

ARE THERE GROUPS OF ADVERTISING CREATIVES
WITH UNIQUE PERCEPTIONS OF THE USEFULNESS OF
MARKETING INFORMATION?

By

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Our study was a secondary analysis of data collected by Sutherland, Duke, and Abernethy on market information flow. Their study focused on the usefulness of types of information that art directors, copywriters, and creative directors wanted and obtained from clients. Our study aimed to answer 2 questions their study left unanswered:

- Are there groups of creatives, with unique perceptions of the usefulness of marketing information?
- What characteristics differentiate the groups?

Units of analysis were of 583 completed questionnaires of employed creatives. The participants included art directors, copywriters, and creative directors.

We did a cluster analysis of perceived usefulness ratings of 6 marketing-information items to explore for unique groups. Two unique groups emerged with different perceptions of the usefulness of the marketing information. One group valued all six information items significantly more than the other group. A demographic

comparison of the groups revealed that creatives with more experience perceived the information as more useful than did the younger, less-experienced creatives.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Overview

Advertising, as we know it, cannot exist without creativity. Creativity plays a role at many stages of the advertising process, including the planning stage (Zinkhan, 1993). The planning stage is where the information gathering begins. Many advertising-agency staff members are involved in this process, but executing the strategy and producing the actual campaign it is the responsibility of the copywriters and art directors (Percy, Rossiter, & Elliot, 2001).

Those working to create advertisements, must know as much as possible about the brand and its targeted consumers. Creative people are always looking for some spark that will ignite their creative juices. The more unique and interesting the facts about the product, brand, and consumer, the more likely the creatives are to find that big idea (Percy et al., 2001).

What information do creative ad agency personnel find useful in creating the advertising that corporations spend billions of dollars on annually? Do these perceptions of the usefulness of the information vary by job title, experience, or agency size?

Research Purpose

The purpose of our study was to determine if there are groups of creatives with different perceptions of the usefulness of marketing information in the creation of advertising. We took the findings of Sutherland et al. (2004) classified them by demographics, and did a more in-depth analysis of the results.

To address the question of information usefulness, Sutherland et al. (2004) surveyed art directors, copywriters, and creative directors to determine if persons from these areas differed in their perceived usefulness of marketing information. While an important study in the area of creativity, the Sutherland et al. (2004) study classified individuals on the basis of job title and function. These are demographic or descriptive variables with the assumption that persons in these positions (copywriter, art director, creative director) were similar to each other yet different from the other positions. From an analysis of variance perspective, the assumption was that each group (copywriters, art directors, copywriters) had less within-group variance and more among-group variance. In other words, it assumed that differences among copywriters were fewer than differences between copywriters and art directors.

According to Haley (1968), the problem with classifying individuals by demographics is that they are descriptive variables, not causal variables. Attitudes (need and perceived usefulness) cause behavior and are more appropriate for creating homogeneous groups. Some copywriters may share perceived usefulness of information with art directors and creative directors, and vice versa. Our study aimed to reanalyze the Sutherland, et al. (2004) data to determine if unique groups of creatives with similar perceived usefulness ratings were not represented or accounted for by comparing individuals by title or job function (e.g., copywriters, art directors, and creative directors).

Study Outline

Our study addressed 2 research questions:

- Are there groups of creatives, with unique perceptions of the usefulness of marketing information?
- What characteristics differentiate the groups?

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Creative Process and Problem Solving

The process of creating ads has two basic functions: 1) writing the copy and 2) laying out a print ad or developing a storyboard for a commercial. A team of creatives (consisting of a copywriter and art director) usually carries out these creative functions. In smaller agencies, however, the process can rest with a single individual (Percy et al., 2001).

Before the 1960s, art directors and copywriters worked separately. William Bernbach made one of the most significant changes in the process of creating an advertisement (Young, 2000). In the 1960s, Bernbach instituted creative teams, each consisting of a copywriter and art director. This revolutionized the advertising business and is believed to have greatly improved the quality of creative work. Combining the talents of an art director and a copywriter enhanced the ability to create great and powerful advertising. These teams could work as a sounding board for each other's ideas and provide consensual validation (Young, 2000).

When we try to define great advertising, we start with advertising that sells; but the definition needs to go well beyond this. Great advertising has equity because it adds something to the brand or company that is greater than immediate sales. Bill Backer of the Philip Morris Company suggested that their annual report should list under assets a line that reads, "Marlboro Man estimated value--incalculable. Great advertising should have legs, able to work over a long period of time (Morgan, 1984 p.34).

Advertising campaigns, particularly those brought about by outstanding creative executions, are usually the result of what is termed a “big idea” (Schultz & Barnes, 1994). A winning creative idea (one that stands out from the crowd and is memorable), can have an enormous impact on sales. Winning creative ideas can greatly increase sales (Buzzell, 1964). Exceptionally creative imaginative ideas also greatly affect hiring and firing of advertising agencies, and help agencies win creative awards. These awards, in turn, enable agencies to generate more business and hire and retain better staff (Wackman, Salmon, & Salmon, 1986). A small but growing trend among clients is to remunerate agencies based on creative effectiveness.

The process of conceiving effective advertising is idiosyncratic and unpredictable.

Creatives use their abilities in something comparable to an artistic production:

copywriters and art directors engage in an intensely personal process (Kover, 1970).

Advertising that gets results bears the imprint of the copywriter and/or art director and his or her life, needs, and perceptions. Ghiselin (1985) described the creative mindset as:

A certain amount of eccentricity, some excess, taint, or “tykeishness” is often prized by creative minds as a guarantee of ability to move apart or aside, outside. Drugs or alcohol are sometimes used to produce abnormal states to the same end of disrupting the habitual set of the mind, but they are of dubious value, apart from the dangers of addiction, since their action reduces judgment, and all the activities they provoke are hallucinatory rather than illuminating. What is needed is control and direction (p. 52).

But to think of advertising writers and art directors as simply one group may be misleading. Important differences exist in the attitudes and perceptions of these creatives.

