reid, 2009a, 2009b) – that the process of producing creative advertisements is not a mystery, but a sequenced process entailing at least two steps: incubation and illumination (White, 1972;

First, the gathering of raw material – both the materials of your immediate problem and the materials which come from a constant enrichment of your store of general knowledge. Second, the working over of these materials in your mind. Third, the incubation stage, where you let something, besides the conscious mind do the work of synthesis. Fourth, the actual birth of the Idea – the “Eureka! I have found it!” stage. And fifth, the final shaping and development of the idea to practical usefulness. (White 1972, p. 29)

Today, researchers would call the first four steps of this process “divergent thinking”—the mental process of coming up with new ideas (Kilgour, 2006; Toubia, 2006). The fifth and final step would encompass the problem solving ability of creativity (El-Murad and West, 2004), which has in advertising creativity research mainly been referred to as “relevance” (Smith and Yang, 2004; El-Murad and West, 2004). One specific interest in advertising creativity research has been to offer processing tools to advertising professionals to ensure a creative output. In so doing, authors have linked a more creative output to advertisement design templates (Goldenberg, Mazursky, and Solomin, 1999; Goldenberg and Mazursky, 2008), interview techniques (Durgee, 1985), and the use of puns (Djafarova, 2008), cartoon spokespeople (Heiser, Sierra, and Torres, 2008), consumer conversations (Jayanti, 2010) and consumer co-creation (Sasser, 2008).

To sum up, there seems to be a general sequence in the mental process of producing creative advertisement. However, there seems to be a big difference in which specific thinking styles different professionals prefer and use within the two steps (Griffin, 2008) and as showed, research have linked several different methods to increased creative output. The creative process might be similar but yet different for each person, meaning that people have to find their own optimized process.
Response-oriented, place—responses to a creative advertising medium

The majority of response-oriented articles focus on creative advertising executions and not on how the placement of an advertisement can be creative in itself. In contrast, Dahlén (2005) and Dahlén, Friberg, and Nilsson (2009) investigate how a creative choice of medium can influence advertising effectiveness. They show that the advertising in itself need not to be creative but by placing the advertisement in a creative (e.g., fire distinguisher), compared to a traditional, such as regular print ads, medium it results in stronger brand associations, and higher advertisement credibility, attitude, and brand attitude (Dahlén, 2005; Dahlén, Friberg, and Nilsson, 2009). In addition, by placing an advertisement in a more creative medium, a brand can be associated with the medium itself even after the advertisement had been removed, suggesting that the medium could become a cue that reminds consumers of the brand (Dahlén, Friberg, and Nilsson, 2009). Consequently, advertisers can achieve perceptions of creativity by using the medium instead of with the design of the advertisement. This might be of particular interest when the advertising design is pre-determined or in similar way limited towards a creative design.

To sum up, there is more to advertising creativity than creative execution within the limits of the advertisement design. Advertisers could think outside the advertisement when pursuing a creative strategy and pose questions about potential creative placement. This stream of research could also further investigate a creative choice of situation or timing in order to develop the research within this perspective. However, although there is room for further investigations, I have decided to focus my own efforts on the person that evaluates the creativity and their processing of creative advertisements.
Response-oriented, person—differences among audiences

Several authors have stressed the importance of including different perspectives on advertising processing (Lautman and Hsieh, 1993; Kover, James, and Sonner, 1997; Sasser and Koslow, 2008; Dahlén, Rosengren, and Törn, 2008). However, only three articles to date have compared different audiences’ responses to creative advertisement. This lack of research works as a start for my own investigations. Thus, I will review and discuss this literature stream in more detail in order to find where current research can add knowledge and contribute to the field. In the following sections I review the articles and sum up by proposing a direction for my own studies.

Kover, James, and Sonner (1997) compare how a sample of 103 advertising creatives and 69 respondents from the general public respond to three types of advertisements: winners of creativity awards, EFFIE winners for effectiveness, and non-winners of awards for either creativity or effectiveness. The results show significant differences. The creatives responded more positive to advertisements that had won awards, while consumers responded positively to advertisements that evoked feelings of personal enhancement (Kover, James, and Sonner, 1997). Even though this suggests that advertising creatives primarily produce advertisements that meet other professionals’ preferences, it does not contribute to the knowledge of how different audiences view creative advertisements. In order to address that question, the focus must shift to the perceived creativity of the advertisement.

White and Smith (2001) assess how 43 advertising professionals, 61 participants representing the general public, and 189 students judged creative advertisements. They showed the respondents 15 print advertisements, after which they compared how the respondents ranked the advertisements. They found significant differences in the overall
rankings among the three samples. Students consistently gave the highest rankings, while advertising professionals gave the lowest and the general public gave the mid-range scores. In order to better understand these differences, they included measures of originality, logic, and well-craftiness as sub-dimensions of advertising creativity. They found no significant differences in the assessment of originality and logic, while well-craftiness rankings were significantly lower for advertising professionals. Nevertheless, they were unable to clearly measure how these three sub-dimensions contribute to the overall judgment of creativity.

In a similar experiment, West, Kover, and Caruana (2008) investigate the definitions of advertising creativity that advertising professionals and consumers use. They analyzed 52 professional and 126 consumer definitions of advertising creativity. They found that even though there were similarities in terms of which sub-dimensions the two samples used, there were significant differences in how often these sub-dimensions occurred in each definition.

These three articles, especially White and Smith (2001) and West, Kover, and Caruana (2008), suggest that there are significant differences in how advertising professionals and consumers assess advertising creativity. However, no study has measured these differences and no larger representative sample has been used. This is one gap in the literature that I will address with my own research.

