THE ROLE OF INSIGHT IN ADVANCING THE CREATIVITY OF AN ADVERTISING MESSAGE PROPOSITION

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Thesis Abstract

To solve advertising problems, account planners frequently call upon insight to direct the development of advertising execution. However, how account planners identify and deploy insight to develop a compelling advertising message proposition and the empirical contribution of insight to the creativity of advertising executions is not well understood. To address these concerns, this thesis uses qualitative research to explore account planners' views on the value of insight and then tests the contribution of insight with an experiment involving working creatives. To this end, this thesis consists of 3 papers.

Paper 1 explores how account planners identify, evaluate and apply insight in developing a compelling advertising message proposition and the contribution of insight to the creative process. Using grounded theory, the study investigates the insight phenomenon through in-depth interviews with 20 Sydney-based account planners. The findings reveal that insight is a creative process designed to inform an appropriate and original message proposition, from which creative execution can leap. In searching for insight, account planners rely upon various techniques: *research, personal domain knowledge, challenging conventions, borrowed sources* and *central narrative extension*. However, as not all insight is equal in its contribution to an advertising message proposition, account planners evaluate the strength of insight based on its *originality* and three types of appropriateness: the *relatability* of an insight among consumers, the *usability* of the insight by creatives, and the *vision* insight opens for the brand.

Paper 2 investigates how insight interacts with strategy and originality to predict the perceived creativity of advertising execution. This study explores the effect of insight on originality and appropriateness (strategy) based on a 3 x 2 between-subject experiment with 60 Sydney advertising agency creatives, who developed a print and television advertisement against a fictitious brief, manipulating insight under three conditions: strong insight, weak insight and no insight. Independent judges assessed the work produced for how strategic, original and creative it is. The results show that insight interacts with the originality of advertising execution to predict creativity. However, strategy does not interact with insight. That is, when the originality of creative execution is weak, insight can substitute for originality; however, insight cannot substitute for strategy.

Paper 3 goes deeper than Paper 2 in that a more sophisticated and comprehensive modelling framework is used. I draw from the Componential Model of Creativity by integrating insight into the context of intrinsic motivation and domain knowledge. Also from a theoretical perspective, I consider how insight may induce mental-set fixation, but sometimes compensate for low intrinsic motivation. In light of these effects, I also compare actor-observer differences in that both self-assessment and judge assessments are used. Thus, the influence of insight on strategy, originality and creativity is explored, especially where the measure for creativity conforms to the "standard definition" of creativity, e.g., being both original and strategic at the same time.

A 3 x 2 between-subject experiment was performed on 60 Sydney agency creatives, manipulating insight quality under three conditions: strong, weak and no insight. Participants developed a print and television commercial that was judged by

professional creatives and completed a self-evaluation questionnaire for measures of creativity, domain knowledge and intrinsic motivation. The findings identified that insight can improve originality in print execution, however, in television, insight displayed classic signs of inducing mental set fixation. The study also suggests that insight improves the self-assessment of creatives' intrinsic motivation, yet in judge-assessments, insight interacted with intrinsic motivation such that when motivation was low, insight improved creativity. Domain knowledge had the most consistently positive effects on strategy, originality and creativity of advertising, as it improved the advertising execution in all cases except self-assessments of originality.

Paper 4 explores a possible mechanism for insight's influence: shifts in the balance of functional and emotional appeals. The way insight works on creatives is that it provides them creative licence to focus on emotional advertising. Effectively, insight guides creatives to develop "inherent drama" or brand narrative based on the deep consumer motivation identified in insight. This emotional focus, however, does crowd out functionally oriented themes, presenting a trade-off between functional and emotional appeals. Strong insight provides a more efficient trade-off in that one does not have to sacrifice as much functionality to gain in emotionality.

The findings in this thesis make a significant contribution to closing the gap between the academic and practitioner divide in our understanding of insight. The qualitative study provides a definition for insight based on practitioner accounts, extends the current literature that suggests insight is based solely on consumer research and identifies the attributes of quality insight. The experimental-based studies provide the first empirical study of insight into the creative development process. These findings have important implications for practitioners who adopt insight in constructing a

compelling message proposition, and provide important constructs through which insight can be further investigated.

Statement of Original Authorship

To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution and contains no material previously published or written by another person except for the following acknowledgement. In Paper 1 of this thesis, the ‘attributes of quality insight’ identified as one of the findings in this paper were initially explored by the author in a pilot study as part of a Higher Degree Research award for the degree of Masters of Research.

The following are acknowledgements to the written contribution to the final papers contained in this thesis:

Paper 1: The Creative Search for an Insight in Account Planning: An Absorptive Capacity Approach.

John Parker - 90%

Lawrence Ang - 5%

Scott Koslow - 5%

Paper 2: Does Insight Constrain or Liberate Creativity?

John Parker - 85%

Scott Koslow - 10%

Lawrence Ang - 5%

Paper 3: The Role of Consumer Insight in Creative Advertising Development: Essential Aid or Cognitive Bias.

John Parker -	85%
Scott Koslow -	10%
Lawrence Ang -	5%

Paper 4: How Consumer Insight Supports the “Leap” to Creative Ideas: It’s Not a Literal Application, but a Shift from Functional to Emotional Appeals.

John Parker -	85%
Scott Koslow -	10%
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Creativity is central to the advertising development process. Given this importance, research on how to produce more creative campaigns has focused on three generalised areas. First, a number of researchers have examined how to support the production of highly creative advertising (Vakratas and Ambler 1999). Second, researchers have explored how to enhance the creative thinking process through the adoption of various creative ideation techniques (Clapham 1997; Goldenberg, Mazursky, and Solomon 1999; Kilgour and Koslow, 2009; Osborn 1953). Third, others have studied how the environment affects creative outcomes (Amabile 1996; Koslow, Sasser and Riordan 2006; Sagiv, Areli, Goldenberg, and Goldschmidt 2010; West and Ford 2001). A major theme of these research streams is that improving the quality of thinking tools and the environments creatives draw upon can improve creativity.

However, few research efforts have approached the creative process, starting with strategy development. For example, some scholars focus on whether or not the finished work is "on-strategy" (e.g., Koslow, Sasser and Riordan 2006), but do not explore how that strategy got there in the first place, nor how that strategy contributes to the creative idea. As Tevi and Koslow (2018) note, creativity is bigger than the creative department, and substantial thinking is needed before any successful ideation takes place. In order to arrive at more creative advertising campaigns, marketers and advertising practitioners need to understand the contribution of advertising message strategy to creative execution outcomes. In the absence of a strong strategy, clients are likely to receive weak creative executions. Good strategy, then, should optimise the creative skills of advertising creatives to produce creative advertising.

This research examines how the advertising message strategy development process can better inform the creative development process. In advertising agencies, account planners are largely responsible for the development of advertising message strategy (Hackley 2003a; Morrison and Haley 2003). Account planning emerged in the United Kingdom in the 1960s (Morrison and Haley 2003) as an advertising discipline focused on elevating the strategic thinking that guides creative execution (Barry, Peterson, and Todd 1987; Hackley 2003a; Steel 1988). Although some credit must go to Stephen King of J. Walter Thompson for founding the account planning discipline, others credit Stanley Pollitt from Boase Massimi Pollitt. The account planning discipline emerged because traditional marketing research was not pragmatic enough—and often too late—to assist in the creative development process (Pollitt 1979). In today's modern advertising agency the planner's primary function is to develop the creative brief with the view of directing advertising to an appropriate and original creative domain (Haley, Taylor and Morrison 2014). A critical contribution of the account planner in the strategy development process is the identification of insight, which is then used to construct a persuasive message proposition.

To better understand the phenomenon of insight and its contribution to creative advertising, the first study (Paper 1) in this thesis investigates the phenomenon of insight in advertising message strategy development through the lens of the account planner. The second study (Papers 2, 3, and 4) examines the role of insight in directing creatives to more creative solutions to advertising problems. Papers 2 and 3 are focused on predicting creativity, whereas Paper 4 investigates the role of insight in orientating the emotionality and functionality of advertising.

1.1 Research Context and Gap

To advertising practitioners, ideas like account planning, message strategy, and consumer insight are everyday concepts, now far removed from the controversies that raged over them through much of the last third of the 20th century. Today, there is a large community of practice that adopts insight in constructing the advertising creative brief (See Fallon and Senn 2006; Steel 1998). In acting as the ‘consumer’s voice’ within the agency, the account planner adds value to traditional market research by searching for insights that can direct the development of advertising execution (Barry, Peterson, and Todd 1987; Hackley 2003a, b). Practitioners identify insights as truths about human behaviour that can be used to inspire creative advertising execution (Fallon and Senn 2006; Gordon 2002; Steel 1998). These insights provide context to the cognition, affect and behaviour displayed by consumers towards the brand and the category (Gordon 2002). By delving deep into the human psyche, the account planner can reveal consumption motivations either hidden from consumer consciousness, that they are unwilling to openly share or that may explain the differences in how they say they behave versus how they actually do (Steel 1988).

Ultimately, account planners give the creative team the essential consumer insight necessary for them to develop a ‘central creative platform’ of the advertising campaign (Hackley 2003a, p. 449). Account planners deploy insight as a significant message strategy component in order to bring the brand closer to the consumer (Hackley 2003a; Meyers 1986); to strengthen brand differentiation (Steel 1998) and to bestow a strategic platform from which creatives can leap (Hackley 2003a; Steel 1998).

Although planning concepts are widely used, little progress has been made in formalising the ideas theoretically. Surprisingly, no major planning practitioners including Fortini-Campbell (2001), Steel (1998) or Pollitt (1979), clearly define what insight is in the advertising context. Despite some normative guidelines (Baskin 2008), there is a lack of agreement on what exactly account planners are supposed to do with insight (Hackley 2003a). As a result, much of the scholarly research on account planning tends to explore the role of account planning (Barry, Peterson, and Todd 1987; Morrison and Haley 2006) or the organisational climate of planning within the agency (Hackley 2000; Nyilasy, Canniford, and Kreshel 2013; Nyilasy, Kreshel, and Reid 2012). That is, scholars skirt the main issue of directly exploring insight's role in account planning. Specifically, how is insight used to inform the advertising message proposition?

Similarly, while research on insight has been conducted within the discipline of psychology, it has been researched using testable problems for which there is a single definitive solution—a context very different form the open-ended situations seen in advertising practice. In advertising, various insights may open new creatively congruent pathways to solve an advertising problem. Schilling (2005) provides a detailed account in her network model of cognitive insight as to the mechanisms of insightful problem solving, yet these need to be further explained in the advertising context. These mechanisms indicate that insight may be realised beyond the current reported convention of consumer research. Further, as not all insights are equal in solving the advertising problem, a key question remains for marketing and advertising practitioners: what are the attributes of quality insight?

Identifying a strong strategic platform is only part of the creative solution, as creatives need to be able to use that strategy to develop strong creative advertising. If insight plays a dominant role in informing the advertising message proposition, then understanding its influence on the ideation process of creatives is vital knowledge. However, no empirical research has yet been conducted to identify the influence of insight on creativity.