The ability to easily process between verbal and visual information, distinguishes art

directors and copywriters. Art directors and copywriters process various kinds of

information in different ways and therefore see the world differently. A better

understanding of the process of producing an effective advertisement is more likely to be

achieved only as a result of a better understanding of the differences in how art directors and copywriters operate, rather than through a generic definition of the term “creativity” (Young, 2000). To understand why some advertisements are more creative than others, we first need to understand why perceptions of creativity differ from person to person (Koslow, Sasser, & Riordan, 2003).

According to Young (2000), two-thirds of creatives realize that major differences exist in how writers and art directors conceptualize advertising. Roughly half of the creatives agree that you can tell the difference between a commercial created by an art director and a commercial created by a writer. Art directors, more than copywriters, cite originality, uniqueness, and the visual and graphic look of the advertising, followed by the attention-getting power and memorability of their favorite commercials. In contrast, copywriters appear to value more highly the persuasiveness of the commercial, particularly in terms of its credibility, its intelligence value, and how well people can relate to it.

Creatives with less time in the business are more likely to be driven by the desire to be fresh and original (Young, 2000). With experience, however, creatives are more likely to understand the limitations of their own professional perceptions in terms of how they make a connection with the consumer. In particular, more experienced creatives appear to become increasingly sensitive to the importance of visual effectiveness in television advertising. As a positive note for advertising researchers, it also appears that with experience some creatives may become more accepting of the role that research can play in the creative process (Young, 2000).

It is no surprise that creatives are misunderstood, given the widely dispersed perspective in creativity research in both the academic and practitioner realms. Creatives often resist testing and will often rebel when given too many rules and mandates. However creatives may be different because they have been insulated more than any other members of the advertising agency. By being buffered from the daily account, budget, and clientele, they may be able to contribute to the strategic thinking with an open mind other agency personnel can't. An original creative strategy, in the form of a creative brief is a stimulus for the creative team in its efforts to create a successful and memorable campaign (Koslow et al., 2003).

Agencies, however, that do nothing more than execute a dull and overused strategy are often left with boring, unconvincing commercials that do not cut through the clutter. They essentially waste millions in media dollars.

To communicate effectively, the creative staff working on an account needs to have adequate knowledge about the target audience, product, and market. Little research has examined differences in information needs among creative directors, art directors, and copywriters (Sutherland et al., 2004). Creating effective advertising cannot be accomplished without proper research, market, and consumer information--the basis for any type of advertising campaign (Schultz & Barnes, 1994). One of "the major inputs received by real-world advertising creatives is a client background document" which typically contains information about "the company, the product and the competitive environment" (Johar, Holbrook, & Stern, 2001, p. 4). This information is used to develop the creative brief. Once art directors and copywriters receive the brief, they begin their brainstorming process. According to Davies (2000), "Poor briefing has been attributed to

poor creative solutions because the creatives are less likely to be on the same wavelength of their clients, or alternatively clients may be indecisive, causing much unnecessary re-work (p. 101).

When it comes to the creative process, creative ideas often appear mysteriously, even to the person responsible. Nevertheless, in most businesses, these ideas are the result of organizational processes (Kover & Goldberg, 1995). The key organizational issue in the creative process is how to balance and optimize the degree of freedom that creatives need to produce the big idea. Studies have suggested in the management of creativity that supervisors should shift between involvement and detachment throughout the process. Control and freedom should be alternated strategically throughout the process. In the early idea-generation stage, there should be complete freedom, but during the execution process, control is necessary.

One of the best-known, proven methods of conceiving creative ideas was developed by Young (1975). Young suggested that a new idea is nothing more than a new combination of old elements. Young, in his book, *A Technique for Producing Ideas*, developed a five-step approach to creating new ideas:

- First, the gathering of raw materials--both the materials of the immediate problem and the materials which come from the constant enrichment of your store of general knowledge
- Second, the working over of these materials in the mind
- Third, the incubation stage, where something besides the conscious mind does the work of synthesis
- Fourth, the actual birth of the idea--“Eureka! I have it!” stage
- Fifth, the final shaping and development of the idea to practical usefulness

This simple formula Young developed in 1940, while at J. Walter Thompson, has worked for many successful creatives and is one of the best-known and widely accepted methods of developing creative ideas.

Creative Process in Advertising

The battle between agency creatives and researchers is a never-ending struggle in the advertising business, which represents the conflict of art versus science (Vaughn, 1983). Creative people have an innate rebelliousness, which inevitably leads them to dislike taking orders. It is imperative, however, for managers to show understanding of creative people and their ideas, but they must retain overall control and make few concessions (West, 1993). Some research has indicated professionals in “creative industries” (e.g., advertising, architecture, and film) tend to be insecure, egotistical, stubborn, rebellious, poor timekeepers, perfectionists, fame seekers, and not possessing out-of-the-ordinary intelligence (Fletcher, 1988). The difficulty that researchers have in communicating with advertising creatives mirrors the problem creatives often have in communicating with consumers. Researchers and creatives sometimes have trouble seeing the point of view of the consumer, who, of course, is their target audience (Young, 2000).

Creatives agree on the most important area of research in creating an advertisement: defining the target audience and its needs. However, creatives also believe research is too frequently used to evaluate advertisements, which, from a creative point of view, is counterproductive to the advertising creative process (Kover, 1995). According to Morgan (1984) there are two arguments regarding copy testing; copy research stifles creativity and worse yet kills good ideas, while the other argument states

that copy research protects our investment in advertising and allows us to separate the winners from the losers.

As an example Morgan (1984) cites the Campbell Soup Company's campaign *Soup Is Good Food*. When the initial commercial in the campaign was copy-tested it was a disaster. The spot received the lowest score ever for a Campbell's commercial. Luckily the campaign was already in its west coast test markets. The commercial was a huge success, creating an awareness level of over 50 percent, exactly what was hoped for. The campaign is one of the most successful ever created. Why did the testing method fail? First the spot was tested for immediate sales, which the commercial was to have little or none. Second, the commercial was designed to be less intrusive in order to wear in because an enormous amount of media dollars was spent in a short period. Morgan (1984) goes on to say:

If you want to nurture and promote great advertising from your agency your chances of doing so may be increased if you consider the following suggestions:

- Recognize that advertising is an extremely complex, multidimensional phenomenon and rarely, if ever, are two situations exactly the same.
- Keep a flexible array of testing methodologies available so that the specific issues related to the advertising objectives can be addressed.
- Do not let your testing methodology drive the creative direction.
- Remember that time and media weight may also be related to a campaign's effectiveness; thus in-market testing may be your best bet to evaluate long-term effectiveness (p. 35).

