Master Thesis

Articulating the creative identity in advertising agencies: a system perspective on advertising creativity.

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Abstract

By the mean of seven interviews with senior creatives and two technology directors in nine different advertising agencies located in The Netherlands, this study aimed at understanding the role played by the changes in the technological environment as well as the sociocultural factors on the articulation of a creative identity in advertising agencies. The research was based on the theoretical contributions of Hungarian psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi on creativity (1988) that offers to take into consideration creativity as a system in which *the field, the domain* and *the creators* are in constant interaction for the production of the creative work. Though the original model was proven to be pertinent, this research took into account a fourth influential aspect: *technology* as a disruptive force. It also took into consideration the components of creative performance such as introduced by Teresa Amabile (1983) to help evaluate the intrinsic qualities of the creators. The results of the nine semi-structured in-depth interviews that were conducted eventually suggest that the creative process is one of internal and external co-creation. Internally, various individuals concur to the ideation of advertising creativity. Externally, clients are more and more involved. They provide with insights regarding their brands and produce feedback for and on the outcomes delivered by agencies. The creative identity is mutually constituted in the internal-external dialectic of the advertising practices and through the changes in the technological environment.

Eventually, the creative identity is linked to the shifting perceptions held be creatives on creativity and its process. In advertising, the concept relates to solving problems for clients. Creativity is embedded at three levels. Practically, creativity serves a purpose. Contextually, it is embedded in the physical space and within the interactions that occur in the space. Metaphysically, creativity is the idea expressed throughout the whole process.

Keywords: Creativity, advertising, identity, technology, process, media.

Acknowledgment and foreword

Hereby, I, Salomé Rentsch declare that no other sources other than those mentioned in the text and its references have been used for this Master thesis. The copyright of this research rests with me until death tears us apart.

I would like to thank all the creatives concerned for giving their time so generously. I am especially grateful to Daniel Peiron, Mervyn Ten Dam, Tobin Nageotte and Raphael Kamp who shared with me contacts to their personal networks and in doing so, helped in the process of reaching out to more creatives. I also would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Mijke Slot for her guidance and flexibility during these past months. I would like to thank Jacco for the thoroughness of his insights during our talks and for the beautiful cover illustration, as well as Zahra and Michèle and all these friends whose presence was much needed and appreciated.

It should be specified that the selection of the topic was first and foremost made because of a personal- yet broad- interest in the creative industry. Moreover, the goal to work in advertising has always been present. Eventually, being the daughter of my father, I have always had somewhat of a romanticised perception of this industry. A place where creativity can be expressed to respond to business needs. As such, it seemed that, too often, fundamental questions were left out and idealized views on creativity were nurtured.

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1. Introduction

'Advertising is a business of ideas.' (Vanden Bergh & Stuhlfaut, 2006, p.373)

The media environment has drastically evolved over the past decades. With the rise of Web 2.0 and associated social media practices, long gone are the days where advertising could be restricted to media placement in newspapers, radio, broadcast television, cable television or outdoor billboards. If the expression 'new media' dates back to the 1960's (McQuail, 2010), scholars often fall in short when it comes to defining what the term comprises. One way to respond to the need for a definition of 'new media' is to approach the concept in a composite way that links information communication technologies (ICT) with their associated social contexts, bringing together three elements: technological artefacts and devices; activities, practices and uses; and social arrangement and organisations that form around the devices and practices (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2006). The changes brought by digital technologies have pushed organisations in all type of industries to modify their structural arrangements to meet the new conditions. Ultimately, digital technologies have altered the external media environment, notably by improving and quickening interactive communications (Rodgers & Chen in Stuhlfaut & Windels, 2017). In this sense, interactive media- referring in this thesis to 'all recently added Internet and social media channels' (as cited in Stuhlfaut & Windels, 2017, p.4)- have pushed advertising agencies to review their internal structures, and evidence supports the notion that ad agencies have added new roles and positions to meet the needs of digital technology (Stuhlfaut & Windels, 2017). Evidences also support that the transition toward a digitalised environment hasn't been met with equal enthusiasm by the different creative professionals in the advertising industry (Heinonen & Rozenveld, 2013).

In addition to influencing organisational structures, the way professionals address these challenges (Heinonen & Rozenveld, 2013), and shifting the locus of power from agencies to clients (Horsky, 2006), digital technologies have also been found to have an impact on the creative process (Stuhlfaut & Windels, 2017). Central to successful advertising, industry experts recognise that creativity can increase effectiveness and efficiency, and have the second largest impact on advertising profitability and long-term brand value after market share (Turnbull & Wheeler, 2017; Priest, 2014; Dyson & Weaver, 2006). Hence, creativity can be seen as a 'product', the mainstay of an agency output- the advertisement being its embodiment (Hill & Johnson, 2015; de Waal Malefyt & Morais, 2010)- but also as a process, during which different groups interact and concur to the production of the final ad (de Waal Malefyt & Morais, 2010). Predominantly, creativity, when applied to the context of advertising, matters since advertising agencies are employed by

their clients to add value (Bosse & Phillips, 2016 in Stuhlfaut & Windels, 2017): Through the use of 'creative work', advertising agencies transform the products or services of their clients into elevated symbolic entities: the brands (Stuhlfaut & Windels, 2017).

1.2. Research problem

Whereas a plethora of scholarly research exists on the creative process (Turnbull and Wheeler, 2017; Hill and Johnson, 2004; Kover, 1995); mainstreams currents having outlined the individual as the locus of creativity (Cropley, 1999 in Vander Bergh & Stuhlfaut, 2006), very little attention has been given to what the creative identity is about and how the creative identity is unfolded in advertising. If creative work is complicated to assess and evaluate, it often relies on the interaction between multiple, conflicting identities (Round & Styhre, 2016). Furthermore, the context of advertising agencies is particularly demanding. Individuals usually have high-identity needs that have to be reconciled with the paradoxical ideology of advertising: creativity is employed to produce economic value, and therefore is being encouraged. However, the advertising field also relies upon standardized, non-creative routines (Round & Styhre, 2016) and creatives are expected to deliver goods that are innovative within manageable bounds (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007 in Gotsi et al., 2010). Thereof, creatives face tensions from multiple identity demands (Michlewski, 2008 in Gotsi, Andriopoulos, Lewis & Ingram, 2010): they ought to weave together their artist and business identities (Gotsi et al., 2010).

Moreover, though creativity has long been seen as the product of 'geniuses- the result of intrinsic qualities- scholars focus has shifted towards understanding the broader sociocultural system in which creativity is situated (Csikszentmihalyi,1988; Roca, Wilson, Barrios & Muñoz-Sánchez, 2017; Vanden Bergh & Stuhlfaut, 2006). As such, creativity is seen as the result of the interrelations between a person, a domain, and a field. More than a simplistic logic based on individual factors, creativity is sociocultural in nature and go beyond the individual focus (Vanden Bergh & Stuhlfaut, 2006) to be embedded at two levels: individual and collective. Additionally, the rapid changes in the technological landscape require an increased flexibility in daily work routines: the work time frames are shortened, compelling creatives to adapt faster to the transitory nature of advertising projects. As a result, greater flexibility in the work processes is necessary, often resulting in unstable self-identity (Round & Styhre, 2016).

Ultimately, as notably stressed out by Wagler (2013) and Heinoen and Rozenveld (2013), these changes in the technological environment require new sets of skills: the shift in consumers behaviour and the multiplication of touchpoints to communicate to them ask for skills that reach beyond the traditional creative work. Creatives have to understand their field in more holistic terms; the creative process is stretched out onto practices that used to be

attributed among different roles. Creatives are now asked to integrate these new imperatives in their daily work routines.

I argue that in the field of advertising what the creative identity entails, how creatives perceive their 'selves' in relation to others, to their environment and to the challenges arising from multifarious factors matters: the combination of the diverse identities eventually leads to the elaboration of what will be sold to the clients and produce an economic and cultural value. Without a stable identity and organisational structures fostering an environment propitious for the nurturing of novelty, advertising could simply not be a business. Hence, understanding the sense given by creatives to their work process and understanding what in their environment might impact it could help easing and enhancing the whole process.

The present study builds upon three assumptions:
1. As Twitchell pointed out, advertising does not occur in isolation but within a broader societal context in which consumers and culture influence the actors of the ads, as much as they are influenced by the ads (as cited in Vandenbergh & Stuhlfaut, 2006, p. 374);
2. Ads being the output of creative professionals, the creative process is the result of the negotiation between competing identities (Hackley & Kover, 2007);
3. The 'Big Idea' is still king and includes the integration of interactive media (Wagler, 2013). The technology and media environment do matter more than ever for the advertising industry whose foundations have been built in the era of traditional media.

1.3   Research question

In order to frame the research problem into a single sentence, the following research question is formulated:

"What roles do the changes in the technological environment andsociocultural factors play in the way 'traditional' senior creatives articulate their identities compared to senior creatives specialised in digital in advertising agencies in The Netherlands?"

The following sub-questions can be addressed to better help grasping the current research:
a. Is creativity articulated similarly between traditional and senior creatives specialised in digital?
b. Does the perception held by the practitioners on creativity play a role on the articulation of a creative identity in advertising?

c. What factors are expressed as having the most impact in advertising practices?

d. Do these factors play a role in the articulation of the creative identity?

e. Can the changes in the technological environment- such as perceived and articulated by the practitioners- provide information regarding the creative identity?

A comparative approach between traditional senior creatives and senior digital in ad agencies is pertinent: as revealed by Heinonen and Rozenveld (2013), the transformation from traditional advertising to digital advertising is still at hand, and the effects are lessened by generational differences, mind-set, competencies and geographical locations. As stated earlier, advertising agencies have seen their internal structure change: new positions have arisen. Whereas the creative process used to be cornered around the copywriter, new staff is being hired in order to fulfil the needs triggered by the changes in the digital environment. In a research on the effects of media and technology on the creative process in advertising agencies, Stuhlfaut and Windels (2017) noted that several creative directors identified cultural and perceptual differences between traditional and interactive media employees. In this sense, traditional creative employees do not always seem to be able to integrate new-digital- technologies in their work flow. Because of the evolution of practices, and as the Internet and social media have grown more central in society and culture, creatives in advertising agencies have come to acknowledge the need to address more systematically the technological factor in the creative process (Stuhlfaut & Windels, 2017).

Eventually, The Dutch context is particularly compelling: The Dutch capital comprises over 1300 advertising agencies and the national market for digital advertising has grown by +13% in 2017 (iab.nederland, 2017). Besides, multifarious cultural and creatives hubs are developing in cities other than the capital, cases being made of Rotterdam, Utrecht and Eindhoven.

1.4   Scientific relevance

Because the creative identity is multiple by nature and shaped in relation to others in specific contexts, the focus of this thesis is put on understanding the macro-level factors that might play a role in the articulation of the creative identity in advertising. As such the positioning of this Master thesis is exploratory. Although literature on creativity (Rhodes, 1961; Glāveanu; Vanden Bergh & Stuhlfaut, 2006; Florida, 2006) and identity (Hatch & Schultz, 1997; Hackley & Kover, 2007; Alvesson, Ashcraft & Thomas, 2008; Bernoux, 2010) in general is extensive, little research have focused on the creative identity (Gotsi et al., 2010; Glāveanu & Tanggaard, 2014; Round & Styhre, 2016) and even less so, on the creative identity in

advertising (Roca et al., 2017). Hence, the primary purpose of this research is to respond to the scholars' call on the need for further generalisation regarding the creative identity in advertising. Furthermore, the changes in the technological landscape have brought several scholars to investigate the consequences for advertising (Wagler, 2013; Heinonen & Rozenveld, 2013; Stuhlfaut & Windels, 2017). However, these researches have put the focus on uncovering the consequences in terms of organisational structures and processes, rather than on understanding the impact on individuals' identities. Based on the systemic approach on creativity developed in 1988 by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, this Master thesis offers to consider the creative identity as anchored in a system that takes into consideration as much sociocultural factors than technological factors. This research will swell the existing literature on advertising creativity, bring complementary insights on the impact of technology on advertising practices and offer perspectives regarding the place of the creative in this challenging environment by highlighting the factors that impact its identity.

1.5   Social relevance

Advertising agencies are worth studying because they serve as cultural intermediaries between three key segments of the society: companies and their brands, media organisations, and consumers (Stuhlfaut & Windels,2017; Cronin, 2004). Featherstone (1991), went further, stating that 'these new cultural intermediaries', 'specialists in symbolic production' have an interest in creating postmodern pedagogies to educate public, and as such are thought to be the mediators between the needs of the producers and the desire of the consumers (Cronin, 2004).

Research have also shown, that the creative work of advertising agencies has the anti-structural properties of ritual symbols (Turner, 1967, 1968, 1997 in de Waal Malefyt & Morais, 2010): ad agencies are, in this sense, the authoritative cultural force charged with transforming ordinary object (products) into elevated symbolic vehicles (brands) that consumers are willing to pay more for (as cited in de Waal Malefyt & Morais, 2010). A compelling example being the one of Nike trademark: *Just Do It*, which was coined in 1988 by Dan Wieden, founder of Wieden + Kennedy whose inspiration came from Gary Gilmore's last words: *'Let's do it'*. Ever since, what started as a simple campaign has turned the brand into an American success story, and the slogan has been the vehicle of symbolic meanings throughout the globe. In this regard, creatives could be considered the milestones in advertising agencies, but also in the relationship held with the clients. Eventually, over the past decades, the industry has undergone through some important changes: with brands building in-house creative shops, "traditional" agencies and consultancy firms buying in small boutique agencies, the "traditional" agencies are facing major competition and must more than ever prove the relevance of their business. As such industry leaders have argued over

the necessity to integrate individuals fit to showcase and defend creativity as a business (Coffee, May 2018 in Adweek). More insights in regard to how creativity is perceived between "traditional" and tech savvy creatives will also allow to address better the purposes of advertising and in doing so perpetuate the relevance of the business.

1.6   Sections outline

The following sections will be dedicated in a first time to developing the theoretical framework. In a second instance, the methodological choices made to conduct the research will be presented, before developing on the results. The research will be concluded in the last section of the research.

