

# Relationship Marketing In Professional Services: A Study Of Agency-client Dynamics In The Advertisin

## PRACTITIONER AND CUSTOMER VIEWS OF ADVERTISING CREATIVITY

Same Concept, Different Meaning?

Douglas C. West, Arthur J. Kover, and Albert Caruana

**ABSTRACT:** This paper examines and compares definitions of advertising creativity held by samples of New York agency practitioners and members of the television-viewing public. Specifically, the research investigates (1) definitions of creativity, and (2) evaluations of advertising from a creative perspective. Significant disagreement between the two sets of subjects was found. Explanations and insights are offered and implications are discussed.

Creativity is highly prized for its ability to gain attention and to impart information in an entertaining or challenging way. In the advertising business, it may affect agencies' gains or losses of clients and the careers of creatives (Reid and Rotfeld 1976; Zinkhan 1993). Furthermore, creative advertising has been consistently perceived as more favorable (Ang and Low 2000), more likable (Stone, Besser, and Lewis 2000), and able to bestow value to brands (Till and Baack 2005). It is said by practitioners that creativity is the only thing that distinguishes advertising from a salesperson's crude and often ineffective pitch. Yet perusal of the literature suggests little is known about how both practitioners and the viewing public discern advertising creativity. The role of creativity in advertising raises a number of important questions. In particular, to what extent are practitioner views of creativity individual or shared? Do these definitions coincide with those of the public that views their work? Moreover, these issues do not solely concern aesthetics. When creative work is broadcast and published, do both advertising professionals and those who view their work recognize it in the same way? Is what is considered creative original and new or is it a form of work falling within a limited group of ideas? Does the viewing public potentially respond, as hoped, to advertising that is considered creative by practitioners?

### ADVERTISING AND CREATIVITY

Creativity in advertising is a means to a concrete end. It is one of the ways for an advertising agency to affect persuasion,

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and ultimately, behavior (Till and Baack 2005). Definitions of advertising creativity by academics involve (1) originality, newness, or novelty, and (2), appropriateness (see Ang and Low 2000; Haberland and Dacin 1992; Koslow, Sasser, and Riordan 2003; Pieters, Warlop, and Wedel 2002; Stone, Besser, and Lewis 2000). Specifically, what is considered creative advertising usually depends on the judgments of creatives themselves (El-Murad and West 2003; Reid, King, and DeLorme 1998; Till and Baack 2005). Evidence of this comes from the many awards for creativity, all of which involve judgments by fellow creatives. In turn, these awards are frequently used in academic research to select creative advertising for analysis (El-Murad and West 2004).

Little is known about how advertising creativity is viewed by the public. Definitions of advertising and surveys of the public's attitudes toward advertising have not focused on ideas about creativity (e.g., Dyer and Shimp 1980; Moore and Moschis 1987; Reid and Soley 1982). Consumers receive and deconstruct advertising according to their needs, and what they think is creative can well differ from the "hunches" of creatives. People and advertisers have a long-term interest in understanding each other's views of creativity, as this allows relationships between them to be maintained (Friestad and Wright 1994, 1999).

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