Response-oriented, process—how advertising creativity works

The second area that I will analyze and discuss in more detail is the literature stream concerning how audiences process creative
advertisements. An analysis of the research highlights two main areas of interest. Researchers are either interested in how the respondents assess the level of creativity, or how those assessments impact on the respondents’ processing of the ad and the brand. The former focuses on documenting factors, or what some authors call sub-dimensions or determinants, of creative ads. 13 articles deal explicitly with such factors (see Table 2). The latter concerns the effects this process has on various communication goals. 15 articles document different effects of advertising creativity. In the following sections I will look closer at these two streams of research.
Table 2. Response, process oriented articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors of advertising creativity</th>
<th>Effects of advertising creativity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Haberland and Dacin, 1992</td>
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<td>Ang and Low, 2000</td>
<td>Kover, Goldberg, and James, 1995</td>
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<td>White and Smith, 2001</td>
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<td>Koslow, Sasser, and Riordan, 2003</td>
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<td>ElMurad and West, 2004</td>
<td>Pieters, Warlop, and Wedel, 2002</td>
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<td>Smith et al., 2007</td>
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<td>Smith, Chen, and Yang, 2008</td>
<td>Dahlén, Rosengren, and Törn, 2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>West, Kover, and Caruana, 2008</td>
<td>Smith, Chen and Yang, 2008</td>
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<td>Yang and Smith, 2009</td>
<td>Baack, Wilson, and Till 2008</td>
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<td>Kim, Han, and Yoon, 2010</td>
<td>Poels and Dewitte, 2008</td>
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<td>Sheikh, Varki, and Ashley, 2011</td>
<td>Yang and Smith, 2009</td>
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<td>Heath, Nairn, and Bottomley 2009</td>
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<td>Sheikh, Varki, and Ashley, 2011</td>
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Factors of advertising creativity

The literature dealing with factors of creativity has mainly focused on how these factors correlate with the overall judgment of creativity. Study participants are typically asked to subjectively rate different factors and the overall creativity in advertisements, with the objective of testing whether different pre-determined factors can predict the overall rating (e.g., White and Smith, 2001; Koslow, Sasser, and Riordan, 2003; Smith et al., 2007; Smith, Chen, and Yang, 2008; Smith and Yang, 2004). An alternative approach is to use exploratory qualitative studies to rely on in-depth interviews in order to find new sub-dimensions (e.g., West, Kover, and Caruana, 2008; Koslow, Sasser, and Riordan, 2003). In addition to these empirical studies, other authors have made conceptual contributions by summarizing and discussing previous findings (e.g., El-
Murad and West, 2004; Smith and Yang, 2004). I will now discuss what we today know about different factors of advertising creativity.

Even though researchers have used different labels, all published studies have measured the factor of divergence in some way (see Table 3). This factor of creativity reflects a deviation from the norm—a stimulus that previous information does not lead one to expect (Haberland and Dacin, 1992). Divergence corresponds to unexpectedness in the sense that advertisements inconsistent with other advertisements in the same product category (see Smith and Yang, 2004).

**Table 3. Empirical Studies on Conceptualizations of Advertising Creativity***

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Relevance</th>
<th>Craftsmanship</th>
<th>Other Factors</th>
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<td>Reformulation</td>
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<td>Novelty</td>
<td>Meaningfulness</td>
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<td>Originality</td>
<td>Logic</td>
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<td>Meaningfulness, connectedness</td>
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<td>Smith et al., 2007</td>
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<td>West, Kover, and Caruana, 2008</td>
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<td>Relevance, goal directed</td>
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<td>Yang and Smith (2009)</td>
<td>Divergence</td>
<td>Relevance</td>
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<td>Clarity</td>
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<td>Shemirani, Vakil, and Ashley, 2011</td>
<td>Novelty</td>
<td>Usefulness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* There are additional authors that have studied factors of advertising creativity (Smith and Yang, 2004). However, these studies are presented in textbooks or in academic journals and conference proceedings which I consider outside the scope of this thesis. None of these postdates 2001 which also makes them of less relevance for our current understanding of the assessment of advertising creativity. Therefore I have excluded these contributions in this thesis. Please see Smith and Yang, 2004 for review of these contributions.
Although divergence is generally regarded as a necessary criterion for an advertisement to be considered creative, other criteria must also be met (e.g., Haberland and Dacin, 1992; El-Murad and West, 2004; Smith et al., 2007). Unless the divergent element conveys some meaning about the advertised product, divergence does not necessarily mean creativity. Relevance, which is also referred to as “logic,” “meaningfulness,” “connectedness,” or “strategy,” complements divergence by turning creativity into an instrument that connects and highlights the advertised product in relation to consumers’ problem solving and goal attainment (e.g., Ang et al., 2007; El-Murad and West, 2004; Smith et al., 2007).

A number of studies also find that craftsmanship, which is sometimes labeled “execution” or “artistry,” contributes to advertising creativity among professionals and consumers (e.g., White and Smith, 2001; Koslow, Sasser, and Riordan, 2003). The reason could be that craftsmanship and “artistry” might be connected to creativity as artists are associated with creative ability. Thus, a more well-crafted advertisement is likely to be associated with higher levels of creativity.

There is also some support for the inclusion of humor as a factor of advertising creativity (West, Kover, and Caruana, 2008; Kim, Han, and Yoon, 2010). However, the connection between humor and creativity is relatively new and unconventional in the field of advertising. This might be because of the focus on advertising professionals’ assessments of creativity (West, Kover, and Caruana, 2008). Consumers, in contrast to advertising professionals, have no personal interest in watching advertising and thus humor might be viewed as a way of offering value or meaning to the audience, which in turn can connect it with creativity. Within psychology literature there is a long tradition of connecting humor with creative ability (Koestler 1964; Smith and White 1965; Treadwell 1970; Ziv 1976; Wycoff and Pryor 2003).

In addition to these four common dimensions, Haberland and Dacin (1992) refer to reformulation which concern the necessity that viewers
reformulate their attitudes towards an advertised product in order for an advertisement to be viewed as creative. Contemporary research on advertising creativity classifies reformulation not as a factor but as a potential effect of advertising creativity, associated to the change of attitudes among the audience. Thus, reformulation connects with advertising creativity research as a measure of effectiveness (Smith and Yang, 2004). The positioning of “effectiveness” as a part of creativity voids its usefulness as an explanatory variable. The constructs have not been considered as factor of creativity in more recent creativity research.