The theoretical framework is based on the system-model of creativity developed in 1988 by the Hungarian psychologist, Mihlay Cikszentmihalyi. The chapter is divided into six sections. The first one shortly introduces the historical trajectory the adverting industry has followed since its days on Madison Avenue to its current state in the eclectic international context of The Netherlands. The second section is dedicated to presenting the volatile concept of creativity and the main differences it holds with creativity in advertising. This is followed by an introduction to the system model of creativity developed by Cikszentmihalyi (1988) alongside brief explanations on the key notions of the field, the domain and the creators. Thereafter, the changes in the technological environment and their implication on the formation of the organisational identity are presented. This part is directly followed by an update of the system model adapted for the purpose of the research. This updated model of creativity takes into account technology as a disruptive force. It also takes into consideration the components of the creative performance (Amabile, 1983). The last section of the theoretical framework frames the concept of identity and the creative identity. It also offers supplementary information to grasp the research at hand.

The result section is divided into four themes, that altogether allow to draw conclusions on who the advertising creative is. The themes are the following:

Theme 1: A pragmatic view of advertising creativity. But it all depends;

Theme 2: Collective practices, a strategy to creativity;

Theme 3: Technology matter, but it all comes down to Media;

Theme 4: The advertising creative.

2.   Theoretical framework- A system model perspective on the creative identity

In a first instance, this theoretical framework presents the state of advertising and the historical trajectory the industry followed in its development throughout time and space. This information is necessary as it provides with the contextual background that led to the development of a global advertising industry in The Netherlands. This part is followed by an introduction to the concepts of creativity and creativity in advertising. Thereafter, an explanation of the system model of creativity developed in 1988 by Mihaly Csikszenthmihalyi is made. It is followed with a section on the changes in the technological environment. This section also brings explanations on the potential impact of technology on identity. As stated above, the updated model takes into consideration the findings made by Amabile (components of creative performance) and integrates technology as a disruptive force. This model provides further insight on the macro level factors that should be considered to evaluate the ecosystem in which creativity comes to be. Eventually, the last section relates to the concepts of identity and the creative identity. Every concept used in this research is intertwined with one another: understanding the perception held by advertising practitioners on creativity and macro-environmental factors will help to draw conclusions on the creative identity in advertising and help redefining the system-model of creativity.

2.1   The Dutch advertising industry and its agencies

   Advertising agencies can be defined as organisations employed by their clients to add value to a product or a service (Stuhlfaut & Windels, 2017). Advertising agencies transform the products or services of their clients into elevated symbolic entities called brands and in doing so become cultural intermediaries (Hackley, 2000 in Stuhlfaut & Windels, 2010).

   If today's organisational profile of international advertising agencies is eclectic, it is the result of an evolutionary process that can be translated into four major waves. As explained by Röling (2010), each wave was born in specific national contexts and followed a logic of changes in the production system. The evolution of the advertising industry was also influenced by the introduction of new technologies and had to adapt to the changes in consumer behaviour. Without further due to the two first waves, I will elaborate on the third and fourth waves. The choice to not elaborate on the two first waves is a practical one: the contexts in which these two waves were born and developed are too far apart from the actual state of the advertising industry. Hence, it does not seem pertinent nor important to extend insights on these early days of advertising.

   In the 1980's, the typical agency's structure that emerged was usually smaller and more flexible compared to those agencies of the two first waves whose functional and horizontal structures reflected the economic needs of standardised mass production. These agencies realised that independence- as opposed by those global networked agencies owned by one of the major

holding groups (WPP, Omnicom, Publicis, Interpublic and Dentsu) - could become a competitive asset. Flexibility allowed these agencies to adapt faster and to increase the speed of campaign productivity while lowering overhead costs. In the same manner, creativity started to be seen as an essential distinguishing factor for the success of advertising campaign.

Much of the fourth wave is a continuation of the process that started in London during the 80's. The main differentiation characteristic is to be found in the broad introduction of information and communication technologies (ICT). This introduction of ICT led to a massive empowerment of consumers, but also resulted in difficulties for the advertising industry to reach and convince their audiences. Agencies that managed to keep and broaden their portfolio of clients were those that understood the possibilities offered by these new technologies and saw the opportunity in maintaining broad networks of relations through the use of ICT (Röling, 2010). In 1992, a major juncture for the European advertising industry happened as Wieden + Kennedy decided to open an office in Amsterdam to follow their client, Nike. The agency proved that it was possible to operate successfully an international agency with a worldwide workforce from Amsterdam. Through a spin-off effect, more international agencies, working for international accounts, set-up their quarters in the city. Slowly but steadily the city creative workforce grew and attracted more international talents.

With the rise of a global advertising industry in Amsterdam, it is thus a new form of advertising that came to be. Mixing various types of organisations (owned vs independent), the advertising field is nowadays more competitive than ever with independent agencies casting shadows on the major groups. Usually born under the emergence of information and communication technologies, these smaller agencies took advantage of the project ecology of advertising and of the pool of international creatives within the city to position themselves on an international market. Nowadays, with the growth of surrounding cities such as Rotterdam, the advertising industry is expanding. As a result, more agencies are opening offices in the harbour city, which has seen its creative workforce capacity grow over the past decade.

The following section is dedicated to presenting the concepts of creativity and creativity in advertising, before developing on the system-model of creativity by Mihaly Csikszenthmihalyi.

2.2   Creativity

Broadly defined, creativity can be seen as the production of novel and appropriate ideas (Vanden Bergh & Stuhlfaut, 2006) with two components: novelty and value (Wallace & Gruber, 1989; Vanden Bergh & Stuhlfaut, 2006). Amabile's conceptual definition of creativity (1983) allows to consider a supplementary element. For the scholar, something can be called creative if the product or response to the task at hand *is heuristic rather than algorithmic.* In this sense, a creative solution is one to which no clear and readily identifiable path exist. According to Rhodes (1961), creativity bares as much an individual characteristic

that facilitates the generation of new ideas; than the process that generates these ideas; the outcome of a creative process; or an environment conductive to new ideas (Rhodes, 1961 in Alves, Marques, Saur & Marques, 2007). With the emergence of a social psychology of creativity through the first works of Amabile in 1996, the conceptualisation of creativity has slowly shifted from being the result of an individual- focused process to incorporate a social dimension. As such, Glăveanu (2015) offers to consider creativity as the contingent result of individuals' interactions with various audiences and the material environment. Thereof, creativity is *in fine* a socially embodied and temporal act (Glăveanu, 2015).

Richard Florida (2006) describes creativity as being multifaceted, multidimensional and experimental: creativity is the reflection of norms and values, experiences and perspectives. It involves the ability to synthesise, and creative work is often subversive in its nature of destroying one's gestalt in favour of a better one (Florida, 2006).

The favoured definition of creativity chosen as ground for this thesis is the one by Amabile. Hence creativity is considered as the result of three components: novelty, value and responding to a heuristic path. This definition allows to get a grasp of the model by Csikszenthmihalyi: it presents creativity as a process responding to various dynamics.

2.2.1   Creativity in advertising

Creativity is the centrepiece of advertising: through guided ritual processes, advertising agencies transform ordinary objects (products and/or services) into elevated symbolic vehicles (brands) (de Waal Malefyt & Morais, 2010). Whereas industry experts all recognise that creativity is necessary for 'successful advertising', no universally agreed definition can be found in the literature on creativity in advertising (Tunrbull & Wheeler, 2017). Moreover, the lack of understanding from the clients' side of what the creative process entail, often causes conflict with agencies, which is considered to having a negative impact on the production of the creative work (Johnson & Lsczniak, 1991; LaBahn & Kohli, 1997 in de Waal Malefyt & Morais, 2010).

The difficulty to grasp creativity in advertising lays in its subjective nature: the notion that something is creative appears to be so to the extent that relevant observers judge it to be creative (Turnbull & Wheeler, 2017). Several authors have agreed that advertising creativity should be treated differently from creativity in the 'pure' arts: on the one hand, advertising creativity must meet marketing objectives set by clients, and unlike other forms of creativity has to be 'appropriate' (Turnbull & Wheeler, 2017). On the other hand, advertising agencies are cultural institutions that create symbols. Direct emanation of creative processes, these elevated symbols that are brands must keep on being innovative.

The mainstream approaches for creativity in advertising have long been focusing on the individual as the locus of creativity (Cropley, 1999 in Vanden Bergh & Stuhlfaut, 2006),

creatives having the idiosyncratic creative ability. The copywriter, hence, was considered to be the sole person responsible for the development of the creative ideas, and the classic model of creativity (adapted from Wallace, 1926 by James Webb Young) described the process in five stages: *ingestion* of the information; *digestion* of the information gathered and of the creative task at hand; *incubation,* where the subconscious mind takes control over the process; *inspiration* the conscious realisation of the solution; and finally, *verification stage* in which the idea is tested, modelled and developed into practical applications (Vanden Bergh & Stuhlfaut, 2006).

Though the model was recognised somewhat useful, it also echoed many critics, especially regarding the sequential logic underlining the process. More recently, models such as the S&S (step and structural model of the creative process) developed by Stuhlfaut and Windels (2017) have called upon for a more holistic approach of advertising creativity; one that involves many creative specialists in multiple steps and that provides a macro lens for understanding the contextual factors affecting individuals' perceptions of creativity (Roca et al., 2017). Hereby, creativity can be viewed as a discursively constructed phenomenon (Brown et al. 2010 in Round & Styhre, 2016) that requires from the creatives to juggle between different identities. Creativity is also seen as an outcome that reconciles the multiple tensions of a competitive environment (Brown et al. 2010 in Round & Styhre, 2016). Drawing from Mihaly Csikszenthmihalyi, these perspectives all have in common to consider creativity as situated in social interactions and historical contexts.

Creativity can be defined in multifarious ways and it is not always clear where it comes from and who is originating 'creativity'. If scholars recognise that creativity is central to advertising, there is not one way to define how it comes about. The following section is dedicated to presenting the system-model of creativity that highlights the various interrelated factors that impacts the coming of creativity.

2.3   A system-model of creativity

In 1988, Mihaly Csikszenthmihalyi developed a particularly useful model to understand the contextual factors in which creativity is produced and communicated (Vanden Bergh & Stuhlfaut, 2006). Accepting the idea that creativity is sociocultural in nature, the systemic model developed by the scholar offers a perspective that can potentially provide explanations of what creativity is, how it comes about in advertising, but also provide explanations about the symbolic meanings creative work hold. Csikszenthmihalyi's model offers to consider creativity and the creative identity with respect to a system that includes the following interrelated factors: individuals, social and cultural factors (Csikszenthmihalyi & Sawyer, 1995).

Defined internally by the corporate culture and externally by the business environment, creativity is the result of interactions between three distinct entities: *The field, the domain and the creators.* These entities are explained right after the introduction and the short explanation of the system model of creativity.
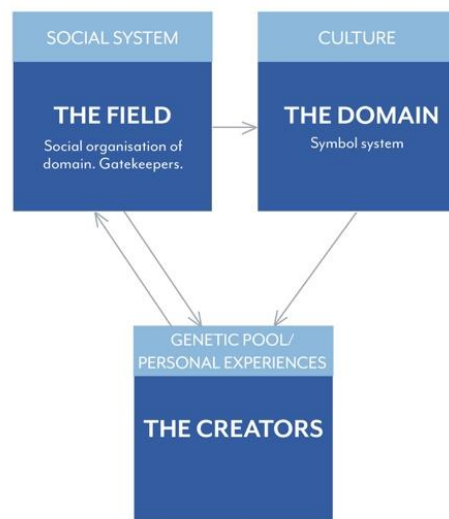
Figure 1. The map of Csikszentmihalyi system model of creativity (1988).

The system model such as developed by the Hungarian psychologist shows the interrelations of the three key factors influencing the occurrence of a creative idea: The creators take some information provided by the culture of the domain. They transform it and if the variation is accepted by the field, it will end up being integrated in the domain.

The model was replicated by Vanden Bergh and Suthlfaut (2006) as well as Roca and colleagues (2017) to the field of advertising; their findings illustrate how creative ideas generate and come about. Working clockwise, creators might author novel ideas, but they do

so only (1) after receiving inputs from the field (clients, managers, colleagues, experts are the field's gatekeepers) and (2) after retaining the relevant information from the domain. Once the inputs obtained, the creators can in turn produce a work which novelty will be appreciated by the field. Eventually, once the work has been acknowledged as 'creative', the output is reinjected into the domain, where it becomes part of the culture and from which, new ideas are drawn. Whereas Roca and colleagues debate the process of reinjection of the creative work from the field to the domain, they do acknowledge the feedback role played by the field in the creative process.

2.3.1 The field

The structure of an organisational filed cannot be determined without any empirical investigation; fields only exist to the extent that they are institutionally defined (DiMaggio & Powell, 2015). This process of definition happens once four conditions have been met: (1) increase in the extent of interaction among organisations in the field; (2) emergence of defined inter organisational structures of domination and patterns of coalition; (3) increase in the information to which organisations contend and (4) the development of a mutual awareness among actors in a set of organisations that they are involved in a common enterprise (DiMaggio & Powell, 2015). In this line of thought, disparate organisations structure themselves in such a manner to form a coherent, aggregated field that responds to the need for stable and socially integrating patterns (Selznick, 1996). Hence, shortly defined, institutions are *'systems of established and embedded social rules that structure social interaction'* (Hodgson, 2006 as cited in Heinonen & Rozenfeld, 2013, p. 8).

In the case of advertising, the field is constituted by various institutions or people. As such the account manager, the account planning, the client or the consumer (Roca et al., 2017) can be perceived as gatekeepers. On the institutional side, the advertising award system (e.g. Cannes Lion) can play a role in what works and doesn't. Online, institutions such as Adage (global media brand for news and data on marketing and media) are also likely to play the role of gatekeepers. Colleagues and mentors can also have a significant impact in the development of the creative identity and how it is expressed in regard to problem finding and problem solving (Mockros & Csikszenthmihalyi, 2000). All in, gatekeepers are responsible for passing on the specialised symbolic information to the next generations (Csikszenthmihalyi, 1988). It should be mentioned that fields in general, vary in the stringency of their selective mechanisms, the sensitivity of the gatekeepers and the dynamics of their inner organisations.