O'Malley (1987) suggested a contrasting style between those involved in strategy versus those in creativity. He remarked that successful advertising comes from two contrasting styles of problem solving--what psychologists call convergent and divergent thinking. Convergent thinking makes deductions and draws logical conclusions from

information, which is what we expect from a strategist. Divergent thinking moves outward from specific information to a more broadly based generalization, which is what we expect from creatives. Percy et al. (2001) stated:

Creative executions spring from a creative idea. These creative ideas may come from a variety of sources, and manifest themselves in any number of ways. But in the end, a creative idea must be consistent with the communication strategy and brand position. It is very important that creative thinking does not begin until a creative brief has been agreed upon. It is the creative brief that helps guide the direction the creative execution must take in order to satisfy the strategy. With the creative brief in hand, the creative team assigned to the campaign can go to work. (p.238)

Hirschman (1989) reports that account executives are focused on fulfilling the client's communications goals. These goals may include building brand awareness and creating favorable attitudes. The advertisement is viewed as a vehicle to execute a given marketing strategy to deliver a positive impression about the product to the consumer. What an account executive would call an appropriate advertisement is one that is consistent with the strategy. The copywriter and art director, however, share a different communication goal for the advertisement. Their goals are to demonstrate their own creative talents and express their own aesthetic viewpoints. For the art director and copywriter, the advertising appropriateness is associated more with the artistic expression of an advertisement. Because account executives play more of a boundary-spanning role between client and creatives, they bear much of the frustration and grief over the advertisement when it is too far from the strategies envisioned by the client. The result is that creatives are stereotyped--often unfairly--by account executives as being more concerned with winning awards than selling the client's product or service.

Creative Brief

Once a strategy has been agreed upon, a creative brief is prepared. The briefing is a dialog at the start of the creative process. A brief is not the ad in longhand but a statement of the problem, whose purpose is to guide and inspire the creative team. It is a statement of purpose, usually not more than one page (Robinson, 1997). A creative brief is a bridge between brilliant strategic thinking and effective advertising, which is capable of affecting a change both on a rational and emotional level in the consumer (Steel, 1998).

At many agencies the creation of a creative brief is the responsibility of an account planner or executive and others do not participate. However creative people should be active participants as their thinking will improve not only the quality of the brief but serve as a catalyst in the development of the creative (Steel, 1998).

While many agency staff members participate in the development of a marketing plan and strategy, the execution of all this work is the responsibility of the creatives. In most cases, a copywriter and art director join forces to conceive the “big idea.” The process starts with a creative brief written by the account planner or executive. Once the brief is agreed upon, it serves as a roadmap for creative ideas (Percy et al., 2001). The more creative and innovative the brief, the greater chance creatives have in developing advertising campaigns that break through the clutter.

While many advertising agencies use creative briefs, there are arguments for and against briefs Sargeant and West (2001). The negatives are as follows:

- Some successful agencies do not use them
- Creatives often don't respect them
- The time involved to create a brief
- They can often complicate the assignment

The positives are as follows:

- A brief will probably be created anyway
- Most great advertising campaigns are based on effective briefs
- The right kind of brief is can help creatives
- Creative briefs can help creatives to “sell” their ideas to clients
- Briefs organize the facts and help manage client expectations is a simple short format

One theory on creative briefs is that there is no better brief than one that essentially says start from scratch or a wide-open brief. This was the direction given to the ad agency Goodby, Silverstein, and Partners, when the California Milk Board approached the agency. All previous attempts to stop the decline in the consumption of milk had failed. The client essentially said do whatever it takes, and it took only two words, got milk. The campaign was ranked by USA Today’s Adtrack as the second most popular in the United States and most importantly reversed the decline in milk consumption (Steel, 1998). While this is not an argument against briefs it does demonstrate that certain situations call for different approaches.

Creative briefs can be a valuable tool in defending and selling the creative executions. While the creative can be subjective, sound research and facts are more likely to be understood by clients, which is why it is necessary to have strong creative briefs supported with solid research.

Creative briefs are short concise documents that should be focused, sustainable, measurable, and, most importantly, inspirational. At its lowest level, the document’s aim is to communicate to the creatives the objectives of the marketing campaign--both in terms of directly measurable results, such as the number of inquiries to be generated, or

in less measurable performance terms, such as the image to be communicated to the prospect (Sargeant & West, 2001).

According to Robinson (1997) in his book *How to Plan Advertising*, objectives and elements of a creative brief should include:

- Why are you advertising at all? What are the objectives? What is advertising's role?
- Who is the advertising aiming to influence?
- What do you wish to communicate about this brand?
- Why do you think those it is aimed at will believe it?
- How do you wish to say it? What tone of voice?
- What do you think they will say having received this communication?
- What are you not allowed to convey about this product or must be communicated legally?

A good brief according to Steel (1998) accomplishes three main objectives. First it gives the creative team a realistic view of what the advertising is expected to accomplish. Second, it clearly outlines the demographics of the people the advertising is to reach and finally it gives a clear direction on the message that is to be communicated to the target audience.

Schultz and Barnes (1994), in their book *Strategic Advertising Campaigns*, state a creative brief should be evaluated for the following traits:

- **Simplicity.** Is the strategy easy for all persons who will be involved in the approval to understand? Can it be made clearer, shorter, or better?
- **Specificity.** Is it clear, complete, and concise? Does it state the advertising problem faced and provides a clear solution?
- **Durability.** Will the strategy last a long time? Can it be overcome or offset by competitors quickly or easily? Is it something the advertiser can live with for several years?

