

PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENT TO ADVERTISING:
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ADVERTISING EDUCATION AND
PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENT

By

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This document is dedicated to my family.

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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A college degree has become a requirement for many positions. A minimal amount of research has been done, explaining the influence of education on professions. This study explores whether there is a relationship between advertising education and professional commitment to advertising. Using a survey given to alumni of a large Southeastern University, conducted in 2003, seven factors were analyzed: (1) level of commitment to the advertising profession, (2) when the decision was made to pursue a career in advertising, (3) completion of an internship, (4) involvement in organizations and competitions, (5) advertising program evaluation, (6) advertising courses, and (7) job satisfaction. These variables were then analyzed to determine which had the largest contribution to professional commitment.

Although significance was found among all the variables except completing an internship, results show that how an individual rates the advertising program is the largest

positive contributor to professional commitment. As a result, the findings of advertising education suggest significantly different directions for future research.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Advertising educators and advertising practitioners disagree on what a student needs to know in order to succeed in advertising (Leckenby and Moore, 1973; Russell, 1978; Hunt et al., 1987). Practitioners argue that college graduates are not prepared for a position in advertising and therefore have a difficult time obtaining one (Zeltner, 1973). A professional commitment to a profession can therefore be difficult for a research graduate to develop (Smith and King, 1993).

Research shows that factors in the work environment determine an individual's success in the advertising profession (Vandenberg and Scarpello, 1994). No research explains whether factors in an individual's academic program correlate with the individual's commitment to the advertising profession. Commitment is an important factor to consider, because it has been shown to have a causal relationship with organizational commitment, including the amount of turnover in an organization (Vandenberg and Scarpello, 1994).

Our secondary research analysis attempted to determine answers to the following six questions:

- RQ1: What is the level of commitment to the advertising profession?
- RQ2: Is there a significant relationship between commitment to the advertising profession and when the decision is made to pursue a career in advertising?
- RQ3: Is there a significant relationship between commitment to the advertising profession and completing an internship?

- RQ4: Is there a significant relationship between commitment to the advertising profession and involvement in organizations and competitions?
- RQ5: Is there a significant relationship between commitment to the advertising profession and the advertising program's preparation?
- RQ6: Is there a significant relationship between commitment to the advertising profession and courses within the advertising program?
- RQ7: Is there a significant relationship between commitment to the advertising profession and satisfaction with the profession?
- RQ8: What significant variable best predicts commitment to the advertising profession?

After gathering results for RQ1, we compared commitment to the variable in the next six questions, to determine if a significant relationship existed. Variables found to be significant were then compared, to determine which one best predicts commitment to the advertising profession.

Answers to these questions may provide evidence to current students of whether they will eventually be committed to the advertising profession. Results may also be helpful to advertising educators in developing an advertising program that ensures they are providing they highest rate of preparedness to their students.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Advertising Education

Educational Evaluative Methods

Evaluating education in the United States originated in the 1960s when individuals wanted to know if the War on Poverty and Great Society Programs, created by Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, were successful (Becker and Kosicki, 1998). With the creation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 institutions were required to adequately evaluate their academic programs in order to adequately evaluate their academic programs in order to receive government funding.

Several organizations are involved in making sure academia is accountable for its actions at the university level. This includes government and education policy planners, media industries, and members within the academic environment, such as administration, faculty, and students. Everyone “wants to know if the educational institutions are doing their jobs; many want to know which ones are doing those jobs better than others” (Becker and Kosicki, 1998, 1).

Each organization applies different measures on which to make their evaluations. These include evaluation of academic literature, which are based on program reviews and performance indicators, program accreditation, and commercial evaluations including *The Gourman Report*, *U.S. News & World Report*, and *The Princeton Review*. All of these evaluative resources have drawbacks. Rankings in academic literature are most often based on quality, an ambiguous term that the National Research Council believes is

centered solely around reputation. Other ways quality is determined is through evaluating the characteristics of an institution, faculty, students, and student activities (Becker and Kosicki, 1998). Accreditation is most often seen as another inadequate form of evaluation because standards for which adequacy is applied differ from school to school. Evaluations of an institution should only depend on the professional outcomes of their students (Gaiter et al., 1999). However, there is no focus given on the outcome of the education for the students in the professional arena. Each institution is evaluated, instead, on certain standards that may be deemed successful at one institution but not another (Becker and Kosicki, 1998). According to Gaiter et al. (1994) the best decision is to combine all of the available alternatives.

Commercial evaluations gather their information strictly from the universities they intend to study. For example, *U.S. News and World Report*, in conducting one of its most recent graduate school studies in 1995, asked “leading faculty” from schools they felt needed to be included in the ranking. Their questionnaire asked faculty members to, “rate each school according to one of five levels of academic quality” (Becker and Kosicki, 1998, 8). In Lickert scale format (1=marginal, 5=strong) respondents were asked to rate schools on adjectives such as distinctiveness, marking “don’t know” if they were unfamiliar with the school (Becker and Kosicki, 1998). Based on the results collected by *U.S. News and World Report*, the advertising schools deemed the “best” by faculty members at schools for journalism and mass communications (Whitelaw, 1996) were as follows:

- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- University of Florida
- Northwestern University (Ill.)
- University of Texas at Austin, and

- University of Georgia.

Program Restructuring

Having a ranking in a nationally known magazine, like U.S. News and World Report, does not ensure a program's survival. For example, The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), which ranked number one in the latest report and is also the nation's oldest advertising education programs, is in danger of being disbanded. The University's 300 advertising students are shocked, joining together to form AdAdvocates, an organization with the goal of keeping the discipline at UIUC. While students are blaming the University for not providing the discipline with enough funding to sustain adequate faculty, a report by Provost Richard Herman notes that the advertising program has "imploded" (Lazare, 2003, 51). Two of the program's most distinguished faculty members have transferred to the University's College of Business. One professor of advertising, Linda Scott, believes the advertising program is the Mass Communication College's "cash cow," but not enough of the advertising student's tuition has been funneled back in to the discipline. Walt Harington, a professor of journalism, is heading a task force that will, "look from an insider's prospective at how the College of Mass Communications is structured and how its various departments are pursuing their respective missions, as well as proactively consider what the college's future goals should be" (Lazare, 2003, 51). Provost Herman called off the search for a new dean, questioning whether advertising and journalism should be incorporated within the College of Mass Communication (Crain, 2003).