To sum up, there is a general agreement that divergence and relevance are two important factors of advertising creativity. However, exploratory studies suggest that craftsmanship and humor might also explain perceptions of creativity (West, Kover, and Caruana, 2008), especially for consumers.

Effects of advertising creativity

The other stream of research regarding the processing of creative advertisements focuses on the effects on how the audience perceives the advertisement, the advertised product, and the brand. This stream of research follows a process-outcome perspective in which a creative advertisement catches the attention of the audience, leading to cognitive processing, which in turn results in emotional and attitudinal changes (e.g., Smith, Chen and Yang, 2008; Yang and Smith, 2009). The sequence of effects follows what is called the hierarchy-of-effects model (Lavdige and Steiner, 1961; Smith, Chen, and Yang, 2008). Articles have documented advertising creativity’s positive effect on recall (Stone, Besser, and Lewis, 2000; Pieters, Warlop, and Wedel, 2002; Till and Baack, 2005; Baack, Wilson, and Till, 2008; Sheinin, Varki, and Ashley, 2011), advertisement attitude (e.g., Kover, Goldberg, and James, 1995; Ang and Low, 2000; Till and Baack, 2005; Smith et al., 2007), brand attitude (e.g., Ang and Low, 2000; Till and Baack, 2005; Smith et al., 2007), brand interest (Dahlén, Rosengren, and Törn, 2008; Smith,
Chen, and Yang, 2008), perceived brand ability (Dahlén, Rosengren, and Törn, 2008), brand trust (Sheinin, Varki, and Ashley, 2011), and purchase intention (Kover, Goldberg, and James, 1995; Smith et al., 2007; Smith, Chen, and Yang, 2008).

The majority of articles have explained the positive effects by using information processing theory, meaning that a divergent and yet relevant content that is creative advertising lead to increased attention (Picters, Warlop, and Wedel, 2002; Till and Baack, 2005; Smith et al., 2007; Smith, Chen, and Yang, 2008; Baack, Wilson, and Till, 2008), greater motivation (Smith et al., 2007), arousal (Ang and Low, 2000; Poels and Dewitte, 2008; Heath, Nairn, and Bottomley 2009), affect (Yang and Smith, 2009; Sheinin, Varki, and Ashley, 2011), and a willingness to postpone the purchase decision and thus stay open to evaluate advertised alternatives (Yang and Smith, 2009). These processing effects then in turn affect the viewers’ evaluation of the advertisement and the brand.

Few authors have introduced alternative theories on how advertising creativity work. One exception is Heath, Nairn, and Bottomley (2009) who argue that creativity does not lead to higher attention, but that the emotional content in creative advertisements lead to more arousal which in turn leads to less attention and counter arguments, making the advertisement more effective. Thus, they argue in one sense against existing theory that creative advertisement leads to more arousal and thus more affect (Kover, Goldberg, and James, 1995; Ang and Low, 2000). However, they still use an information processing approach. The only exception to this approach is Dahlén, Rosengren, and Törn (2008) who explains the positive affect of creative advertisements by signal theory. They show that creative advertisements signal greater marketing effort on behalf of the advertiser and the brand, resulting in more brand interest and perceived brand quality.

To sum up, during the last years we have witnessed numerous studies that document the positive effects of advertising creativity. Creativity is
linked to each stage in the hierarchy-of-effects and is predominantly explained by information processing theory. However, alternative theoretical perspectives, or focus on other dependent variables might enhance our knowledge of advertising creativity.

Table 4. Response, process oriented articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Dependent factor(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kover, Goldberg, and James, 1995</td>
<td>Emotional connection, information processing</td>
<td>Ad attitude, Purchase intentions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone, Besse, Lewis, 2000</td>
<td>Information processing; arousal</td>
<td>Ad attitude, recall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ang and Low, 2000</td>
<td>Information processing; attention</td>
<td>Ad and brand attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pieters, Warlop, and Wedel, 2002</td>
<td>Information processing; attention</td>
<td>Recall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tellis et al., 2005</td>
<td>Information processing</td>
<td>Recall, Ad and brand attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Till and Baack, 2005</td>
<td>Information processing; attention</td>
<td>Ad and brand attitude, Purchase intentions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith et al., 2007</td>
<td>Information processing; attention, motivation, depth of processing</td>
<td>Perceived brand quality, brand interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahlén, Rosengren, and Törn, 2008</td>
<td>Signal theory: sender effort</td>
<td>Attention, Interest, Depth of processing, Ad and brand attitude and purchase intentions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, Chen and Yang, 2008</td>
<td>Information processing; attention</td>
<td>Recall, Recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baack, Wilson, and Till 2008</td>
<td>Information processing; attention</td>
<td>Viewing intentions, purchase intentions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poels and Dewitte, 2008</td>
<td>Bioinformational theory of emotion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang and Smith, 2009</td>
<td>Information processing; affect, desire to postpone closure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heath, Natin, and Bottomley, 2009</td>
<td>Processing, emotive content (arousal); lower attention and counter argument</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheinin, Varzi, and Ashley, 2011</td>
<td>Information processing; affect</td>
<td>Recall, ad and brand attitude, brand trust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Towards a Better Understanding of Advertising Creativity

On the basis of this body of research, I have identified three areas in which there seem to be gaps or inconclusive findings in the literature. I will now address these areas and formulate a research agenda that sets the ground for my six empirical studies.

Who Should Judge Advertising Creativity?