- Advertisability. Does this strategy offer the creative and media people latitude to develop really outstanding advertising? Is it too restrictive? In short, can great advertising come out of this strategy? (p. 159)

Sutherland, Duke, and Abernethy Study

Sutherland et al. (2004) state that there are six general categories of marketing information critical to the development of a successful advertising campaign: 1) the target audience demographic profile; 2) customer product usage information; 3) product performance information; 4) competitor's product performance information; 5) marketing strategy information; and 6) the main selling point supplied by the client.

Since all these informational items are important to creating successful advertising, we expect that art directors, copywriters, and creative directors will consider this information of great value. We also believe art directors, copywriters, or creative directors will perceive differences in the usefulness of these six types of information. Sutherland et al. (2004) research has determined that advertising agencies and creative personnel are often resistant to having the client supply the main selling point. Creatives and agency personnel want and need freedom to determine a main selling point, which is why they are hired. Therefore among the six types of informational items, the main selling point was considered the least useful.

The best creatives understand the value of good research. They know that its usefulness is limited not only to creating great ads, but as a selling tool when presenting their creative executions. But while it is important to provide essential information to creatives, it is also essential not to overwhelm them with excess research that can limit the possibilities for getting that big idea. The best account executives and planners provide creatives with the information they need--not all the information they have.

Unfortunately, a number of recent studies have shown that descriptive variables, such as age, sex, income, occupations, and race, are generally poor predictors of behavior. Consequently, these descriptive variables are less than optimum bases for segmentation strategies (Frank & Green, 1968).

Causal versus Descriptive Method

The Sutherland et al. (2004) research relied on descriptive factors, such as job title, comparing art directors to copywriters and creative directors. For this reason, we cannot offer an explanation for art directors, copywriters, and creative directors informational needs. This study identified by causal factors clusters of art directors, copywriters, and creative directors with similar informational needs regardless of title. Causal factors give us the ability to make predictions about future informational needs based on title, gender, product experience, primary duty, years in the industry and agency size.

Identifying segments by causal factors rather than descriptive factors can be called “benefit segmentation.” People are classified into segments in accordance with the benefits they are seeking. They are then compared to all other segments in terms of their demographics, volume of consumption, their brand perceptions, their media habits, their personality and lifestyle, and so forth. This provides us with a deeper understanding of the people who make up each segment (Haley, 1968).

Several alternative statistical approaches can be employed, among them the so-called “Q” technique of factor analysis, multi-dimensional scaling, and other distance measures. All these methods relate the ratings of each respondent to those of every other respondent, and then these methods seek clusters of the individuals with similar rating patterns. If the items related are potential consumer benefits, the clusters that emerge will be groups of people who attach similar degrees of importance to the various benefits.

Whatever the statistical approach selected, the end result of the analysis is likely to be between three and seven consumer segments, each representing a potentially productive focal point for marketing efforts.

Each segment is identified by the benefits it is seeking. However, it is the total configuration of the benefits sought that differentiates one segment from another (Frank & Green 1968).

The benefit segment approach used in this study provided researchers with new insight into the Sutherland et al. (2004) findings. Using usefulness of information (benefit) segmentation, two homogeneous clusters were discovered. For the purpose of this study, information usefulness was determined using the six informational items from the Sutherland, Duke, and Abernethy study. The items were ranked on a 1-7 scale with 7 being the most useful.

Research Questions

The Sutherland et al. (2004) study determined the types of information creatives desire and obtains from clients. Using cluster analysis, this research poses the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** Are there groups of creatives, with unique perceptions of the usefulness of marketing information?
- **RQ2:** What characteristics differentiate the groups?

CHAPTER 3 METHOD

Cluster Analysis

Cluster analysis has become a common tool for the marketing researcher.

Academic researchers and marketing applications researchers rely on the technique for developing empirical groupings of persons, products, or occasions which may serve as the basis for further analysis. Such a tool is particularly relevant for the emerging discipline of marketing, which still struggles with the problems of how best to group consumers, products, media types, and usage occasions (Punj & Stewart, 1983).

Used as an exploratory data analysis tool cluster analysis solves classification problems. The object of cluster analysis is to sort cases (people, things, events, and so forth) into groups, or clusters, so that the degree of association is strong between members of the same cluster and weak between members of different clusters. Each cluster thus describes, in terms of the data collected, the class to which its members belong. It has been found to be a particularly useful aid to market segmentation, experimentation and product positioning (Saunders, 1994).

As with factor analysis, cluster analysis is a tool of discovery. It is an exploratory method that may reveal associations and structure in data which, though not previously evident, are nevertheless sensible and useful once found. Objects to be clustered are scored on several dimensions and grouped on the basis of the likeness of their scores.

This results in objects within groups that are more similar to one another than they are to objects in different groups. The grouping of similar objects provides a more in-

depth analysis and provides a platform between two extreme views that: a) all objects are unique and inviolable and b) the population is homogeneous. These two views represent a poor basis for marketing planning, whether the objects are consumers or products.

Cluster analysis can offer a range of alternative views that can be useful to marketing management (Saunders 1994).

Another important use of cluster analysis is its ability to help seek a better understanding of people's behaviors by identifying homogeneous groups. This addresses the need for better classification of relevant characteristics of individuals (Bettman, 1979). Advantages of cluster analysis include

- Ability to predict. It is cognitively easier for people to predict behavior or people or objects based on group membership--all because members share similar properties.
- Group members share certain properties that are common, and it is hoped that the resultant classification will help provide some insight into a research topic. The classification has the effect of reducing the dimensionality of a data table by reducing the number of rows (cases).
- Organizational convenience
- It has no independent or dependent variable

The two complementary features are

- High internal (within cluster) homogeneity
- High external (between cluster) heterogeneity

There are two types of cluster analysis. The first method is the hierarchical method (binary or categorical) whose algorithms rebuild the entire hierarchy of the objects under analysis (the so called tree), whether in an ascending order or in a descending order. The second method is the nonhierarchical/partitioning method: the user previously defines the cluster numbers in which the set of objects under analysis is divided.