Any study of the account planning context also needs to be explored in a theoretical context, which unfortunately is not as well specified as most scholars would like. In order to measure creativity in advertising as a construct we need to be able to define it. Some researchers define creativity as a measure of the *person* (Galton 1962). This perspective views creativity as a collection of the personality and intellectual traits of the individual (Batey 2012) An alternative perspective is to view creativity as a *process* whereby creativity emerges from the individual or group, based on experiences, materials and events (Rogers 1954). A more popular view among academics, and the approach adopted in this thesis, is to define creativity in terms of the *product* as the output of creative thinking (Stein 1974).

In order for the advertising product to be creative it must be both *original* and *appropriate* (See Kilgour and Koslow 2009; O'Connor, Koslow, and Sasser 2016; Runco and Jaeger 2012; Sasser and Koslow 2008). To be original the idea must offer something 'new' or 'novel' and to be appropriate it is required to be 'on strategy' (Koslow, Sasser, and Riordon 2003; Sasser and Koslow 2008). That is, the advertising should deliver against the objectives, motivate the target audience and be differentiated from other advertising in the product or service category.

According to Amabile's (1996) componential model of creativity, three main components predict individual creativity: 1) creativity skills, 2) intrinsic task motivation and 3) domain knowledge. Central to any creative process are the widely researched areas of divergent and convergent thinking (Guilford 1968). Divergent thinking centres on identifying multiple alternative ideas to a problem or opportunity. This often involves connecting unrelated ideas across multiple domains of knowledge to identify unexpected discoveries (Amabile 1988). However, divergent thinking in isolation is unable to fulfil the requirement of identifying a single appropriate strategic direction. Subsequently, convergent thinking is deployed to arrive at a strategically congruent solution (Kozbelt 2006). This may involve iterative processes of divergent thinking to overcome hurdles that may prohibit a specific direction in problem solving (Mumford, Hunter, Eubanks, Bedell, and Murphy 2007). Therefore, the general view is that divergent and convergent thinking must both be deployed collectively to arrive at an appropriate and original idea.

An individual's domain knowledge has also been shown to be an ascendant of creative thinking (Amabile 1996; Csikzentmihalyi 1996). Everyone has different domain knowledge based on his or her experiences. Domain knowledge refers to the degree of expertise of the individual in the specific knowledge domain (Schilling 2005). Creatives access these knowledge domains to assist in problem solving. Some researchers have found that broad and narrow knowledge improves creative problem solving because it facilitates random connections across knowledge domains associated with more original thinking (Dosi 1988; Schilling 2005). While this random approach may limit the number of successful creative outcomes, the possibility of breakthrough ideas is more likely (Fleming 2001; Schilling 2011). Other researchers highlight the importance of narrow and deep expertise in domain knowledge. From this perspective, a rich understanding of the domain provides the specialisation required for breakthrough thinking (Gardner 1993; Hayes 1989). However, some researchers suggest that this is more likely to deliver incremental, rather than original or disruptive solutions (Schilling 2005).

In a further complication with domain knowledge, it may induce mental set fixation. Research has shown that primed examples can impair divergent thinking (Jansson and Smith 1991; Marsh, Landau, and Hicks 1996). In the advertising context insight represents a knowledge domain that directs creative thinking. This knowledge domain may act as a priming cue that impairs the divergent thinking of creatives in their creative ideation process.

As the creative process is often difficult, intrinsic motivation is an important factor in moderating the degree of cognitive effort towards the advertising task. Intrinsic motivation relates to the individual's motivation towards the task that flows from personal reward. This has important implications over the direction, effort and level of persistence displayed by creatives in finding a breakthrough creative solution. When creatives find an advertising task enjoyable and consistent with their own internal system of reward, motivation towards the advertising task should be stronger (Patall, Cooper, and Robinson 2008), more cognitive effort should be provided and the creatives' effort should be more persistent (Deci 1972).

Overall, it is probably an understatement to maintain that there is a research gap. More to the point, there is a large theoretical terra incognita of how insight is found, message strategy is formed and how they come together to lead to creative advertising. Thus, this research stands as one of the first studies that attempts to define account planning concepts, set them in a theoretical context and test them experimentally.

1.2 Conceptual Model

Given the broad nature of this thesis' topic, some discussion is needed regarding the domain and links that will be investigated. This is diagrammed in Figure 1, which presents a simplified conceptual model with only the main effects shown. The topics of Papers 1, 2, 3 and 4 are shown as areas within the diagram. Although there are a number of interactions among these core concepts, these are not diagrammed to reduce the complexity of the figure.

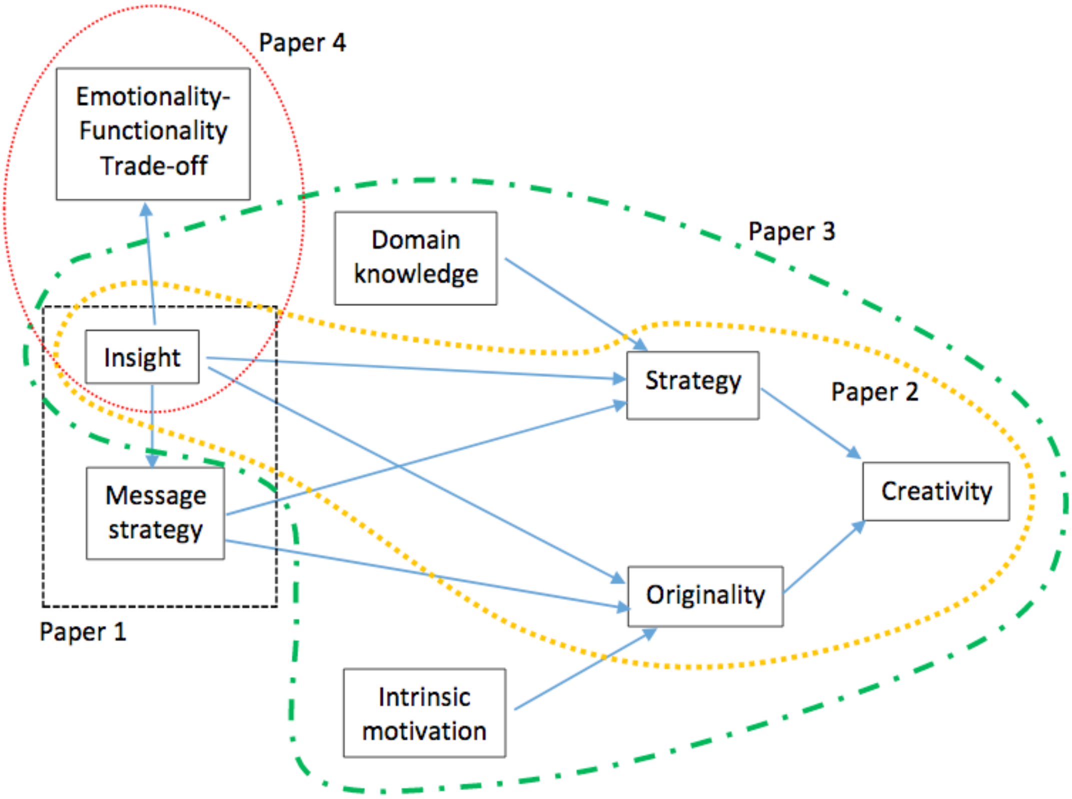
Paper 4
Emotionality-Functionality Trade-off
Domain knowledge
Paper 3
Insight
Strategy
Paper 2
Message strategy
Creativity
Originality
Paper 1
Intrinsic motivation

Figure 1. Conceptual model keys to the topics of Papers 1, 2,3 and 4.

As the main focus of the thesis, consumer insight is central. Paper 1 addresses the relationship between insight and message strategy and draws from in-depth interviews with working account planners. Paper 2 switches gears and uses experiments to understand the influence of insight on the calibre of the work creatives produce. Paper 3 goes deeper than Paper 2, drawing in concepts from the componential model of creativity: domain knowledge and intrinsic motivation. Paper 4 focuses on other effects of insight, and in this case the trade-off between emotional and functional appeals in the advertising produced.

1.3 Contribution

While practitioners advocate the benefits of insight in the creative development process, the insight phenomenon has not been widely investigated. The majority of research into insightful problem solving has been conducted within the psychology discipline (See Schilling 2005; Schilling and Green 2011). The relevance to the advertising context has been limited, largely because these studies have focused on experiments where there is a single correct solution pathway. However, in advertising different insights may provide a creatively congruent solution to an advertising problem. This thesis explores the use of insight by account planners in developing a creative message proposition and the influence of insight on creative ideation processes.

The studies provide a significant contribution to the extant literature. First, in a *qualitative* study among account planners a clear definition for insight is established. Second, the study clarifies how the account planner deploys insights in constructing a creative message proposition. Third, the mechanisms used by account planners in illuminating insight are uncovered. Finally, as not all insights are equal, the study identifies the attributes account planners consider fundamental to quality insight.

In a *quantitative* study among creatives, the thesis builds knowledge on how insight influences creativity. First, the contribution of insight to creativity, originality and strategy is identified across print and television media. Second, the influence of insight is investigated across two important criteria for individual creativity—domain knowledge and intrinsic motivation. Third, this study demonstrates that while insight is intended to liberate creatives in an original knowledge domain, it can induce functional fixedness, which impairs divergent thinking. Finally, the research provides experimental research that confirms that insight has its influence in making creative executions more emotive,

1.4 Summary and Conclusion

To summarise, this chapter has introduced insight in the advertising context as the focus to this thesis. It identifies the aims of thesis, the theoretical background, conceptual model, key research questions and the significance of the contribution.

Chapter 2 (Paper 1), ‘The creative search for an insight in account planning: An Absorptive Capacity Approach’ is a study of insight through the lens of the account planner aimed at improving our understanding of how insight is identified and used to inform the advertising message proposition. It is not clear in the current academic or practitioner literature precisely how account planners use insight to inform the message proposition. Beyond consumer research, the research is silent on how account planners may identify insight, and as not all insights are equal in their contribution to the creative process it is important to understand the attributes of quality insight. In a qualitative study with 20 Sydney-based account planners from multinational advertising agencies, the research explores the ideation process of the account planner in identifying insight. Specifically, the paper explores the mechanisms adopted by account planners in searching for insight; how account planners use insight to inform the advertising message proposition and the attributes account planners assign to quality insight.

Chapter 3 (Paper 2), ‘Does insight constrain or liberate creativity?’, is a study that investigates the impact of insight on the originality and appropriateness of creative execution. The same themes are continued in Chapter 4 (Paper 3), ‘The role of insight in creative advertising development: Essential aid or cognitive bias’, investigates if insight, by focusing creatives on a primed knowledge domain, can induce mental set fixation. The study also explores the influence of insight on creatives' intrinsic motivation towards the advertising task.

Chapter 5 (Paper 4), 'How consumer insight supports the leap to creative ideas: It's not a literal application, but a shift from functional to emotional appeals', investigates insight by focusing the creative execution around a human truth makes creative executions more emotional. It ties in both Reeves' Unique Selling Proposition (USP) and Leo Burnett's "inherent drama" approaches, setting them in context for functional and emotional approaches, respectively, to advertising. Insight can be viewed as an approach to emotional advertising using specific consumer motivations to target the inherent drama or emotional appeal to what may be the most effective persuasion approach.

Chapter 6 (Conclusion) provides a summary of the findings, the contribution, the theoretical and practical implications, limitations and a discussion on the areas of future research.