A number of studies have advanced the literature on advertising creativity by testing how such creativity impacts advertising effectiveness (e.g. Smith, Chen, and Yang, 2008; Dahlén, Rosengren, and Törn, 2008). In concluding that creativity in advertising impacts favorably on receivers, these studies have predominantly relied on advertising professional definitions of creative advertising by either using an expert jury to assess creative advertisements or by only using the divergence/relevance factors of creativity. Recent studies find that other receivers (e.g. consumers) are indeed able to assess the creativity of advertising and that these evaluations have impact on their attitude towards the advertisement and the brand (Dahlén, Rosengren, and Törn, 2008; West, Kover, and Caruana, 2008). However, this literature has not systematically matched different audiences’ assessments with advertising effectiveness. If consumers are able and inclined to assess and consequently reward advertising creativity, it becomes vital to understand how they make their assessments. Furthermore, it would be particularly interesting to match consumers’ assessments with those of advertising professionals in order to compare and evaluate existing research on how advertising creativity might work.
What’s in Advertising Creativity

Knowledge about how to systematically plan for advertising creativity seems to be lacking in the advertising industry (Nyilasy and Reid, 2009a), and there seems to be a gap between what researchers and advertising professionals know and what they believe (Nyilasy and Reid, 2009a). Although creativity is a valuable subject matter for advertising, the ways in which it can be operationalized are not obvious (Sasser and Koslow, 2008; West, Kover, and Caruana, 2008). Many of the positive effects of creative advertising have been measured and explained in terms of the combination of divergent, but relevant, content that is attributed to creative advertising (e.g., Smith et al., 2008; Yang and Smith, 2009). Still, research shows that there may be other factors that might explain creativity (West, Kover, and Caruana, 2008). Factors such as craftsmanship or humor might also be included in assessing of creative advertising (West, Kover, and Caruana, 2008). To date, no study has tested these dimensions with consumers and advertising professionals assessment of advertising creativity. To fully understand advertising creativity, research needs to take into account what dimensions constitute advertising creativity and how they contribute to the various effects of creative advertising.

Effects of Advertising Creativity

Although creativity has been the focus of the advertising industry for many years, more extensive research on the connection between advertising creativity and measures of advertising effectiveness has only emerged in the last decade (i.e., Ang and Low, 2000; Stone, Besser, and Lewis, 2000; Pieters, Warlop, and Wedel, 2002; Till and Back, 2005; Ang, Lee, and Leong, 2007; Smith, Chen, and Yang, 2008). The focus has been on a information processing theory, which links advertising creativity with communication effectiveness and different hierarchy-of-effects measures (e.g., Smith, Chen, and Yang, 2008). However, Dahlén,
Rosengren, and Törn (2008) used signal theory to show that creative advertisements signaled greater sender effort to the consumer. By partaking in this perspective, by asking the question could creativity signal additional information to the audience?, new insight might be found and developed.

Studies on the effects of advertising creativity have used a traditional hierarchy-of-effects perspective, documenting how creativity influences processing and attitude of the advertisement and the brand. However, advertising creativity research might need to move beyond the traditional communication objective perspective to find new insight in how creativity might work. For example, research has shown that consumers who are exposed to a brand might not only be affecting on how they think about the brand per se but also on how they think themselves (e.g. Fitzsimons, Chartrand, Fitzsimons, 2008). In an experimental setting, Fitzsimons, Chartrand, and Fitzsimons (2008) showed that consumers that were exposed to the logo of Apple, who they perceived the more innovative, compared to an IBM logo Apple logo, the consumers perceived themselves as more innovative and also performed better in an creativity test. Could this also be the case for creative advertising, meaning that it can make consumers more creative themselves?

Creativity has in some cases shown to be a mediator in other fields of advertising research (e.g. Heiser, Sierra, and Torres, 2008). For example Heiser, Sierra, and Torres (2008) explained the positive effect of a cartoon spokesperson in an advertisement in terms of perceptions of advertising creativity. This shows that creativity can serve as a mediator of previously investigated effects. This thesis asks the question if there might be other areas within advertising research that can be explained and extended by investigating the role that advertising creativity might play?
Chapter 3

INTRODUCING THE ARTICLES

In the sections above, I have summarized what is known about advertising creativity today and discussed paths for future research. On the basis of this conceptual understanding and discussion, I will now present my own research in order to explain how this thesis contributes to the understanding of advertising creativity. In this section, I present an overview of the five articles, each of which contributes to how to measure, evaluate, and plan creative advertisements.

The first article develops the understanding on how consumers assess creativity differently than advertising agency professionals (White and Smith, 2001; West, Kover, Caruana, 2008), by testing how both groups weigh the factors divergence, relevance, craftsmanship and humor. The findings highlight that consumers weight relevance, craftsmanship and humor to a higher degree in their assessment of advertising creativity. The second article shows that advertising professionals reason differently when addressing the creativity or the effectiveness of an advertisement. The findings are particular interesting when considering the importance of a common understanding within agencies and between agencies and clients (Hackley, 2003; Stuhlfaut, 2011). The third article takes a new perspective on “creative” and “effective” advertisements by comparing
the effects on the advertised brand for advertisements that have won either a creativity award or an effectiveness award. The findings show that creative advertisements is perceived by consumers to signal more sender effort and expense when compared with “average” and “effective” advertisements, which in turn positively affect brand attitude, interest and word-of-mouth intentions. The fourth article takes an “outside-the-box” perspective on the positive effects of creative advertisements. It shows that creative ads not only benefit the advertised brand but also the media vehicle and those who are exposed to the advertisement. This introduces a new perspective on the effects of creative advertising by measuring effects on other stakeholders. The fifth article links creativity to the emerging literature on the effects of artwork included in marketing tools. By investigating the role of art in advertising, the article shows that by enhancing perceptions of creativity, the inclusion of art can lead to positive effects on the advertised brand.

**Methodology**

The first step in this research process was to document the researcher perspective on advertising creativity. Thus, a theoretical analysis was first conducted leading to the list of 107 academic articles that I have described earlier. For the empirical studies some specific requirements was set in order to be able to investigate the research questions. As this thesis sets out to test how different audiences perceive advertising creativity, samples from different populations were necessary. Most important was the inclusion of a large consumer and advertising professional sample to enable investigations and comparison of how these two audiences view advertising creativity. These two requirements were the foundation of study 1 and 2, which explore how consumers and advertising professionals think about advertising creativity. Study 3 to 5 are experimental studies used to investigate potential side effects that creativity might have on consumers and media vehicles. Study 6
connects creativity with the emerging field of how artistry in advertising design influence effectiveness. The specifications for all seven studies are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Article(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Consumer creativity study</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
<td>4,398 consumers</td>
<td>1, 2 and 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Advertising professional creativity study</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
<td>2,201 advertising professionals</td>
<td>1 and 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Side effects of creativity on consumers (1)</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
<td>274 consumers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Side effects of creativity on consumers (2)</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
<td>129 consumers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Side effects of creativity on media vehicles</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
<td>121 students</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Creativity and art in advertisements</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
<td>255 students</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Article 1: What if advertising creativity is for everyone?