The two steps include: 1) creating a table of relative similarities or differences between all objects, and 2) using this information to combine the objects into groups. The table of relative similarities is called a proximities matrix. The method of combining objects into groups is called a “clustering algorithm.” The idea is to combine objects, which are similar to one another, into separate groups. To validate this method we use a different sample of split-half. Finally, we profile to see the relationship between cluster membership and other important variables.

Profile of Sample

Sutherland et al. (2004) conducted a survey of 583 practicing creatives who subscribed to *Creativity*, an Advertising Age publication and industry standard.

The survey produced the following results:

- 583 completed questionnaires with a 17.0% response rate
- The response rate for art directors was 13.3%, copywriters 21%, and creative directors 16.7%
- A 17% response rate for an unsolicited, first mailing, which is considered common (Fink, 1995) and comparable to results reported in similar large scale marketing surveys (West & Paliwoda, 1996)

Sutherland et al. (2004) adjusted each respondent’s position to reflect his/her most current position. By comparing current position and responsibilities, as indicated on returned questionnaires to current position according to the list they purchased, Sutherland et al. identified and reclassified individuals to their most current position: art director, copywriter, or creative director. The final adjusted-by-title sample included 131 (22.5%) art directors, 225 (38.6%) copywriters, and 227 (38.9%) creative directors.

Respondent Profile

Male copywriters were the most common group among the 583 respondents. The group had an average age of 37.2 with an average of 13.5 years in the business. Their experience averaged 11.8 years in their position as an art director or copywriter. Male respondents were older (37.8) than females (35.8), and they had been in the profession longer (M=14.1) than females (F=12.3). There were no significant differences in numbers of males and females in their primary jobs as art directors, copywriters, and creative directors.

There was a significant difference between copywriters, art directors, and creative directors based on their years in advertising and years in the primary job. While art directors and copywriters were not significantly different in age, they were significantly younger than creative directors. In years of experience, creative directors had significantly more experience than art directors and copywriters, but art directors had more years of experience than copywriters.

Study Design

Stage 1: Cluster Analysis Objectives

The objective of this study was to cluster ad agency creative personnel into groups with similar perceptions of the usefulness of the six different types of informational needs identified in the Sutherland et al. (2004) research. Cluster analysis was used to segment the respondents' ratings as to the usefulness of six different types of information (i.e., variables X1 through X6).

Stage 2: Cluster Analysis Design

The squared Euclidean distance as the similarity measure was used, given that the set of variables are metric. Distance measures consider both the data magnitude (e.g., not

very useful versus very useful) and the pattern, unlike correlation measures that detect only data patterns (Hair, Tatham, Anderson, & Black, 1998, p. 503).

The agglomeration schedule was used to determine the presence of outliers in the dataset. Only two observations had a stage of 0, meaning they never joined a cluster. With only two possible outliers, no observations were deleted in order to preserve the structure of the dataset. Also, standardization of variables is not necessary since all variables are on the same scale.

Stage 3: Assumptions

In cluster analysis, there are only two important assumptions: sample representativeness and multicollinearity. Cluster analysis is not a statistical inference technique. The sample (n=575) is large and considered representative of a wide range of advertising agency personnel.

Stage 4: Driving Clusters

To achieve the maximum result efficiency, the researchers performed both hierarchical and nonhierarchical techniques in sequential steps. Step one employed a hierarchical method to 1) determine the appropriate number of clusters in the dataset and 2) provide initial seed points for step two. Step two employed a nonhierarchical method to fine tune the analysis by using the hierarchical results (i.e., k clusters and centroids) as a basis for generating a final cluster solution (Hair et al., 1998 p.503).

Step 1: Hierarchical Cluster Analysis

Our first and most important issue is to determine the final number of interpretable clusters. Ward's method was chosen because it uses the sum of squares between clusters summed over multiple variables. At each clustering stage, the within-cluster sum of

squares is minimized over the complete set of separate clusters in order to minimize differences within clusters.

Additionally Ward's clustering agglomeration coefficient is an accurate stopping rule for identifying the correct number of data clusters (Hair et al., 1998). The technique is to look for large increases in the coefficient value in the agglomeration schedule at each stage of the hierarchical procedure. When the clustering algorithm joins two distinct clusters, the result is a large percentage change in the coefficient. When a large increase occurs, the prior cluster solution is selected for further analysis because its combination causes a significant decrease in similarity. To identify a stopping point, the percentage change in the coefficient between clusters was calculated at each step. The step at which the change diminished was the stopping point. This determined a range of cluster solutions that are practical to the proposed research objectives. Our analysis looks for two to five clusters, which is reasonable given the nature of the respondents. Table 3-1 displays the calculated percentage change in the clustering coefficient for ten- to two-cluster solutions from the hierarchical procedure.

Results showed the largest percent change increase occurred when going from two to one cluster (41.3%) and from three to two clusters (21.5%). This indicates that both the two-and three-cluster solutions joined very different clusters and required further analysis for their practical significance as distinct groups used for classifying the participants. When we go beyond three clusters, small coefficient changes indicate homogenous groupings and the stopping point in the present data.

Table 3-1: Hierarchical cluster analysis: Analysis of Ward's agglomeration coefficient

Number of clusters	Agglomeration coefficient	Change in coefficient to next level	Percentage change in coefficient to next level
10	2418.2	111.7	4.6
9	2529.9	124.7	4.9
8	2654.6	152.6	5.7
7	2807.2	186.9	6.6
6	2994.1	188.7	6.3
5	3182.8	244.3	7.6
4	3427.1	284.8	8.3
3	3711.9	800.8	21.5
2	4512.7	1868.1	41.3
1	6380.8	--	--

Two-Cluster and Three-Cluster Profiles. At this point in the analysis, the objective was not interpretation but rather ensuring cluster distinctiveness (Hair et al., 1998). Profiles of both the two- and three-cluster hierarchical solutions act as a guide in the selection of the final cluster solution. Table 3-2 provides the variable profile.