2.3.2 The domain

The domain is a culturally structured symbolic system of rules and procedures that permits and constrains the actions within a defined context. Hatch and Schultz (1997) pointed out that

organisational culture works as a symbolic context within which interpretations of the organisation-self are formulated. As such, organisational culture must be considered when evaluating athe organisational identity (Hatch & Schultz, 1997). Furthermore, a strong culture that encourages adaptation and fosters change is said to enhance the organisational performance (Daft, 2009 in Heinonen & Rozenveld, 2013). Taken into the advertising context, organisational culture should be translated into a strong creative identity, that will be beneficial for the production of 'creative work. It should also influence how clients' problems are solved (Stuhlfaut, 2011 in Wagler, 2013).

2.3.3 The creators

Eventually, creativity is also the result of individuals (*the creators)* and their relations with peers and the environment that surrounds them. Csikszenthmihalyi's model permits to take into consideration the contribution of individuals in the creative process. Recognising the importance of the individual in bringing creative variation, the scholar underlines some characteristics that allow the creative to interact with the field and the domain. He notably mentions cognitive and motivational aspects in how creatives access the domain and in their efforts to convince the field of the value of their work. He also stresses that access to information and ability to internalise the rules of the domain, as well as the opinions of the field can benefit the creatives to get their ideas accepted and integrated into the domain. Other qualities recognised to playing a role in the expression of the creative self are a sense of responsibility (moral expectations), sense of purpose or the willingness to take risks.

In this line of thoughts, Amabile (1983) noted that high levels of creativity depend on three major factors: (1) domain relevant skills, (2) creativity-relevant skills, (3) task motivation. For the scholar, the domain relevant skills are the basis from which any performance must proceed. These skills include the factual knowledge of the domain, the technical skills required by it and the relevant talents available in the domain. Creativity-relevant skills include the cognitive style, the implicit or explicit knowledge of heuristics for the exploration of new pathways and working styles. Eventually, task motivation can operate on the perception level of an individual's own motivation for a task, but is also highly dependent -and may vary depending- on the task at hand. Her contribution on creativity is a valuable additional source to the model of Csikszenthmihalyi since it offers a suitable overview of the components of the creative performance on the individual level. These components are presented below.

Domain-relevant skills	Creativity-relevant skills	Task-relevant skills
Includes: - Knowledge about the domain - Technical skills requires - Special domain-relevant talent *Depends on:* - Innate cognitive abilities - Innate perceptual and motor skills - Formal and informal education	*Includes:* - Appropriate cognitive style - Implicit or explicit knowledge of heuristics for generating novel ideas - Conducive work style *Depends on:* - Training - Experience in idea generation - Personality characteristics	*Includes:* - Attitudes toward the task - Perceptions of own motivation for undertaking the task *Depends on:* - Initial level of intrinsic motivation toward the task - Presence or absence of salient extrinsic constraints in the social environment - Individual ability to cognitively minimize extrinsic constraints

Figure 2. Components of creative performance. Amabile (1983)

In spite of the fact that the social-system model of creativity permits to capture adequately and dynamically the advertising creativity, it does not emphasise enough the potential impact of technology in general, and digital/ interactive media in particular on the initial components described by the scholar. Technology as a disruptive force, should be considered: on the one side, it impacts the domain and the field. Technology changes culture. As previously stated, it influences for example the consumers behaviours. As such brands need to reposition themselves and comprehend technology in their mission to communicate with audiences. It also impacts the domain since organisations have to integrate these changes in the most fluid way possible. On the other hand, it impacts the creators whose practices require new skills. Identities become less stable. Eventually, since one of the main assumption of this master thesis: The 'Big Idea' is still king and includes the integration of interactive media, it matters to understand the role played by technology in the process. The following section offers a reflection on the changes in the technological environment and their impact on identity and presents the updated model which takes the technological factor into consideration (see below figure 3.)

2.4   Changes in the technological environment: impact on the identity

An increasing amount of studies on creativity and its process offer to consider the impact of technology in advertising agencies by taking into account the changes in the media environment (Heinonen & Rozenveld, 2013; Wagler, 2013; Suthlfaut & Windels, 2017). Built on strategic thinking and born in the context of traditional media, the advertising industry and its agencies must now integrate interactive media perspectives as they develop creative ideas (Wagler, 2013). If new forms of communication ask for new skills, the big idea is, however, still a central focus in advertising (Griffin, Morrison & Sheehan, 2009 in Wagler, 2013).

As outlined by Stuhlfaut and Windels (2017), the explosion of media channels in the recent years have made it difficult to describe-and define-concisely what the phenomenon encompasses, leading eventually to semantic problems. Previously referred to in the introduction, the current research uses the terminology of interactive media to allude to all the ongoing changes in the media environment. These changes were permitted and enhanced through the emergence of the Internet in the 90's and more recently though the expansion of social media channels. As opposed to traditional media, interactive media are characterised by the ease they allow in the connection between users and content producers as they increase users' control and customisation (Stuhlfaut & Windels, 2017).

Technology has been called 'the most important single determinant of working behaviour' by Woodward in 1965 (Stuhlfaut & Windels, 2017), and organisations use it to gain control over process and activities in order to achieve their goals and objectives (Stuhlfaut & Windels, 2017). With the appearance of the Internet in the early 1990's and the transition from print to digital, a new genre of networked media environment (term picked from Benkler, 2003 in Heinonen & Rozenveld, 2013) have enabled the mass production and distribution of information making it widely available for the public in large scales.

As pointed out by the two authors, this massive access to information could lead to what some have called an 'information famine' (Heinonen & Rozenveld, 2013). The idea, drawing from Malthus law, states that in the long run, the fraction of information that will actually be consumed will approach zero: The rising amount of information consumes the attention of its recipients leading to a poverty of attention. Combined with the highly competitive landscape of the advertising field, attracting and holding consumer's attention has hence, become a challenge. In this sense, engaging actively with audiences through the use of interactive media *creates a promise and can solidify perceptions of brands for consumers to look to for relevant information'* (as cited in Wagler, 2013, p.121). Interactive media eventually provides a context for 'institutional reflexivity' that can empower users with new modes of organisation. However, it also impacts the organisational-self (Laniray, 2013; Gal, Blengind Jensen & Lyytinen, 2014). Under the assumption that technology and organisational practices are mutually constitutive, changes in the interactive media landscape create opportunities for new affordance which in turn enables social exchanges and identity orientations (Laniray, 2013; Gal, Blengind Jensen & Lyytinen, 2014). For example, Giddens (1991) expressed that, while technology enables new ways of doing by facilitating the modes of interaction, they also blur the organisational boundaries and stretch the social practices over larger spans of space and time. As a result of these shifts, individual identity is likely to be undermined since reference points are constantly moving (Nach, 2009).

Taken into account these various aspects, the updated model is presented below. As described in the section dedicated to introducing the advertising industry, it was shown that technology has always played a key role in advertising and in the way agencies have built their structures to respond to the external demands. Enabling new forms of interactions, new technologies were also described as undermining stable identities. Hence, the importance to take this factor into consideration.

Below, the updated map shows the interrelations of the three key factors (the field, the domain and the creators) influencing the occurrence of a creative idea, object or action. Technology as a disruptive force has been added as impacting the field and the domain, but also the creators. It also takes into consideration the components of creative performance developed by Amabile (1983).
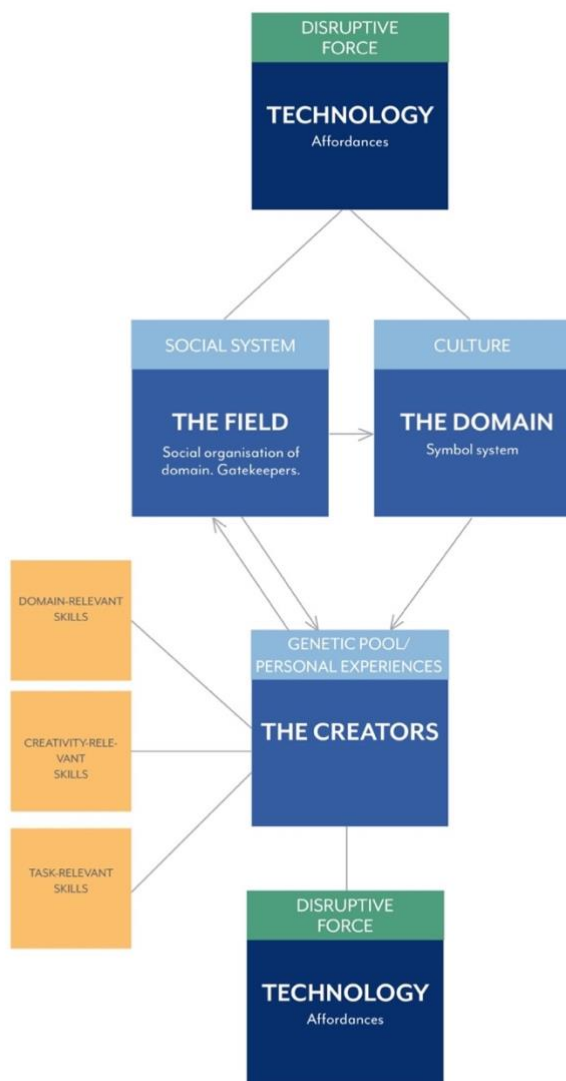
Figure 3. The updated map of Csikszentmihalyi system model of creativity.

The following sections presents the aspects underpinning the concept of identity. It ends with an overview of the creative identity.

2.5   Framing identity

Ideas about who we are in relation to others give us a sense of direction in the social world (Hackley & Kover, 2007). From a social perspective, identity- as a process of sense making- is constituted in relation to others and is the result of subjective meanings and experiences (Alvesson, Ashcraft & Thomas, 2008; Bernoux, 2010). For Jenkins (2004), identities, whether individual or collective are constituted in an 'internal-external dialectic' (Hackley & Kover, 2007) that involves the acceptation, negotiation or resistance to the labels that are imposed on us by the external world. In agreement with this stance and drawing from the theory of social representations, identities are constituted between two subjects and an object: an identity is a system of representations about oneself in relation to others and their own systems of representations (Galveanu & Tanggaard, 2014). The process of identity constitution is a dynamic one; a reality that can never be fully achieved and is constantly reformulated through an ongoing effort to address the fundamental questions of 'who am I?' and by extension, 'how should I act?' (Galveanu & Tanggaard, 2014).

    In an organisational environment, work identity is constituted in situations influenced by social interactions, within which individuals craft self-narratives by digging on cultural resources, memories and desires to transform or reproduce their sense of self (Alvesson, Ashcraft & Thomas, 2008). If identity used to be seen as fixed, this view has long been challenged, and scholars are increasingly conceptualising identity as being fluid and malleable (Kreiner et al., 2006a in Gotsi, Andriopoulos, Lewis & Ingram, 2010), impermanent and fragmentary (Bendle, 2000 in Gotsi et al., 2010), multiple and contextual (Alvesson, 2000 in Gotsi et al., 2010). Coexisting and competing identities are thus, what characterise the nature of the self (Gotsi et al., 2010, p.783). Complementary to the view on the work identity, Hatch and Schultz (1997), offer to consider the notion of organisational identity as grounded in local meanings and organisational symbols communicated by top management and interpreted and enacted by organisational members. The members of an organisation give sense to these symbolic systems through their interpretation of the culture of the organisation, but also through their work experiences and through the social influence from external relations with the environment (Hatch & Schultz, 1997). Identity in organisational contexts is generally ambiguous and paradoxical (Knight & Willmottt, 1999 in Gotsi et al., 2010) and is enacted at several levels. Eventually, the various conceptualizations of identity highly depend on the posture adopted by scholars. This research is rooted in a rather constructivist perspective: the identity is framed as being the historical product of relations between humans and their environment.

2.5.1 The creative identity

The creative identity appears as somewhat mystical and the linked concept of creativity, carries much of a romantic connotation (Round & Styhre, 2016). As previously mentioned, the paradigmatic model used to study creativity has largely revolved around the *creative person* as the locus for the production of novelty. If the vision entails interesting insights for cognitive and psychological research, the person-centric view of creativity misses the point in that no connection is made between the creator and its wider environment (Glaveanu & Tanggaard, 2014).

Consequently, the creative work is merely the sum of individual accomplishments, but rather endorses a collective trait, yielding derisory the long-standing belief in the supreme creative talent. Under the spectrum of the social representation theory, Glaveanu and Tanggaard (2014) researched the impact of social interaction in the conception of a creative identity. Acknowledging that behaviours and identities are intertwined and situated in vast systems of social relations and meanings that evolve over time, the authors concluded that creative identities are dynamic in both time and space, adaptable and contextual, multiple and mediated by social interactions, discourses and ideologies.

Creatives evolve in multiple symbolic systems and must face tensions from multiple identity demands (Gotsi et al., 2010). Moreover, when applied to the creative industry- to which advertising belongs- an oxymoron appears in the denomination of what being creative entails: to be creative and to be industrious stresses the tension creatives in advertising must face in their day to day activities. Hence, on the one hand, they must respond to the core value of their milieu- that is to the need for an artistic (and aesthetic) ethos, and must-on the other hand- weave together the daily work pressures (Gosti et al., 2010). Thus, creatives are expected to innovate within manageable bounds where art and business are intertwined (Eikhof & Haunschild 2007, in Gosti et al., 2010). Related to the system model of creativity, the creative identity can be understood once each element has been uncovered. As such, the creative identity is the result of the interaction between the different macro level factors considered in the model.