Exploring the Perceptions of Consumers versus Practitioners

Authors: Erik Modig and Micael Dahlén

Status: Second-round review in the Journal of Advertising
This study compares how consumers and advertising professionals assess advertising creativity. Studies have shown that consumers and practitioners assess advertising creativity differently (Smith and White, 2001; West, Kover, and Caruana, 2008) however, no study has formally tested these differences. In order to better understand how advertising creativity works, this study compares the differences between consumers’ and advertising professionals’ assessments of creative advertising by documenting how they weight the underlying factors divergence, relevance, craftsmanship, and humor.

In order to compare these assessments, this article uses a sample of 20 advertisements with various degree of creativity. The study was conducted using an Internet survey, which is similar to the procedure used by Dahlén, Rosengren, and Törn (2008). The consumer sample encompassed a representative cross-section of the working population, which was derived from an Internet survey panel provided by a professional market-research firm. A total of 4,398 consumers participated. To address the advertising professional population, we used a list of e-mail addresses compiled by the national advertising association, which resulted in 2,201 valid responses. All respondents were randomly exposed to one of the 20 stimulus advertisements and then asked to complete a questionnaire, as in Smith and White (2001).

By extending the research about consumers’ (e.g., White and Smith, 2001; Dahlén, Rosengren, and Törn, 2008; West, Kover, and Caruana, 2008) and advertising professionals’ (e.g., White and Smith, 2001; West et al., 2008) assessments of advertising creativity, this study confirms that consumers are able judges of advertising creativity and that their assessments differ from those of advertising professionals. Significant differences are found between the two samples in terms of the four factors. The findings specifically show that consumers find divergence to be less important when judging creativity. At the same time, consumers are more prone to weight in relevance, craftsmanship, and humor than advertising professionals. These findings add to existing theories on how
consumers and advertising professionals reason about advertising creativity. One explanation for these differences could be that consumers focus less on the “how” of advertising and more on the “what is in it for me” perspective. Consumers might attribute more importance to relevance, humor, and craftsmanship because they view these elements as simple measures of advertising value. These findings suggest a need to revise existing theories and form new theories that take consumers’ assessments into account.

In relation to advertising planning, the investigation suggests that both consumers and advertising professionals appreciate advertising creativity, but that they adopt two different perspectives on this mutual goal. In this respect, consumers might not only function as a resource for pre-tests of the overall, explicit level of creativity in an advertisement before it leaves the drawing table, but they might also offer inspiration for and indications of those aspects of creativity that they find most important. To this end, they may, as a target group, be even better equipped than the professionals to provide input on dimensions of creativity such as humor, craftsmanship and relevance.

Article 2: Does it matter what you look for?

What practitioners see in “creative” versus “effective” advertisements

Authors: Erik Modig and Micael Dahlén

Status: First-round review in the International Journal of Advertising

This paper investigates how advertising professionals assess advertising creativity compared to advertising effectiveness by posing the question:
Does it matter whether agencies aim for creativity or effectiveness when producing an advertisement? On the one hand, one would not expect a focus on creativity or effectiveness to matter, as most advertising literature to date merges the two. For example, several authors suggest that effectiveness is invariably the result of creativity (Kover, 1995; Nyilasy and Read, 2009a). On the other hand, the existence of separate awards for creativity and effectiveness in many markets suggests that the outcomes of creativity-based work and effectiveness-based work differ in practice.

The article extends the findings and the vocabulary found in the large body of research on advertising professionals’ assessments of advertising creativity (e.g., White and Smith, 2001; Koslow, Sasser, and Riordan, 2003; West, Kover, and Caruana, 2008) to include advertising professionals’ assessments of advertising effectiveness. With few exceptions (Kover, 1995; Nyilasy and Read, 2009a, 2009b), assessments of advertising effectiveness have been neglected in previous research. Therefore, this paper furthers the understanding of advertising effectiveness and the ways in which advertising works by detailing the experience and tacit knowledge that advertising professionals share.

The article also uses data from study three on advertising professionals and compares the ratings on advertising creativity and effectiveness with those of the factors divergence, relevance, craftsmanship and humor for 20 real advertisements.

The findings show that what advertising professionals are looking for affects their perceptions of advertisements. Advertising professionals rate advertisements differently on the four sub-dimensions divergence, relevance, craftsmanship and humor depending on whether they are asked to assess advertising creativity or advertising effectiveness. The results indicate that the trend in the advertising literature to merge the two concepts might be misleading. Advertising literature should rather treat creativity and effectiveness as separate constructs. Although
research finds that advertising effectiveness is closely linked to creativity, different factors contribute to an advertisement’s effects in the minds of the advertising professionals. This paper contributes to a deeper understanding of these differences.

The understanding of the differences between different judges may also enhance the advertisement planning process by highlighting different perspectives and common ground both within agencies (e.g., between “creatives” and “strategists”), and between agencies and clients. This could be of particular importance as research show that the communication between agencies and clients are a reoccurring issue for conflict and ineffectiveness (Hackley, 2003; Hackley and Kover, 2007; Stewart, Cheng, and Wan, 2008).

**Article 3: Consumer-perceived signals of “creative” versus “efficient” advertising**

**Investigating the roles of expense and effort**

Authors: Erik Modig, Micael Dahlén and Jonas Colliander

Status: Second-round review in the International Journal of Advertising

This paper takes a broader perspective on advertising creativity than articles one and two by investigating whether creative advertising can have positive effects on consumer perceptions of a brand and whether “too efficient” advertising can have negative effects on consumer perceptions of a brand. By using marketing signal theory (e.g., Dahlén, Rosengren, and Törn, 2008; Kirmani and Rao, 2000; Whysall, 2005)
this paper examines whether consumers make inferences about brands not only on the basis of what is explicitly communicated but also on the basis of how the message is communicated. More specifically, the paper hypothesizes that high (low) perceived advertising expense and effort signal positive (negative) properties about the brand to consumers.

