

**THE CHARACTERISTICS AND CURRENT CHANGES OF
ADVERTISING CREATIVITY**

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ABSTRACT

Creativity research is one of the least advanced areas among advertising research, especially in Japan. This paper focused on the essence of advertising creativity and its current changes. What is the essence of advertising creativity? Does advertising creativity change because of digitalization? In order to clarify these questions, semi-structured interview research was conducted to Japanese top creators and planners. The unchanged points and its current changes of advertising creativity have been made clear.

INTRODUCTION

Preface

In recent years advertising has been changing dramatically because of digitalization. Advertising has changed from one-way communication to interactive communication, and has changed from communication to engagement. More devices have emerged than ever before. The speed of change is high and intense.

The purpose of this research is to clarify the characteristics of advertising creativity and the current changes of creativity in advertising. And then we want to vitalize advertising creativity in the future.

Definition of Creativity

Reid, King, and DeLome wrote “Creativity is at once the least scientific aspect of advertising and the most important.”(Reid et al., 1998) Verbally defining creativity is one of the most difficult things among human activities. Guilford insisted “The theory about creativity is, in fact, a theory of the entire personality.”(Guilford, 1950) He thought that “creativity refers to the ability that is the most conspicuous characteristics of creative people.” Guilford emphasized that creativity belongs to people.

Rhodes’ (1961) standpoint is not regarding creativity as part of creativity but as a whole. Rhodes collected forty definitions of creativity and analyzed the contents. He extracted four standards which academically have unique identities. They are person as a human being, mental process that is operative in creating ideas, influence of the press on the person, and the product in which ideas are usually expressed in the form of language or craft. These are what we called Rhodes’ 4Ps of creativity, i.e. (1) person, (2) process, (3) press, and (4) product.

Uejyo said “Creative research in Japan has just started recently.”(Uejyo, 1993)

The definitions of creativity made by the following authors were reviewed: (Guilford, 1950), (Rhodes, 1961), (Watson, 1930), (Wertheimer, 1945), and (Amabile, 1983).The following

summarize the points from the previous creative research for advertising creativity research:

- (1) Creativity is the ability related to the creative persons.
- (2) Creativity cannot be achieved only by intelligence.
- (3) Creativity research should cover 4Ps of Person, Process, Press, and Product.
- (4) Creativity and insight arise when the thinker grasp the essential features of a problem and their relation to a final solution.
- (5) Creativity of products or responses cannot be achieved by objective analysis. Creativity analysis needs some type of subjective assessment.

Characteristics of Advertising Creativity

The characteristics of advertising creativity are summarized to three points. First, advertising creativity has common elements with creativity in other areas, such as originality, novelty, appropriateness, and imagination. In addition, advertising creativity should fulfill goal-directed and problem-solving aspects. (EL-Murad and West, 2004) Second, advertising creativity should resolve the issue of the corporation or organization and be useful to meet practical needs. Third, unlike creativity of art and science which can be sometimes achieved by individuals, advertising creativity needs to get consent of all related people to complete an idea development process from idea generation to final advertisements or advertising campaigns.

DISCUSSION

Personal Interviews with Top Creators and Planners

In this research, in order to grasp the characteristics and changes of advertising creativity, expert interviews (Semi-structured interview) were conducted from October 2013 to February 2014. Respondents were 9 top creators and 9 strategic planners who worked for major advertising agencies in Japan. The criteria to select creators were: creators who had experience in acting as a judge of domestic and or international advertising awards, or winning major international or domestic advertising awards. Concerning the planners, a condition is that they were managers or senior managers at major advertising agencies in Japan.

Questionnaire and Summary

Five questionnaires were organized on the following: 1) Recognition of changes and diversities of media. 2) Changes of ideas with creativity. 3) Recent creative works considered to be outstanding. 4) Changes of creative development process to achieve creativity, and 5) the future of advertising creativity. Interview venues were selected by respondents. Sometimes, meeting rooms of their office, coffee shops close to their office, etc. One session took 60 to 90 minutes. Based on their agreement all interviews were typewritten and recorded

after the interviews. Rhodes' 4Ps of creativity were referred to make questionnaire and to select respondents.

Consideration on Research Results

1) Structural Changes of Advertising Creative Development Process (Table 1)

The structural changes of advertising development process contain the following three points. First, development system has changed from relay-race system to team system. Second, more members participate in the creative development process, due to digitalization. Third, the timing of advertising creative development: it has changed from making excellent ideas by taking enough time to prioritizing speedy development and adapting changes to be always in line with real-time activities.