This is not a new trend. Advertising schools are facing both budgetary and philosophical contempt while at the same time they have, "more students then ever applying for schools specializing in advertising" (Crain, 2003, 18). Experts believe

problems have arisen because most advertising programs are understaffed. The ideas circulating within the academic environment are that “advertising is bad stuff and it’s OK to shortchange anyone associated with it” (Crain, 2003, 18). However, even though “more students apply for these programs college’s ad departments have to fight for academic respect and funding” (Crain, 2003, 18). Others point to inconsistency within education because academics distinguish certain forms of promotion as “not advertising” (Richards and Curran, 2002). Partly because of this thought some at the university level want to restructure advertising programs, making them more integrated with other disciplines in the marketing field (Crain, 2003). Referred to as Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) the goal is to show how to understand consumers on a deeper level (Oliver and Rust, 1994).

At its inception, practitioners argued about where the importance within advertising academia should be. This thought, thereby separated the study of advertising in to the journalism view and the marketing view (Mandell, 1975). Hence, one of the larger debates in the field was where advertising should be taught; either in the marketing or journalism school (Russell, 1977). One side saw individuals within the business department teaching aspects of advertising that were strongly established on the faculty’s degree preparation from business schools. The other side saw faculty members in the journalism school who were quite different, having a background in communications education. The ideal program for advertising had not yet been reached (Mandell, 1975).

Larkin (1977) took on the task of determining where advertising belonged in academia by asking students both in and outside of the discipline. Studies of this topic primarily show that students’ attitudes toward courses vary enormously (Palmer, 2003).

“Therefore, in many cases, we may be making decisions concerning advertising education on the basis of obsolete data” (Larkin, 1977, 42). The majority of students questioned believed advertising was both anti-social and uneconomic, thereby placing advertising in an area outside both business and journalism.

What may be needed to improve advertising education in the future is a more thorough and comprehensive program of information concerning the social and economic effects of advertising so that advertising students can better answer the questions raised by their peers, and a broader, more comprehensive program designed to inform non-advertising majors of these areas of interest (Larkin, 1977, 46).

Two major problems exist with studies involving students. The first is that these studies are done sporadically, and can therefore be highly outdated (Palmer, 2003). The second is that while most students are going through an academic program they are highly critical of them or have unrealistic expectations. “They mellow with time” (Christian, 1973, 14).

The real catch lies in the fact that if a student follows the business track they will leave out a “real void” in their preparation for an advertising career. At the same time, “the journalism track simply does not meet the needs of students today when more than ever an understanding of the whole business environment is essential for a successful advertising career” (Mandell, 1975, 8).

Class Evaluation

Advertising education in 1973 was seen by practitioners as healthy (Christian, 1973). Agencies such as Leo Burnett, Grey, and J. Walter Thompson reported good results from advertising recruits, noting they were successful within research, media, creative, and account work. There was no argument over rather the trade or educational philosophy regarding the discipline was more important. “Major universities with broad

communications, journalism, and business curriculum do an excellent job of providing the theory and philosophy sprinkled with ‘how to do it’ courses” (Christian, 1973, 12). Universities, such as the University of Illinois, were cited as developing a student’s analytic and creative thinking skills, creating awareness of the tools needed to solving product issues, encouraging the student to develop an understanding of humanities and social sciences, and educating them on advertising’s traditions, and purpose (Christian, 1973).

Advertising curricula was seen as providing a large service at the time, creating two distinct types of students. The first were those interested in making advertising a career while the second were those who took courses in advertising to find out about one of the, “most persuasive forms of communication” (Christian, 1973, 14). However, even in 1973 professionals within the field still saw room for improvement. The most prevalent idea was that advertising education needed to stress the importance of understanding society. Educators in the field were expected to continually evaluate and improve the curricula offered and be honest with students about their strengths and weaknesses. In “A Philosophy of Advertising Education” Carl Sandage noted that, “emphasis should always be placed on teaching the student rather than teaching a course or subject” (Christian, 1973, 15).

This thought was already being practiced in advertising academia where students were required to determine their specialization within the discipline. Practitioners believed students needed to know both production and financial difficulties involved in advertising decisions (Lewis and Smith, 1956). A number of schools were interested in introducing product cases within the confines of the classroom so students could get a

clear understanding of everyone's roles within the agency while not inundating them with repetitious tasks. The goal was to allow students to deal with "the success or failure of any promotional effort" (Lewis and Smith, 1956, 281). It was noted that a "copywriter would have little going for him with a prospective employer if he only studied the theory of advertising" (Mandell, 1975, 8). Most of the students worked with others outside their discipline, such as fine arts. The primary role of the instructor was to "not concern himself with factual knowledge as much as with the development of the students' power to act successfully in a problem situation" (Lewis and Smith, 1956, 282).

The curriculum being taught in classrooms today mirrors that of what was taught during this time, stressing importance in subjects such as strategy development, planning, and consumer behavior (Marker, 1999). Students are more often required to take additional courses in advertising copy for traditional media, how ad copy works, how to choose the right medium, and how to manage traditional advertising (Oliver and Rust, 1994). Some of these classes include discussion about how advertising influences societal stereotypes, including gender, ethnicity, and sexual preferences (Sawyer, 2004). These classes also incorporate the framework of Integrated Marketing Communications, (IMC) which will no longer be useful within the next 10 to 15 years because of what is going on within the business of advertising (Oliver and Rust, 1994). Simply, a change in marketing will require a change in advertising. In order to be able to incorporate these changes students need to understand concepts encompassing creativity, behavioral sciences, customer orientation, and business-government relationships (Montana, 1973).