To conclude, insight plays a unique role linking together both message strategy and creative ideation. Without insight, advertising strategy seems to be merely a collection of highly ambitious goals and well-meaning intentions—which never gets down to the mechanisms of persuasion needed for strong creative work. But with insight, creatives have the tools they need to deliver truly outstanding work.

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Chapter 2: The Creative Search for an Insight in Account Planning: An Absorptive Capacity Approach

Abstract

In advertising agencies, insight is frequently sought to solve advertising problems. However, the ideation process of the account planner is not well understood. Viewing account planning through a lens of absorptive capacity suggests planning is about identifying and assimilating external information about consumers for use in the creative process. Account planners thus need to search deliberately for insight and work hard to express it to the creatives, who then exploit it to develop powerful creative ideas. The study adopts an in-depth grounded theory investigation of the insight phenomena among 20 Sydney-based account planners. The findings reveal that identifying and applying insight is a highly creative process. The account planner uses *research*, *personal knowledge domains*, *challenging conventions*, *borrowed sources,* and *central narrative extension* to search for insights. However, since not all insights are equal, this study also uncovered what account planners consider quality insight. These include attributes of *originality*, *relatability*, *usability,* and *vision*. These findings provide guidelines for marketers and account planners who seek insight in framing an advertising message.

An advertising agency is like an “ideas factory.” Information about consumers and brands enter through one door of the agency, while finished advertisements exit through another—thus transforming raw external information into creative outcomes. Some academics like Sutherland, Duke, and Abernethy (2004) document how critical information often fails to reach the creative team, but the wider, transformation process remains understudied. To examine how agencies transform external knowledge about consumers and brands into unique and useful advertising, Verbeke et al. (2008) suggest the concept of *absorptive capacity of the firm* from Cohen and Levinthal (1990). This concept explores the firm’s ability to identify, assimilate and exploit knowledge from the environment. Many advertising agencies show they can absorb critical information and apply it to produce strong, award-winning creative work year after year (Verbeke et al. 2008).

However, the mechanism for how agencies do this external-information-to-useable-knowledge transformation still needs to be identified. We propose that a critical element of absorptive capacity in advertising agencies is the function of *account planning*, which takes external information about consumers and transforms it into highly usable knowledge, commonly known as *insight*. In this regard, the account planner adds value to traditional market research by being the “voice of the consumer” in the account team to ensure that consumer insight is integrated throughout the creative development process (Barry, Peterson and Todd 1987; Hackley 2003a; 2003b). One early study found that advertising agencies with an account planning department tend to have more accounts, higher billings and win more creative awards (Maxwell et al. 2000).

Yet how do account planners go about developing and integrating insight into the creative development process? Hackley (2003a) suggests that account planners play an abstract “midwifery” role to creativity by giving the creative team the critical consumer insight necessary for them to develop an equally abstract “central creative platform” of the advertising campaign (p. 449). While valuable descriptions of account planning are often detailed and examples of insight are frequently provided, prominent contributors to understanding the account planning function like Fortini-Campbell (2001), Steel (1998) or even Pollitt (1979) still fail to *define* what insight is clearly. In fact, much of the scholarly research on account planning tends to explore the broader functions of account planning (Barry, Peterson and Todd 1987; Morrison and Haley 2006), or the socio-political climate within which account planning exists (Hackley 2000; Nyilasy, Kreshel and Reid 2012; Nyilasy, Canniford and Kreshel 2013) rather than how account planning activities help agencies absorb critical external information.

To focus on mechanisms of knowledge absorption, we draw from Lane, Koka, and Pathak (2006) who identify three sequential steps. First, an organization must recognize and understand new external knowledge (e.g., exploratory learning). Second, it also needs to assimilate valuable external knowledge (e.g., transformative learning) in order to make it understandable to those who use the information. Lastly, the firm must apply the assimilated external knowledge to harvest its full value (e.g., exploitive learning). We argue that account planners perform the first two steps, to set up advertising creatives to perform the third.

The initial exploratory learning step goes well beyond merely identifying consumer-based research. It is an intensive creative problem-solving process in itself as account planners *actively* search for such an insight. We identify five methods account planners use to uncover insight that includes: (1) traditional consumer research, (2) personal knowledge domains, (3) challenging conventions, (4) borrowed sources, and (5) central narrative extension.

The second step of transformative learning requires expressing the insight in a way that enables it to be incorporated into the creative development process. In the advertising context, insight takes on a special form, which involves the identification of a human truth (Haley, Taylor and Morrison 2014; Gordon 2002; Steel 1998). This study identifies that what is referred to as a “human truth” is actually (1) a socio-cultural expression of human motivation or need which (2) contains an inherent tension that can be resolved by the brand attribute or benefit, in a way that is (3) original, because it has not previously been applied in the category. For example, a human truth that teenage boys are sexually aspirant but socially insecure holds a tension that can be resolved by a product benefit that facilitates social confidence. Linking this “so-called human truth” to the benefit may ultimately develop into a message proposition that can be creatively expressed as; brand X is ‘your best first move.’ Thus, the words *insight* and *human truth* take on a different epistemology from that which is normally applied in the sciences.

The mining of insight extends beyond just consumer research. The planner searches for insight within personal knowledge domains, by challenging conventions, using borrowed sources and by looking for insight around the brands central narrative. When quality insight is revealed it is characterized by several important attributes: it is original, relatable to consumers, usable by creatives, and visionary for the brand.

This paper starts with an integrative review of account planning scholarship as a mechanism for absorptive capacity in advertising agencies. It also sets out how this relates to what we know about advertising creative thinking processes. Next, the paper presents an in-depth grounded theory investigation of the insight phenomena among 20 Sydney based account planners. Finally, these results are discussed and applied to both practice and theory in advertising.

2.1 Theory Development

Well before Cohen and Levinthal (1990) penned the phrase *absorptive capacity*, advertising agencies were concerned about how to take relevant external information about consumers and integrate it into the creative process. To address that challenge two London admen, Stephen King of J. Walter Thompson (JWT) and Stanley Pollitt of Boase Massimi Pollitt (BMP), founded fifty years ago what we know today as account planning (Baskin and Pickton 2003).

Pollitt's (1979) motivation for creating the account planning discipline was driven by his concern that agencies were not using research fruitfully. The findings generated tended to be too sterile and lacked pragmatic value in solving the advertising problem. Pollitt perceived that advertising research tended to be used by account managers to suit their own purpose, rather than to genuinely understand consumers. His solution was to redefine how research should be conducted, making consumer feedback central to getting the advertising content correct. To achieve this, he created the role of the account planner whose task is to ensure that "all data relevant to key advertising decisions should be properly analyzed, complemented with new research, and brought to bear on judgments of creative strategy and how the campaign should be appraised" (p. 22).

Since account planning's introduction, the function has been widely copied. Barry et al. (1987) argued that the planner should be actively involved throughout the creative development process so that insight can be integrated into the advertising. In this way, the account planner "value adds" to traditional market research by being the "voice of the consumer." Hackley (2003a) found that there is often confusion among practitioners on what constitutes useful research for creative development. This is because they often mistake consumer research with quantitative analyses, which generally tend to yield little actionable insight for creative development.

With the exception of Hackley (2003a) and a few other contributors (e.g., Zaltman 2014; Haley, Taylor, and Morrison 2014), academics rarely use the term *insight* when discussing planning-related issues. Instead, scholars use an abstracted notion that consumer research translates into creativity seamlessly or automatically, thus invoking the “ideas factory” analogy. For example, Koslow, Sasser, and Riordan (2006) are typical, showing that the use of consumer research leads to more creative advertising. The challenge of integrating consumer information into the creative process is only hinted at in the form of an interaction between the consumer research’s use and the client’s openness—with no mention of planners’ efforts.

Research in account planning centers around two broad themes. One is about what an account planner does (or should do) in an advertising agency. For instance, in their survey of US and British agencies, Barry et al. (1987) found that British planners are overwhelmingly more involved in communicating with the creative teams and developing the creative brief than their US counterparts. In a later survey of US account planners, Morrison and Haley (2006) found that account planners are more involved in creative strategy articulation and creative strategy development research than in tactical evaluation. Feedback from the creative team is also their most preferred form of evaluation (Morrison and Haley 2003). Patwardhand et al. (2009; 2011) found that although account planning has been widely adopted in Indian advertising agencies, driven mostly by agency’s size and global affiliation, there is limited assimilation into agencies’ routine practice.

The second theme focuses on control and the socio-political conflict between different constituencies in advertising agencies. For instance, Kover and Goldberg

(1995) found that copywriters use discursive strategies (e.g., sneak attack) to try to retain control over their creative work, while Hackley (2000) noted that differences in ideology and goal orientation between creatives and account managers are a constant source of conflict. In interviewing Scottish account planners, Crosier et al. (2003) found that while there is conflict between account planners and creatives, this conflict is resolved through collaboration. The surprising finding is that conflict also occurs between account planners and media planners. They speculated that media planners, who currently tend to originate from outside the agency, have a numerical mindset different to that of account planners, who are more intuitive.

More recently, in interviewing creatives, Haley et al. (2014) found that trust, respect and knowing professional boundaries are vital ingredients in a successful partnership between account planners and creatives. In the broader context, practitioners tend to pay little attention to academic research on how advertising works, but instead rely on their own implicit models or creative code (Nyilasy and Reid 2009; Stuhlfaut 2011). This echoes the earlier findings of Kover and Goldberg (1995) and Kover et al. (1997). Nyilasy et al. (2012) later found that advertising personnel (i.e., account planners, account managers and creatives) tend to engage in pseudo-professional tactics (e.g., rhetoric, relationship management, and knowledge creation) to reduce the anxiety of their clients.

2.1.1 Insight as the Foundation for Creative Ideation in Account Planning

Although insight is scarcely studied in the academic advertising literature there is a “community of practice” among account planners who highlight insight’s importance in advertising development (Baskin 2008; Fallon and Senn 2006; Gordon 2002; Hall 2002; Mitchell 2002; Steel 1998). The term *insight* was popularized by

Fortini-Campbell (2001). Her book, entitled *Hitting the Sweet Spot—How Consumer Insights Can Inspire Better Marketing and Advertising*, is considered to be a consumer insight classic among practitioners. She advocated that account planners should be “insight miners” since this is “one of the most important skills a planner can possess” (Baskin, 2008, p. 49).

Creatives also value highly the insights account planners can give, often describing these as the “Aha!” or “whoa!” factors in the creative brief (Haley et al. 2014, p. 177). Perhaps unlike academics, practitioners are more keenly aware of the need for an insight that will help develop a differentiating brand message. This difference in mindset, or “logics,” is an example of the tension in the academic-practitioner divides often debated in the management literature (e.g., Bartunek and Rynes 2014, p. 1184).

However, the work of Hackley (2003a, 2003b) tries to bridge this divide by highlighting the importance of doing the right kind of research for creative development. He observed that advertising personnel often do not know how to use research, equating consumer research with quantitative studies, which tend not to yield anything useful for creative development. Hackley (2000) argued that the power of account planners comes from taking the lead in researching and writing the creative brief. He also suggested that if account planners can become known as “consumer insight professionals” they are likely to become politically unassailable (Hackley 2003b, p. 450).