2) Changes of Ideas with Creativity (Table 2)

What is unchanging in advertising creative ideas is the essence of creative idea and their function to move people's mind. Changes in creative ideas are related to the environment where creativity is displayed, i.e., from TV, newspapers, magazines, posters, radio (i.e. advertisement work) to buzz, participation, engagement, and so forth (including schemes on web and SNS). And technological development has also changed the expressions and contents on a real-time basis.

3) Changes and Diversification of Media (Table 2)

From the interviews with creators and planners the following points are indicated in terms of changes in media. Changes in media have influenced advertising creativity a lot. "It shifted from one vs N (mass media) to N vs N (digital, SNS)"(Mr. I) "Devices should be seen, 3 cm(mobile), 30 cm(PC), 3m(TV), 30m(Movie)"(Mr. I) "Since consumers' media contacts have changed our media usage has also changed."(Mr. L) "Not only has the number of media increased, but also people's feelings and contacts with media have changed."(Mr. K)

The penetration of mobile phone has increased as indicated in the interviews. The penetration rate of smart phone in Japan was 72.0% (The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, 2016). The number of contacts with internet and smart phone would exceed that with PC within 2016. They connect smart phone to internet on a real-time basis; since they are always in interactive communication, devices have changed environments for advertising creativity. In terms of media changes, what we should bear in mind is that there are not only changes in volume of media diversification, but also in quality of people's feelings and involvement in media.

4) Current Outstanding Advertising: Core Ideas and Appeal points (Table 3)

Three types of core ideas from current outstanding advertising campaigns were identified through the interview. ① Big Insight: "Real Beauty Sketches"(Dove, 2013), "Best Job"(P&G, 2012). ② Social contribution to the society: "Small Business Saturday"(AMEX, 2012), "Dumb Ways to Die"(Melbourne Railway, 2013). ③ Buzz and Viral : "Congratulation Kyushu"(JR Kyushu, 2013), "Sound of Honda"(Honda, 2015).

CONCLUSION

To summarize the results of this research the characteristics of advertising creativity become clear through the definition of creativity, positioning of advertising creativity among a broad sense of creativity, and advertising creativity development processes.

- 1) The characteristics of advertising creativity are originality, novelty, and appropriateness, and imagination, goal-directed and problem solving processes.
- 2) The objective of advertising creativity is not pursuit of beauty for creativity of art, or pursuit of truth for creativity of science, but to fulfil the practical goals of companies or organizations.
- 3) Concerning advertising creativity, at first there should be ideas from excellent creators. And then they will further develop through participants' pursuit of excellence.

Second, changed and unchanged points of advertising creativity through the interview research are summarized as follows based upon Rhodes' 4Ps of creativity.

- 1) Creative person: There is no change that the source of advertising creativity is ideas from excellent creators. Many respondent creators said "The essence of idea hasn't changed," which means the key is "to move people's minds" by outstanding ideas and to solve clients' issues. This point hasn't changed at all.
- 2) The process for advertising creativity: Ideas are born in a creator's brain, which is an unchanging fact. The execution process of ideas has changed a lot, because of changes and diversifications of media. ①The framework of development system has changed from "Relay Race System" to "Team System." ②More people participate in the development process than before because it also requires staff in charge of buzz, viral, and engagement communication. ③Speedy and timely reactions are needed because of mobile and real-time media environment.
- 3) Press for advertising creativity: Digitalization has changed the number of media and media contacts. Consumers' feelings and contacts with media (quality of media contacts) have changed. In order to achieve creativity, it is important to consider changing the quantity and quality of media.
- 4) Products of advertising creativities: as shown for the analysis of outstanding advertising creative, there was no advertisement which used only mass media. Using web and social media animates communication and enhances buzz and viral engagement. Major core ideas from this research hold big insights, social or contribution to society, and buzz and viral communication. These are a summary of this research.

In conclusion, whether or not there is media change, the essence of outstanding idea does not change at all. The advertising creativity's key role is to move people's mind and to lure them to take action. This is unchangeable. The issue is how to move people's mind in the complex and matured economic society.