Therefore, one of the larger debated between professional and educators is what curricula the advertising major should be required to take in order to gain the largest

amount of knowledge within the confines of the academic environment. “The major problem with most of the previous discussions of the problems of advertising education is that often they tend to look at broad issues without examining some of the fundamental problems of advertising curricula” (Russell, 1977, 50). Although taking college courses will not immediately enable an individual to find a job in advertising, classes can help a student’s focus and provide focus (Palmer, 2003). The question often arises as to what “the ideal advertising program [should] consist of in terms of major course, electives, and minors, whether administered in schools of journalism or business” (Russell, 1977, 51). Factors also included are the total length of the program, hours of instruction required of advertising majors, whether a class in advertising and society was required or an elective, and how marketing courses are incorporated in to the curriculum. At the time Russell (1977) found that students could enter an advertising track in their first or fifth year, depending on the institution and that the required number of hours were similar although the number of courses within the discipline of advertising differed, including advertising and society. Russell also found that traditional news courses, which were housed under the journalism college, were more often required of students with each discipline. Advertising educators believed that marketing was necessary in the advertising curriculum to help the student understand terminology used in the professional arena. However, most schools did not list one marketing class as a requirement (Russell, 1977).

Individuals interested in pursuing a career in advertising need to take English, Humanities, and Science courses outside their discipline (Dunbaugh, 1957). They also need to involve themselves in internships and extracurricular activities that involve interacting with members of professional advertising (Russell, 1978). More importantly

they need to know how to professionally communicate (Dunbaugh, 1957). They need to understand and be able to effectively use non-traditional forms of media (Oliver and Rust, 1994). If advertising education fails to evolve with the changing media involvement it will eventually lead the profession to failure. As of now the “\$138 billion advertising industry seems unprepared for the future” (King and Smith, 1993, A1). Students need to be aware of the changing media landscape, resulting from media fragmentation, shift from a product-oriented to service-oriented environment, and mass customization of the media message.

Advertising academia will be forced to reinvent itself, perhaps in to a more specialized discipline. Perhaps renaming the term advertising to “consumer communications” or “media information management” will help to provide focus and specialization (Oliver and Rust, 1994, 72). It is essential that there be a, “more accurate depiction of the business and the fiercely strategic, complex, business-oriented, financial nature of the work” (Sawyer, 2004, 26). For this change to occur, it has been suggested that some classes need to be obliterated all together, including advertising management, advertising campaigns, and advertising strategy, because they reflect the old agency environment. “The implication is that the core of the new curriculum must reflect the emerging business realities of the information superhighway” (Oliver and Rust, 1994, 72). Specializations within the discipline will most certainly ensure its survival. The recent advertising graduate needs to have skills instilled in him “which he cannot obtain in any other way” except through higher education (Dunbaugh, 1957, 341).

Practitioner’s View

There are practitioners who believe advertising cannot be taught in a classroom, and since the “major employment opportunities for students who study advertising are

agencies, advertisers, and media” their opinion should be noted (Mandell, 1975). Some practitioners have gone on to campuses to tell students they are wasting their time getting a college degree. They admit to ignoring advertising educators and do not hire graduates, encouraging the notion that getting a degree in advertising will prevent an individual from getting a job in advertising (Christian, 1973). “*The Wall Street Journal* recently stated the quality of undergraduate ad studies at colleges and universities is inconsistent” (Crain, 2003, 18). Faculty members are asking themselves if all practitioners share this opinion (Russell, 1978). “Advertising agencies and advertisers are finding that many of the college graduates entering our business are, in many cases, not adequately prepared for a career in advertising” (Zeltner, 1973, 178). They have begun to question whether the jobs they are doing in educating these students is good enough, concerning themselves from what looks good from the practitioners point of view (Russell, 1978).

To determine the accuracy of whether students are prepared for a job in advertising Leckenby and Moore (1973) questioned educators, practitioners, and educators. University educators were asked questions regarding,

- the change of the curriculum at their respected university since they were hired,
- the quality of the advertising students,
- whether universities are providing practitioners with the most promising students
- the value of advertising as a course in the future
- if they studied in advertising, how valuable their educational experience was, and
- about the exchange of ideas between themselves and practitioners.

More often than not educators replied in a positive light to these questions. Educators also said that the mission of advertising education was to first provide students with problem solving training, second prepare students for a long-term career, third give the student an appreciation of the field, fourth prepare student for first job in advertising, and fifth teach students the latest advertising approaches. Practitioners ranked the choices the

same as educators, but students had a different ranking. The first important thing when determining their advertising education's purpose was preparing them for a long-term career, second to teach them the latest advertising approaches, third to provide them with problem solving training, fourth to prepare them for their first job in advertising, and fifth to give them an appreciation of the field. Both practitioners and students believed advertising history was the most important class at undergraduate level, while educators believed it was magazine article writing. Clearly all three groups did not match, although the researchers believed that the practitioners and students agreed more often with one another than with the faculty (Leckenby and Moore, 1973). Educators believed that agencies are placing a higher value on graduates' knowledge while practitioners believed colleges are giving students very little, insinuating that "most students are taught by people who can't get a job" (Leckenby and Moore, 1973, 7). In an open-ended question, educators were asked what could be done to improve the quality of advertising education. The item most suggested was a large amount of communication between educators and practitioners, who pointed to a lack of appropriate materials, orientation, and advertising techniques as factors in the decline of the quality of education.

Moore and Leckenby (1993) believed in five objectives for which advertising should strive:

- prepare the student for a career,
- prepare the student for their first job in advertising,
- teach the student the latest advertising approaches,
- provide the student with training and judgment, and
- give the student an appreciation of the field of advertising.

However, some practitioners do not believe educators are able to fulfill these suggestions (Hunt et al., 1997). Practitioners believe advertising education is "cloud-

built, not in tune with reality” (Dunbaugh, 1957, 341). In order for the academic world to meet the professional one there needs to be some form of work-based learning. Also known as placements these programs incorporate academia in to real-life. “Most colleges already involve working practitioners in some respect” (Burgoyne, 2004, 10).

