

Factors of Creativity in Marketing Agencies

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Abstract: *Nowadays when we are bombarded with more than 1,600 messages a day, it is of a great importance to advertising agencies to be more creative and to develop unique and creative advertising campaigns that will differ and come out from the messages clutter of the media. As such the nature of the work calls for creativity of the employees and creativity is of paramount importance to marketing and advertising agencies. Therefore a number of authors point to the importance of enhancing work creativity to enhance organizational performance.*

However creativity is connected to and influenced by a number of variables. In an attempt to understand the determinants of creativity this paper employs the methodology developed by Grant and Berry (2011). This paper tests the assumption that creativity is influenced by the intrinsic motivation of the employees. Furthermore the paper also hypothesizes that this connection is moderated by prosocial motivation. The model is tested using a sample of employees in marketing agencies in the Balkan countries.

This paper will be of assistance to the marketing agencies and the science of marketing creativity, providing data which factors are having the biggest influence in the agency for creating better working conditions and better creative marketing agencies.

Keywords: *Creativity, organizational performance, motivation and marketing / advertising agency.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Creativity and innovativeness are very important for companies in today's world characterized by intensified global competition (Cummings and Oldham, 1997). Clients can choose from many different products and brands and they are constantly bombarded with many advertising messages. In such situation advertising messages serve as a last frontier for providing competitive advantage for the brands (Collister, 2007). Namely, creativity in advertising is a very powerful tool for communicating familiar and unfamiliar brands. Although it becomes increasingly difficult to position and differentiate brands, the literature points the effectiveness of using creativity to enable successful marketing communication. This means that instead of spending a lot of money on bigger advertising campaigns or longer and more frequent campaigns, the results can be achieved by increased creativity in advertising (Dahlen, Rosengren and Torn, 2008). As such it is of great importance for advertising agencies to provide their clients with creative ideas to help the brands' survival and prosperity. This leads to a situation where the clients expect a flow of creative, innovative ideas (Collister, 2007).

The significance of creativity is recognized in advertising (Collister, 2007; Dahlen, Rosengren and Torn, 2008; White and Smith, 2001). It is accentuated that the creativity has four different aspects: the product or the outcome of creative behaviour, the process, the personality and the environmental and cultural influences on behaviour (White and Smith, 2001). However much of the research was focused on understanding the creative process and on uncovering how different groups of people, namely advertising professional and the consumers judge the creative ideas, and very little attention was paid to the factors that can contribute to the production of creative ideas (Collister, 2007; White and Smith, 2001). In addition very little research is done in the field of advertising creativity and understanding the factors of creativity in South-Eastern Europe. Therefore this paper will try to shed some light on those topics using data from advertising agencies operating in three Balkan countries.

Since creativity is quite important for the work and success of advertising agencies, understanding the factors that can promote it and develop it are quite essential. Several research studies in different fields point to the value of creativity in achieving competitive advantage and also look at different factors that are linked to creativity (Cummings and Oldham, 1997; Oldham and Cummings, 1996). Among the factors studied are personal factors such as problem-solving style and employee personality (Cummings and Oldham, 1997) as well as the job design and organizational and work context including job complexity, supportive and non-controlling supervisors and stimulation co-workers. As a result of the analysis the studies also pointed to the importance of motivation as a factor of creativity although they did not study it directly (Cummings and Oldham, 1997; Oldham and Cummings, 1996). More direct support for the role of motivation in creativity comes from a research that examined leadership and employee creativity and leadership styles in different industries

(Tierney, Farmer and Graen, 1999) and pointed to the need for appropriate motivation and appropriate job placement to enhance creativity. Further studies in quite different settings found direct support for the link between two types of motivation, namely intrinsic and prosocial motivation in enhancing employees' creativity (Grant and Berry, 2011).

Having in mind the importance of creativity in advertising and the necessity to provide deeper understating on the factors that influence it, but are sparsely researched, the aim of this paper is: To provide understanding of the role of intrinsic and prosocial motivation in the creativity of advertising professionals from the Balkans.

The paper will start by examining the different definitions and aspects of creativity, it will then move onto uncovering the theoretical connection between the two motivations and creativity. The paper will then present the results of the current research and provide conclusion and recommendations at the end.