2.6   Conclusion

Drawing from various concepts, this theoretical framework aimed at presenting the complex environment of advertising and the macro-environmental factors that are meant to play a role in the articulation of a creative identity in advertising agencies. As Institutionalised field, advertising followed an historical trajectory heavily influenced by the changes in the technological landscape. This trajectory also impacted the organisational structure of agencies: smaller, the agencies born during the third and fourth wave of advertising were presented to be more flexible and to adapt better to their environment. Process of sense

making, identity was introduced as a dynamic system of representations about oneself constituted in relation to others and their own system of representations.

Translated into an organisational context, identity is grounded in local meanings and organisational symbols, and enacted through the interpretation of the organisational culture, work experiences, and in regard to the external relations with the environment. In this sense, *the field* is simply the broader social system within which *the domain* belongs to and that is constituted of gatekeepers in charge of transmitting specific systems of symbols and values. Both field and domain have an impact in the way identity is expressed on the individual level.

If the conceptual definition of creativity is broadly defined and often ambiguous, creativity can be seen as a product or idea that is both novel and valuable, and that responds to a heuristic path. Applied to advertising, creativity was claimed necessary for successful advertising whose role in producing elevated symbols force to novelty. Moreover, while creativity used to be considered as the output of an individual, this vision has made place for one that views creativity as a discursively constructed phenomenon

If the locus of creativity was shown to go beyond the locus of the individual only, understanding the ways external factors are played out in the formulation of the creative identity in advertising agencies still matters to understand what creativity is. Field, domain and technology are all supposed to influence how creatives articulate their identities. Multi-layered, the creative identity was best presented by Amabile (1983) through the components of creative performance. (1) domain-relevant skills, (2) creativity-relevant skills and (3) task-relevant skills were used to complete the model made by Csikszenthmihalyi.

The creative identity, core notion of this thesis, was introduced as yielding a collective trait, being multiple, dynamic in both time and space, adaptable and contextual, as well as mediated through social interactions, discourses and ideologies. In advertising, the creative identity is also confronted with two antagonist ethos that requires from the creatives to weave together the artistic and business sides in order to innovate within manageable bounds. Understanding how identities are unravelled by creatives within agencies is manifold and can be approached in various ways.

Eventually, one should retain that the creative professional faces tensions from multiple identity demands. If creativity is the result of individual factors, it is also heavily influenced by sociocultural and technological factors. In order to reflect this aspect, the original system model of creativity was updated to take into consideration technology as a disruptive force, but also integrated the components of creative performance such as introduced by Amabile (1983). The following section is dedicating to presenting the methodological choices made to conduct this research.

3.   Method

This section presents the methodological choices made to carry out the research. As stated by Nowell and colleagues (2017) a clear description of the process and how data was analysed should be given alongside explanations on the assumptions that informed the analysis.

3.1   Research design

The creative identity and how it is articulated by senior creatives in advertising being the subject of interest, the qualitative nature of the research was an evidence from the start. Qualitative research is directed at providing in-depth interpretations of the social wold within which participants evolve (Moriarty, 2011) and to generate knowledge grounded in human experience (Nowell, Norrris, White & Moules, 2017). Usually, small samples are selected on the basis of salient criterion. The final outputs of the research focus on giving interpretations of social meaning through the mapping and representing of the world of the participants.

Following the recommendation of Reid et al. (1998), this study used semi-structured in-depth expert focused interviews (total of 9 interviews). These interviews were conducted face-to-face on the location given by the interviewees. Interviews are one of the most common way to provide insights for qualitative data as they can bring depth and allow the exploration of complex believes, knowledge or experiences (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2010). Semi-structured interview, while possessing challenges can also bring unexpected answer and bring new insights to the table. This method is especially relevant since personal experiences and opinions matter most to uncovering the concept of identity.

3.2   Comparison

A comparative element between traditional senior creatives and senior digital creatives brought depth and consistency to the research: on the one hand, it allowed for a follow-up of the results made by Heinonen and Rozenveld concerning the integration in agencies of digital technologies. Are these findings still relevant five years later? Do traditional creatives and tech savvy creatives perceive the changes in the digital environment and their integration in organizational practices differently? But it also provided depth to the slants of the interviewees. Moreover, the fact the research was conducted in 9 different advertising agencies of different sizing (see below for sampling criterion) allowed for greater consistency in the comparison. Eventually, the various backgrounds and years of experience of the participants provided rich grounds to the writing of the findings. Based on literature, results should show that identity becomes more stable with years of experiences. However, due to the fast pace changing environment, it is likely that this result will be mitigated.

3.3   Sampling

The company selection process started with a brainstorming regarding the type of agencies that would be relevant for the purpose of the research: independent or owned by a publicly traded holding group? Global or local? Big agency or small to medium sized? The following criterion were chosen, leading to a purposive sampling procedure:

- Full-service agencies with local offices, but global reach;

- Independent or owned by a publicly traded group;

- At least a small, a medium sized and a large company;

- Working with a broad portfolio of clients;

- 1 traditional or tech-savvy senior creative with several years of experience in the industry per agency.

Google and Adforum (https://www.adforum.com/) were used to look up for the relevant information about the agencies. Though the initial idea was to conduct interviews with two creatives per agency in seven agencies based in Amsterdam, the lack of positive responses following the first contact with the agencies pushed me to broaden my spectrum. Eventually, a total of 42 agencies were contacted. The first approach was made through e-mail. A reminder was sent to every agency, before personal calls were made. Some interviewees were recommended from the personal network of previous participants. These people were contacted either via personal email or on Linkedin.

3.3.1   Participants

This section is dedicated to presenting the background of the 9 agencies in which the participants work. Figure 4 (also to be found in the Appendix) is a table presenting an overview of the agencies, their location and size and whether they are independent, held by a group and/or part of a network. Three out of the nine agencies are held by major groups. Most of the agencies were also part of global networks (network of partner agencies or global reach with offices in worldwide hubs). Amongst the nine interviewees, two held the title of Technology Director, one of Copywriter while the remaining interviewees were all Creative Directors or Executive Creative Directors. Table 5 presents an overview of the interviewees' characteristics.

PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

AGENCY	LCATION	SIZE	NETWORK	HOLDING GROUP
72 and Sunny	Amsterdam	Large	72 and Sunny	MDC Partners
Amsterdam Worldwide	Amsterdam	Medium	Amsterdam Worldwide	Independent
Achtung! mcgarrybowen	Amsterdam	Medium	Dentsu Aegis Network	Dentsu
KRFL	Amsterdam	Small	-	Independent
Ara	Rotterdam	Medium	TBWA\Worldwide	Omincom
Campagne	Rotterdam	Small-Medium	AMIN Worldwide	Independent
Dept	Amsterdam	Large	DDA	Independent
DPDK	Rotterdam	Medium	-	Independent
Anonymous	Rotterdam	Small-Medium	-	Independent

Figure 4. Table of participating agencies

RESPONDENTS CHARACTERISTICS

NAME	FUNCTION	AGENCY	GENDER
Tobin Nageotte	Technology Director	72 and Sunny	Male
Daniel Peiron	Creative Director	Amsterdam Worldwide	Male
Mervyn Ten Dam	Creative Director/Founder	Achtung!mcgarrybowen	Male
Hesling Reidinga	Executive Creative Director	KRFL	Male
Raphael Kamp	Creative/Copywriter	Ara	Male
Bart van Wageningen	Creative Director	Campagne	Male
Japie Stoppelenburg	Creative Director	Dept	Male
Antwan can der Mooren	Head of Technology	DPDK	Male
Respondent 10	Creative Director	Agency X	Male

Figure 5. Participants characteristics

3.5   Operationalisation

In order to operationalise the creative identity, the updated model of Csikszentmihalyi served as the main guideline. The research question used to frame the research problem was: "*What roles do the changes in the technological environment and sociocultural factors play in the way 'traditional' senior creatives articulate their identities compared to senior creatives specialised in digital in advertising agencies in The Netherlands?"* The concepts of creativity and the creative process, technological factors and identity were operationalised. It has to be mentioned that these concepts are intertwined with one another. If creativity is the results of individual factors and is influenced by sociocultural and technological factors, the creative identity, such as postulated in this thesis is also the result of the interactions between these factors. Furthermore, it has to be remembered that the thesis eventually postulates that creativity- and identity- are two concepts that are sociocultural in nature. They are part of a broad system of meanings and interpretations.
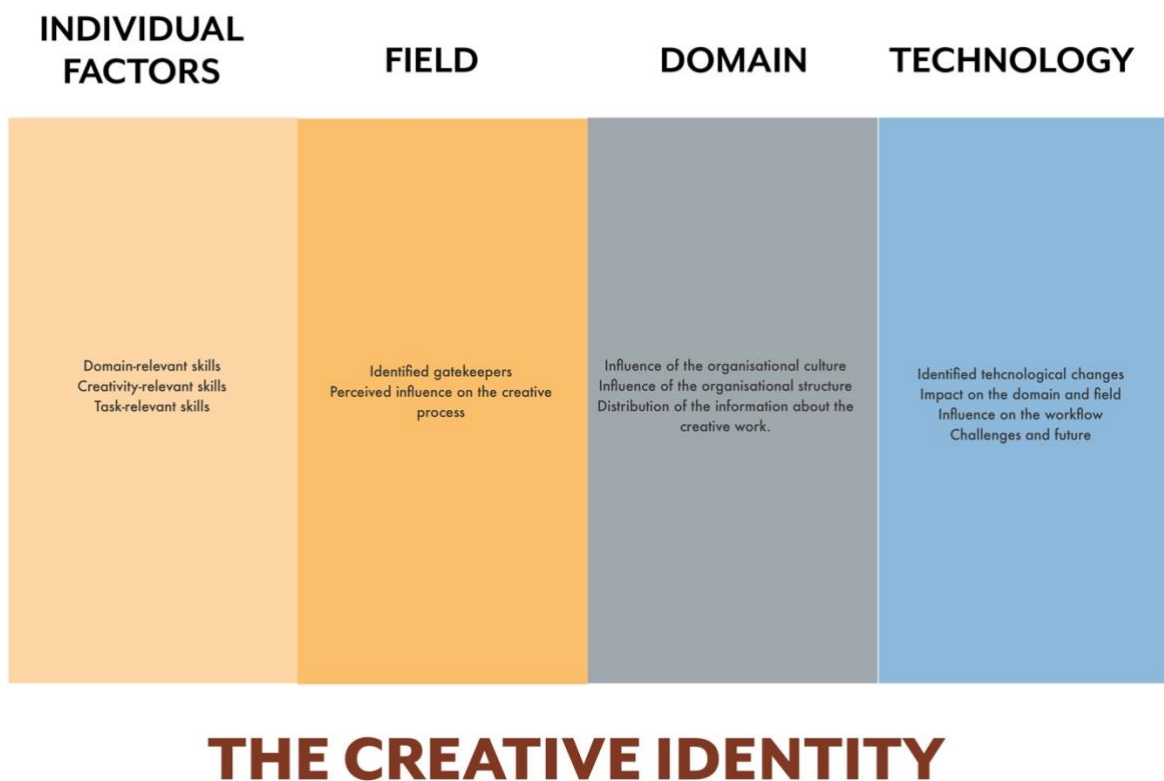
3.5.1   Creativity and the creative process

In order to operationalise the concept of creativity and the creative process, the definition given by Amabile (1983) was used as ground. Hence, creativity is the production of *novel* and *appropriate ideas* that are *heuristic* (no identifiable path for the ideation and generation of the ideas). Questions regarding creativity and the creative process were asked as such (What is creativity according to you? How is the creative process organised in your agency?). Quotes that related to creativity and advertising practices were used to redefine the concept of creativity and what it means to be creative in advertising. For example, quotes relating to the collective aspect of creativity and associated process were retained.

3.5.2   Technological factors

As previously stated, there is no common agreement on what the term of technology or *digital* technologies encompass. The definition used in this research is one that see technology as *the most single determinant of working behaviours* (Woodwards, 1965 in Stuhlfaut & Windels, 2017). Thereof, technology is mutually constituted with organisational practices. Technology enables social exchanges and identity orientations (Laniray, 2013; Gal et a., 2014). Questions regarding technology related to the impact of these changes for advertising process and creativity. Quotes were classified following their impact on the creative process and whether they were holding possible implications for creativity and the articulation of the creative identity.

3.5.3 Identity

Identity is the core notion of this research and perhaps also the hardest concept to grasp. The definition used to operationalise the concept of identity is the one used in the social representation theory (Glāveanu & Tanggaard, 2014). As such identity and behaviours are mutually constitutive and are situated in vast systems of social relations and meanings that evolve over time. The updated model of Csikszentmihalyi system model of creativity was used in order to grasp more precisely the social and organizational view on identity and what factors or which individuals might have an influence on the articulation of the creative identity in advertising.

INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

Domain-relevant skills
Creativity-relevant skills
Task-relevant skills

FIELD

Identified gatekeepers
Perceived influence on the creative process

DOMAIN

Influence of the organisational culture
Influence of the organisational structure
Distribution of the information about the creative work.

TECHNOLOGY

Identified tehcnological changes
Impact on the domain and field
Influence on the workflow
Challenges and future

THE CREATIVE IDENTITY

Figure 5. *The sociocultural view of the creative identity*

Quotes relating to individual factors were those in which respondents specified their personal motivations, showed knowledge regarding the domain and what creativity in advertising entails for them. Quotes relating to the field were classified as whether they were seen as inputs (sense of collaboration, affirmation/confirmation) or as judgments by the identified gatekeepers in evaluating the creative process. Quotes relating to the domain were classified as either reporting to the system of symbols that influence the creative identity, how the information about the creative work is distributed (organisation of the creative

process) and whether the creative work is integrated in the domain and could play a role in influencing future creative works. Finally quotes relating to technological factors were classified regarding their perceived impact on the domain and the field and their impact on the process as a whole.

3.6   Data collection and data analysis

Interviews were conducted on-site within a two-months' time span. Most of the interviews were conducted in a quiet room in every agency, which resulted in clear audio recordings. Only one interview was conducted via Skype.The average interview lasted approximatively forty minutes, with the shorter interview lasting for 30 min 21 and the longest for 1 hour. A topic list was designed to reflect accurately the research question and operationalisation.This topic list was given for review to a freelance creative with knowledge of the advertising industry. After the first interview, some minor changes were made (addition of some probes) in order to ensure more specificity during the rest of the interviews.

