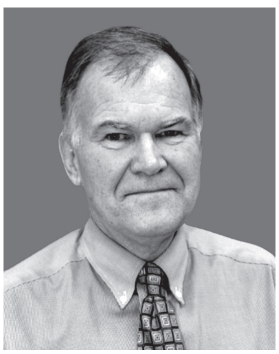
Editor's Desk

What Do We Know About Creativity?

JOHN B. FORD
Editor-in-Chief,
Journal of Advertising Research
Eminent Scholar and Professor of Marketing and International Business,
Strome College of Business, Old Dominion University
jbford@odu.edu



The quantification of creativity in advertising is an ongoing challenge that seems to remain just beyond the grasp of proper marketing research. The good news is that both academics and practitioners are closing the gap between execution and evaluation, and four papers in a special "What We Know about Creativity" collection demonstrates the breadth of that progress.

Does the conveying of passion in advertising make customers rate their products and brands more highly? In **"The Effects of Communicating Passion in Advertising: How Messages Like 'We Love What We Do!' Shape People's Product and Brand Evaluations"** (please see page 3), authors Micael Dahlen (Stockholm School of Economics), Helge Thorbjørnsen (Norwegian School of Economics), Jonas Colliander and Sara Rosengren (also from the Stockholm School of Economics), Alice Gemvik (AT Kearney), and Christian Thorwid (McKinsey and Co., Stockholm) find evidence that there is indeed a positive relationship.

So strong is their work that the *Journal*'s editors honored this paper as the winner of the third-annual Douglas C. West Advertising Creative Article award. Its findings suggest that, when a brand advertises that the company "loves" what it does, consumers believe that the company works harder and makes better quality products.

The authors also rationalized that since "passion can be transferred from leaders to employees in a management context," they suggest that emotional contagion would apply to the transfer of passion from a brand to consumers through advertising. To reach their findings, the authors conducted three studies in three product categories (coffee, soft drinks, and hand soap). Not only did they find that the use of passion in advertising sends a positive signal to consumers that the firm works harder to create better products, but they also found that "the positive emotion the brand signals by stating its passion also seems to spill over to the consumer and his or her brand attitudes and purchase intentions."

The creative-idea generation process is the focus of **"Why Do Great Creative Ideas Get Rejected? The Effect of Creative Ideation Processes on External Judges' Assessments,"** (please see page 12) by Mark Kilgour (University of Waikato), Scott Koslow (Macquarie University) and Huw O'Connor (also from University of Waikato).

The authors provide strong evidence that, in order to judge an idea for its creativity, an external judge needs to "agree that the idea an advertising professional generates and views as creative is high in both originality and appropriateness." Not only does the concept have to be considered creative, but the generator of that idea must be able to sell that idea to the external decision makers.

Some 49 creative professionals and 65 account executives took part in the "Great Creative Ideas" study and shared a one-page brief for a household-brand advertising campaign. The authors found that "the originality of creative ideas is relatively easy to recognize and accept." The downside: The people who generated the ideas "tended to rate their own ideas as more appropriate than did external judges." If external judges do not see the whole idea generation process, the authors contend, they may not be able to judge the appropriateness of the ideas which arise from the process.

To advance the practice of creativity in advertising, the research finds the best way forward is "to get rid of the notion that in evaluating ideas managers need to have confidence in those decisions – at least in the initial stages."

And, with that broad-stroke suggestion comes a two-stage idea-selection process.

- Find the most original ideas, even those that seemingly are outrageous.
- Identify "the strategy that underlies each idea."

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And, in support of that theory, the paper counsels, "Creative ideas do not speak for themselves; presentation is crucial."

How does the language of an advertisement affect a targeted audience's willingness to pay? In **"Can Your Advertisement Go Abstract without Affecting Willingness to Pay? Product-Centered versus Lifestyle Content in Luxury Brand Print Advertisements"** (please see page 28), authors Francesco Massara (Università IULM), Daniele Scarpi (University of Bologna) and Daniele Porcheddu (University of Sassari) examine print advertising for luxury brands to determine the connection between content and commitment.