Table 3-2: Difference between cluster centers

Variable	Degree of freedom	F value	significance
Two-cluster solution			
X1 TA demo profile	1	204.5	.000
X2 product perf. profile	1	358.8	.000
X3 Comp. product perf. info.	1	369.1	.000
X4 Marketing strategy info.	1	324.3	.000
X5 Customer product usage	1	253.5	.000
X6 Main selling point 1	1	45.7	.000
Three-cluster solution			
X1 TA demo profile	2	149.2	.000
X2 Product perf. profile	2	253.7	.000
X3 Comp. product perf. info.	2	355.1	.000
X4 Marketing strategy info.	2	269.8	.000
X5 Customer product usage	2	209.5	.000
X6 Main selling point 1	2	80.7	.000

Step 2: Nonhierarchical Cluster Analysis

Nonhierarchical cluster analysis methods were used to fine-tune the hierarchical results in step one and get final cluster solutions.

Table 3-3: Two-cluster solution

Cluster	X1 TA demo profile	X2 Product perf. info.	X3 Competitors product perf. info.	X4 Marketing strategy info.	X5 Customer product usage info.	X6 Main selling point from client	Cluster size
Final cluster centers							
1	5.46	4.88	3.76	5.01	5.01	4.91	200
2	6.73	6.56	6.19	6.57	6.52	6.07	375
Statistical significance of cluster differences							
F Value	231.12	360.25	625.22	263.89	297.48	86.60	
Significance	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	

Table 3-4: Two- and three- clustering variable profile: Ward's hierarchical cluster analysis

Cluster	TA demo profile	Product perf. info.	Competitors product perf. info.	Marketing strategy info.	Customer product usage info.	Main selling point from client	Cluster size
Two-cluster solution							
1	5.02	4.22	3.15	4.28	4.49	4.76	99
2	6.55	6.34	5.80	6.39	6.30	5.86	426
Three-cluster solution							
1	5.02	4.22	3.15	4.28	4.49	4.76	99
2	6.17	5.89	5.03	5.83	5.80	5.15	216
3	6.87	6.72	6.45	6.86	6.72	6.44	260

Table 3-4 shows two respondent groupings that have unique perceptions of the usefulness of all six items. Cluster 1 (n=99) respondents have lower values on each variable, particularly X3 (i.e., competitor's product performance information), indicating

a group of respondents who place little value in any of the present information as being useful in coming up with creative executions as do those respondents grouped in cluster 2 (n=426).

The three-cluster solution results in the splitting of cluster 2 from the two-cluster solution to form similar groups: cluster 2 (n=216) and cluster 3 (n=260). Cluster 1 (n=99) remains stable on each centroid and also the cluster size when compared to the two-cluster solution. However, respondents in cluster 3 rate the usefulness of all six information items only slightly higher those in cluster 2. This demonstrates that these two clusters are not clearly differentiated by their perceptions of the usefulness of the six clustering variables.

While the stopping rule supports either the two- or three-cluster solutions, the variable profiles indicate a similarity between clusters 2 and 3. Given the robustness of the large coefficient change and a very distinct variable profile, the two-cluster solution demonstrates practical significance as a classification system. The remainder of the study (i.e., cluster interpretation, validation, and profile) was therefore conducted only for the two-cluster solution.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Cluster Membership and Usefulness Ratings

The results of the cluster analysis provided evidence of two clusters. A comparison of the perceived usefulness of the marketing informational items revealed that one group had significantly higher usefulness ratings across all six items (table 4-1).

A repeated measures analysis of variance, which compared usefulness ratings of information items within cluster 1, revealed significant differences. Cluster 1 rated the target audience profile significantly more useful than any other item of information.

Marketing strategy information, customer product usage information, and the main selling point provided by the client and the client's product performance information did not have significantly different usefulness ratings. They were equal in usefulness but less than the target audience profile and more useful than the competitors' product performance information. The competitors' product performance information was significantly less useful than all the other information items.

Repeated measures of usefulness ratings by cluster 2 also revealed significant differences among the items. Similar to cluster 1, the target audience profile was the most useful item. Marketing strategy information, customer product usage information, and the client's product performance information were tied at second, less useful than the target audience and more useful than the main selling point or the competitors' product performance information. The main selling point was rated the least useful behind the competitors' product performance information.

Table 4-1: Cluster by informational usefulness

	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Significance
	Mean	Mean	df = 1
Target audience demographic profile	5.46 ¹	6.73 ¹	F = 231.12, p = .000
Marketing strategy information	5.01 ²	6.57 ²	F = 263.882, p = .000
Customer product usage information	5.01 ²	6.52 ²	F = 297.477, p = .000
A main selling point provided by the client	4.91 ²	6.07 ⁴	F = 86.591, p = .000
Client's product performance Information	4.88 ²	6.56 ²	F = 360.257, p = .000
Competitors' Product Performance Information	3.76 ³	6.19 ³	F = 625.222, p = .000

¹Indicates rank of usefulness rating. 1 = Most useful. Items not significantly different from each other are ranked equally, (e.g. marketing strategy information and customer product usage information).

Cluster Membership and Primary Duty

Table 4-2 profiles the clusters by primary duty. Primary job duty was defined as your primary job responsibility (i.e. art direction, copywriting, or other). This provides evidence that there may be more variance in usefulness of information ratings among copywriters, art directors, and creative directors than between these groups.

There was a significant difference ($p=.007$) in the components of the clusters. Cluster 1 shows a much greater number of copywriters (47.0) than cluster 2 (34.4), while cluster 2 shows a larger number of creative directors (42.7) than cluster 1 (31.0). Art directors showed little difference in numbers between cluster 1 (22.0) and cluster 2 (22.9).

Table 4-2: Cluster by primary duty

	Cluster 1		Cluster 2		Total
	n	%	n	%	%
Copywriter	94	47.0	129	34.4	38.8
Art director	44	22.0	86	22.9	22.6
Creative director	62	31.0	160	42.7	38.6
Total	200	100.0	375	100.0	100.0

Chi square = 9.988, df = 2, p= .007

Cluster Membership and Current Title

The clusters (table 4-3) contained individuals with different titles, e.g. copywriters, art directors, and creative directors. The clusters were composed of all titles, supporting the approach of not using demographics in future research in this area.