Despite insight’s importance, less is known about how account planners go about searching and then recognizing a quality insight. To add further confusion, neither has insight been clearly defined. Instead, practitioners suggest that insights reside in hidden “truths” (Fallon and Senn 2006; Hall 2002; Steel 1998), a concept similar to

Gordon's (2002) idea of "deep insight." Overall, the community of account planners believe that a good planner can provide creatives with "basic truths" to assist them in their creative work (Haley et al., 2014, p. 175).

To set this practitioner-oriented work in context, consider again the three-step absorption process of exploratory, transformative and exploitive learning suggested by Lane, Koka, and Pathak (2006). The first step, identifying usable information, is almost universally acknowledged by practitioners and scholars alike. As Baskin and Pickton (2003) note, not only do planners often perform research activities, they also analyze, interpret and distill that information succinctly. However, account planners do more than just identify and understand key pieces of information; they also take on transformative aspects to make the information meaningful to creatives.

Few scholars directly deal with how account planners assimilate knowledge for creatives' use. One exception, Baskin and Pickton (2003), notes how planners come into their own as a "knowledge applicator" (Baskin and Pickton, p. 422). That is, to be able to reformulate the information laterally, in order to articulate insight well. The transformative learning aspect of planning is also emphasized by Hackley (2003a). Not only does the planner provide insights, they are also charged with ensuring they are acted upon in the creative development process.

2.1.2 The Idea Generation Process and Insight

Lubart (2001) notes that most early models of creative thinking are individual-oriented and start with information acquisition. Later models like Osborn (1953) tend to separate out information-oriented steps as a sub-process. Planning can be viewed as the initial steps of a creative thinking process. However, in the advertising agency environment, the creative development process needs to be considered within a team context, where different specialists do insight formation and idea generation.

Recent scholarship into the creative process in advertising takes an implicit or explicit team-oriented approach where creative idea generation is the focus. The identification of insight that *precedes* the generation of these creative ideas is rarely emphasized—but is still present. For instance, Lynch and West (2017) focus on knowledge utilization as feeding into the idea generation process rather than knowledge's identification or assimilation being part of the process. The assumption is that insight is already found. Kover (1995) in his seminal work discovered that creatives use their own implicit model (in a form of internal dialogue) to determine which *creative idea* generated is effective. This is not the same as finding the insight that will assist in the realization of the creative idea. But the insight is still something creatives are given which "fleshes out" (p. 600) a useful understanding of the target audience.

Although current advertising creativity models also routinely focus on the idea generation process deployed by creatives, it is possibly better described as an exploitive learning step in the absorptive capacity process. For example, Goldenberg, Mazursky and Solomon's (1999) creative templates provide a framework for creatives to exploit different techniques to translate the advertising message proposition into a big idea. For example, to dramatize the message proposition that a washing detergent brand makes whites whiter a creative may consider deploying, among others, the extreme consequences template to show the implications of not using the brand.

2.1.3 Understanding the Characteristics of Insight

If insight plays such an important role in shaping advertising then understanding the insight phenomenon is critical. The problem, however, is that definitions of insight in an advertising context are difficult to find in either the academic and practitioner literature. One of the few definitions of insight is offered by Zaltman (2014, p. 373): "insight is a realization—an idea—that feels correct; it is a thought experienced as true at the moment it reaches awareness." He differentiates an insight from what he calls "facts" (p. 373) such that insight mixes with other tacit knowledge to give the meaning that is not explicitly spelled out in data. That is, "facts" alone are insufficient to develop advertising from; rather, it is the thoughts and feelings that reside in the mind that imbue meaning to "facts" that are important (Zaltman 2014). Closely aligned with the notion of thoughts and feelings, Hackley (2003a, b) suggests insights are research findings about consumers that can be integrated into the creative development process.

Practitioners tend to talk about insight as truths about ordinary people and their relationship with a brand or category that can be used to inspire creative advertising (Fallon and Senn 2006; Gordon 2002; Steel 1998). As Gordon (2002, p. 107) suggests, insights provide a depth of understanding "into the way people think, feel and behave in relation to brands." Mitchell (2002, p.47) provides an example of an insight from the motivational researcher, "Ernest Dichter [who], famously advised Chrysler that men thought of their sports cars as mistresses and of their sedans as wives." Fallon and Senn (2006, p.99) identified an insight for Lee Jeans, relevant to a young male audience that "cool is having the confidence and courage to let your actions do the talking." Revealing themselves in research, mining for insights involves delving deep into the motivation of consumers to unlock truths that consumers may not be consciously aware of (Zaltman 2014), openly willing to share, or that may help bridge the gap between what they say and what they do (Steel 1998).

Although advertising professionals need to pinpoint what they define as insight, some perspective may be gained from the study of insight in psychology. First, when achieving insight, a person experiences a sudden jump from the impasse to the solution (Schilling 2005; Schilling and Green 2011). That is, the emergence of a solution is a sudden realization and not simply the next step in a deliberate problem-solving process. Second, the jump produces an “Aha!” moment (Lubart 2001), which represents the affective response that arises from the sudden realization that there is a pathway to the solution (Gick and Lockart 1995). Third, the initial problem becomes re-interpreted or re-defined in light of this realization. This usually requires the problem-solver to become detached from their previous experience in order to see a new relationship between critical elements of the problem. This may involve changing the goals of the problem (Ohlsson 1992), re-directing attention to other problem elements (Grant and Spivey 2003), or re-combining these elements to yield a new perspective (Davidson 1995).

However, studying insight in a psychology laboratory is different to understanding insight in advertising. Problem-solving tasks carried out in psychology laboratories have one solution, but in advertising, the problem is more complex and often ill-defined. The tell-tale sign commonly reported is the accompanying “Aha!” moment when an insight is found. Yet, notions of insight and “truth,” and their relationship to the “Aha!” moment still need to be situated and unpacked in the advertising context. Specifically, we need to understand how insight informs an advertising message proposition, the mechanisms through which insight can be realized and the attributes of quality insight

2.2 Method

A Grounded Theory Approach. This study adopted grounded theory because the aim of this research is to advance our understanding of the insight phenomenon by identifying important practitioner-based constructs and their relationships with each other (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Guided by practitioner accounts of their own ideation process, this approach is most useful in advancing new theoretical understanding, rather than theoretical testing (Goulding 2017).

This study follows the constructivist grounded theory approach, which proposes theoretical analysis as interpretive, rather than an objective, reflection of reality (Charmaz 2005). Through the process of grounded theory research it is 'appropriate to turn to existing literature with the goal of improving it through reflection and reconstruction' (Burawoy 1991, p. 11). As suggested by Charmaz (2005), no qualitative research solely relies on inductive analysis, as the world is constructed by the extant knowledge we hold about our reality. Hence, there is an interaction between induction and deduction in the justification for grounded theory research (Miller and Fredericks 1999).

Throughout the analysis phase there was an iterative movement from an inductive analysis of the data to a deductive analysis within the existing literature on the insight construct and the 'Aha!' moment and 'truths' as elements identified in the literature as being associated with insights. However, at all times the research strived to ensure that the proposed themes were supported by empirical evidence. Subsequently this constructivist approach provided the appropriate approach because it enabled academic- and practitioner-based constructs to be cultivated in the context of the extant academic and practitioner literature (Nyilasy and Reid 2009).

Data Collection. The study was informed by a sample of 20 account planners, employed across 12 different Sydney advertising agencies. At this point theoretical saturation was achieved. The respondents were purposefully selected at the senior account planner and planning director levels, with experience across multiple product categories and international markets, providing the experience necessary to create a reliable study. The respondents were either known to the researcher, were referrals from participants or identified via LinkedIn, and were contacted by phone to participate. A description of the participants is provided in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Description of Interview Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Title	Agency	Years of Experience
01	M	Senior Planner	Multinational	10
02	M	Planning Director	Multinational	22
03	F	Senior Planner	Multinational	6
04	M	Senior Planner	Multinational	8
05	M	Planning Director	Multinational	14
06	M	Planning Director	Freelance	21
07	F	Planning Director	Multinational	16
08	M	Senior Planner	National	7
09	M	Senior Planner	Freelance	9
10	F	Senior Planner	Freelance	8
11	M	Planning Director	Multinational	18
12	M	Senior Planner	Multinational	7
13	F	Planning Director	Multinational	9
14	M	Senior Planner	National	7
15	M	Senior Planner	Multinational	8
16	F	Senior Planner	Multinational	6
17	F	Senior Planner	Multinational	7
18	F	Planning Director	Multinational	17
19	F	Senior Planner	Multinational	8
20	M	Planning Director	Multinational	8

Semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face by the researcher, who had previous interview experience over a 20-year industry work history. The interviews took place over 13 months, ranged in duration between 40 to 90 minutes, and resulted in

253 transcribed pages. Interviews were conducted in either an agency meeting room or in an agreed meeting place (such as a quiet coffee shop or the lobby of an international hotel chain). The interviewer also went back to the respondents with further questions to clarify concepts and to fill learning gaps. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed.

An interview guide was constructed around a broad question relating to insight to establish the respondents comprehension of the phenomenon under investigation. The open-ended questions contained in the interview guide were: (1) ‘In your role as a advertising strategy planner can you tell me what an insight is?’ (2) ‘What role does insight play in helping you solve an advertising problem?’ (3) ‘Using an example can you explain how you use insight when developing an advertising message proposition?’ (4) ‘How do you go about finding insight?’ and (5) ‘What do you think makes an insight strong?’ These open-ended questions were broad to allow the ideas behind the insight construct to develop organically. During the interview, new elements and ideas that emerged in the narrative of earlier participants were probed only if the subject had not raised the issue.

Data Analysis. The study used the constant comparison method, coding and recoding data through an iterative process (Creswell 1998). The data were analysed by two coders. At the completion of each stage, the coding was reviewed and discussed between the two coders, leading to the refinement of the codes at each of the stages in the coding process. Data analysis began with ‘open coding’ (Strauss and Corbin 1990), which required systematically reviewing the interview transcripts in NVivo, and undertaking the initial task of ‘breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising data’ (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p. 61). This process focused on establishing the meaning embodied in the words, sentences and paragraphs of the respondents narrative. It also required investigating the sequences, relationships, circumstances, examples and repercussions behind the phenomenon. The emerging themes were then developed through observations of repetition, similarities and differences and via revisiting absent respondent accounts (Bogdan and Taylor 1975).

At this point, axial coding linked the categories based on interrelationships. Committing the themes required finding evidence in the narrative that affirmed their theoretical importance. When the significance of these themes was confirmed the attributes and properties were further investigated to advance the comprehensive nature of their features. By constantly comparing the data this process continued until such time as saturation was achieved.

In the final step, the data were assigned into main categories that pulled the concepts together in order to describe the insight phenomenon. This step was completed using selective coding, at which time the theoretical ideas were adopted.

2.3 Findings

Three major findings were uncovered in this study. First, insight is a “so-called human truth” that provides a deep understanding of human motivation. Second, insight in advertising can be identified through five possible methods: (1) research, (2) personal knowledge domains, (3) challenging conventions, (4) borrowed sources and (5) central narrative extension. Third, there are four attributes of insight that are considered high quality: originality, relatability, usability, and vision. Each of these findings will now be discussed in more detail, and unless otherwise stated, all the names of account planners and brands are anonymised.