2. CREATIVITY AND MOTIVATION – AN IMPORTANT LINK

2.1. Understanding creativity

Creativity is a concept with quite different definitions and explanations. It is a concept connected quite widely to employee and organizational performance and it is pointed as a major aspect that enables organizational success. When looking at creativity in business context it is quite often used interchangeably with innovativeness (Scott and Bruce, 1994). However a number of authors point that creativity is linked with the production of novel ideas and innovativeness is linked with successful implementation of those creative ideas. As such creativity is viewed as a precursor for innovativeness (Cummings and Oldham, 1997; Oldham and Cummings, 1996; Scott and Bruce, 1994). This paper will therefore focus on the aspect of the organizational functioning linked with production of novel ideas. In such context a useful definition of creativity is provided by Amabile (1997, p.2) "creativity is simply a production of novel appropriate ideas in any realm of human activity". The important aspect of this definition is that creativity is focused on appropriate and usable ideas and solutions to problems. In that sense creative behaviour related to business need to focus on another characteristic and that is easy implementation of the ideas and influencing the way business is done (Amabile, 1998). Having novel, usable and easy implementable ideas is quite important in advertising as it enables creation of good advertising campaigns and client satisfaction (Collister, 2007; Dahlen, Rosengren and Torn, 2008; Stuhlfaut, 2010). This is important as in advertising companies creativity is a part of a dynamic process involving a number of people and it is a structured and collaborative team effort guided by organizational culture and the implicit theories about how to produce a creative idea (Stuhlfaut, 2011). Although the appraisal of creativity differs it was noted that supervisors and managers can serve as a valuable source when judging employees' work creativity because they are monitoring employees work on daily basis (Tierney, Farmer and Graen, 1999).

To fully understand the creativity in work context, an understanding of the factors that lead to creativity is needed. The first aspect of creativity is expertise which is the cognitive aspect of creativity seen through the pathways used to solve a problem or perform a task. The second aspect are the creative thinking skills linked to cognitive styles that enable taking new perspectives when it comes to looking at problems and having a working style favourable to pursuit of one's work. The third aspect is intrinsic motivation which determines what the person will actually do unlike the previous two that determine the capabilities (Amabile, 1997). The motivation aspect of creativity is actually the aspect that can be influenced by the social and work environment and as such it should be deeply understood as it is highly connected to supporting creativity in organizations through various interventions in the work context (Amabile, 1998). This points that a deeper understanding of work-related motivation factors is needed.

2.2. Intrinsic and prosocial motivation and creativity

Intrinsic motivation expands the individuals desire to learn, explore and engage their creativity (Grant and Berry, 2011). Studying intrinsic motivation in relation to creativity is quite important in advertising agencies where creativity is precondition to success and motivation is precondition to creativity (Stuhlfaut, 2011). In essence: "the more it is known about what intrinsically and extrinsically motivates creative professionals, the better those in the field could promote conditions that lead to positive outcomes" (Stuhlfaut, 2011, p.81).

In essence intrinsic motivation is based on people's need to feel competent and self-determined. As such intrinsic motivation arises in the active engagement with tasks that individuals find interesting and that satisfy the needs for competence and autonomy (Deci and Ryan, 2000). This is in contrast to extrinsic motivation where the extra-personal factors such as money, rewards, recognition or external threats serve as instigator of performance (Stuhlfaut, 2010), so it comes from the outside and is far less conducive to creativity but it can serve as a starting point for developing intrinsic motivation (Amabile, 1998). Although intrinsic motivation is a powerful motivator and driver of performance, people need to feel the usefulness of their ideas and focus on how the ideas will benefit others (Grant and Berry, 2011).

The aspect of motivation connected to focusing on others and perspective taking is prosocial motivation. Prosocial motivation can be defined as “the desire to expend effort to benefit other people” (Grant, 2008, p. 49). The prosocial motivation is based on the desire to benefit others unlike the intrinsic motivation that is concerned with enjoyment and interest on a personal level. The prosocial motivation is outcome focused and intrinsic motivation is process focused and prosocial motivation is future focused whereas the intrinsic motivation has a present focus. As such intrinsic and prosocial motivation work in coherence to produce positive organizational outcomes (Grant, 2008). Having in mind that the advertising professionals need to take into consideration the wishes and needs of their clients (Collister, 2007) taking the prosocial motivation into consideration, when studying the effects of motivation on creativity, is especially important.

Therefore this study applies the model developed by Grant and Berry (2011) in studying the effects of motivation on creativity. The model points the importance of intrinsic motivation for creativity, but also accentuates the role of prosocial motivation. It states that when the employees are focused on others they will produce ideas that are useful to others. This means that prosocial motivation acts to channel the intrinsic motivation towards producing novel and useful ideas.

Following the model this paper tests the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The higher level of intrinsic motivation will lead to higher levels of creativity of the employees in advertising agencies.

Hypothesis 2: Prosocial motivation strengthens the association between intrinsic motivation and creativity.