The sequence of the questions was made flexible in order to insure a smooth flow during the interviews. Questions were roughly sorted out into four categories reflecting the updated system model of Csikszentmihalyi (field, domain, technology and creators). Topics discussed included questions concerning reasons for respondents to choose advertising life (intrinsic motivations), questions related to creativity and the creative process and questions related to the changes in the digital environment and the potential impact on the advertising industry. Probes were integrated in order to gain more depth if necessary. In the introduction part of the interviews, personal questions were asked to the interviewees: "Can you shortly introduce your background?" "Can you explain the reasons you chose advertising life" were meant to form a background and draw a certain reference point for the remaining questions. A closing question concerning the challenges for technology and creativity was asked in order to gain insights on how the interviewees foresaw the future of the industry. In every question, the language was checked and no academic jargon was used. The concept of 'identity' was never mentioned during the interviews. This choice was purposefully made due to the complexity of the notion and to avoid confusion for participants.

 Before the start of each interview, an approval for quoting the participants with real names and company was asked. One respondent asked to stay anonymous (Respondent 10). The rest of the participants agreed on the terms (the consent form can be seen in the appendix). The purpose of the research was explained before starting the recordings.

Conversations were recorded using QuickTime Player on a laptop. Side notes were taken during each interview and typed down digitally after each interview. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. The language used for the interviews was English.

The international background of the respondents made it that there was no problem in conducting the interviews in English**.**

 After every meeting, a thank you e-mail was sent to the participants with the mention that an executive summary would be sent by mid-July.

Thematic analysis was chosen as the preferred method for analysing the data. Adapted from the grounded theory, thematic analysis is a method for identifying and analysing patterns in qualitative data and is used to understand how a group of people define their reality in relation to their social interactions (Clarke, & Braun, 2013). Thematic analysis is considered as the most sensitive analysis to discover meanings through the use of interpretations. Following Nowell and colleagues (2017), thematic analysis is useful for summarizing key features of data sets and provides grounds for the coding and categorisation of the recorded information into themes.

 As stated in Nowell and colleagues (2017) qualitative coding is a way of interacting with and thinking about data that allows the researcher to simplify and focus on the particularities of the data. This procedure relies upon three steps that allow to analyse systematically the data. In a first instance, open coding was used in order to retrieve the core information in the data. For this step, sentences, or part of sentences were highlighted in each interview and labels were given to the relevant information. For example, fragments within interviews that related to creativity as finding solutions to problems where labelled "Problem solving". These fragments were further compared in order to grasp whether supplementary information could be found and whether nuances existed. As such, creativity was also often spoken in terms of the unexpectedness of the ideas found to solve problems. These types of fragments within an interview were added to the coding tree and labelled "unexpected" and were used as subthemes. This step was repeated over for every single interview conducted. In a second instance, interviews were compared with one another: were there similarities? Were the initial codes representative of the whole? Were there characteristics in interviews that could be linked back to defining general concepts? According to Nowell and colleagues (2017), abstract entities, themes and subthemes bring a meaning to recurrent experiences into a meaningful whole. Once themes and subthemes were identified, they were named in order to give a clear sense of direction.
The table below illustrates the coding steps of the first theme that relates to advertising creativity.

Open coding	Axial coding	Selective coding
… We, we are, we are not artists, we solve problems, we are more sort of architects of ideas, than, than we just come up with the ideas?	Problem solving	
Creativity in general it's like finding less expected ways to solve things	Unexpected	
Because I think the more fences or boarders you put around people, the more creative you have to be to make something else out standing out of all those, all those, those…	Bounds	**Advertising creativity**
it's such a broad term that I think it holds different meanings for everyone, but for me creativity is really…	Subjectivity	

Figure 6. Coding example

Because of the subjectivity of the general concept of the research, the updated model of Csikszentmihalyi was used to develop broad codes and help categorizing the data. Hence themes were mostly generated through a deductive approach. Through open and axial coding, 23 sub-codes were found, they were then reduced into 11 categories which once grouped, formed 4 themes: (1) Advertising creativity, (2) Advertising practices, (3) Technological changes and (4) Creative identity. The miscellaneous codes were retained on the side as insurance that comments that were not directly oriented in responding to the research question were not lost. Case can be made of *the politics of creativity*. Several creatives mentioned the impact that the internal politics of brands could have on the agencies creative outputs. As such, this code could be considered as indirectly linked to the research.

3.6.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency or dependability to which an instrument measures the attribute it is designed to measure (Polit & Hungler, 1995). In this case, questions were used over and over for the 9 interviews. Due to the nature of the interviews (semi-structured), questions were sometimes asked differently to fit the natural flow of conversations. However, all questions were covered and I feel interviewees were consistent during their interviews and showed knowledge and understanding in face to the matter at hand. Finally, the fact that the interview questions were tested beforehand adds to the overall reliability of the research.

3.6.3 Validity

Considered in qualitative research as one of the most important aspect, validity is also quite challenging in its nature to combine rigor, subjectivity and creativity into the research (Whittemore, Chase & Mandle, 2001). Bryman and Bell (2007) suggest using measurement (construct), internal validity, external validity (population) and ecological validity to answer to the aspect. Internal validity was insured by following a thread during every step of the research and by systematically explaining the goals of the research to the participants.

External validity is the extent to which results are generalizable. In the present case, the final sample could be considered as quite small with participating agencies all located in The Netherlands and generalisations difficult to make. However, all interviewees are experts and accumulate several years of experience in the industry. Moreover, the interviewees responses showed consistency with one another. Hence, it can be claimed that the final findings are accurate enough.

Ecological validity was reached using questions related to individual experiences and in relation to the practices in advertising. It is likely that some interviewees included a "sales-pitch" in some of their answers. However, this aspect was rare due to the highly subjective nature of the research and the fact it was mentioned to the interviewees that their individual perspective was what mattered most.

3.6.4 Practical and ethical issues

This research was conducted in an ethical manner. Participants were made aware of their rights to withdraw at any moment, they were also made aware of the recordings and asked whether they wanted to stay anonymous (informed consent). A combination of primary and secondary sources was used. No primary or secondary source was made up. Contact of the participants can be made available upon request. Referencing was made according academic standards (APA style).

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4. Results

This study results highlight the complex and implicit constructs of the creative identity in the Dutch context of advertising. Because of the subjectivity of the two terms comprising the *creative identity*, the research was framed following the system model of creativity and the research question was expressed in the subsequent terms: *What roles do the changes in the technological environment and sociocultural factors play in the way 'traditional' senior creatives articulate their identities compared to senior creatives specialised in digital in advertising agencies in The Netherlands?"*

Following a thematic analysis, four themes were discovered. These themes are presented below and are all interrelated: **Theme 1:** A pragmatic view of advertising creativity. But it all depends. **Theme 2:** Collective practices, a strategy to creativity, **Theme 3:** Technology matters, but it all comes down to the Media, **Theme 4:** The advertising creative. This chapter is divided following these four intertwined themes and sub-themes are illustrated with quotes from the interviews. Theme 4 findings are mostly related to the previous themes.

4.1 Theme 1: A pragmatic view of advertising creativity. But it all depends.

The first theme discussed relates to *A pragmatic view of advertising creativity. But it all depends.* Despite theory mentioning that no universally agreed definition of advertising creativity exist, informants showed consistency in describing what creativity in their industry is about, and many aspects mentioned by the respondents support the theory on creativity (Amabile, 1983; Florida, 2006; de Waal Malefyt & Morais, 2010; Gotsi et al., 2010; Turnbull & Wheeler, 2017). Far from the romantic idea of a pure "Creativity", the findings suggest that creativity in advertising is firstly oriented toward *problem solving*. Eight out of nine interviewees mentioned this *pragmatic* aspect of creativity. As such, creativity in advertising is embedded on a practical level: creativity is *bounded and purpose driven* and *unexpected and subjective.* This section is divided into three sub-themes that respectively take into account this practical aspect of advertising creativity. The sub-themes are as followed: (1) *Problem solving,* (2) *Bounded and purpose driven creativity,* (3) *Unexpected and subjective creativity.*

Interestingly, while Gotsi and colleagues (2010) came to the conclusion that creativity in advertising responds to the needs of an artistic and business ethos, the present study concludes elsewise. In accord with Turnbull and Wheeler (2017), creativity in advertising is expressed as antagonist to creativity in the Arts. By acknowledging this, advertising creatives clearly dissociated themselves from creative groups evolving in other spheres.

Thereby, creativity is contextual since it respomds to advertising own selective mechanism. In this line of thought advertising is thus a *field* of its owy.

Eventually, creativity cannot be dissociated from its process: collective and physically bounded, the process is also highly based on strategic insights. As such, creativity in advertising is further embedded in a contextual and metaphysical level. These two aspects will be presented in Theme 2. This second theme is directly linked to Theme 1 and takes into account the collective aspect of advertising practices.

4.1.1   Problem solving

As Mervyn Ten Dam, creative director and founder of Achtung! asserted, the prime goal of creativity in advertising is to solve problems through the elaboration of ideas. Creatives do not see themselves as *artists*, but as Mervyn Ten Dam mentioned, as architects of ideas who solve problems. In this same line of thought, Respondent 10 sees creativity as: "the ability to look at things in a different way than most people do. The ability to come up with a solution or a translation or a design that bring attention or surprises people".

The interviewees' perception of *why* clients come to ad agencies is linked to the aspect that problems need to be solved and advertising can deliver uncommon ideas. There is obviously no common agreement to what can be considered as unexpected. Certainly, the message is central: "In the end our work is very similar to marketers trying to find the best way to bring their messages in between or where people are […]" (Daniel Peiron, Amsterdam Worldwide). Some interviewees such as Anonymous mentioned *design* as a creative solution, others, such as Hesling Reidinga from KRFL, believe in the value of delivering extra *services* or building brand personalities. Eventually, it all comes down to "striking the nerves of common people" (Mervyn Ten Dam, Achtung!). In line with the definition of Amabile (1977), these quotes illustrate how creativity is after all related to finding heuristic paths to bring value for both the clients and the consumers. Advertising creativity brings solutions to the table. Good creatives know that the best ideas are those that are viable. The path always depends, but successful ideas are those that are thought of thoroughly up to their execution point.

4.1.2   Bounded and purpose driven creativity

Importantly and in line with Eikhof and Haunschild (2007 in Gotsi et al., 2010), creativity in advertising is *bounded* within frames imposed by (a) business objectives- what needs to be solved for the clients and (b) clients' internal politics which often impacts the feedback on the creative work. All interviewees expressed these aspects of advertising creativity.

"I think that creativity inside advertising is always more focused on a business point of view. I mean in the end, you know the client has a certain target, a certain KPI they want to achieve, or they want to raise awareness, improve their branding or maybe increase sales […] You have to be creative inside a framework". (Raphel Kamp, Copywriter, Ara).

Business oriented, advertising creativity is limited to the problem at hand (Turnbull & Wheeler, 2017). However, these bounds are also perceived as enjoyable by creatives; they confer challenges and push them to innovate:

"We work for a client, we work with a certain product and that's what I personally really like. Because I think the more fences or boarders you put around people, the more creative you have to be to make something stands out." (Mervyn Ten Dam, Achtung!)

In opposition with creativity in the Arts and in line with Turnbull and Wheeler (2017), creativity in advertising is framed, limited to various elements imposed by the clients and *purpose driven*. The creative work is not aimed at fulfilling oneself, "to do nice stuff", but first and foremost to "achieve something" for the client:

"I guess that creativity is very important for us, but it should always lead to certain business result or a certain goal […] I think that, unless you want to be an autonomous artist, in most cases I think creativity should serve a purpose. Not that an artist doesn't have purpose but I mean in our field it should serve a purpose." (Anonymous).

If creativity in advertising is bounded to the clients' business objectives, this bound goes further: clients' own internal politics are biding creativity. As Daniel Peiron underlines it, clients are supposed to know best what fits for their brand. The pressure of their own work environment can push clients to lack constructivism in their feedback. They may also show a need for control over the process that can impact creativity.

"The more the client is in control, the less room there is for creativity […] There are companies that have very high hierarchal structures and that are controlled by a few people that love whip all day […] You can say you don't feel it. It's okay […] discussions can be harsh and yeah, we might not agree, but at least we are clearing what we're trying to achieve together".

If creativity in advertising is bound to respond to business needs and meet marketing demands (Turbull & Wheeler, 2017), it is also driven by a purpose that goes beyond politics and capitalism. Creative expect to make the world a better place and to "create something meaningful" (Tobin Nageotte, 72 and Sunny).

> "[…] Creativity should be an outlet for you to share your view on the world, to share what you think life should be, or what society should. You can do that through the brands that you're working for […]" (Raphael Kamp, Ara).

As this quote illustrates, agencies work for clients. However, the belief is that there is room for agencies to act as mediators in delivering messages that will improve the well-being of society. Agencies can help "build the world we want to build" (Tobin Nageotte, Technology director, 72 and Sunny).

4.1.3 Unexpected and subjective creativity

Eventually Practitioners conceptualized creativity in advertising as the ability to find lateral solutions to very specific communications or marketing problems. Creativity in general it's like finding the less expected way to solve things. (Daniel Peiron). The *unexpected* factor is central:

> "[…]If you ask for an idea, you might get two or three ideas which you never thought about." (Mervyn Ten Dam, Achtung!).

But it all depends...

If interviewees showed similarity and consistency in their definition of "what is creativity", most of them also acknowledged that the concept is highly subjective. In alignment with previous research (Amabile, 1971; Vanden Bergh & Stuhlfaut, 2006; Tunbull & Wheeler, 2017), creativity bares different meanings in different contexts: "Yeah because it's super subjective and of course a lot of people have a different vision" (Daniel Peiron, Amsterdam Worldwide). "Creativity is a big word that you can use in a lot of different contexts" (Antwan, DPDK). In this line of thoughts, Raphael Kamp offered appealing insights:

> "…it's such a broad term that I think it holds different meanings for everyone, but for me creativity is actually the process before you have an idea. If you look up the word creativity, it actually says it's an original idea, but I don't totally agree with that. I think

it's the part before the idea comes into shape. It's the part where you really brainstorm with other people. It is the process of connecting certain subjects […]."