2.3.1 Human Truth as Insight in the Advertising

Based on participant accounts, the serendipitous discovery of a human truth is what excites account planners because it assists them in their task. In searching for insight our participants indicated explicitly that their objective was to "Find a truth about human behavior that could help seed an idea for the [advertising] message proposition" (Interview with senior planner).

This search for insight is integral to the account planner's creative contribution to the creative brief, and confers several advantages to the strategy development process. First, insight brings the brand closer to the human motivation most effective in satisfying the target audience's unmet need. Second, this results in a message proposition that elevates an attribute or benefit from a commodity. As one senior planner suggests:

> Attributes are easily superseded and benefits are increasingly feeling like commodities… [many] cosmetics and fashion brands sell a glamor look … shampoos promise confidence (Interview with senior planner).

Third, the insight assists the creatives by giving them a starting point to differentiate the brand:

> Insight adds a [differentiated] strategic idea to a brand benefit that ultimately helps the creative team get underway in developing a fresh idea (Interview with planning director).

When the account planner serendipitously finds insight they experience the "Aha!" moment characteristic of insightful problem solving, as a senior planner explained:

> You know when you've nailed the insight because the "Aha!" moment makes the hairs on your arms stand up … it's a nice feeling … great insights often have nothing to do with the product or the category … you're looking for something fresh and you won't find it close to home [e.g., close to the brand or category] (Interview with senior planner).

Account planners also indicate they search for insight by looking for unexpected observations or findings of human behavior in “people, culture, category, competition, the product or the brand.” When an insight is revealed it gains its persuasive power through a succinct expression that encapsulates the human truth. These expressions then provide the foundations for the message proposition that will ultimately guide the development of the creative idea. The following are examples of insight expressed as a human truth:

> Everyone has a secret to hide (Interview with senior planner).
> Life is better experienced, not observed (Interview with senior planner).
> Children love dreaming about future possibilities (Interview with planning director).

Account planners indicate that insight can serve as a vehicle to direct new advertising messages within a brand’s existing positioning or assist in identifying how a brand may be repositioned for competitive advantage. A senior planner gave the following example of how insight into a human truth was used to reposition an existing sports shoe brand away from cluttered category claims of superior athletic performance:

> … a nice example of where insight was used to reposition a brand was with [brand name] where the agency focused on the idea that for most of us sport isn’t about superior athletic performance but rather sport is part of life … part of play, it’s social … young adults aren’t into Lucozade [an energy drink] and half-time oranges, they’re into beers and kebabs and 3AM … playing snooker in pool halls … and the prize isn’t a trophy but a phone number on a soiled beer coaster (Interview with senior planner).

The uncovering of a (new) consumer insight has huge implications on how an advertising problem can be solved. In this example, the insight that for most young adults, “life is a social sport played after hours”, serves to create a new direction for the brand’s positioning. A new consumer motivation is revealed that directs a new advertising narrative in order to strengthen brand differentiation relative to the competition.

Importantly, insights can be distinguished from facts based on the affective appeal they embody. Facts are merely descriptors of something known or proven to be true. For a fact to transition to an insight, they require further elaboration. For example, one planning director reported: “You know facts [*sic*] is a dirty word until it’s expressed in a way that somehow has a tension in it.” In this way, facts lack the necessary surprise often seen in insight realization (i.e., the “Aha!” moment). The following examples demonstrate knowing the brand’s positioning or attribute is not enough. They must still be linked to a human truth:

> For example, the brand truth is that all over the globe [brand X] powers priceless experiences and the human truth [as final insight] that links to this brand truth is that life is better experienced, not observed (Interview with senior planner).
>
> In its own right, a product truth isn’t an insight ... it is typically only a characteristic of the product. It can lead to an insight if you explore the human behavior that resonates with it… [Brand Y] has a slow forming, thick creamy head … they likely linked to an insight around anticipation … anticipation is the foreplay to pleasure (Interview with senior planner).

Based on these observations, one can define a human truth as (1) a succinct socio-cultural expression of human motivation or need, which (2) contains an inherent tension that can be resolved by the brand attribute or benefit, in a manner that is (3) original because it has not previously been applied in the category.

2.3.2 Insight’s Role in the Construction of the Advertising Message Proposition

Ultimately, the insight is used to place a strategic idea into the message proposition. In order to arrive at a proposition, the account planner must be able to link the human motivation embodied in the insight to an attribute or a single benefit embodied in the brand. As a senior planner describes:

> There needs to be a strategic link between the insight and the attribute or attributes you may focus on, or the single benefit you may adopt… [in order] to arrive at an idea that is credible to consumers (Interview with senior planner).

Once the planner can make the association between the insight and the attribute or benefit of the brand, they need to make this link via a creative expression of the proposition. It is in this process that the planner calls upon their creativity to arrive at an articulation of the message proposition that is inspiring to creative, motivating to consumers and relevant to the brand. This is not easy. As a planning director suggests:

> I find writing the proposition always difficult … it is something I spend a lot of time on … writing, rewriting … It has to hold the magic that inspires the creative (Interview with planning director).

This proposition embodies the compelling message the creative work needs to deliver to fulfill the communication objectives. It therefore, contains the central, single-minded theme that encapsulates the strategic thinking. The following is an example (with other examples shown in Table 2.2) of how an account planner links the insight to the benefit in constructing the final brand proposition:

> … a nice example was for [Brand X] where the idea [insight] was …that when your look good you tend to have more confidence ….and you also tend to express yourself better…. Which at its heart this is really about promising that the brand would give you more confidence [Benefit]…. but the way we finally articulated it was that [Brand X] brings out your true personality [proposition] (Interview with senior planner)

Table 2.2. Insight, Benefit and Proposition Relationship

Human Insight	Attribute or Benefit	Proposition
Professional athletes’ deepest fear is failure	Cushioning inner soles	[Brand] lessens the pain of failure
Freedom is the ability to be completely yourself—unrestrained, uninhibited, unembarrassed	Shows the true you	With [Brand] you can live life unbuttoned

The same insight may lead to two different expressions of the proposition. How the account planer uses the insight to form the message proposition has a direct influence over the opportunity created for creatives. In describing the construction of a proposition for a soft drink brand around peoples' desire for belonging, a senior planner suggests:

> The question I would ask is would that inspire a creative person … You know beer is a social glue as well so you have to push the proposition in terms of the tweak you give it … So between saying [Brand X] brings people together versus … in the land of [Brand X] nobody is a stranger, I think the latter is … more inspiring in terms of where creatively the folks [creatives] can go (Interview with senior planner).

2.3.3 The Mechanisms for Insight Realisation in Advertising

This study also discovered five mechanisms through which account planners identify insight for the purpose of advertising message development: (1) research, (2) personal knowledge domains, (3) challenging conventions, (4) borrowed sources and (5) central narrative extension. Examples of the coding used in constructing the techniques used by account planners for identifying insight are represented in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3. Mechanisms for Insight Realisation in Advertising

Insight Mechanism	Examples	Interpretation and Coding
Research	'Social media monitoring tools are increasingly used for finding super deep insight. We plug in key words and it lets us listen to all the conversations that are happening online. We can even listen inside.'	Infers the use of research in finding insight. Coding: Insight illuminated from consumer research.
Personal domain knowledge	'I think a lot of insight comes from our experiences, rather than the amount of experience we have.'	Directly suggests that insight can come from our own experiences. Coding: Insight as personal domain knowledge.
Challenging conventions	'I like to start with challenging conventions around the brand to see if that opens up an interesting new space. Nike is a good example … because much of their work focuses on the athlete … what if instead of looking at the athlete we looked at the fans … and their role in inspiring peak performance. [That] might lead you to some interesting insights around how sport inspires fan love.'	Suggests that insight is found by questioning the status quo. Coding: Insight as challenging conventions.
Borrowed source	'… really, insights can come from anywhere … I will look at what other brands have done and see if I can apply those insights to the category I am working on.' 'I might look to see how other brands have found fresh ways to advertise.'	Implies that insight is found by material similarity. Coding: Insight as borrowed source. Directly suggests looking for problem resolution within a class of other problems. Coding: Insight as borrowed source.
Central narrative extension	'All great brands have a story to tell ... Disney isn't a story about theme parks, it's a story about magical moments and Hallmark cards isn't a story about greeting cards, it's a story about caring shared. So if the brand is seeking to continue to build the bond it has with consumers I will actively seek insights that tell the story within that story.'	Suggests insight can be found around the brand's central story. Coding: Insight as central narrative extension.

Research. Consumer research serves as a valuable source for insight realization. As one participant related:

> …research is useful for exploring around the role the brand plays in a consumer's life. This can often provide fruitful territory to discover the insight and the benefit or benefits that can be associated with it (Interview with senior planner).

Thus, research aids planning in identifying the consumer motivations that the brand fulfills. These motivations can then be built on and more deeply explored to determine a surprising human truth.

Planners adopt various research methods in their search for insight. These include quantitative and qualitative research, such as focus groups, in-depth interviews, observation, ethnography, and participation in the customer path to purchase. Ultimately, all these various approaches seek to reveal the hidden consumer motivation that might hold relevant insight, or, as is particularly true of observation and ethnography, to reveal the subconscious consumer behavior that may embody insight, which is frequently hidden in focus groups or in-depth interviews. As one senior account planner describes:

> Observation, I think, can be really interesting to uncover behaviors that consumers are unaware of. When I was working for [agency X] there was a great campaign for [brand Y] that identified that all the sexy women's underwear … mostly purchased by males [as partners] was at the back of the drawer and all the comfy stuff was at the front. This was an interesting observation that gave rise to a compelling insight that was later leveraged to a comfort benefit (Interview with senior planner).

Interestingly, the growth in digital media has also enabled insight exploration through the monitoring of consumer conversations. One planning director emphasizes:

> Social media monitoring tools are increasingly used for finding super deep insight. We plug in keywords and it lets us listen to all the conversations that are happening online. We can even listen inside Facebook (Interview with planning director).

In the course of consumer research, it is important to explore both the consumers' actual and desired state. Focusing research on the actual state may reveal insight around the problem experienced by consumers and the subsequent role the brand can play in resolving that problem. However, what might be more motivating to consumers is a more transformational focus in advertising execution that shifts the consumer from the actual to a desired state. Focus on the desired state, and the unmet needs that underlie it may reveal more persuasive and motivating insight. An example provided by one planning director is:

> Too much insight research is designed to have consumers discuss their life's reality. So we end up with benign insight from research and unfortunately [based on those insights] work that plays consumers' lives back to them. For example, mums who are time pressured, they are juggling kids, … work and other family responsibilities … which ultimately gets played back to them [in advertising]. When in actual fact, they are thinking more about what their lives might be like when their hectic life winds down (Interview with planning director).

Personal Domain Knowledge. Insight also arises by drawing from actor-specific life experiences. These experiences can result from work experiences across multiple product and service categories, the experiences and observations one might associate with encountering life, or chance encounters with new information. Two account planners provide specific details:

> I think a lot of insight comes from our experiences, rather than the amount of experience we have (Interview with planning director).
>
> …there's a great scene in the movie Good Will Hunting that shows what I mean about insights being connected to our life's experiences ... it's the scene where Robin Williams is sitting on a park bench talking with Matt Damon … Robin Williams's character is a shrink and he says to Damon, who is a troubled kid … you wouldn't know what it's like to hold a dead person in your arms, and you wouldn't know what it smells like in the Sistine Chapel and you wouldn't know what it feels like to be really loved by a woman ... his point is that we have no insight into the things we have never really experienced (Interview with planning director).