Instead of relying on educational institutions to produce future advertising scholars, some are placing their confidence in others. Wieden & Kennedy, an advertising creative agency in Portland, Oregon has created its own class where students pay \$13,000 for a 13-month program in order to work with actual clients. Thousands of applicants applied, but only 12 were selected. Agencies and services or brands are beginning to get involved directly with students. For example, Virginia Commonwealth University was given the opportunity to reintroduce the *Virgin Cola* brand to the United States. It is not clear whether this will result in a change in education (Ives, 2004). The concept of offering additional instruction to recent graduate is not all together new. Ogilvy & Mather has a paid year-long course called “Young Guns” that provides newly graduated individuals with training and experience (Ives, 2004).

Most individuals who have a “career-love” with advertising are “not afraid to roll up their sleeves and show it” (Baker, 1997, 31). Hunt, Chonko, and Wood (1987) explored the question relating to “career-love” as to whether an advertising education is better than being trained within the advertising environment. Until this time there had been no information available about a possible relationship between long-term career success and a college acquired advertising education. They questioned advertising executives this and other topics such as whether advertising education should emphasize theory or practice and whether students should be educated in respect to their first job in

advertising or their long-term career. They found that an advertising education does have a positive effect income when compared to other educational concentrations. There was also a relationship between how successful the individual believed themselves to be and if they got a degree in advertising. Those who majored in business, communications, and humanities also felt successful.

Calkins (1946), in his paper titled “Objectives of Business Education,” noted that, “any student with intelligence enough to benefit from a college education should be prepared for a career” (Hunt et al., 1987, 44). He also noted that the primary purpose of education should be to prepare the student for a career. However, advertising is seen as more trade than profession (Sawyer, 2004). Both educators and practitioners have expressed their own views on the topic; each seeing the other side as misguided. The little amount of research that has been done concentrates primarily on the opinions of either group, each individual with different beliefs, biases, and backgrounds (Hunt et al., 1987).

Commitment

Evaluation of the Term “Commitment”

Although there are variations, the term commitment is simply defined “the state of being obliged or emotionally compelled” (Mish, 1989, 265). This physically occurs when an individual combines his self interest with activities that help to define them. It is used in sociological research to analyze individual and organizational behavior, describe or account for the behavior of people or groups, and in conjunction with topics such as religion, power, recruitment, and political behavior. “The term has been made to cover a wide range of common-sense meanings, with predictable ambiguities” (Becker, 1960, 33).

More often commitment refers to some form of consistent behavior, continuing over some period of time thereby having the individual make a commitment or be committed. One of the larger discussions in social science is to determine the essence of commitment as it relates to human behavior. Research has gone on to clarify the term by associating it with theories of social sanction and social control. "These theories propose that people act consistently because activity of some particular kind is regarded as right and proper in their society or social group" (Becker, 1960, 34). The largest problem with these theories, however, deals with the fact that most individuals react without a notion of being punished. Whatever the case, it can not be argued that commitment either arises knowingly or unknowingly; the individual either knows they are committed or is faced with an obstacle that makes them realize they are committed (Becker, 1960).

Commitment is most often studied as it relates to an individual's attitude and behavior at their workplace, specifically in regards to how turnover is affected (Chang, 1999).

Professional Commitment

Occupational or professional commitment is defined "a person's belief and acceptance in the values of his or her chosen occupation or line of work, and a willingness to maintain membership in that occupation" (Vandenberg and Scarpello, 1994, 536). For example, "men ordinarily settle down to a career in a limited field, and do not change jobs or careers whereby they become committed to a particular occupation" (Becker, 1960, 33). Other terms used in measuring the concept of professional commitment, including career motivation and professionalism. These terms are most often combined to create the definition for career commitment, defined "one's attitude towards one's vocation, including a profession" (Blau, 1989, 89).

Directly associated is the occupational value system, which goes in to a larger amount of detail about occupational commitment and looks at concepts such as objectives, standards, autonomy, and loyalty. It has been generally understood that if an individual feels he is occupationally committed he will be organizationally committed as well, meaning that a decrease or increase in one aspect will give the same decrease or increase in the other. However, several researchers (Miller and Wagner, 1971; Greene, 1971) have proven this observation to be incorrect. Instead it has been understood that professional commitment shares a causal relationship with organizational commitment (Vandenberg and Scarpello, 1994). So, relatively high organizational commitment is a result of an individual feeling that the organization satisfies his professional goals (Kalleberg, 1977). Past research has primarily focused on measuring professional and organizational commitment in search of their correlation with job practices or the organization. Individuals tend to bring a certain number of traits that are important to them to their profession, comparing those traits within the organization to their level of expectation and the reality (Chang, 1999). Problems in comparing both forms of commitment arise when researchers fail to include the definition of commitment in their study, leaving individuals to how they perceive commitment (Vandenberg and Scarpello, 1994).

Research has shown there is a correlation between the age of an individual and their idea of professional commitment (Alutto et al., 1973). A younger individual has a larger amount of professional commitment than a person in his middle years. This is “perhaps due to adjustments made by individuals to the realities and problems of individual occupational interaction” (Alutto et al., 1973, 452). It was also found that those

individuals interested in an advanced degree, and males, had a larger amount of professional commitment. This concept has increased in importance since a profession or career has “provided a significant source of occupational meaning when organizations have become unable to provide employment security” (Chang, 1999, 1259).

Information gathered about the relationship between advertising professions and advertising education has been somewhat unobtainable because of low response rate. However, one study was able to overcome this and discovered a positive relationship between individuals who majored in advertising and variables within the workplace, including variety in their job and feedback from their supervisor (Hunt et al., 1987). The same study showed a negative relationship between individuals who majored in advertising and those who thought their job had enough opportunity for independent thought and action. Another negative relationship was shown between those who majored in advertising and opportunity to complete the work that was started.