The hypotheses are tested on the data from study one. However, it focuses on three different types of the sampled advertisements: creativity-award-winning, effectiveness-award-winning and non-award-winning advertisements. The results show that highly creative advertising might have positive effects on brand attitude, brand interest, and brand word-of-mouth, while efficient advertising might have corresponding negative effects. We find that advertisements with higher-than-average perceived expense and effort have a positive effect on consumer evaluations and that advertisements with lower-than-average perceived expense have a negative effect. This research contributes to the signal theory perspective on advertising creativity and shows that creativity signal both higher perceived sender effort and expense.

In this regard, advertisers should be aware of the signals that they send to consumers and carefully consider the fact that how advertising communicates can have both positive and negative effects on consumer perceptions of a brand. This suggests that the traditional division between “creative” and “effective” advertising should be reassessed, and that consumer perceptions of expense and effort could add important input for advertising effectiveness measurements.
Article 4: Think Outside the Ad

Can Advertising Creativity Benefit More than the Sender?

Authors: Sara Rosengren, Micael Dahlén, and Erik Modig

Status: Second-round review in the Journal of Advertising

This paper take a “think-outside-the-box” approach to the effects of advertising creativity in order to find effects that might have been neglected by the previous dominated communication objectives perspective on the effects of advertising creativity. The article pose the question “Can advertising creativity benefit more than the sender?”. By referencing to the literature on consumer creativity the article test whether advertising creativity might benefit both consumers and the media vehicles in which the advertisements are placed. More specifically, the findings show that creative advertising can make consumers who are exposed to the advertising more creative and increase the perceived value of the advertising’s media context.

The questions are tested in three experimental studies. The first study exposed consumers to more versus less creative ads and showed that the consumers who were exposed to the creative advertisement performed better in a standard test of creative ability. The reasoning builds on, and contributes to, two bodies of research. First, it shows that the exposure of a more creative advertising lead to increased consumer processing of the advertisement (e.g., Baack, Wilson, and Till, 2008; Smith, Chen, and Yang, 2008) and that a heightened level of processing can impact favorably on consumer creativity (e.g., Burrought and Mick, 2004; Dahl and Moreau, 2002, 2007). Second, the study show that the exposure to creative advertising also heightenened the perccived level of own creativity.
which in turn impact on actual creativity as it makes the consumer more prone to take a creative perspective (e.g., Tiernay and Farmer, 2002, 2011). The effects were then confirmed in a follow up study. The third study manipulates the advertising creativity in a magazine and showed that enhanced creativity favorably effects consumer-perceived value of the media context.

These three studies find that creatively “thinking outside the box” in advertising can give us additional insight on how advertising creativity might be valuable for other stakeholders than the advertiser. The findings add to existing knowledge by showing that advertising creativity may impact consumers in ways that are beneficial not only to senders but to consumers as well. Advertisers could use this finding as an inspiration to explore new potential positive effects on consumers.

Article 5: Advertising artistry and brand evaluation

Can art in advertisements increase perceived creativity and luxury and enhance advertising effectiveness?

Author: Erik Modig

Status: First-round review in the Journal of Marketing Communication

This article takes a new perspective on advertising creativity and links it to the literature about artistry in advertising design. It shows that perceptions of creativity explain the positive effects on brand evaluation
found when images of artworks are added to an advertisement. The findings bridge the two streams of research about artwork in advertising and advertising creativity. By answering the question: How does the presence of visual art influence the way consumers view an advertisement?, this article introduces advertising creativity to another stream of research.

Research on the potentially positive effects of the inclusion of art on consumer perceptions of the advertised brand is scarce, and the only studies explain the positive effect on brand evaluation by enhances perceptions of luxury (Hagtvedt and Patrick 2008a and 2008b). This article adds to this stream of research by showing that perceptions of creativity mediate the positive impact on brand attitude, interest and perceived brand ability.

The study was conducted by included images with different level of artistry in an identical advertisement. The study was distributed to undergraduate students at a large university in a west European country. Each respondent was asked to help evaluate an advertisement’s design for the chosen brand. They were provided with a booklet containing one of the five advertisements as well as the questionnaire. The respondents were not made aware of the existence of five different versions of the advertisement or the purpose of the study. In total, 255 completed questionnaires were collected.

The article extends the research on advertising creativity and on artistry in advertising imagery. First it shows that the inclusion of an artwork in an advertisement can influence perceptions of creativity. This corresponds to previous research on how advertising professionals can achieve advertising creativity (e.g., Goldenberg, Mazursky, and Solomon, 1999; Goldenberg and Mazursky, 2008). Second, this paper extends the understanding of how the level of artistry in advertising imagery influence brand evaluation by showing that perceptions of advertising creativity are a mediator of the effects.
Chapter 4

DISCUSSION

The aim of this thesis was to contribute to the understanding of creativity within advertising. Specifically, this thesis has addressed the issues of who should judge advertising creativity, how that creativity should be measured, and the effects on marketing objectives of such creativity. This thesis contributes to existing theories about advertising planning and effectiveness by extending prior research (e.g. Sasser and Koslow, 2008; Nyilasy and Reid, 2009a). By presenting the two largest studies to date on consumers’ and advertising professionals’ perceptions of advertising creativity, this thesis offers confirmation of existing theories and new insights about how advertising creativity works. It also offers new, “creative” perspectives, which hopefully highlight inspiring directions for future research, not only with regard to advertising creativity but also in relation to the broader field of advertising effectiveness research.

In the following section, I discuss how this thesis contributes to advertising research and to advertising practice. Even though each of the five articles included in this thesis contributes to a specific stream of research, this discussion focuses on their contributions to the understanding of advertising creativity as a whole and how that creativity
correlates with advertising effectiveness. For more information on specific studies and their findings, please see the individual articles.

Contribution to Advertising Research

Even though some researchers view creativity as the heart of advertising production, several facets of creativity’s functions have not been addressed. In fact, academics have repeatedly asked for more research on advertising creativity (White, 1972; Zinkhan, 1993; Sasser and Koslow, 2008). This thesis answers these calls and seeks to contribute to this growing stream of research.