This planner's implication is that we do have insight into those things we have experienced. Thus, it is legitimate that in searching for insight the account planner may draw upon his or her own life experiences as the foundation for identifying insight. This personal domain knowledge extends to include, as a senior planner suggests, insights revealed in “books, movies or song lyrics.”

These personal knowledge domains are frequently used in unfocused searches for ideas that may provide a solution in creative problem solving, or they may be used to integrate or link unlikely pairings of multiple domains of knowledge in pursuit of a novel solution. A senior planner suggests how these searches play out:

> I use a mind map when I start looking for insight … I think of as many ideas as I can … I keep going until I find something interesting that I can work with (Interview with planning director).

Challenging conventions. A disruptive route to revealing insight is to question the status quo around how the planner thinks about the internal and external environments surrounding the brand. One participant explains:

> You see challenging conventions is naturally more disruptive [in finding insight] because it forces you to question the norms that place barriers on our ability to reach truly breakthrough thinking (Interview with planning director).

Questioning the way in which history has governed the way brands are managed, for example in relation to corporate, marketing and consumer conventions go on to illuminate insight. Questioning company conventions is related to confronting the assumptions around whom the competition is and what category the brand is competing in. For example, a senior planner suggests that different airline companies are not just competing against each other, “they are competing against buses, trains and campervans”. The challenging of marketing conventions requires questioning decisions pertaining to elements of the marketing mix. A planning director explained:

> …instead of showing what it feels like to use the product, we focus on what it feels like to be deprived of it…or instead of focusing on the brands performance you focus on the competitor’s failure (Interview with senior planner).

Challenging consumer conventions involves challenging the nature of consumer decision-making, questioning the relationship between the buyer and the user; the purchaser and the brand; and the role or function the brand performs for the target audience. Consider, for example:

> While I haven't worked on the brand, I like the brave way that French Connection challenged fashion credentialed clothing brands to establish its positioning around anti-fashion fashion. This sets up a great brand story for fresh insights built around the rebellious individuality of the FCUK consumer (Interview with senior planner).

In challenging conventions, the planner seeks to view the solution to the problem through a new lens. This shift in perspective provides a sudden realization of the solution to the problem. In the following example, the account planner described the problem for the footwear brand as "finding a fresh way to extend the narrative of superior athletic performance." The solution was to reformulate the goal to focus on how fans, rather than coaches, inspire athletic performance:

> I like to start with challenging conventions around the brand to see if that opens up an interesting new space. Nike is a good example … because much of their work focuses on the athlete … what if instead of looking at the athlete we looked at the fans … and their role in inspiring peak performance. [That] might lead you to an interesting insight around how sport inspires fan love (Interview with planning director).

Borrowed Sources. Insight can also materialize by searching for similarity to other problems at hand. In the application of a borrowed source the planner searches for insight by looking at the current advertising problem as being like a class of other problems, as the following account planners suggest:

> What you do is look at the actions or programmes [advertising] of other brands and infer the insight … and that may inspire you that that insight is right for you (Interview with planning director).

This is aligned with what Schilling (2005) refers to as finding a problem analog. In searching for insight by way of analogy, the account planner may focus on the structural similarity or similar problems faced in another domain. Given the relatively common similarity in product and service benefits that can be witnessed across product categories, it is not surprising that the search for analogy is a useful mechanism for insight realization.

However, the real value of borrowed sources may come from the account planner's realization that insights used to solve an advertising problem across one product or service category, may help solve the advertising problem in a different product or service category, as is suggested in the quote below:

> …what I would do is pick up on the tension or the consumer understanding they may have created because they had a similar problem. So for instance, using confectionery, we would regularly review what ice cream brands are doing and look at the kind of [advertising] work ice cream brands are undertaking to see what that means for confectionery, because they are both treats and may have similar problems (Interview with planning director).

Therefore, more than just looking for analogs (e.g., Schilling 2005), this technique of insight realization involves deeper thinking to uncover what can be learned about basic human motivation or needs.

To expand on this theme further one senior planner suggests:

> If I am working on a brand and I am looking for interesting insights around rebellion, individuality, or freedom … I might look to see what brands like Levi's, Harley Davidson, Audi have done around the world as a source of inspiration (Interview with senior planner).

To trigger fresh thinking, the search for an analogy by way of an insight around confidence may be leveraged to a combination of attribute and/or benefit relevant to the problem at hand.

Central Narrative Extension. Planners identify that strong brands have a clear understanding of the central narrative or brand mantra that directs future storytelling in advertising execution. Planners use various descriptors to describe this central narrative that holds the brand story, such as "story", "brand story", "brand essence" and "brand DNA." This story represents the core promise made by the brand to consumers. In order for the brand to build and reinforce brand meaning around that core promise, the planner may actively seek to identify insights that reinforce that core or central brand narrative, in order to strengthen the bond between the target audience and the brand. One example from a participant is:

> All great brands have a story to tell ... Disney isn't a story about theme parks, it's a story about magical moments and Hallmark cards isn't a story about greeting cards, it's a story about caring shared. So if the brand is seeking to continue to build the bond it has with consumers I will actively seek insights that tell the story within that story (Interview with senior planner).

In searching for insight around this central brand story, planners search for human truths that fit within the story domain. As related by one participant:

> …when I am searching for insights around a central brand story I tend to focus on the values that I can connect to that brand. So, by example, if the central story in the brand is around making progress I would start by looking at values like ambition, passion or spirit, and use that area to explore the opportunity for a relevant insight (Interview with senior planner).

In completing a schema, when the account planner is looking for insight that can be used to extend the brand they must identify how the problem fits into a larger framework. In the advertising context, this involves deciphering how the givens and the goals of a problem fit into the broader story that holds the narrative of the brand together. For example, as one account planner demonstrates, the central story of "making progress" that holds the brand meaning (i.e., the given) may reveal an insight that lies within a proximal "value" to the central narrative, such as "ambition", "passion" or "spirit", which ultimately leads to fresh thinking around expressing that central narrative (i.e., the goal).

This creation of a schema acts as a mechanism to reduce the random nature of the insight search process. As Simon (1981) states, "what is evoked by initial schematic anticipation is not a potential solution but a solving method" (p. 155). This appears to be the case within the advertising context, as the planner might identify the appropriate schema that will lead to an original and appropriate solution; however, it does not directly give rise to the insight. However, it does assist in constraining the proximal values that pertain to the brand's central story, through which insight realization can be explored. This, in turn, reduces the random nature of the insight search process.

2.3.4 Attributes and Properties of Quality Insight

The previous section described how account planners go about searching for insights. However, as account planners recognize, not all insights are equal in the contribution they make to construct the message proposition. The current study has uncovered the attributes that constitute quality insight. Quality insight is characterized by four primary attributes, which in turn contain 12 key properties that provide context for the account planner, consumer, creative and the brand (see Figure 1). An illustration of the coding adopted in developing the attributes of quality insight is contained in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4. Attributes of Quality Insight and Their Interpretation and Coding

Insight Quality Attribute	Examples	Interpretation and Coding
Originality	‘It’s the fact that they [insights] surround us, yet remains unnoticed.’ ‘[When] they [insights] are brought to our attention … they offer an element of surprise.’	Directly suggests that insights are hidden from conscious thought. Coding: Insight as latent. Directly suggest that insight offers an element of surprise. Coding: Insight as surprising.
Relatability	‘As long as it’s [insight] genuine and as long as it’s relevant and hits back to, you know, our deeper human instinct…’	Directly suggests that insight needs to be genuine and relevant. Coding: Insight as credible.
Usability	‘[The] expression [of insight] needs to be just sufficiently expressed to capture the thought.’ ‘[Insight] should provide the context for the storytelling, but not actually be the story.’	Suggests that insights need to be captured succinctly. Coding: Insight as an economy of expression. Implies that insight needs to contain gaps from which storytelling can be built. Coding: Insight as spacious.
Vision	Insights have gained prominence because emotional benefits have become like commodities.	Implies that insights strengthen the ‘commodity’ nature of benefits. Coding: Insight as differentiating.

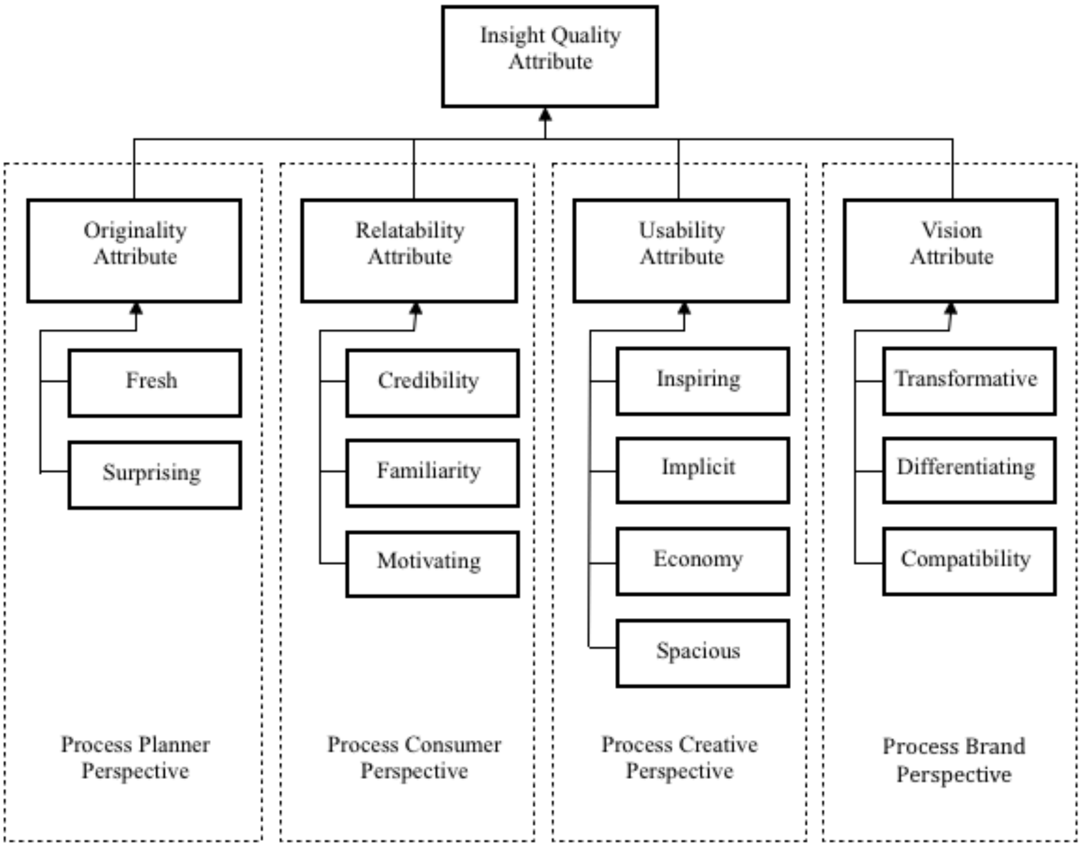
Insight Quality Attribute
Originality Attribute
Fresh
Surprising
Process Planner Perspective
Relatability Attribute
Credibility
Familiarity
Motivating
Process Consumer Perspective
Usability Attribute
Inspiring
Implicit
Economy
Spacious
Process Creative Perspective
Vision Attribute
Transformative
Differentiating
Compatibility
Process Brand Perspective

Figure 1. Quality insight attributes and properties.