3. METHODOLOGY

The current study was conducted with the employees of three different advertising agencies that have offices in a number of countries. For the study the branches in FYR Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia were used. The total number of employees participating was 31 of which 14 were males and 17 females. In addition their immediate supervisors participated in the appraisal of employee creativity as they are deemed an appropriate source of employees’ work creativity. The total number of supervisors that took part in the research was 4. Most of the participants, 48%, worked between 1 and 5 years for the company.

The research was conducted in January and February 2012, using web-based questionnaires. The first step of the research was the employee survey where the employees filled a questionnaire for appraising their intrinsic and prosocial motivation. The second step involved the supervisors and started after the employees finished with their questionnaires. The supervisors also filled a questionnaire. The questionnaires were administered using the names and surnames of employees to enable matching of the employees’ answers and the supervisors’ appraisal of their creativity. The questionnaires included an explanation of how the anonymity of the answers was ensured.

The employees filled the intrinsic and prosocial motivation scales developed by Grant (2008). The scale on intrinsic motivation contained four items with a Cronbach Alpha of .90 and the prosocial motivation scale also contained four items with a Cronbach Alpha of .71. Both scales were administered in the same questionnaire with the same opening question: “Why are you motivated to do your work?”. The intrinsic motivation scale contained items such as: “Because I enjoy the work itself” and the prosocial motivation scale contained items such as: “Because I want to help others through my work”. The items were given on a 7 point Likert-type scale ranging from “disagree strongly” to “agree strongly”. Higher scores meant higher levels of motivation.

The supervisors filled a creativity appraisal scale developed by Tierney, Farmer and Graen (1999) with a wording adapted to fit the context of advertising agencies. The scale contains nine items on a 7 point scale ranging from “disagree strongly” to “agree strongly” with a Cronbach Alpha of .95. Supervisors were instructed to appraise how often a certain employee exhibits certain behaviour such as: “Found new uses for existing methods and strategies”. Higher scores meant higher degree of creativity.

4. RESULTS

To be able to test the hypothesis the data was analysed in few steps. To begin with we appraised the overall scores on the three scales. The means and standard deviations are given in Table 1. As it can be seen the mean for both intrinsic and prosocial motivation are quite high.

Table 1. Means and standard deviation for intrinsic, prosocial motivation and creativity

| | Mean | Standard deviation |
|----------------------|--------|--------------------|
| Intrinsic motivation | 5.9113 | 1.05 |
| Prosocial motivation | 5.1371 | 1.61 |
| Creativity | 4.5412 | 1.47 |

The second step was to test the two hypothesis. To test the first hypothesis a correlation was calculated between the Intrinsic motivation and Creativity. The correlation coefficient is -0.47 and is not statistically significant ($p=0.82$) which means that the Hypothesis 1 is not supported.

To test the second hypothesis we followed the approach suggested by Grant and Berry (2011) and conducted a regression analysis. The intrinsic and prosocial motivation variables were mean centred first and then multiplied to test for their interaction effect. After that a hierarchical ordinary least squares regression was performed. The explanatory variables entered in the first step were intrinsic and prosocial motivation, and their interaction was entered in the second step. The regression analysis showed that the association between the criterion and explanatory variables is not high ($R=0.34$) and that all the variables accounted for only 12% of the overall variance. The analysis showed that the explanatory variables will not predict the criterion variable ($p=0.324$). Therefore the second hypothesis is not supported as well.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research was based on the premises that intrinsic and prosocial motivation are important factors in employee creativity. Since there is a lack of research of the factors determining creativity in the advertising agencies in the Balkans, the research utilised three different instruments to test for the impact of intrinsic and prosocial motivation on creativity in three countries from the Balkan peninsula, FYR of Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia. The research is also one of the first in the field of marketing and advertising to utilise specific instruments in researching creativity and motivation among advertising professionals.

The results of the research did not support the two hypothesis of the research. This might have occurred for a number of reasons. To begin with, the sample used in this research was quite small and it was based on convenient sampling. If a different sampling technique was utilised and a bigger sample was used the results might have been different. The second reason for the obtained results might lie in the instrument used in the research. The proposed instrument were never previously used in the field of advertising. This means that the instruments used need more testing to see whether they it is appropriate to be used in the field of advertising. Most importantly it needs to be considered how creativity of advertising professional is measured and whether the supervisor can be used as an only source for the creativity of employees in advertising agencies. More appropriate measures might include ratings from various sources such as clients and consumers, as it can be shown that different people judge creativity differently (Collister, 2007; White and Smith, 2001).

This does not mean the results are not significant. The research just shows that more work is needed to understand the factors that influence creativity in advertising professionals. The lessons learnt from such research might prove to be very valuable for managers in advertising agencies since they can help motivate the employees in a manner which will lead to greater creativity and productivity of the employees in advertising agencies.

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