Synthesizing Advertising Creativity Research

The starting point of my thesis reviews 107 academic articles about advertising creativity. Although every article cannot be offered the space it needs or might deserve in any literature review (Hart, 1999), I have sought to present a detailed overview of research about advertising creativity to date. My literature review is relevant since researchers have stated that much research in the field lacks an understanding of previous knowledge, and hence cumulative progress on the issue of Advertising Creativity has been unnecessarily slow (Sasser and Koslow, 2008). My review extends that of Sasser and Koslow (2008) by including 41 additional articles. Especially this thesis offers a discussion of the 30 most recent article published between 2008 and 2012, which is important given the rapid expansion of the field. Overall, the literature review indicate that the extant research have primarily focused on the production side of advertising creativity by answering to questions regarding how advertising agencies should organize themselves, how individuals can become creative, and which processes can be used to produce more creative advertisements. On the other hand, my review
highlights a dearth of studies on the response-oriented side of advertising creativity. Hence, the review highlights some gaps in the literature that I have sought to fill.

Judges of advertising creativity

This thesis adds to the growing number of articles that show that consumers are able and inclined to assess the overall level of creativity within an advertisement (Dahlén, Rosengren, and Törn, 2008). In so doing it answers to calls for more studies on consumer response to advertising (Bernardin and Kemp-Robertson, 2008; Sasser and Koslow, 2008). This thesis shows that consumers are indeed able to assess the creativity of an advertisement and that they rate effectiveness higher for advertisements they judge as creative. This finding add to previous research that shows that advertising professionals’ and students’ assessments of creativity influence perceived advertising effectiveness (e.g., Smith, Chen and Yang, 2008; Dahlén Rosengren, and Törn, 2008). However, this research show that even though consumers value creativity in the same sense as advertising professionals they need not judge the level of creativity equally. This suggest that consumer opinion are important when evaluating advertising creativity.

By quantitatively matching consumers’ assessments with those of advertising professionals I have sought to extend the literature that compares consumers’ and advertising professionals’ perspectives on advertising creativity (White and Smith, 2001; Koslow, Sasser, and Riordan, 2003; West, Kovcr, and Caruana, 2008), as well as the literature on advertising in general (Nyalisy and Reid, 2009a).
Definition of advertising creativity

One aim with this thesis was to contribute to the knowledge about how we can and should measure advertising creativity. By quantifying the differences in advertising professionals’ and consumers’ assessments, this thesis contributes to this research stream about how audiences define and assess advertising creativity (e.g., Smith and Yang, 2004; Smith et al., 2007; Kim, Han, and Yoon, 2010). The findings suggest a broader perspective on creativity is needed in the field, given to the currently predominating focus on ‘divergence’ and ‘relevance’ as the sole factors important for creativity. Specifically, my studies show that when it comes to defining advertising creativity, taking into account the consumer perspective adds value to current research. This validates previous findings that show that consumers use additional factors in their definitions of creativity, compared to professional advertisers (West, Kover, and Caruana, 2008; Kim, Han, and Yoon, 2010). As there seems to be a lack of consensus within the advertising industry on how consumers assess advertising creativity, the findings in my thesis may help to serve as a bridge between the differences between ‘the professionals’ definition’ and ‘the consumers’ definition’ of advertising creativity (Kover, Goldberg, and James, 1995; El-Murad and West, 2004; Nyilasy and Reid, 2009a). My findings show that, in comparison to advertising professionals, consumers view divergence as less important, while ‘relevance’, ‘humor’, and ‘well-craftiness’ as relatively more important dimensions of creativity. This implies that different groups define advertising creativity by adopting a “what’s in it for me” perspective that reflects their own position. As a result, a definition of advertising creativity must take the specific role of the audience and its goals into account.

A result of my findings is that advertising creativity would benefit from adapting the socio-cognitive of creativity as ‘context specific’ (Amabile, 1997). Consequently, the goals and needs of the sampled advertisements and respondents need to be considered when analyzing data. As shown
in Article 1, consumers and advertising professionals use different strategies to assess creativity depending on which advertisement they evaluate. This finding raises the question of whether creativity can be defined in the sense of a common definition relevant to all individuals and advertisements. My conclusion from this research suggests that there can be no such unified definition of creativity, as each individual makes his or her own subjective judgment, a judgment that can also differ depending on the situation or culture (compare to Kim, Han, and Yoon, 2010). This finding questions the notion found in previous research that creativity can always be defined as something ‘divergent’ and ‘relevant’ (e.g. Smith and Yang, 2004; Smith et al., 2007; Smith, Chen and Yang, 2008). Theories adopting too narrow a definition of creativity will not fulfill the potential of creativity in advertising. Notably, however, the four factors presented in Articles 1 and 2 can serve as a tool for predicting the level of creativity, even though all aspects need not be significant in all situations. This finding both revises and re-formulates extant theories on assessments of advertising creativity.

**Effects of Advertising Creativity**

This thesis contributes to the understanding of advertising effectiveness in three ways. First, it uses a signal theory perspective on advertising creativity and shows that consumers’ perceptions of how advertising messages are conveyed impact the effectiveness of those messages. Article 3 shows that advertising creativity signals above-average sender expense and sender effort, which in turn favorably impact brand attitudes, brand interest, and brand WOM intentions. This shows that advertising creativity might not only enhance persuasion but also send signals about the brand. By contrasting above-average creative advertisements with “effective” advertisements that signaled below-average sender expense, my research challenges the prevailing distinction between creative and effective advertising. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first study
to address this issue using a large-scale quantitative study involving real brands. As such, my research furthers the research seeking to link advertising creativity with signal theory (as Dahlén, Rosengren, and Torn, 2008), and thus contributes to the understanding of how consumers process creative advertisements. Surely, more research is needed about how advertising really works and what signals that are sent to consumers through more or less creative advertising.