Originality. The originality attribute means the human truth uncovered is fresh and surprising. This may come about from remote domains of knowledge, not directly related to the product category or brand, yet capable of being relevant. One account planner suggests:

> I think that in the true sense of the word great insights come from places well removed from the product or category…they tend to be more powerful… PlayStation once did a campaign where I suspect the insight was around the idea that we all have a secret to hide, which in that instance they related to adult gaming. Now when you think of secrets you wouldn't naturally think of gaming, but PlayStation made that connection (Interview with senior planner).

Thus, a knowledge domain remote from the product category makes the insight more profound. However, other account planners indicate that proximal domain knowledge is sufficient, provided that the insight relates to latent (or hidden) consumer behavior not presently evident or realized by consumers:

> [An insight is] a surprising truth and one that I believe leads to more inspiring strategy and creative work than merely a fact that often masquerades as an insight (Interview with senior planner).

What this implies is that in the absence of surprise, an insight is likely to be a mere factual account of human behavior, and cannot therefore cement the required emotional consumer connection.

In this pursuit of an original insight, account planners often report experiencing mental blocks that need to be overcome. Sometimes this requires deliberate disengagement from the task, or distraction to be able to see it with fresh eyes. Two planners report:

> Finding a great insight isn't an easy task…you find yourself constantly pushing to find something fresh…something that hasn't been done…it's easier to reject a poor insight…than it is to find that nugget of gold that is truly original [that reveals the solution] (Interview with senior planner).
>
> The strange thing about insight is that often it comes when you least expect it. I could have spent days toiling over it with no real progress and then I could be out shopping, watching a movie, or having a game of tennis and then suddenly it will come to me out of the blue (Interview with senior planner).

Relatability. The relatability attribute of the insight means the properties of the human truth uncovered are credible, familiar and motivating for the target audience. For an insight to be relatable it must first be credible. That is, it must be capable of being believed:

> [When] evaluating an insight it must be an interesting truth, and yes it must be true, most importantly in order for consumers to be able to relate to it (Interview with senior planner).

Like metaphors, analogies, and similes, the insight needs to be familiar to the target audience. When an insight is familiar consumers can immediately relate to it and draw upon it to form a *personal* association, as the following planners describe:

> [Insights] are powerful because we make an immediate association with them …so if insights fail to provide that experience for you as a planner they will inevitably fail to provide that experience for the consumer (Interview with senior planner).

> [The insight]…might not be something they say themselves or that they would articulate personally, but it needs to be relevant, relatable to them and their world (Interview with planning director).

In the presence of credibility and familiarity, the insight becomes motivating to consumers. This motivation manifests because the insight resonates with consumers' behavior and serves to either affirm that behavior, or be in conflict with it. It is this surprising, yet familiar tension embodied in an insight that holds the motivation necessary of quality insight, as one planning director describes:

> …the insight needs to grow out of behavior you want to change or behavior you want to encourage, and you need to understand why people are doing what they are doing because that's the purpose of the insight because that's the tension you can resolve with your advertising… So familiarity is grounded in the fact that insight captures a truth about their world that can provide the basis for how you motivate them (Interview with planning director).

However, the relatability attribute needs to be prefaced with the notion that an insight is designed to construct the proposition and may not necessarily make its way directly into creative execution. Instead, it may take an indirect route. In this instance consumers are not directly responding to insight, as one planning director suggests:

> Often insights are not something that you directly want consumers to respond to because it's something that you give to creative as an internal thing (Interview with planning director).

That is, insight sets the stage or provides a platform for how the creative will relate to consumers, and therefore to keep the resulting creative work relevant to them and their reality.

Usability. This attribute encompasses the properties of the human truth that can inspire the creative team to strive for the big idea. Insights are strongly influenced by the linguistic frame of the language adopted by the account planner, as well as the imagination, to identify a potency of expression. When realized, insight contains the single-minded idea from which the message proposition can be constructed, founding a preliminary idea from which the creative team can launch their work. A high-quality insight can facilitate this development, as insight

> …should serve to inform and provide inspiration to the proposition, and in that sense, provide inspiration to the creative team (Interview with senior planner).

To be inspiring, the insight must be succinct, characterized by an economy of expression. This economy of expression of insight serves as a discipline that compels the account planner to be focused and clear. One planner noted about insight that the

> …expression needs to be just sufficiently expressed to capture the thought clearly (Interview with planning director).

Importantly, this expression needs to provide a space or a context from which the creatives can leap to an idea, requiring that the expression be spacious and liberating, rather than constraining:

> [Insight] should provide the context for the storytelling, but not actually be the story (Interview with planning director).
>
> Think of insight as a seed, not a tree. A seed needs room to grow (Interview with planning director).

Account planners consistently affirm the importance of focusing insight on the inherent nature of being human, avoiding an explicit descriptive expression unlikely to contain any deep understanding of the human motivation under study:

> [When] you're articulating an insight you need to avoid being too descriptive and if it is descriptive, it's likely you haven't found the insight, so you need to delve deeper (Interview with senior planner).

Furthermore, planners also report that when an insight is highly descriptive and offers little room for originality, creatives may lack the passion required to excite original work. In the presence of a highly descriptive and constraining insight there may be little room for further creative ideation, and as a result, the creative team merely execute the brief in an appropriate, yet unoriginal manner:

> It's quite ironic that, in many instances, often the creative work doesn't live up to the strategy, and I find a lot of examples of creative work which I see these days where you look at the ad and say 'oh, that's the creative brief or the insight, where is the creative work?' (Interview with senior planner).

Vision. The vision attribute means the insight offers a space for the brand to be transformative, allowing it to differ from the competition, yet remains compatible with the desired brand positioning. As one senior planner suggests:

> Insights by their very nature tend to open up fresh new spaces for brands because they provide a fresh way to tell the story … look at Nike and the way they use insights around things like commitment, hard work … pain, female empowerment, endurance … you know the list is endless (Interview with senior planner).

The transformational aspects of insight are frequently observed when account planners adopt the technique of challenging conventions discussed earlier. When realized, this human truth provides a strategic idea to an attribute or benefit that elevates it from feeling more like a commodity, to one that holds a strategic idea. One comment from a senior planner is: "Insights have gained prominence because emotional benefits have become like commodities." This is important for competitive advantage, as product categories are increasingly, as one senior account planner suggests, "flooded" with the same emotional benefits. A human truth can be differentiated from a single emotional benefit because it adds a strategic idea to the message proposition, which the benefit can resolve, in a manner unique to the brand.

2.4 Discussion

The objective of this paper is to develop an understanding of how an account planner searches for, uses and evaluates insight. If the insight is of poor quality, it cannot adequately guide the subsequent development of the “big” idea. In the absence of any studies that examine the planner’s ideation process, the findings from this investigation are novel. It bridges the academic–practitioner gap by suggesting how account planners define insight, how they go about searching for one, and what they consider a high-quality insight. Account planning is a severely under-researched area, but this paper contributes to this literature in the following ways.

First, account planners play a more complex role in the creative development process than the scholarly literature acknowledges. In the planner’s quest for insight, they engage in their own struggle that is a creative process of its own, involving searching for human truth and then linking it to a brand attribute or benefit. This iterative searching and linking process is needed because the solution is not immediately obvious. To be successful, the human truth needs to have an inherent tension the brand can credibly resolve. Described as elusive by one senior planner, and often subject to mental blocks, message formulation is hardly an easy task.

One apparent reason why the search for insight is difficult is that it has to be *four* things: original, relatable, usable and visionary. Account planners search for insight by conducting research, tapping into existing domain knowledge, challenging conventions, using borrowed sources and extending the brand’s central narrative. But even so, they struggle to identify an insight that will seed a strong creative idea, from which creative ideation can leap.

Second, we show that the human truth adds a strategic idea to the advertising message proposition. This human truth represents a belief about human motivation that when it surfaces to the conscious mind, through a succinct expression, it will be surprisingly true. The affective response that flows from the human truth embody the “Aha!” moment, which when enacted in the advertisement creates the emotional connection for the consumer. Relying on the simple attribute or benefit of the brand alone lacks this human connection. A human truth gives strategic context to an attribute or benefit that elevates it from feeling more like a commodity to one that holds an inherent strategic idea. By example, the benefit of social confidence alone could be deployed by numerous brands across various product categories. However, by introducing the human truth that teenage boys are sexually aspirant, yet socially insecure frames a tension this benefit can solve in a manner original for the brand, appropriate for the target audience and inspirational for creatives.

In some ways, this finding is not surprising, since the notion of human truth is not new (Holbrook 1995; Hollis 2008). However, what is surprising is the *importance* account planners place on a human truth as a form of insight unique to the advertising context. One possible reason why human truth is so important is that insight focuses on motivation which in turn helps focus the advertising communication towards an emotional brand benefit (Mitchell 2002). Perhaps experienced account planners know that this form of insight is more likely to spark the imagination of the creatives and set them on a path to finding the winning idea using a more emotional advertising appeal. Interestingly, an analysis of the 2017 Cannes Lions award winners found that “emotion remains central to best-practice campaigns” (see Insights from the 2017 Creative Effectiveness Lions, p. 3).

2.4.1 Future Research and Limitations

The current findings suggest new avenues for future research. Although account planners spend considerable effort searching for the link between the human truth and the brand, it is assumed that this will be helpful in developing a creative idea. Future experimental research on creatives can confirm whether insight improves their ideation process. Similarly, one can also study if insight, as a creative technique deployed by the account planner, can substitute for other creative techniques such as Goldenberg, Mazursky and Solomon's (1999) creative templates.

If insight has its influence on improving creativity, it should contribute to the strategic orientation and originality of creative work, although Kilgour and Koslow (2009) identified a trade-off between appropriateness and originality in divergent thinking tasks. Related to this issue is whether insight acts as primed knowledge. If so, then it would influence creative thinking. Various studies have demonstrated that priming respondents to a specific knowledge domain can impair their divergent thinking ability because of mental set fixation (Marsh, Landau and Hicks 1996; Smith, Ward and Schumacher 1993). On the other hand, if insight is intended to bring the brand closer to the consumer, then research which examines different conditions of insight (such as strong, weak and no insight) should influence consumer attitudes towards the brand, the advertising and purchase intention. This qualitative study also suggests a role for insight in making advertising more emotional. It is therefore essential to develop our understanding of insight and its relationship in strengthening the affective appeal of advertising, if any.

Related to this research question is whether some mechanisms for revealing insight are more effective than others in helping account planners find the insight. Although five methods were discovered (i.e., research, personal domain knowledge, challenging conventions, borrowed sources and central narrative extension), the effectiveness of their application may vary in different circumstances. For a genuinely new product category, relying on personal domain knowledge is not likely to be useful due to limited experience. For a brand that seeks a new positioning, challenging conventions may be a productive option.

Future research can also examine how an account planner and the creative interact with each other when the quality of insight is poor. One intriguing question is whether a low-quality insight will spur creatives to work harder. If so, this may result in a *better* creative idea because creatives have no choice but to ideate more. On the other hand, if the presented insight is already of high quality, thanks to the hard work of the account planner, the creatives may simply take advantage of this. However, without additional ideation on the part of the creative, the insight, no matter how strong, may not reach its full potential of becoming the big idea.