A “gap” clearly exists in research that explains if a relationship exists between variables within advertising education and a professional commitment to advertising. As a result, the secondary analysis presented in this thesis attempts to answer the following eight research questions:

- RQ1: What is the level of commitment to the advertising profession?
- RQ2: Is there a significant relationship between commitment to the advertising profession and when the decision is made to pursue a career in advertising?
- RQ3: Is there a significant relationship between commitment to the advertising profession and completing an internship?
- RQ4: Is there a significant relationship between commitment to the advertising profession and involvement in organizations and competitions?
- RQ5: Is there a significant relationship between commitment to the advertising profession and the advertising program’s preparation?

- RQ6: Is there a significant relationship between commitment to the advertising profession and courses within the advertising program?
- RQ7: Is there a significant relationship between commitment to the advertising profession and satisfaction with profession?
- RQ8: What significant variable best predicts commitment to the advertising profession?

Hypotheses

- H1: There will be a high level of commitment to the advertising profession.
- H2: There will be a significant relationship between commitment to the advertising profession and when the decision is made to pursue a career in advertising.
- H3: There will be a significant relationship between commitment to the advertising profession and completing an internship.
- H4: There will be a significant relationship between commitment to the advertising profession and involvement in organizations and competitions.
- H5: There will be a significant relationship between commitment to the advertising profession and the advertising program's preparation.
- H6: There will be a significant relationship between commitment to the advertising profession and courses within the advertising program.
- H7: There will be a significant relationship between commitment to the advertising profession and satisfaction to the profession.
- H8: Completing an internship will best predict commitment to the advertising profession.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Data was taken from a questionnaire that was sent to advertising graduates from a large Southeastern University in 2003. (See Appendix for survey sample.) The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather information from alumni of the advertising program. It was not done to determine the answers to the aforementioned research questions. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part was comprised of questions concerning involvement and evaluation of the subject's education. The second part questioned the subject about their professional experiences and history. The third asked demographic questions, relating to gender, ethnic background, and citizenship. Once collected the surveys were coded and analysis was done to test the relationships between variables.

Subject Selection

A listing bought and generated from a large Southeastern University's alumni association enabled six thousand surveys to be sent out to graduates from the department of advertising. Of those six thousand surveys 804 were returned, a response rate of 13%. The participation of the survey was strictly voluntary; the subjects did not have to answer any questions they did not wish to answer. There was no penalty for not participating, no compensation provided for their participation, and all surveys were kept confidential.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 502 (62.4%) of respondents were female and 302 (37.6%) were male. The bulk of the respondents (47.9%) graduated between 1990 and 1992; some as early as 1957. These individuals began their academic career at the University of Florida (62.1%) or transferred from an in-state community college (24.8%). Approximately 36.7% did not work during the pursuit of their degree. Over half (63.8%) of these individuals took two months or less to find their first position after graduation. Over half (56.1%) have also been employed by up to four companies, where employees number between one and 300,000. Most (74.8%) are employed full time, but only 23.1% work either within the advertising or media industry. Over half (65.4%) also see their current position as a career instead of a job. These positions include account management, media planning, and design, among others not directly involved with advertising such as homemaking and accounting.

RQ 1: What is the Level of Commitment to the Advertising Profession?

Survey respondents were asked to evaluate their commitment to the advertising profession on an interval scale where one was the lowest value and 10 was the highest. (Appendix, survey question 35.) Of 804 respondents, 752 answered the question. The average level of commitment was 5.47 with a range of one to ten and a standard deviation of 3.43. The median was 6.0 and the mode was one.

RQ 2: Is There a Significant Relationship between Commitment to the Advertising Profession and When the Decision is Made to Pursue a Career in Advertising?

Survey respondents were asked to choose a category that best describes when they decided to major in advertising. (Appendix, survey question 3.) Out of the total number of respondents 743 answered the question. When respondents were asked, “Which of the following best describes your academic program?,” 17.4% believed they knew the specific advertising area in which they wanted to focus and stayed within the area. The largest amount of individuals (35.1%) developed their career interests while they were in the advertising major. A little less (26.8%) were interested in another major when they were accepted in to the college, but after taking some advertising courses changed their mind. About 14.7% had some interest in majoring in advertising, but after taking courses decided advertising was not their career choice. The smallest amount (4.6%) never intended to pursue a career related to advertising.

In order to avoid analysis of small groups these categories were collapsed in to three groups, thereby combining similar characteristics of two similar options. The last category, respondents who never intended to pursue a career related in advertising was deleted because of a low response rate. The two combined were those who developed their career interests while in the advertising major with respondents who had a different career interest when entering the University, but after taking some courses changed their mind. This new group totaled 503 respondents or 62.6%. The other two groups remained the same. The groups were labeled number one, two, and three in order to obtain results:

- The individual knew the advertising area in which to focus and stayed with that area.

- The individual solidified their career choice in advertising after taking some courses.
- The individual had a career interest in advertising, but after taking courses decided it was not their career choice.

There is a statistically significant effect on commitment to the advertising profession and when an individual determines their career in advertising ($p \leq .05$). Further testing reveals an equally strong relationship when any of these variables are combined. Results show that if an individual either knows they want to focus in advertising or if they solidify their career interest in advertising after taking course then they are more likely to have a stronger commitment to their advertising profession.

Those who wanted to focus in advertising and stayed in that area averaged a 7.0 on the commitment scale, while those who solidified their career interest in advertising after taking courses averaged a 6.0. Those who had a career interest in advertising then change their minds had a low commitment to their advertising profession, averaging a 2.5 on the commitment scale. The mean level of commitment and standard deviation are listed in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1. Summary of commitment and when the decision is made to pursue a career in advertising.

Choice	Mean	Std. Deviation
Knew specific advertising area in which to focus and stayed in that area	7.04	3.26
Solidified their career choice in advertising after taking some courses	5.86	3.23
Had a career interest in advertising, but after taking courses decided it was not their career choice	2.63	2.55

$F = 74.25^*$, $df = 2$, $p = .00$

RQ3: Is There a Significant Relationship between Commitment to the Advertising Profession and Completing an Internship?