Second, Article 4 takes an “out-of-the-box” perspective on the effects of advertising creativity. It moves beyond the traditional hierarchy of effects to show that creative advertisements can enhance both perceptions of the advertising medium and the creativity of the viewer. By examining effects that are not connected with the advertised product and brand, this research shows that creativity might benefit more than the sender. The findings that creative advertisements also affect the medium and the viewer, suggest that additional stakeholders, such as media owners (publishing houses and TV stations), should be included in theories on the effectiveness of advertising creativity.

Third, Article 5 connects creativity with research on art infusion, as it shows that creativity mediates the positive effect the inclusion of art in advertisements can have on brand evaluation. This research therefore connects advertising creativity with a new stream of research and shows that perceptions of creativity might play a role in explaining other phenomena in marketing literature. This research corresponds with signal theory in the sense that the presence of art signal creativity, which in turn affect brand evaluation. Future research should investigate other advertising elements that might signal creativity and thus contribute to the overall perception of creativity. Such an investigation would help researchers better understand how specific advertising elements can influence advertising creativity.
Chapter 4

Contribution to Advertising Practice

Creativity as an advertising strategy

Creativity has the ability to enhance processing of an advertisement, which in turn can result in a more elaborate cognitive response in the form of stronger brand recall and an improved understanding of the advertising message (e.g., Smith et al., 2008; Yang and Smith, 2009). Through a unique combination of divergent, relevant, well-crafted and humorous content, creative advertising can offer value to the consumer, which translates into more favorable attitudes towards the advertisement and the advertised brand. These attitudes have been shown to have an impact on purchase intentions. Hence, creative advertisements has the potential to impact sales both directly via enhanced persuasion and indirectly via enhanced brand attitudes. Therefore, advertisers should pursue a creative strategy in cases where enhanced brand attitude can be translated into increased sales.

As consumers become more advertising savvy, traditional methods of persuasion might become less efficient. Creative advertising might therefore be of extra interest, as it can benefit advertisers by offering real value to consumers as well as a chance to communicate with consumers without the risk of triggering persuasion knowledge. By offering creative advertisements, brands provide real value to consumers in exchange for their attention.

Using the “right” judge of advertising creativity

This thesis shows that although consumers’ and advertising professionals’ judgments of creativity work in the same way – there is a positive relationship between their creativity assessments and advertising
effectiveness – these two groups differ in terms of the importance they attribute to various factors, including divergence, relevance, craftsmanship and humor. Advertisers may therefore be well advised to include consumers in the planning process to a higher degree and welcome their opinions on the development of creative advertisements. Such activities might be of specific interest in relation to relevance, craftsmanship and humor in advertising, as consumers seem more likely to value these dimensions of advertising creativity.

A common language for advertising creativity

Advertising agencies seem to have no formalized techniques or definitions for judging advertising creativity (El-Murad and West, 2004). Clients are dependent on the judgments of the individuals who manage their accounts and the codes used by specific creatives (Stuhlfaut, 2011). An improved, unified understanding of creativity might guarantee a higher level of creative output. The results of my research suggest that agencies would benefit from developing and implementing a common understanding of creativity and techniques for its measurement on the basis of current research. This thesis might serve as an initial step towards such a definition.

Who can benefit from advertising creativity?

As shown above, advertisers and brand managers have much to win from considering the level of creativity in their advertising. Advertisers can directly influence the impact of their advertisement by increasing the level of creativity. Brand managers can use creative advertising as a route to enhance brand attitudes among consumers, which in turn should result in increased sales.
As shown in article four, advertising creativity is not only beneficial for the advertised brand but also for the individuals in the audience, as such creativity can rub off on the audience. Advertising creativity is therefore not only a mission for advertisers – it is also relevant on a macro level for media partners, individuals and the advertising industry. Creativity can shift advertising from an “unavoidable evil” to content that offers value to the individual consumer. As this might enhance society’s general attitude towards advertising, creativity should be a goal for the entire advertising industry in relation to refurbishing its somewhat tarnished reputation. In addition, creativity can enable media owners to offer additional value to their readers. This might allow advertising to turn from a necessary source of revenue into a strategic tool that can be used to offer value to the reader and, in the long run, to increase the value of the media outlet.

Limitations

In this thesis I have aimed at making a contribution to the academic literature on advertising creativity. The thesis is not a comprehensive guide about how to successful plan creative advertising, but one attempt to help researchers and professionals in approving advertising theories and practice. Given this aim and scope I have had to make certain choices regarding methods and perspectives. These choices come with limitations and implications on my results and contribution. Each article has its own specific limitations, which is stated in each article. In the following section I will highlight certain overall limitations with the research methods employed.

One limitation is that these studies are carried out in a western European country and therefore dependent on specific cultural aspects from this part of the world. It might not be the case that creativity is assessed in a similar way in other parts of the world. Further, the implementation and
use of creativity within the advertising industry might be different across various nations and cultures, which put a limit on the external validity of the studies presented. This needs to be taken into account when considering the suggestions and implications for management in this thesis.

Besides these limitations in external validity, there is an obvious methodological limitation in how we treat creativity as a dichotomous variable in some of the studies. As we can observe in article 1 there are levels of creativity, which suggest that creativity is more nuanced than a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ variable. By treating creativity as a yes or no variable we do not control for variance or any specific level of creativity in the tests. When we test a more versus a less creative advertisement we have little knowledge about how high or low these measures are, compared to “normal” advertisements. Future research should test how different levels of “high” versus “low” creative advertising might affect different measures of effectiveness.

Another methodological limitation is the fact that we do not perform any follow up studies. Without repetition of studies it is hard to say that the effects that are discussed in this thesis will be consistent over time or how long they will endure. Even though we suggest that creative advertising has an impact in the long run, no study to date has measured the long-term impact of advertising creativity on for example brand equity and sales. Future research should do several studies over a longer time period in order to measure the effects of creativity over time.

Another limitation is that we do not compare the relative effect of creativity compared to other advertising strategies. Even though advertising professionals and research suggest that creativity is one of the most powerful tools to outperform competition we do not control for that in these experiments. This might be a goal for future studies about advertising creativity in order to answer the question not only that advertising creativity matters, but if it matters the most.


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