Table 4-3: Cluster by current title

	Cluster 1		Cluster 2		Total
	n	%	n	%	%
Copywriter	73	36.5	69	18.4	24.7
Sr. copywriter	25	12.5	68	18.1	16.2
Art director	37	18.5	67	17.9	18.1
Sr. art airector	10	5.0	25	6.7	6.1
Assoc. creative director	15	7.5	21	5.6	6.3
Creative director	40	20.0	125	33.3	28.7
Total	200	100.0	375	100.0	100.0

Chi square = 29.32, df = 5, p= .000

There was a significant relationship (p=.000) between cluster membership and current position (table 4-3). Current job title was an open-ended question; creatives were

classified by their title. Cluster 1 had a much greater percentage of copywriters (36.5%) than cluster 2 (18.4%), while cluster 2 has a far greater percentage of creative directors (33.3%) than cluster 1 (20%).

Cluster Membership and Gender

Table 4-4 shows 74.7% of cluster 1 was male compared to 67.2% males in cluster 2 while 25.3% of cluster 1 was female compared to 32.8% females in cluster 2. There was no significant relationship ($p=.061$) between gender and cluster membership.

Table 4-4: Cluster by gender

	Cluster 1		Cluster 2		Total
	n	%	n	%	%
Males	148	74.7	252	67.2	69.8
Females	50	25.3	123	32.8	30.2
Total	198	100.0	375	100.0	573

Chi square = 3.502, df = 1, $p= .061$

Cluster Membership and Product Experience

There was no significant difference ($p=.488$) between product experience and cluster membership as shown in table 4-5. Both clusters 1 and 2 had the most experience in packaged goods, service advertising, and other (i.e. promotions, graphic services, health-care, Hispanic etc). They also both shared the least experience in direct response and recruitment advertising.

Table 4-5: Cluster by product experience

Type product	Cluster 1		Cluster 2		Total
	n	%	n	%	%
Packaged goods	53	27.3	87	23.6	24.9
Direct response	22	11.3	38	10.3	10.7
Service advertising	51	26.3	111	30.3	28.8
Recruitment advertising	5	2.6	4	1.1	1.6
Other	63	32.5	128	34.8	34.0
Total	194	100.0	368	100.0	100.0

Chi square = 3.435, df = 4, p= .488

Cluster Membership and Years in the Industry

There was a significant difference between cluster 1 and cluster 2 in age, years in the industry, and years in the primary job. Table 4-6 shows age in cluster 2 had a much higher mean (48.12) than cluster 1 (35.02) (p=.000). Respondents to years in the industry in cluster 2 had a mean = 14.46, while cluster 1 had a mean = 11.53. Finally in years in the primary job, cluster 2 had a mean =12.72 and cluster 1 had a mean =10.05.

Table 4-6: Cluster by years in the industry

	Cluster 1		Cluster 2		Significance
	n	Mean	n	Mean	df =1
Age	171	35.02	314	48.12	F = 12.99, p = .000
Years in industry	188	11.53	367	14.46	F = 11.61, p = .001
Years in primary Job	177	10.05	328	12.72	F = 13.67, p = 000

Cluster Membership and Number of Employees

There was a significant difference (p=.015) in clusters by the number of employees in the company by which respondents were employed, as shown by table 4-7. Cluster 1 had an average of 2,137.99 employees compared to cluster 2 with 533.56. Cluster 1

comes from larger organizations while cluster 2 comes from medium and smaller organizations.

Table 4-7: Cluster by number of employees

Cluster	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	111	2137.99	9409.639
2	216	533.56	1693.658
Total	327	1078.18	5687.412

F=5.923, df = 1, p = .015

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

This study was an extension of the research conducted by Sutherland et al. (2004). It seeks to determine if there were groups of creatives with different informational needs. Two different clusters emerged from the study of the perceived usefulness of the marketing informational ratings.

The clusters' usefulness ratings for the information items were significantly different. Cluster 2 rated all items significantly more useful than cluster 1. A repeated measures analysis of variance comparing usefulness ratings of information items within cluster 1 revealed significant differences. Cluster 1 rated the target audience profile significantly more useful than any other item of information.

Marketing strategy information, customer product usage information, and the main selling point provided by the client and the client's product performance information did not have significantly different usefulness ratings. They were equal in usefulness but less than the target audience profile and more useful than the competitors' product performance information. The competitors' product performance information was significantly less useful than all the other information items.

Repeated measures of usefulness ratings by cluster 2 also revealed significant differences among the items. Similar to cluster 1, the target audience profile was the most useful item. Marketing strategy information, customer product usage information, and the client's product performance information were tied at second, less useful than the target

audience and more useful than the main selling point or the competitors' product performance information. The main selling point was rated the least useful behind the competitors' product performance information.

Demographically, the groups differed by primary duty, current title, years in the industry, informational usefulness, and agency size. Some art directors, copywriters, and creative directors had similar informational usefulness needs while others had different usefulness needs. The study established that perceived usefulness of information differs, but not necessarily by title or position but by characteristics.

Conclusions

This analysis was conducted to answer two research questions:

- **RQ 1:** Are there groups of creatives, with unique perceptions of the usefulness of marketing information?

The study found there were two groups, with distinctly different perceived usefulness of information. Composition of groups showed a mix of copywriters, art directors, and creative directors in each group. This contradicts the Sutherland et al. (2004) study that assumes the perceived informational usefulness differs by title.

- **RQ2:** What characteristics differentiate the groups?

There was a significant difference between cluster 1 and cluster 2 in age, years in the industry and years in the primary job. In age cluster 2 had a much higher mean (48.12) than cluster 1 (35.02) ($p=.000$). Respondents to years in the industry in cluster 2 had a mean = 14.46 while cluster 1 had a mean = 11.53. Finally in years in the primary job, cluster 2 had a mean =12.72 and cluster 1 had a mean =10.05. These results indicate that older creatives with the most experience have significantly greater informational needs than less experienced creatives.