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Table 1. Structural Changes of Advertising Creative Development Process

Belongs to/Feature	Changes of Creative Development Process
Global agency, Chief strategy development. Judge of Effie. Ms.A	In the past, idea development was done by 2–3 people. Currently from briefing to idea generation, whole team participated to the process. (i.e. from beginning to end)
Global agency, Chief knowledge officer. Mr.B	The important thing is sharing information with whole team. This is co-creative, to make idea together by consent.
Japanese major ad. Agency, Director of iPR. Mr.C	If we set total advertising creative development process of development, selection, and execution as 100%. In the past, it was 50% development, 20 % selection, and 30% execution. We worked very hard for strategy and idea development. Now it is 10% development, 10% selection, and 80% execution. Currently we are in the always on situation, so we should keep changing and adapting every time.
Japanese major ad. Agency, Director of R&D. Mr.D	After completion of creative brief, concept developed both by creators and planners. And then creative start idea development.
Japanese major ad. Agency, Director of Digital Solution. Mr.E	In the past, creative development process was relay race system. It was like this, account people got client brief, then planner made creative brief, then creative started idea development. Now it is whole team system. Whole team make key issues, creative brief, and idea.
Japanese major ad. Agency, Chief Researcher, Mr.F	In the past, it was vertical system of idea development. The order was marketing strategy, creative strategy, and media strategy. Now whole team make scrum to develop idea.

Table 2. Summary of Interview to Creators

Belongs to/Feature	Changes of Media	Changes of Creativity	Current Outstanding Creative Works
Japanese major ad. Agency ECD Cannes Judge Mr.G	At the time of News Paper era, it was persuasive idea development. On TV era, funny CM increased. After SNS emerged, people try to use it.	Change is from creativity of advertisement to creativity of scheme. Major advertising campaign (e.g. Cannes winners) reflect these changes.	Real Beauty Sketches(Dove) American Rom Southern Comfort(CM) Oreo(Super Bowl)
Digital Agency in Japan Creative Director Cannes Winner Mr.H	The diversification of media is good thing. Because the way of communication increased. Media will change more. Concerning buzz, confidence to talking people become important.	There is not change regarding creativity. The objective of creative is to move mind of people. Social point of view and right thing move people.	TNT Push to Add Drama
Japanese major ad. Agency Creative Director Cannes Film Judge Mr.I	From one vs N(Mass media era) to N vs N(Digital/SNS era). Devices are seen, 3cm(mobile), 30cm(PC), 3m(TV), 30m(Movie).	Creativity does not change. Idea means to make move in human mind. It can not be done by logic. Creative is uncertain and to make buzz to people. I am careful not to make per-established harmony.	English school by street children (Philippines) Soccer ball style storage battery become light at night.
Global ad. Agency ECD Cannes Judge Mr.J	Whether or not there is media change, idea is universal. TV is still important to deliver message to whole Japan.	The essence of idea doesn't change at all. The way of idea delivery changed. The way of storytelling changed. Idea is discovery. The magnitude of discovery is the size of idea.	Sound of Honda(Ayrton Senna)
Global ad. Agency exECD Judge of Domestic ad.Award Mr.K	Not only the number of media increased, but also the people's feelings and touch to the media changed.	Idea have not changed. It looks like a gemstone of conception. The core of idea is to move people's mind. It does not change.	Viral video of lotto sports lottery
Domestic ad. Agency CM Planner One Show/London Winner Mr.L	We should accept change of media, because it is the trend of period. Media contact of consumer change so our media for advertising change, too.	The essence is to move consumer by best idea and scheme. The way of making idea does not change. But when we execute idea, budget and out puts changed.	Real Beauty Sketches(Dove)
Japanese Digital Agency ECD Pusan Judge Mr.M	It is implicit that mass media have been weakened and expenditure for mass media decreased. When advertising message got around by PR, it has strong effectiveness to society.	First the understanding to digital technology is base. Then, tools, devices, way of idea development are still useful. Three important points are 1)contents are shared,2)ad message should be a bite-size,3)control the emotion of people.	American Rom Small Business Saturday (AMEX)
Japanese major ad.Agency Digital Creative Curator Cannes Gold Winner Mr.N	Digital media increased because it started from zero. TV once said ineffective, but TV is still effective to get recognition of new product.	Essence of idea doesn't change. The importance of idea is universal. By carving key issues, core idea appear.	Dumb Ways to Die
Japanese major ad. Agency exCD Domestic Award Winner Ms.O	Situation of era changed naturally. Regarding cross media, consumer insight analyzed carefully.	Essence of idea does not change. Creative way of thinking have power to move society. The important thing is way of living and thinking as human.	Congratulation Kyushu.(JR Kyushu) Dumb Ways to Die.

Table3. Core ideas and appeal points from interview (Current Outstanding Advertisement)

Type of Core Idea	Current Outstanding Advertisement	Key Communication Point
Big Insight	Real Beauty Sketches (Dove)	Giving common sympathy to the world's people
Social and Contribution to the Society	Small Business Saturday (AMEX)	Not only company's profit but the contribution to the society
Buzz and Viral	Congratulation Kyushu! (JR Kyushu)	Buzz and viral through good contents