Survey respondents were asked, “Did you complete an internship?” (Appendix, survey question 10.) Out of the total number of respondents 730 answered the question. Over half (60.3%) reported they did not have an internship, while the remaining (36.2%) reported they did. In order to be analyzed no and yes answers were recoded in to the numbers one and two, respectively:

- (1) no, did not complete an internship.
- (2) yes, did complete an internship.

The mean level of commitment and standard deviation are listed in Table 4-2.

Table 4-2. Summary of commitment and completion of an internship.

Choice	Mean	Std. Deviation
Completed internship	5.76	.66
Did not complete internship	5.03	.61

F = **7.78***, df = 1, p = .01

There is a statistically significant effect ($p \leq .05$) on commitment to the advertising profession and if an individual completes an internship. Results show that individuals who completed an internship were more likely to be committed to their advertising profession, than those who did not complete an internship.

RQ4: Is There a Significant Relationship between Commitment to the Advertising Profession and Involvement in Organizations and Competitions?

Survey respondents were asked, “While you were an advertising major at UF, which of the following were you involved in?” (Appendix, survey question 13.) Out of the total number of respondents, 782 answered this question. The largest organizational involvement was in Advertising Society (39.8%) and the smallest was “Orange and Blue”

Magazine (.9%). The largest competition in a competition was the AAF National Student Advertising Team (8.8%). The lowest was the IAA Interad Competition Team (.2%).

Although respondents choose up to four categories, groups three and four were combined so groups could be composed of 30 or more individuals. Respondents who only participated in one group totaled 292 or 40%. A total of 110 or 15.1% choose two groups and a total of 45 or 6.61% in three or four groups. Because of their large number, 283 or 38.7%, individuals who did not choose any categories were also considered.

There is a relationship between commitment and involvement in organizations and competitions ($r = .18$). The largest relationship was between respondents who participated in no organizations or competitions and choose a one on the commitment scale ($N = 84$). The second largest came from respondents who were involved in one organization or competition and choose a one on the commitment scale ($N = 63$). There were 52 respondents, involved in one organization, who choose number 10 on the commitment scale. Commitment to the advertising profession increased as the number of organizations steadily increased, from zero to two. Commitment to the profession went down when individuals were involved in three or more organizations or competitions.

RQ5: Is There a Relationship between Commitment to the Advertising Profession and the Advertising Program's Preparation?

Respondents were asked, "How well would you say the advertising program prepared you?" (Appendix, survey question 13.) The average level of preparation, as it related to the advertising program, was 6.71 with a range of one to ten and a standard deviation of 1.85. The median was 7.0 and the mode was 7.0.

There is a significant relationship between respondents' commitment to their advertising profession and if they felt the advertising program prepared them ($p \leq .05$)

with an F value of **5.26***. There is a weak correlation between both variables ($r = .21$). However, only 4.2% ($r^2 = .042$) of the variance of commitment can be explained by how prepared they feel because of the advertising program.

RQ6: Is There a Significant Relationship between Commitment to the Advertising Profession and Courses within the Advertising Program?

Survey respondents were asked, in an open-ended question, “What advertising course(s) would you say has been most helpful to your career development?” (Appendix, survey question 16.) Out of the total number of respondents 438 answered the question. Only the first course listed was used in the analysis because it can be assumed that the first course that came to mind was the most applicable to the question.

Classes were initially grouped in to seven categories, determined based on their similarities: (1) all, (2) campaigns, (3) research, media, and strategy, (4) copy and visual, and design, (5) mass communication law (MMC 2100), (6) business and marketing, and (7) none. In order to assure validity within the groups categories were collapsed again so groups could consist of 30 or more individuals. The new categories total 57.4% percent of the respondents, or 466 individuals. In order to be analyzed the numbers one through four were assigned to the new categories:

- (1) Mass communication law (MMC 4200) (3.9%, N = 32).
- (2) Copy and visual, and design (16.5%, N = 134).
- (3) Media, strategy, and research (14.8%, N = 120).
- (4) Campaigns (22.2%, N = 180).

The mean level of commitment and standard deviation are listed in Table 4-3.

Table 4-3. Summary of commitment and courses within the advertising program.

Course name	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mass communication law	5.21	3.22
Copy and visual, and design	5.83	3.28
Media, strategy, and research	6.37	3.22
Campaigns	6.36	3.38

F = 1.52, df = 3, p = .21

There was not a statistically significant effect ($p > .05$) on commitment to the advertising profession and what class the class they felt was helpful. Respondents who reported that campaigns, media, strategy, and research were most helpful had a commitment level of 6.4. Those who reported copy and visual, or design, had an approximate commitment level of 5.8. Respondents who listed mass communication law had an approximate commitment level at 5.2.

RQ7: Is There a Significant Relationship between Commitment to the Advertising Profession and Satisfaction with the Profession?

Respondents were asked, “All things considered, how satisfied are you you’re your present job?” (Appendix, survey question 33.) Over half of respondents (58.4%) are over moderately satisfied with their current job. The average level of satisfaction, as it related to satisfaction with the profession, had a mean of 7.74 with a range of one to ten, a standard deviation of 2.0 and a Pearson r of .149. Both the median and mode were 7.0. There is a positive relationship between professional commitment and satisfaction with current job. While not a large coefficient, there is a significant relationship between respondents’ commitment to their advertising profession and satisfaction with the profession ($p \leq .05$). The F value was **11.37***.

RQ 8: What Significant Variable Best Predicts Commitment to the Advertising Profession?

Variables found to be significant were tested to determine what variable best predicted commitment to the advertising profession. These variables included the following: individuals who solidified their career choice in advertising after taking some courses, individuals who had a career interest in advertising but after taking courses decided it was not their career choice, participation in an internship, organization and competition involvement, prepared because of the advertising program, and current job satisfaction. Because of lack of explanatory power, the variable concerning individuals who knew the specific advertising area in which to focus and stayed in that area, was excluded from the regression.