In alignment with Rhodes (1961) and de Waal Malefyt and Morais (2010) this quote illustrates that creativity is as much the idea than the process. "Defining the creative process, is defining the process of an agency. The most important source is creativity [...] you can never have one idea and then it's like a linear thing. It gets interfered by other forces. The whole process…I see it together with the feedback. The internal feedback, the feedback from the client, from everyone… It's never a pure idea that goes from A to Z." (Daniel Peiron, Amsterdam Worldwide).

Creativity in advertising is the idea, the process before during and after the idea that includes many different steps and people. Creativity in advertising is heuristic and collective in nature. Advertising is defined through the creativity of its practices and is contextual after all. This perspective relates to the system model of creativity such as first developed by Csikszenthmihalyi (1988) and replicated by Vanden Bergh and Stuhlfault (2006). Ultimately, sdvertising as a field at the opposite of Arts, responds to peculiarities within a system. Ideas are the result of interactions between subjects and their environment.

4.2   Theme 2: Collective practices, a strategy to creativity

Abreast theory (see Glāveanu, 2015), creativity is sociocultural. It is the result of interactions between different audiences as well as the result of the interactions of these audiences with the material environment. The present theme offers an overview of the findings regarding the practices in advertising and how these practices are linked to creativity. Two main observations are drawn. Firstly, internal and external dynamics underpin advertising practices. These dynamics are first and foremost collective. Internally, the practices are strategy and insights based, the process favouring the thinking more than the end result itself. Externally, the clients are the main instance to which agencies must respond. Practices are therefore tailor-made to their inputs and goals. The nature of the advertising practices is one of *co-creation* on both levels. Finally, the physical space matters. This theme is subdivided in two. The first subtheme relates to the collective character of the internal and external dynamics of advertising practices. The second subtheme relates to the physical space.

4.2.1   The collective character of the internal and external dynamics of advertising practices

According to participants, the creative practices are both internally (nine out of nine interviewees) and externally (eight out of nine) predominantly *collaborative*: "We have a special way of working and that means that we bring in our clients in a number of sessions and we co-create with them" (Respondent 10).

Externally, though working *for* clients, agencies mostly perceive their relations with the brands that hire them as "partnerships". As such, clients are a knowledgeable source for insights that will help advertising achieving the best results:

> "[…] We use a lot of their knowledge and opinions to come to our concept […] We don't believe in being a supplier, but we really believe in a tight collaboration. […] They know their competition better than we do, so we don't believe in the typical black advertising box." (Respondent 10).

If the steps of the actual process "is always depending on the situation" (Antwan van der Mooren, DPDK) and may vary from one agency to another, as well as from one client to another. It always starts with the brief in which directions and information are provided to the agencies. From there on, agencies all have their way to getting along with their clients. However, maintaining a relationship of trust is the most secure way to come up with results satisfying for both parties:

> "The more trust you get from a client, the bigger the chances are that the ideas that come out are special." (Mervyn Ten Dam, Achtung!)

Internally, the practices are also oriented toward collaboration. The emphasis is centrally put on the importance of a well-drawn strategy. The role of the strategist in advertising creativity seem hence primordial, and a *well-defined strategy* can make the difference in the outcomes that will be sold to the clients:

> "I think that the core of being a good agency is that you can […] make a very smart strategy and creative concept around the challenges of your clients. That's what make you sustainable in a way." (Daniel Peiron, Amsterdam Worldwide).

The general narrative around the strategy somewhat places advertising at a meta-level: "it all starts with a vision" (Respondent 10). More than a concrete, physical product, the thinking is favoured:

"[…] The process is becoming a bigger conversation. How we approach the work is almost as important as what we make […] Our value is the thinking […] That requires ideas that bang against each other." (Tobin Nageotte, 72 and Sunny).

Daniel Peiron's discourse holds a similar value to the one held by Tobin Nageotte:

-*talking* about the role of production companies and why brands go back to advertising agencies- "That's kind of what's happening. They (brands) are going back to the agencies because they add this strategy and creativity at a different level. It's not only about execution."

4.2.2   The physical space.
Though not much is to be developed regarding the physical space, seven out of nine interviewees referred to their environment as the physical space when asked about the environmental factors influencing most their creative work:

"I think physically the place is quite important. I think you need a place that feels like home. You need to be relaxed to come up with ideas." (Mervn Ten Dam, Achtung!).

Physical space is to be understood as much in its *materiality*: "Throughout most of the agency all of our walls are magnetic. The idea is that you are supposed to bring out your thinking." (Tobin Nageotte, 72 and Sunny) than in the feelings it procures. As such, the space has to be "nice, calm and friendly" (Daniel Peiron, Amsterdam Worldwide).

In line with Glāveanu (2015), creativity is contextual and contingent: it is the result of interactions with various audiences and their material environment. Creativity in advertising is collective and is cornered around the process more than the outcome. Many creative specialists are involved in the various steps of the process. Creativity is internally and externally discursively constructed in a process of co-creation.
The pragmatism of the narratives of the interviewees suggests an erasure in the differentiation given to advertising roles. Creativity is not allocated to the copywriter only, but nor is it allocated to "creative directors" either. This demonstrates a semantic problem in the industry: the collective nature of the creative process blurs the lines between roles and functions; creatives become strategists, strategists must be smart in understanding the clients and in doing so, prove to have "creative" qualities.
        Eventually, creativity in advertising is embedded at three levels: the practical level, the contextual level and the metaphysical level. On the practical level, flatly put, creativity

serves a purpose: finding unexpected ideas to solve a problem. On the contextual level, creativity is embedded in the physical space and in the interactions occurring within this space. On the metaphysical level, creativity in advertising is the thinking. More than the technique, it is the idea that express itself before, during and after the process.

4.3   Theme 3: Technology matters, but it all comes down to Media

The two previous themes presented the macro level factors that play a role in both defining creativity and the creative process. Theme 3 gives a special attention to the impact of technological changes on (1) the media landscape and (2) the advertising processes. An emphasis is given to the impact of digital technologies. As expressed by the participants these changes are two-folded in advertising: on the one hand, they affect the media landscape. As such, technology affects society as a whole and empowers users (Röling, 2010). The media landscape is changed in that technology in general and digital technologies in particular, provide more channels through which communicate. However, the essence of advertising stays put: the idea is king (Wagler, 2013). Advertising helps brands to communicate and reach out to consumers in the least disruptive way possible *where* they are. On the other hand, these changes are felt on the processes. Technology is seen as a tool that can ease and enable the creative process.

This section is divided into these two following subthemes:
 (1) The media is king and the users come first.
 (2) Ease in the creative process

4.3.1   The Media is king and the user comes first

On the media side, two observations can be highlighted. Firstly, the changes in technology affect society as a whole: the consumers are empowered. The "users" come first. Secondly, the channels are multiplied, which offers more possibilities to advertise. If the idea(s) is/are central, the notion of "advertising" becomes irrelevant as brands must become human in their efforts to reach, engage and foster a dialogue with brands' audiences. Advertising agencies become the *to go* partner for building brand personalities and develop holistic messages.

Nowadays, "people control media" (Mervyn Ten Dam, Achtung!). And it doesn't come any simpler as that. Increase in control on the users' side, ease of social interactions (Stuhlfaut & Windels, 2017); the changes in the technological environment have empowered people. Ten out of ten practitioners acknowledged what could be called a process of democratization made possible through digital technologies. For Daniel Peiron: "People are

more able to choose. [...] They are- in theory- more in control. For example, you know, you go to our website and you see it is full of adverts. You can decide to close them. Before you would have ads on TV and had to watch them all [...] It empowers people, the consumers…"

The impact of the technological (r)evolution (as three of the interviewees called it) is mostly felt on the societal level and as such is not perceived as a threat for advertising.

"I guess that, the whole digitalization of society of course influences us as well […] I've never quite seen this as a problem, because I think we move together." (Respondent 10).

Though interviewees seem to perceive the empowerment of the consumers rather as an opportunity than a threat, they also acknowledge that the changes in consumers behaviour asks for changes in the way messages are delivered:

"We always put the user first, we know that they are in control. We are not from an age where you say I'm going to spend a few millions and then everyone knows this little funny tune or the tagline of my brand, you know? We always try to come up with things that you actually follow through, voluntarily. That you want to deal with or to be involved with." (Mervyn Ten Dam, Achtung!).

This quote illustrates clearly the main shift through which advertising is ongoing: the user comes first and the message has to reach the audience in a non-disruptive way. Audience engagement (in concordance with the findings of Wagler 2013) is central and the connection with the users is made through various touchpoints that cannot be limited any longer to what traditional advertising used to do. The changes in the technological environment give advertising practices more channels to deliver brand's messages, which in turn have to reach audiences smoothly.

"[…] It also makes it a lot more fun because it's almost limitless. Whereas in the past you had three TV channels, five newspapers and a couple of lifestyle magazines and the radio. Now everything can be communication […] It also makes it confusing and intrusive but also creative [...] Who are you talking to? Then you decide where you can see it and how you distribute it. Some people have an attention span of five minutes and other three seconds […]"

Hence, the imperative lays in understanding *who* the audience is, *where* it is and *how* to reach it and catch its attention (Antwan van der Mooren, DPDK). The changes in technology empower people and offer advertising practitioners the opportunity to reach consumers through multiple touchpoints. The shift resides in the need for more awareness in regard to what the consumers and the brand's position are within this new landscape.

In this sense, practitioners recognise the need for advertising to go beyond advertising. Whereas in the "old days" time was *bought*, in the present days, time is *earned* (Mervyn Ten Dam, Achtung!). The multiplication of channels has made it so that users are constantly overflowed with messages, and while a three minutes commercial does not do the trick any longer, nor does a three seconds film: "You can't have an emotional arch in a film in three seconds. If you want to connect with someone, they can get the brand and they can get like a quick feeling, but you can't really take anybody with you in three seconds […]" (Hesling Reidinga, KRFL). Audiences must be reached subtly and efficiently where they are actually willing to be reached (voluntarily vs forced)**.**

Advertising has to be smarter and though it might never be at the forefront of technological change, as suggested by Daniel Peiron (first it will be the gaming industry or the porn industry), agencies offer the means to develop more cleverly and subtly messages that can help brands to become human and foster a dialogue with the consumers. The hook is not only oriented toward the traditional *tagline*, but in helping brand to develop a personality: What does a brand do versus what does a brand say (Japie Stoppelenburg, Dept) is the embodiment resulting from the changes in the technological environment within which creatives have to build their creative strategy. According to Raphael Kamp, this requires a whole different approach of "how we think, how we act and react to technology. Technology has a lot of benefits […] I do believe that even from a creative point of view, the digital tools or the technology should never be like at the core of it […] The idea should always be at the core of a good campaign or a good add and technology can help improve it."

All in all, advertisers offer to be the partners that help delivering brands' messages to the consumers. Technology is a mean to enhance the idea, but the fundamentals stay the same. The changes in the technological environment eventually ask for smarter advertising. As suggested by Daniel Peiron: "advertisers have to be a smarter and more relevant. How they bring their messages is the biggest change and I think is for good." Advertising has to embrace change and understand the position in this ever-changing landscape of both brands and consumers in order to deliver. If TV is not always perceived as a favourable channel to communicate, creatives understand the reach the media still has. The difficulty of "modern" advertising lays in understanding how to combine traditional media with digital oriented solutions.

Finally, interviewed practitioners also acknowledge the need to adopt a humbler position; advertising and brands are- in their eyes- perceived as manipulating their audiences. Whatever the message is, ethics and responsibility should be integrated in advertising.

"It's, there's a little responsibility that comes with that. I don't know if that responsibility will again win of over profits. I don't know it's a very, it's become a very immoral like how people are being advertised to without knowing it, whether it's about political beliefs or products or social movements and people are being manipulated. I think advertising is more and more now perceived as manipulation and where people are almost helpless in making choices, choices are being made for them [...]" (Hesling Reidinga, KRFL).

In conclusion and in line with existing literature (Wagler, 2013; Stuhlfaut & Windels, 2017), the findings suggest that advertising practices are influenced by the changes in the technological environment. Yet, its essence is left unchanged. Partners to brands, advertising practitioners deliver strategy based messages to consumers. The Big Idea is still king. The changes in the technological environment influence society and advertising has to adapt and embrace these changes as quickly as possible. The multiplication of media offers a chance for advertising agencies to innovate and bring novel ideas to the table through an unprecedented number of touchpoints.

The following sub-theme is dedicated to presenting the impact of technological changes on the internal processes of advertising agencies.

4.3.2   Ease in the process
On the process side, technology offers tools that ease the whole creative process. In this sense, technology is a tool for creatives to access broader world of references, a practical tool to communicate and share instantly (interactive communication) and an instant feedback loop tool. In line with Giddens (1991), new technologies facilitate the modes of interaction and are mutually constitutive with organisational practices (Laniray, 2013; Gal, Blengind Jensen & Lyytinen, 2014). As previously stated, the fundamentals of advertising are still very similar to what they used to be back in the golden years of Madison Avenue. As a practice, advertising relays upon strategic thinking and creativity is used to solve problems. The changes in technology affect the processes in that they provide tools that facilitate the approach to problem solving; From the information gathering, to the ideation and realization

of the idea through its implementation via different media, technology offers tools that can be put in service of expressing messages more creatively. The biggest challenge being to understand how to shift through all the information at any given stage of the process. For Raphael Kamp: "technology has given us a very broad view on the world and has given us an easy access to everything, but the pitfall is that we don't know how much of it is usable […]".

Eventually and concordant with the findings of Stuhlfaut and Windels (2017), technology in agency is not only framed as a tool for producing and expressing an idea through a message, but is also the vehicle through which ideas are generated. Advertising was, is and probably will keep on being a business of ideas, a business for problem solvers. Creatives seem conscious of the opportunities offered by technology as well as the risks that come with it. Furthermore, in line with Wagler (2013), the changes in the technological environment first and foremost impact society as a whole: empowered, the users are central.