The study first "disentangled advertising style (lifestyle- versus product-centered content) from the language used to convey the message." Then, through the lens of construal theory (the way that consumers envision the brand), the authors examined the role of lifestyle advertising in the shaping of the consumer's willingness to pay.

Their research demonstrates "that lifestyle advertising is more consistent with abstract language and that product-centered advertising is more consistent with concrete language." As such, the study concludes that "advertising style *per se* does not trigger construal levels but rather the language used in the advertisement." In such instances, construal level, therefore, becomes a key component since it significantly affects the consumer's willingness to pay for an advertised brand where a low construal level (less concrete envisioning of the brand) was found to lead to a higher willingness to pay.

In **"Gotcha! Realism of Comedic Violence and Its Impact on Brand Responses: What's So Funny about that Bloody Ad? The Moderating Role of Disposition to Laughter,"** (please see page 38), Malgorzata Karpinska-Krakowiak (University of Łódź) examines the use of comedic violence and its impact on consumers' brand responses.

In brief, Karpinska-Krakowiak found that highly violent humor had a negative impact on perceived realism and resulted in less positive brand attitudes when compared to low levels of comedic violence, suggesting that "when an advertisement incorporates highly violent humor, … consumers tend to deny its veracity, and the mediating effect of advertisement realism becomes negative."

The study also proposes that "claims of nonreality might shield a brand from negative consequences of aggressive humor." Interestingly, the author concludes that "people who enjoy being laughed at and who like laughing at others were observed to respond more favorably to comedic violence than nongelotophiles [those who do not like being laughed at] or nonkatagelasticists [those who do not enjoy laughing at others], particularly when advertising depictions were highly realistic."

While the use of comedic violence is growing in advertising, its use must be approached carefully in that such practice could have a negative impact on consumer brand perceptions if improperly used.

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The *Journal of Advertising Research* is a peer-reviewed publication that relies on the knowledge and experience of an Editorial Review Board of marketing academics and professionals to ensure that each paper has a fair reading and full final execution. The very nature of marketing research, however, means that our editors need to step beyond the board's expertise to identify subject-matter specialists who can give further expertise to our review process.

To that end, a variety of ad-hoc reviewers give freely of their time and effort to balance out the reviewing burden for our regular board members. Among the distinguished reviewers who volunteered to maintain the highest standards of research presentation in 2019 were Michael Belch, San Diego State University; Julie Bilby, RMIT University; Joël Brée, ESSCA School of Management; Jaime Core, University of Washington Tacoma; Catherine Demangeot, IESEG School of Management; Christian Dianoux, Université de Lorraine; Troy Elias, University of Oregon; Debbie Ellis, University of KwaZulu-Natal; Fernando Fastoso, University of York; Nathalie Fleck, Le Mans Université; Marie-Laure Gavard-Perret, Université Grenoble Alpes; Ritesh Ghosal, Infiniti Retail; and Joel Gjuka, Slalom.

Additionally, Linda Hamdi-Kidar, University of Toulouse; Agnès Helme-Guizon, Université Grenoble Alpes; Marco Ieva, University of Parma; Michael Kamins, Stony Brook University; Eunjin (Anna) Kim, University of Southern California; Kevin Lehnert, Grand Valley State University; Jean-François Lemoine, University of Paris I; Marie-Christine Lichtle, University of Burgundy; Karina T. Liljedal, Stockholm School of Economics; Lily Lin, Simon Fraser University; Géraldine Michel, University of Paris I; Prokriti Mukherji, King's College London; Cathy Nguyen, Ehrenberg-Bass Institute; Philippe Odou, University of Reims Champagne-Ardenne; and Gaëlle Pantin-Sohier, Université d'Angers.

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