The primary duty showed a significant difference ($p=.007$) between clusters. Cluster 1 shows a much greater number of copywriters (47.0) than cluster 2 (34.4), while cluster 2 shows a larger number of creative directors (42.7) than cluster 1 (31.0). This suggests that creative directors and art directors have greater informational needs than copywriters.

A significant relationship existed ($p=.000$) between cluster membership and current title. Cluster 1 had a much greater percentage of copywriters (36.5%) than cluster 2 (18.4%), while cluster 2 had a far greater percentage of creative directors (33.3%) than cluster 1 (20%). This again suggests that creative directors and art directors have the greatest informational needs.

There was a significant difference in clusters by the number of ad agency employees. Cluster 1 had an average of 2,137.99 employees compared to cluster 2 with 533.56. Cluster 1 comes from larger agencies while cluster 2 comes from medium to small agencies. Large agency creatives may not be better informed than smaller agency creatives. While large agencies may have bigger budgets, research departments, account planners, and access to more consumer testing, these resources are not being used to their fullest potential.

In summary, there was a significant difference between clusters 1 and 2 based on primary duty, current title, age, years in the industry, years in the primary job, the six informational usefulness ratings, and the number of employees.

This study is important for two main reasons. First and foremost, it suggests the existence of unique groups of creatives based on characteristics not title. Older creatives with more experience found the information more useful than younger, less experienced

creatives. In other words this study suggests that creative personnel's perceived usefulness of the information vary, but not by job title alone.

The study provides evidence that groups differ by primary duty, current title, age, years in the industry, years in the primary job, and the number of employees. It is not surprising that more experienced creatives, particularly creative directors, have the greatest informational needs because they are responsible for the creative output of the agency. Since they are more experienced, they also tend to be older. This analysis showed that the most successful and experienced creatives--those with the title of creative director and the group with the greatest informational needs--were in cluster 2, a group that probably has more contact with clients and thus a better understanding of research and the role it plays in creative solutions. Cluster 1, which consisted of younger, less experienced copywriters and art directors, can use this research to better understand the value of a sound strategy and the creative brief in the advancement of their careers.

It also establishes that agency size is a factor in the informational process. Creatives working at large agencies with 2,000 or more employees are less likely to value research than those working at agencies with 600 or less employees. This rebuts the argument large agencies often make in pitching new business, that their size gives them a distinct advantage in research, often hiring account planners and establishing research departments. Clients can no longer take for granted that the research they're paying for at large agencies is going to use. Creative directors at large agencies are not as hands on as creative directors at smaller agencies. They devote most of their time to the largest most profitable accounts leaving less time to supervise younger creatives working on smaller, less important accounts. This gives younger creatives more freedom in creating ads. In

contrast at smaller agencies the creative directors are more involved and often participate in creating the ads.

This study will provide new insights into informational needs and their usefulness to creatives. Perhaps now agency and client personnel will have a new perspective on how research is being used and by whom.

Practical Implications

Strategy is the key to every successful campaign. Without it, the campaign is less likely to succeed. What to say is one of the most important decisions in creating an advertising campaign, but the how to say it, or the advertising execution, also has a major impact (Schultz & Barnes, 1994).

Professionals should use the results from this study to assure that the what to say is understood and agreed to by the creative team before they start the creative process or the how to say it execution. Informational needs of all creatives not only have to be met but that information must be used. Agency personnel can learn from this research that job title does not necessarily indicate the value creatives put on the information they receive.

Surprisingly, the study also suggests that large agencies, which usually have the greatest informational resources (e.g., research departments, larger clients with bigger budgets, account planners, and so forth), are not communicating with the creatives on the usefulness of their information. Large agencies often use their size and resources as selling points when seeking new business. However, the study suggests that medium to small agency creatives are better informed and that these agencies are handling the information flow better than larger agencies.

Younger creatives need to understand the importance of the development of a sound strategy and how that strategy can help in seeking that “big idea.” Younger

creatives often feel the constraints of a creative strategy that they believe may inhibit them from coming up with the most creative solution. Their interest is in establishing a creative reputation within the industry as quickly as possible, and they may believe research and testing can hinder that goal.

Limitations

Some of the limitations of this study include a mailing list limited to subscribers of one publication. Ideally, a broader base would have made the results more generalizable.

While this study addressed the characteristics of agency creative personnel, it was unable to determine the success of the creative executions produced by those surveyed. Were creatives with the most informational needs producing the most effective ad campaigns? We also do not know the types of clients these creatives handled. Some clients will have different informational needs than other clients.

Future Research

There are several possibilities for future research in determining creatives' informational needs. This study is based solely on quantitative research. A future study applying qualitative methods could reveal much about why informational needs vary and why the value of the information changes. A qualitative study would give us a more in-depth understanding of what really goes on in the minds of creatives.

Another study could be conducted to determine if an agency's client base plays a role in informational needs. Are there certain groups of clients who share or withhold information on a regular basis from agencies? How greatly do informational needs vary by client?

Additionally, the present study identified only the agency creative's informational needs and demographics. Future study could determine if there are unique groups in

account services, such as account supervisors, account planners, and account executives.

On the client side, are there differences among marketing heads, brand managers, or assistant brand managers?

Finally, a study to determine if award-winning advertising is produced by creatives with the greatest informational needs or creatives working with less information and fewer constraints in coming up with the big idea. What effect do creative briefs have on how creatives conceive their ideas? Do they aid in coming up with the most creative executions?

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

After deciding to pursue a career in advertising, Phil Willet attended the Ringling School of Art and received a certificate in graphic design in 1979. He then moved to New York, working for 15 years at major ad agencies creating print and broadcast advertisements for national and regional accounts. He was employed first as an art director, and then as a creative director.

After deciding he would like to teach, Phil returned to college to complete his Bachelor of Science degree at the University of Florida, (UF) in Gainesville receiving his degree in 2002. He received his Master of Advertising degree from UF in May 2005.