Had a career interest in advertising, but after taking courses decided it was not their career choice was the largest negative contributor and prepared because of the advertising program the largest positive. In all a person's assessment of how well a program prepared them and the student's involvement in professional organizations are important to commitment. Interestingly, whether a person completed an internship is not related to professional commitment. The standard beta, t-scores, and significance are listed in Table 4-4.

Table 4-4. Regression analysis of all significant variables.

Variable	Std. Beta	t	Significance
Solidified career choice in advertising after taking some courses	-.16	-3.60	.00*
Had a career interest in advertising but after taking courses decided it was not their career choice	-.45	-9.89	.00*
Participation in internship	-.18	-.47	.64
Organization involvement	.11	2.97	.00*
Prepared because of advertising program	.14	3.65	.00*
Current job satisfaction	.13	3.49	.00*

F = **29.58***, df = 6, p = .00

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

Summary

Individuals had an overall moderate level of commitment. This means that individuals have a moderate “belief and acceptance in the values of his or her chosen occupation or line of work, and a willingness to maintain membership” (Vandenberg and Scarpello, 1994).

If an individual either knows they want to study advertising, and is thereby interested in pursuing a career in advertising prior to taking any classes, they will have a stronger commitment to the advertising profession after taking classes. Admitting individuals that have an interest in the program early will likely lead to professional commitment to advertising. Courses may or may not lead to professional commitment. Schools differ as to what the total length of the program should be, including the number of hours a student should be required to take (Russell, 1977; Sawyer, 2004).

Individuals who complete an internship are more likely to be committed to the advertising profession. This supports the idea that students need to involve themselves in internships and extracurricular activities that involve interacting with members of professional advertising (Russell, 1978).

If an individual does not get involved in either competitions or organizations related to the advertising major they are less apt to have a high level of professional commitment toward advertising. The more organizations an individual involves themselves in the lower professional commitment they will have towards advertising.

Commitment to the advertising profession increased as the number of organizations steadily increased. Commitment to the profession went down when individuals were involved in three or more organizations or competitions. Since organizations and competitions are directly involved with education, it is understood that they are used to help (1) prepare the students for a career and (2) prepare the student for their first job in advertising (Moore and Leckenby, 1993). Organizations and competitions have a positive effect on an individual's commitment to the advertising profession.

If an individual feels the advertising program prepared them they are also more committed to the advertising profession. However, individuals who feel moderately prepared by the program are also the least committed. This negates the idea that students highly critical evaluation of the advertising program "mellows with time" (Christian, 1973). They are still critical of the program when comparing it to their commitment to their profession.

There is not enough evidence to support the idea that a relationship exists between identified courses that were most helpful and commitment to the advertising profession. There were no significant results discovered. It seems that alumni's view vary as to what course is the most important, therefore extending the view that "attitudes towards courses vary tremendously" in to the professional realm (Palmer, 2003).

The primary purpose of education should be to prepare the student for a career and that, "any student with intelligence enough to benefit from a college education should be prepared for a career" (Hunt et al., 1987). Based on these observations it makes sense that the largest positive predictor of commitment to the advertising profession concerns individuals who feel prepared because of the advertising program. It also makes sense

that the largest negative predictor individuals who decided against a career in advertising after taking courses.

Implications

It can be argued that the evidence supporting this research is minimal and therefore should not be generalized to a different population. However, some of the information may be helpful for students interested in the advertising profession. If an individual finds it important to be committed, or “obliged or emotionally compelled,” to the advertising profession they may want to consider how strong their interest is in advertising, if they should complete an internship, the number of organizations or competitions to be involved in, and the courses they should consider important (Mish, 1989). If students were to perform this early evaluation, advertising programs may also benefit. This evaluation may increase the preparedness rating programs receive from the individual post graduation. Individuals working within advertising may find it helpful to determine their satisfaction with their profession. This evaluation could help them in determining their commitment to and their future with advertising.

Members of advertising education, both faculty members and administrators, may also find it interesting to know that students who are already interested in the profession before taking any classes will have a higher level of commitment. They may also find it interesting to note that the largest contributor to professional commitment was if an individual felt the advertising education program prepared them.

Future Research

This study evaluated whether a relationship exists between factors within advertising education and a professional commitment to advertising. The results support six of the eight hypotheses. The two that could not be supported dealt with whether a

relationship existed between commitment to the advertising profession and courses within the advertising program, and that advertising would be the largest contributor to professional commitment to advertising. These relationships both returned with no significance.

Future research should further explore the effect education has on an individual's professional outcome.

APPENDIX
INFORMED CONSENT FORM AND QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey of Advertising Graduates

Informed Consent

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

This study is being conducted by Dr. John Sutherland, professor and chair of the Department of Advertising at the University of Florida.

Purpose of the research study:

The purpose of this study is to develop a profile of the professional history and accomplishments of advertising graduates.

What you will be asked to do in the study:

To participate, you may complete the attached questionnaire.

Time required:

10 - 15 minutes

Risks and Benefits:

There are no risks. Participants will be able to receive a summary report of the results.

Compensation:

No compensation will be provided for your participation.

Confidentiality:

Your responses will remain anonymous.

Voluntary participation:

Participation is strictly voluntary, and you will not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer. There is no penalty for not participating.

Right to withdraw from the study:

You have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime without consequence.