Unlike traditional advertising, the approach is not top-down focused anymore; the communication form adopted is the least interruptive one as possible. Messages are not only delivered though commercials but oriented towards building brands' personality. The advertising axiom is put on storytelling and audience engagement through the delivery of enriched experiences (Raphael Kamp, Ara). For advertisers, the medium is the message and technology should serve the purpose of transmitting this message in the most adequate fashion. Strategy is central and offers the red line through which advertising will deliver value for the brands they work for.

One should retain that the advertising industry has eventually always followed and adapted to the changes in the technological environment. It was mentioned in the first section of the theoretical framework that the fourth wave of advertising characteristics responded to the broad introduction of communication technologies (ICT) which led to the empowerment of consumers and to difficulties for agencies to reach and convince audiences. Technology impacts society, empowers them. The media is multiplied, but the essence of advertising stays the same. All in, agencies succeeding to retain their portfolio of clients are the ones to adapt the fastest and to integrate the new challenges into their practices as smoothly as possible. Nowadays pace is always faster, and delivering commercials is not sufficient anymore to respond to this challenging environment. Advertising practitioners must hence adopt holistic behaviours in their efforts to reach audiences and to meet brands' expectations. Technology eases the process of co-creation both internally and externally. All in, far from being a threat, technological (r)evolution is rather perceived as an opportunity.

The following section is dedicated to presenting the results regarding the organisational identity.

4.4 Theme 4: The advertising creative

Based on the three previous themes, this section is dedicated to presenting the results regarding the creative identity. It has to be mentioned beforehand that throughout all interviews, the question of *identity* was never asked as such. Due to the complexity of the concept and to avoid any type of confusion, the concept was approached indirectly through questions relating to individual experiences. The results of these aspects were presented in Theme 1, Theme 2 and Theme 3. As such, Theme 4 is the sum up of the three previous themes. It should also be mentioned that interviewees for the most, did not chose advertising (eight out of nine interviewees ended in advertising by hazard). Though backgrounds and professional experiences varied, interviewees expressed many similarities regarding creativity in advertising, the advertising practices and the impact of the changes in technology on their industry. This indicates a shared knowledge among advertising practitioners of the common enterprise they pursue (DiMaggio & Powell, 2015), but also places advertising as a field with established social rules structuring the social interactions (Hodgson, 2006 in Heinonen & Rozenfeld, 2013, p. 8).

Introduced in the theoretical framework, identity was presented as being a process of sense making constituted in relation to others and being the result of experiences and subjective meanings (Alvesson, Ashcraft & Thomas, 2008; Bernoux, 2010). The present results confirm this view though some nuances need to be made. This last theme presents the advertising creative. Three sub-themes allow to grasp what the identity of the advertising creative is about. Firstly, it is placed within a process of association versus dissociation: *Who am I* versus *Who am I not?* Secondly, the creative identity in advertising responds to collective features. Finally, the identity of the creative in advertising also responds to individual traits. These sub-themes are shortly presented below.

4.4.1 A process of association versus dissociation

The main result regarding the creative identity in advertising suggests that identity is embedded in a process of dissociation versus association. Contrarily to literature (Gotsi et al., 2010), creatives in advertising do not assimilate themselves with artists. Interviewed practitioners explained that their individual needs for creativity in its artistic sense can be fulfilled outside the organisational context (Respondent 10). As suggested by Round and Styhre (2016), creatives acknowledge that their work is mostly oriented towards achieving

business goals. The narrative is oriented toward a process of dissociation between *traditional* versus *non-traditional* advertising. The digitalisation of society and changes in consumer behaviours being the main aspects for the shift between what is considered traditional (crudely: producing commercials for TV) and non-traditional advertising (in sum: building brand personality though the use of several touchpoints that reach consumers in a non-disruptive way). Hence, creatives distance themselves from what they consider to be outdated to present themselves as distinctive.

While Stuhlfaut and Windels (2017) noted that the cultural and perceptual differences between traditional and interactive media employees could lead to unstable identities within organisations, the results of this thesis suggest elsewise as interviewees do not seem to perceive differences between creative traditional roles and more tech savvy roles. Creatives have to endorse new skills and extend their vision of the advertising practices, but so do other employees: as such everyone in advertising is "creative people" (Bart Wageningnen, Campagne). The creative process doesn't revolve around the creative director and copywriter- as it used to be- but is the result of interactions between a broader spectrum of advertising employees. To maintain their position, creatives must endorse roles that are not limited to the pure production of the creative work. If everyone is creative, "creatives" have to become strategists in order to get their vision through. As creatives must juggle between more imperatives, their identity become more fragmentary.

Eventually, the creative identity is internally constructed and enacted through the creative process. Collective, the process is the result of forced interactions between individuals holding various responsibilities and roles. The impact of technology in the process facilitating communication but blurring and expanding its limits.

4.4.2   Collective features and individual traits

Aside from the process of association versus dissociation described above, common features emerge.

The first feature relates to the pragmatic view of the creative work. As stated in the first Theme, creatives perceive creativity as a mean to solve problems (nine out of nine interviewees mention that creativity is about solving problems). Interviewees identify themselves as problem solvers. Hereby, they recognize the economical and institutional essence of advertising and associate themselves to the needs of their field.

The second common feature relates to the social responsibility the respondents feel they ought to deliver in their work (five out of nine). Advertising has lost its credibility and participants believe they can make the world a better place. Advertising is a business, but it doesn't mean it cannot be ethical. Creatives identify themselves with values that are bigger

than advertising or the brands they work for. They are in the position to deliver messages, but it has to be "morally right" (Daniel Peiron, Amsterdam Worldwide). Advertising practitioners can be mediators between society and brands (Suthlfaut & Windels, 2017; Cronin, 2004; Morean, 2005) in a mission to drive the world to a better place.

The creative advertising is at last an experienced based identity. Though intrinsic qualities might be of some importance, experiences and the skills matter most. In line with the components of the creative performance (Amabile, 1983), creativity-relevant skills heavily rely upon past experiences. The changes in technology offer the opportunity for creatives to learn by themselves the skills that might differentiate them on the work field. But being creative isn't about knowing how to create aesthetically appealing images on Photoshop. The creative ability in advertising resides in the actual capability to create something on the most basic programs, to organise, plan and predict the whole creative process. The creative ability resides in the strategic thinking throughout the whole process. It resides on the capacity of the creative to understand what brands want, what tools they have at their disposition to get their ideas running, how to get the ideas realised. The creative identity is inherent to personal characteristics and abilities, but also to an accumulated knowledge gained though experiences.

All in and in line with the theory of social representations, the creative identity is built in relation to others in a process of association versus dissociation. The creative identity in advertising is volatile as it is highly dependent on the daily work practices and social interactions. The technological changes have eased aspects of these interactions but have also brought complications in regard to the process. Creatives need to adopt a more holistic stand and in doing so are confronted with more imperatives. Experience can bring more stability in the understanding of these imperatives. The biggest challenge for the creative identity in advertising lays in the sense of moral responsibility and ethics that creatives feel they ought to maintain in their practices.

Eventually, in line with Laniray, 2013 and Gal et al. (2014), technology and organisational practices are mutually constitutive. Technology offers means for creatives that facilitate their daily practices. But in becoming more inclusive, these practices lead to more imperatives to which creatives must answer to. Traditional vs non-traditional, morally correct vs business needs, extension of the skill sets…Creatives ought to balance internal and external pressures in the articulation of their identity.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

This explanatory research sought to uncover the role played by the changes in the technological landscape and the role of sociocultural factors in the way 'traditional' senior creatives articulate their identities compared to tech savvy creatives in advertising agencies.

The results showed that the creative identity is articulated similarly by traditional and tech savvy creatives. The creative identity in advertising is built on a shared pragmatic vision of what advertising creativity entails. The articulation of the identity relies upon a pragmatic view of creativity that responds to the institutional and economical imperatives of the advertising industry. It is constructed in the internal/external dialectic of the creative process and in co-production with the various relevant gatekeepers. As such, the creative identity is built in dissociation with what "it is not" and in association with what "it is". In this case, the dissociation is made between traditional and non-traditional. The spectrum of non-traditional advertising being one that goes beyond the simple production of commercials to be extended to the generation of ideas and unexpected solutions. More skills are required in order to fill in complementary roles. Hence, the identity of the advertising creatives could be said to be one of a "strategist" as their perspectives on the process ought to be more holistic. Moreover, though creatives do not feel the need to fulfil artistic endeavours within the bounds of their work, their needs for morals and ethics represent perhaps the most prominent weight for the articulation of stable identities. They ought to weave together the business imperatives and personal values; meet the clients' needs while insuring that their wish for a better world can be attained. Strategized ideas can help in implementing such messages that will reach beyond the capitalistic exigences of brands. However, fluctuations in the daily practices curb the formation of stable identities. Sociocultural in nature, the creative identity fluctuates substantially during the creative process.

Ultimately, technology as a factor influencing the processes is constitutive of the creative identity. It extends the practices in that interactions are eased. As such, more people get involved in the process forcing "creatives" to adapt faster and to endorse supplementary roles.

5.1.   Theoretical implications

This research extended existing literature on advertising creativity. It also brought further insights on the role of technology and advertising practices as well as on the creative identity. The most attractive aspect of the model by Csikszentmihalyi allowed to consider creativity in a dynamic manner, every factor impacting one way or another the other factors of the model. Adaptable to various fields, the model implicates that creativity is eventually a shifting concept. If in the field of advertising, the concept was shown to be embedded at three different level: practical, contextual and metaphysical. It is to be expected that a replication of this model to other part of the creative industry will provide with different findings. Though the technological factor is not part of the original model, the findings let suggest that this factor should not be left out. The advertising system model of creativity is presented below. It takes into consideration the various dynamics that concur to the occurrence of advertising creativity and *in fine* in to the articulation of a creative identity.

5.1.1   The advertising system model of creativity

One of the most consequent addition of this research to existing literature on advertising places its creative practices in an internal-external dialectic of direct co-creation. If the original model by Csikszentmihalyi suggested that creativity is collective in nature, the changes in the technological environment have resulted, for advertising, in a democratization of the process. The instantaneity allowed by digital technologies makes it so that everyone- in theory- can take part in the creative process.

The original system model developed by Csikszentmihalyi and adapted for the needs of the research with the components of creative performance (Amabile,1983) offered to take into consideration the interrelations between the field, the domain and the creators alongside the impact of technology on the creative process. The advertising model of creativity eventually postulates that technology is an important determinant of advertising creativity. On the one hand, technology impacts the media environment. On the other hand, it impacts the process which in turn influences directly the *creators'* behaviours and identities.
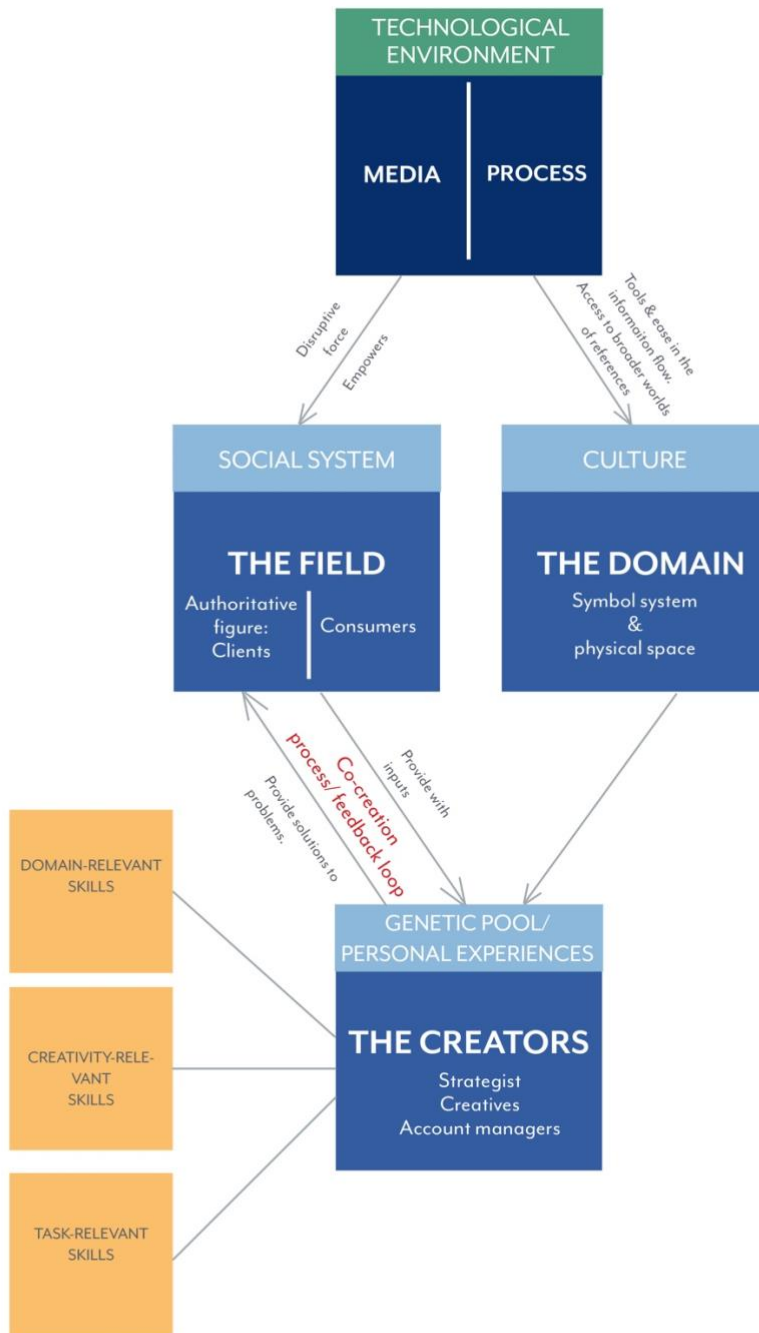
Figure 7. The system model of advertising creativity.