Whom to contact if you have questions about the study:

John Sutherland, Professor and Chair
Department of Advertising
College of Journalism and Communications
University of Florida
PO Box 118400
Gainesville, FL 32611-8400
jsutherland@jou.ufl.edu

Whom to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study:

UFIRB Office
Box 112250
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL 32611-2250
(352) 392-0433

Signature _____

Date _____

13. While you were an advertising major at UF, which of the following were you involved with? (Mark all that apply)

- Independent Florida Alligator
- Orange and Blue Magazine
- Ad Society Member
- Ad Society Leader
- Entered a student ADDY competition and placed
- Entered a student ADDY competition, but did not place
- Entered the One Show competition and placed
- Entered the One Show competition, but did not place
- Served on AAF National Student Advertising Competition Team
- Served on DMA ECHO Student Competition Team
- Served on IAA Interad Competition Team
- None

14. On a scale of 1 -10, with 1 being not completely prepared and 10 being completely prepared, how well would you say the advertising program prepared you?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

15. What would you recommend to improve our program?

16. What advertising course(s) would you say has been most helpful to your career development?

17. What advertising course(s) would you say has been least helpful to your career development?

18. At this point in your career, what advertising professor would you say had the most influence...

1. On you personally as an advertising student

2. On your career development

19. After graduation, what did you do?

- Went to graduate school
- Went to the military
- Continued a job I held while in school
- Accepted a position held open for me while I was in school
- Accepted a position I found after graduation
- Did not go to work immediately
- Other

20. At the time of your graduation, how many job offers or solid job opportunities were available to you? (Specify number)

21. In the time since you graduated, have you ever worked for at least a year in any of the following categories? (Mark all that apply AND place a 1 next to the category where you had your first job.)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising agency | <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aerospace and Defense | <input type="checkbox"/> Internet and New Media |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Library Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts and Entertainment | <input type="checkbox"/> Media-Broadcast |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Automotive | <input type="checkbox"/> Media-Print |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aviation and Airlines | <input type="checkbox"/> Media-Outdoor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Banking/Financial Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Military |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beverage | <input type="checkbox"/> Mining |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biotechnology | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Profit and Social Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Construction | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Care and Service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consulting Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Pharmaceuticals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Relations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Energy and Utilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Real Estate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Restaurant and Food Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Retail/Wholesale |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fire, Law Enforcement, and Security | <input type="checkbox"/> Science and Research |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing | <input type="checkbox"/> Sports and Recreation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food | <input type="checkbox"/> Tobacco |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forestry | <input type="checkbox"/> Telecommunications |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government-Federal | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation and Warehousing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government-Local | <input type="checkbox"/> Travel and Tourism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government-State | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Graphic Arts | <hr/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Healthcare | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hotel, Gaming, and Leisure | |

22. Counting only the time you actively sought a position, how many months would you say it took you to get your first job after graduation?

- 0 - 2
- 3 - 5
- 6 - 8
- 9 -11
- 12 +

23. Did you use a placement service or university resource to find post-graduation work? (Mark all that apply)

- Yes, College of Journalism Advertising Department Office
- Yes, general university resource
- Yes, general placement agency
- Yes, general online resource
- No

24. Are you currently employed or self-employed?

- Yes, full-time
- Yes, part-time
- Yes, both full-time and part-time
- No, I am enrolled in school (go to 34)
- No, I am unemployed but looking for work (go to 34)
- No, I am unemployed and not looking for work (go to 34)
- Other (please specify)

25. When did you start to work at your current job?

(month) (year)

26. Which of the following best describes the industry in which you currently work?

- Hotel, Gaming, and Leisure
- Retired
- Advertising agency
- Aerospace and Defense
- Agriculture
- Architecture
- Arts and Entertainment
- Automotive
- Aviation and Airlines
- Banking/Financial Services
- Beverage
- Biotechnology
- Construction
- Consulting Services
- Education
- Energy and Utilities
- Engineering
- Environment
- Fire, Law Enforcement, and Security
- Fishing
- Food
- Forestry
- Government-Federal
- Government-Local
- Government-State
- Graphic Arts
- Healthcare
- Insurance
- Internet and New Media
- Legal Services
- Library Services
- Media-Broadcast
- Media-Print
- Media-Outdoor
- Military
- Mining
- Non-Profit and Social Services
- Personal Care and Service
- Pharmaceuticals
- Public Relations
- Real Estate
- Restaurant and Food Services
- Retail/Wholesale
- Science and Research
- Sports and Recreation
- Tobacco
- Telecommunications
- Transportation and Warehousing
- Travel and Tourism
- Other

27. What is your current job title?

28. What are your current duties?

- Art direction
- Account management
- Account planner
- Brand management
- Broadcast production
- Campaigning
- Copywriting
- Creative director
- Graphic design
- Interactive media
- Marketing management
- Media buying
- Media planning
- Media sales
- Print production
- Research
- Traffic management
- Other

26. Do you think of the work you do as a "job" or do you think of it as a "career"?

- Job
- Career
- Don't know

30. What is your current income before taxes from your employer?

- \$0 - 24,999
- \$25,000 - 49,999
- \$50,000 - 74,999
- \$75,000 - 99,999
- \$100,000 - 124,999
- \$125,000 - 149,999
- \$150,000 - 174,999
- \$175,000 - 199,999
- \$200,000 - 224,999
- \$225,000 +

31. Please approximate the total number of people employed in the company for which you work and/or in your own company.

(please make your best estimate)

32. In what metropolitan area, city or town, do you currently work?

City/Town State Zip Code

33. On a scale of 1 - 10, 1 being not very satisfied and 10 being very satisfied, all things considered (that is, thinking of the work, the opportunity for advancement, the salary, etc.), how satisfied are you with your present job?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

34. How many different employers, including your current employer, have you worked for since you graduated? (Please specify number. If you have ever been self-employed, please write a 1 next to "Self-employed".)

_____ Self-employed _____ # of employers

35. On a scale of 1 - 10, 1 being not very committed and 10 being very committed, how committed do you feel to your advertising profession?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

36. Do you wish now that you had prepared for a major other than in advertising?

- Yes
- No

37. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

38. Please mark your ethnic background:

- American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Black, not Hispanic
- Hispanic, of any race
- White, not Hispanic
- Other

39. Are you an American citizen?

- Yes
- No

Thank you for your participation. Please use the envelope provided to return this questionnaire by April 15, 2003.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Julia Jane Thomas grew up in Southern Maryland, near the Chesapeake Bay and Solomon's Island. She began the pursuit of her bachelor's degree at Towson University near Baltimore, Maryland.

In 1998 she moved to Florida with her husband. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Advertising at the University of Florida in May 2003. A few months later, in August, she began the pursuit of a Master of Science degree in Advertising from the University of Florida.

Upon completion of her graduate endeavor, Julia plans to return to the Washington D.C. area to explore the realm of social marketing research.