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Technology

The key finding regarding the initial model do not place technology as a direct influence on the creators: as presented in previous sections, the main impact of technological changes is placed on the societal level. It impacts the media. As technology becomes culture, expectations from the field change: consumers are empowered and brands expect advertising to deliver their promises accordingly. On the organisational level, technology influences the organisational processes, hence the behaviours. Digital technologies in general and interactive media in particular improve and quicken interactive communications by easing the way activities and practices are organised. They confer new social arrangements for organisations. This result in advertising practices to become more and more collaborative. The process of creation becomes one of co-creation.

The field

Advertising is a field of its own that responds its own rules. These rules are commonly shared and mostly relates to practices. The findings suggested at least two main gatekeepers in the acceptation of novel ideas for advertising. Both play a role, to some extent, in the ideation, generation and acceptation of advertising creativity.
 The influence on the field is principally translated by the profusion of media and an empowerment of the users. On the domain, the impact is felt on the ease in the processes through the tools technology offer. From there on, technology indirectly influences the creators' behaviours. Technology and practices are in this sense mutually constituted. Concerning the field, the clients are the authoritative figure: though often perceived as partners in the process of co-creation, they are the ones the works are ideated and made for. Ideally, they provide the necessary insights for the start of the process and feedback on the creative world.

The domain

 The domain still provides creators with a system of symbols. The physical space plays a major role in the process. Because of the digitalization, the frontiers of the domain are expanded: creatives have access to unprecedented world of references that also impact organisational culture.

The creators

As for the creators, their own experiences alongside the degree to which they show curiosity are the main characteristics that play a role in how creativity is expressed. Their interaction with both their colleagues and the domain gatekeepers is embedded in a co-creation and

feedback loop process. The most prominent finding regarding the creative self is its sense of responsibility.

As a final note to this section, it should be said that all in all, advertising hasn't changed much. The idea(s) and how they are communicated through specific messages still seem to be key to successful advertising. As Marshall McLuhan stated so justly: "We march backward to the future"[1]. Sense is made of the environment we- humans- create and sense is given in relation to knowledge based on past experiences. Advertising has always been perceived as a business of ideas with creativity laying at its core. Technologies are changing, or perhaps more justly (r)evolving. Society creates as much as it is created by these changes in the technological environment. The medium eventually becomes the message. The future of advertising might be one where people are not passively being influenced by their environment, but actively and in partnership with the various actors concerned, trying to change it and make understandable for the "masses" that media can be talked to. The advertising of tomorrow should not be one of manipulation and consumerism, but one where dialogue is instituted and story are told in a collaborative manner. Clients are nowadays more involved in the creative process, but what if the advertising of tomorrow involved in the most direct manner, consumers?

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[1] Pages are not indicated in the edition used of the book.

5.2   Practical implications and recommendations

This research highlighted the utility of using the system model of creativity as well as the necessity to include technological and sociocultural factors in the process of defining the creative identity. In advertising agencies, the creative identity is formed in a process of dissociation versus association in the internal and external dialectic of the creative process. Maybe because of the complexity of the social world, creatives are acknowledging the need for a "down-to-earth" approach to advertising creativity. Hereby, advertising is not about making nice commercials anymore. The narratives are oriented toward "making the world a better place" and giving a human face to brands. This can only be achieved through close partnership with brands. In this perspective, the tone of the message is oriented toward storytelling and co-creation behaviours are preferred when working for- and with- clients. It is thus primordial for managers in advertising to recognise that co-creation is substantial and should be encouraged by all means. Advertising creativity does not happen in isolation. This leads to the second recommendation.

Inclusive behaviours should be favoured. That means that clients should be involved as much as possible during the whole creative process. Clients can and should be made aware of the process. They also should be reassured that agencies are working in order to fulfil their needs. Technology offers the means to ease and increase interactions with them. Inclusive behaviours mean that consumers should be involved too. Agencies are the intermediaries between brands and consumers. In the eclectic digital environment, consumers have more power and involving them in the earliest stages could represent for agencies an opportunity to gain some control back.

Internally this means that everyone in agencies should be included in (re)defining the process. On a recurrent base, managers should ensure that the core of their business is understood similarly by everyone: creativity is a shifting notion. It evolves in the flow of interactions and bares meanings that might differ over time. Building a common understanding of advertising purposes will certainly give advantage to agencies that best understand the need for total inclusiveness.

Finally, the findings revealed a crucial insight on creatives: they want to make the world a better place. Advertising agencies have all means to achieve this impetus and to prove that they can be the mediators of responsibility. It is in the hands of managers to minimize as much as possible the gap between the possible antagonist goals between brands, agencies and employees.

All in all, TV did certainly not kill the radio and advertising haven't radically changed. Creatives perceive rather positively the changes in the technological environment. On the one hand the process are smoothened. The changes in technologies mean more tools that facilitate the gathering of the relevant information and the formulation of insight-based

strategies; tools that facilitate the access to unprecedented broad worlds of references. If customers are empowered and channels multiplied, the goal stays the same. The Medium is the Message. The last must be striking, the former meet the consumers *where* they are in the least disruptive way possible. Agencies should be future oriented while bearing in mind the learnings of the past.

5.3   Limitations

Conducted on the base of a follow-up to the research of Heinonen and Rozenveld (2013), Stuhlfaut and Windels (2017), Roca et al. (2017). The methodological limitations are described here under alongside the semantic problem that was encountered regarding the use of the terms of digital technology, media/interactive media. While recurrent in literature (the distinction is rarely made between these different terms), I believe future research should make sure to correctly frame these terminologies, that eventually bare different meanings.

This research, as all inquiries, suffers from limitations which might have influenced the final quality of the results. First, the sample size might be considered as slightly too small. However, the position and years of experiences accumulated of the interviewees in some of the best international advertising agencies allow to ensure the quality of insights and expertise. Secondly, the use of a qualitative method usually discourages for generalization. However, the variety of experts interviewed in a relatively large pool of ad agencies in The Netherlands can bridge this gap. Thirdly, practitioners were defined as creatives; two of the interviewees respectively held the titles of "Technology Director" and "Head of technology". It is reasonable to think that the knowledge held in advertising by practitioners is heterogeneous and the views between the individuals holding these two functions might have differed from "pure" creatives. In this sense, it could have been pertinent to use a ratio of 50/50 in the sample in order to insure a perfect representativeness. Nevertheless, I feel this did not led to any bias and brought enough depth to the findings.

Besides, interviews are prone to bias and potential resistance can occur from the individuals interviewed. This might have been the case on the primary steps of the contact phase. Nonetheless, no particular setback happened during the research and respondents were willing to participate. Additionally, the use of thematic analysis is a highly interpretivist method and it could have biased the writing of the findings: I feel that the various touchpoints used in the theoretical framework helped me framing enough the coding while insuring that new codes could be discovered and used to the past research used as sources for the research.

The investigation was also limited to a single geographical area. Though qualitative research does not require the same representativeness than quantitative methods, it would add depth to conduct similar research in other international hubs, but perhaps also, to provide quantitative additions to it.

Furthermore, many forces are at play in the articulation of creativity and the identity. Though bringing pertinent insights, it is likely that this research does not highlight enough the peculiarities of each components in the system model of creativity. As such, the results might be perceived as too general. However, I am positive, that the final model presented in the section dedicated to the theoretical implications represents quite accurately the current ecosystem of advertising.

At last, the sample, unfortunately, only included males. Thereof, the sample cannot be generalised to the real population. More interestingly, this raises the issue of gender inequality in a still predominantly male dominated industry.

5.3.1   Semantic problem: The misuse of the interrelated terms of digital technology, media/ interactive media

Another limitation of this master thesis concerns the semantics around the terms of *digital technology* and *media/ interactive media*. Though the confusion is recurrent in previous research- I believe that future research considering exploring similar thematic should not fall in the trap. I mentioned in my theoretical framework that the term of *interactive media*- that encompasses all the changes in the digital environment- (Stuhlfaut & Windels, 2017) would be used in the research. While building and conducting the interviews, the term of *digital technologies* was used without distinction to media, let alone interactive media. In regard to the difficulties of the interviewees to describe what the term encompasses, it is likely that *interactive media* would have encountered similar difficulties. Interestingly enough, the interviewees, probably without fully knowing it, made a clear distinction between the terms. As it was presented in section 4.3, two phenomena exist: on the one hand, technology relates, at least in advertising, to the tools that allow the ease of the creation process. On the other hand, *media* is an intermediate that requires an active act of creation (creation of a message) and of selection of the means that will be used to send these messages (through the channels). All in, digital technologies are the tools that ease the process of creating and selecting the media, while interactive media- in opposition with traditional media- allow both sender and receiver to interact instantly. Hence, to co-create.

5.4   Future research

There are several possibilities for future research to swell the existing knowledge on the creative identity in advertising. Though qualitative research cannot allow for generalisation, quantitative measurements should be conducted with creative professionals to explore the themes presented in this Master thesis. If further qualitative researches were to be conducted, academics should focus on expanding the insights on the creative identity to other geographical locations. Countries holding different cultural values than Occidental ones should be a fertile ground to grasp how the creative identity in advertising is articulated. In this sense, future research should also take into consideration countries said to hold more feministic values such as Nordic countries.

Another interesting perspective could be one that focuses on apprehending better the relation between ethics and identity in advertising. As it was shown, creatives are purpose driven, but how are one's values held in a business environment that responds to many different imperatives? Additionally, the creative process being one of co-creation, it would seem pertinent to explore on the one side how clients perceive advertising creativity: why do they hire advertising agencies? What are their expectations of the creative work? How do they perceive their role in this process? On the other hand, it is imperative to focus on the other roles of advertising accounted for in the creative process. Do the strategists hold similar view on the advertising practices? Are these views concordant throughout agencies? Ultimately and perhaps more importantly, what is or what could be the place of the consumer in this process of co-creation? Future research should also focus on uncovering what the materiality of creativity means. What are the concrete links between the physical space and creativity? What is the materiality of creativity?

At last, technology will keep on evolving. It is primordial for academics to keep on researching the impact of the technological changes on work practices and on the identity. Accordingly, research should keep track of these changes and replicate the research on a recurrent basis.

7.   References

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8.   Appendices

Appendix 1. Respondents characteristics

RESPONDENTS CHARACTERISTICS

NAME	FUNCTION	AGENCY	GENDER
Tobin Nageotte	Technology Director	72 and Sunny	Male
Daniel Peiron	Creative Director	Amsterdam Worldwide	Male
Mervyn Ten Dam	Creative Director/Founder	Achtung!mcgarrybowen	Male
Hesling Reidinga	Executive Creative Director	KRFL	Male
Raphael Kamp	Creative/Copywriter	Ara	Male
Bart van Wageningen	Creative Director	Campagne	Male
Japie Stoppelenburg	Creative Director	Dept	Male
Antwan can der Mooren	Head of Technology	DPDK	Male
Respondent 10	Creative Director	Agency X	Male

Interview Guideline

1) Can you shortly introduce your background and the reasons you chose advertising (factors that influenced the choices)?
2) Can you shortly describe the culture of your agency?
3) What is creativity according to you?
   a. Do you think creativity in advertising is different from what you just described?
4) How is the creative process organized in your agency?
   a. What place does aesthetics takes in the final outcomes sold to the clients?
   b. Are you able to experiment with new style or new creative process? (examples)
5) What in your environment influences most your creative work?
   a. constraints clients or colleagues
   b. agency culture
   c. other?
6) How would you define digital technologies?
7) How do you think digital technologies have changed advertising practices?
8) Which digital technologies would you say are the most influential in advertising?
   a. AI, VR, AR, Social media, management tools, other?
9) In what ways have these technologies impacted the creative process?
   a. Do you perceive generational differences in the incorporation of new digital techniques in the creative process?
      i. Need for new skills?
      ii. Information gathering- ease of the process?
10) What are the biggest challenges in the incorporation of these technologies in the creative process in agency?
11) How do you see the future of technology and creativity?

Appendix 3. Consent request form

CONSENT REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, CONTACT:

Salomé Rentsch, 423382sr@eur.nl, 0614985461

DESCRIPTION

You are invited to participate in a research about the creative identity in advertising agency. The purpose of the study is to understand what creativity and the creative process in advertising agencies are. 2 creative leads- one specialized in digital technologies- will be interviewed in about 7 agencies based in the Holland province. Each interview will last for about an hour. An executive summary of the research will be shared with every participating agency at the end of the research. If asked for, the full research can be shared.

Your acceptance to participate in this study means that you accept to be interviewed. In general terms:

- the questions of the interview are related to the individual experiences of the interviewees in advertising agencies.

- The questions focus on creativity and the creative process.

- My observations will focus on uncovering the similar patterns between interviewees related to creativity and unless you prefer that no recordings are made, I will record the interview. You are always free not to answer any particular question, and/or stop participating at any point.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

As far as I can tell, there are no risks associated with participating in this research. Yet, you are free to decide whether I should or should not use your name or other identifying information (name of the agency, clients). If you prefer, I will make sure that you cannot be identified, by using a general identification (such as respondent x, agency y).

I will use the material from the interviews and my observation exclusively for academic work, such as further research, academic meetings and publications.

TIME INVOLVEMENT

Your participation in this study will take about 1 hour. You may interrupt your participation at any time.

PAYMENTS

There will be no monetary compensation for your participation.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

If you have decided to accept to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. If you prefer, your identity will be made known in all written data resulting from the study. Otherwise, your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS

If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact –anonymously, if you wish— Dr.Mijke Slot (slot@eshcc.eur.nl)

SIGNING THE CONSENT FORM

If you sign this consent form, your signature will be the only documentation of your identity. Thus, you DO NOT NEED to sign this form. In order to minimize risks and protect your identity, you may prefer to consent orally. Your oral consent is sufficient.

I give consent to be audiotaped during this study:

Name Signature Date

I prefer my identity to be revealed in all written data resulting from this study

Name Signature Date

This copy of the consent form is for you to keep.