This research is not without its limitations. First, this study adopts a cognitivist approach to social research, which has an intra-personal orientation. While this approach may represent one view of reality, we acknowledge that a broader constructionism approach (e.g., Hackley 1998), may also be useful in revealing different reality; in particular, how other team members might play a role in the realization of insight. In this study, insight is assumed to originate solely from account planners, but in reality, insight can come from anyone, including the clients themselves.

Different socio-cultural contexts at both the macro and micro level may give rise to different realities from which insight may materialize. At the micro level, the contribution of insight and the types of insights themselves may vary based on the socialization factors through which individual actors construct their own socio-cultural reality. How actors make choices and how professionals engage in meaning-making, influences their cultural knowledge and shapes advertising creative process (Zayer and Coleman 2015; Nyilasy, Canniford and Kreshel 2103). For instance, face-to-face interactions between planners and clients are not studied here. Nor were group dynamics between planners and creatives. Such interactions bring a different form of reality, and could very well influence how insights are attained.

Future research can also investigate the influence of the macro environment on insight attainment. For instance, Zayer and Coleman (2015) show how stereotypical views of gender in advertising (e.g., women are vulnerable to media influence, but men are immune) affect their creative decisions among practitioners. Recent theorizations about marketplace sentiments, also suggest that insights can also be found at the macro level (Gopaldas 2014). These sentiments focus mainly on how our reality is adopted, modified and evolved through ideals portrayed in for instance, activism, brands, the media and changing consumer sentiments. For example, consumer sentiment towards the environment, bullying, gay marriage, gender equality and the visual portrayal of women in advertising have evolved within cultures. The impacts of such market sentiments and how they shape insight are not examined in this study. But, they have an important role to play in explaining how insights emerge, remain or change over time—especially cultural myths that can be effectively exploited (Holt 2003). Similarly, they may help improve knowledge of how insights are identified, selected or rejected by institutional actors.

Although advertising agencies relish the “idea factory” analogy, the inside mechanism of developing ideas has largely been assumed to be in the magical hands of creatives (Sasser and Koslow 2008). However, this research has shown that creatives have no monopoly on the creative ideation process. Instead, the absorptive capacity concept emphasizes much of what creatives do stems from account planners’ ability to discover and articulate insight. As a critical part of current advertising practice, insight’s influence on creative success deserves continued research.

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Chapter 3: Does Insight Constrain or Liberate Creativity?

Abstract

Consumer insight is widely considered as leading to creative and effective advertising. However, the mechanism by which insight works to facilitate better creative work is unclear. A number of scholars claim insight allows a greater focus on strategy in advertising, while others argue that insight works as an ideation tool to allow more original work. These two mechanisms fit within the way creativity is defined. The standard definition of creativity is work that is both original and appropriate in solving the advertising problem. This paper investigates the role of insight on appropriateness and originality through an experiment where professional creatives are asked to develop print and television advertisements in the automotive category, after being provided with conditions of either strong, weak or no insight. The study finds that insight moderates the effect of originality, but does not moderate the effect of strategy. Insight can substitute for originality when originality is low, but originality cannot substitute for strategy.

Advertising creativity may be in the eye of the beholder, but at least advertising researchers now have a better idea about the patterns of what is perceived to be creative. Psychologists have shown that the standard definition of creativity routinely holds well in a variety of settings, with what is perceived as creative being something that is both original and solves the problem at hand (Runco and Jaeger 2012). One application of this idea to advertising is that of Koslow, Sasser and Riordan (2003), who show that the advertisements that are perceived as creative are those that are both original and 'on strategy'. This two-part pattern holds, whether one is an account executive, creative, planner or media specialist, even if they still disagree on which advertisements are viewed as more creative.

Originality appears to be the more straightforward of the two dimensions of creativity, because there is usually high agreement on which advertisements are more original. However, where observers disagree is on what is considered appropriate in solving the advertising problem. As Sasser and Koslow (2008) note, this second factor could range from strategy to artistry, to relevance and even to entertainment value. Two observers might agree that one advertisement is more 'on strategy' and another more relevant to the category. However, if one observer views the problem to be solved as making sure the advertisement is relevant to the consumer and the other observer sees the problem as keeping on strategy, whatever that strategy is, the two observers may end up disagreeing on what is creative.

Given this understanding of creativity, it is unclear what the role of insight in advertising creativity should be, as research on insight often does not distinguish between the two. For example, Crosier et al. (2003) and Haley et al. (2014) both suggest that account planners serve four functions: 1) they operate as the voice of the consumer;

2) provide strategic orientation to the creative brief; 3) inspire creatives in the execution of the strategy and 4) act as the custodian of the client's interests in the brand. Certainly the second function relates to strategy, while the third corresponds to originality. However, the first and the fourth functions may be either component. Does insight focus on enhancing the strategy or the originality component? Does insight have these effects separately or jointly? Such an understanding would go a long way to obtaining a better understanding of the mechanisms by which insight works.

This research explores the role of insight in what is perceived as creative by creatives by asking whether insight enhances strategy or originality more. Sixty professional creatives from Sydney, Australia developed 120 advertising concepts that drew from conditions of strong insight, weak insight or no insight. These were then assessed by other Sydney creatives for how creative they were, as well as for their originality and strategy. Results suggested that insight works more through the originality route, with insight often substituting for originality, but not strategy. The implication for managers is that insight should be thought of as a tool to obtain original executions, rather than ones that are more on strategy.

3.1 Theory Development

The advertising development process can be viewed as a relationship between the product, the consumer and the competition (Jacobi, Freund, and Araujo 2015) plus the advertising itself, and the media vehicle used to deliver it. The product holds the attributes or benefits that fulfil the needs of consumers and the advertising execution communicates the message through an appropriate medium in order to bring the brand and consumer together.

It is from this interwoven relationship between the product, the consumer and the advertising message that the role of account planning emerged in the 1960s. Planning was introduced to ensure that 'all data relevant to key advertising decisions should be properly analyzed, complimented with new research, and bought to bear on judgements of creative strategy and how campaigns should be appraised' (Pollitt 1979, p. 22).

Since the 1960s, account planning has been widely adopted within advertising agencies, despite differences in the planning function being reported across countries (See Barry, Peterson, and Todd 1987; Morrison and Haley 2003, 2006; Patwardhan, Patwardhan, and Vasavada-Oza 2009; Zambardino and Goodfellow 2003). Interestingly, those advertising agencies that have an account planning discipline have been shown to win more awards, have more accounts and higher billings (Maxwell, Wanta, Sheehan, and Bentley 2000).

3.1.1 Insights and Creativity in Advertising

A critical task of the account planning discipline is identifying insights that may inform the creative development process (Hackley 2003a; Jacobi, Freund, and Araujo 2015). Whilst insight facilitates a breakthrough solution to a problem, insight in the advertising context take on a unique form. In this way the epistemology of insight is different to that applied in other knowledge domains, such as the sciences. An insight in advertising can be defined as "a human truth that is (1) a succinct socio-cultural expression of a human motivation that (2) contains an inherent tension that can be solved by an attribute or benefit, in a way that is (3) original because it has not previously been applied to the category" (Cite deliberately withheld). Ultimately this insight is used to inform the advertising message proposition, used by creative to 'leap' to a big idea. For example, an insight that “teenage boys are sexually aspirant but socially insecure” contains a tension that can be resolved by the brand benefit of “social confidence”. The account planner can then bridge the insight and the benefit into a message proposition: “Brand X is your best first move.” (Cite deliberately withheld). The strength in insight therefore resides in the creativity the account planner can inject into the strategic idea that will later be used by creatives in developing the creative idea.

Much of these insights come from consumer research. Barry et al. (1987) argued that the account planner should be actively involved throughout the creative development process so that observations and findings about consumers can be integrated into the advertising development process. In this manner, the account planner brings the consumer perspective to the strategy development process (Meyers 1986; West and Ford 2001) by acting as the voice of the consumer (Hackley 2003a, b). In fact, Hackley (2000) argues that the power of the account planner comes from taking the lead in consumer research in order to create the appropriate strategic orientation to solve the adverting problem. In this way, the account planner takes control in constructing the creative brief that holds the critical message strategy elements (Haley, Taylor, and Morrison 2014; Jacobi, Freund, and Araujo 2015; Steel 1998). The intended outcome is more effective advertising because advertisements would be built from insights that closely reflect the needs and motivations of the target audience, which leads to improvements in the creativity and effectiveness of marketing communications (Zambardino and Goodfellow 2003).

There is also a strong ‘community of practice’ among account planners who advocate the importance of insight to the creative development process (See Fallon and Senn 2006; Gordon 2002; Hall 2002; Mitchell 2002; Steel 1998). Insight represents a human truth that provides a rich and deep understanding of consumer motivation (cite deliberately removed). Account planners also frequently refer to insights as ‘truths’ about human behaviour that provide a robust and focused understanding of the relationship between ordinary people and the brand, category or competition (Fallon and Senn 2006; Gordon 2002; Steel 1998). These insights provide a depth of understanding for the planner in terms of how consumers think, feel and behave. For example, Fallon and Senn (2006) identified an insight relevant to a young male audience that ‘cool is having the confidence and courage to let your actions do the talking’ for the brand Lee Jeans (p. 99). When insights are revealed they provide a creatively congruent pathway that links the brand to the motivations of consumers in order to solve the advertising problem.

However, not all insights are equal in their contribution in facilitating advertising creativity. Quality insights hold several key attributes: they are (1) original, (2) relatable to consumers, (3) usable by creatives to inspire great creative work, and (4) visionary for the brand (Cite deliberately withheld). Weak insights fail to contain a deep human truth that holds a tension the brand can resolve. They may also merely rely on facts, which fail to imbue meaning into the human motivation (Zaltman 2014), or rely simply on product features without revealing the human connection to the features the brand embodies (cite deliberately removed). Arguably, the quality of insight must affect the appropriateness and originality of creative work.

However, insight is rarely discussed in the context of the two-component definition of creativity, so the question of how insight influences creativity remains. Given that advertising must be both original and appropriate to be creative (Runco and Jaeger 2012), through which construct does insight work? It could be that insight enhances an advertisement's originality by leading to a fresh expression of an idea that is differentiated from the competition. Originality is an important element of creativity, because it helps brands break-through consumers natural indifference to advertising. It also helps to provide the differentiation necessary for achieve strong competitive advantage. Alternatively, insight could work through improving the appropriateness of advertising by embodying a message proposition relevant to the motivations of the target audience in order to deliver the objectives contained in the creative brief. Appropriateness is important to creativity, because it makes that creativity meaningful. In the context of a brand this means communicating a message that solves the advertising problem in a manner appropriate to the target audience, and consistent with the brands positioning. To explore insight's role in creativity, the following review is presented.

3.1.2 Insight and the Strategic Orientation of Creative Work

One approach is that insight works through appropriateness by enhancing the strategic nature of advertising. If insight is a deep truth about consumer motivation, then it can help inform the advertising message proposition in order to give creative executions more direction. When an insight is linked to an attribute or benefit of a brand it helps inform a single-minded message proposition that guides creative execution (Cite deliberately removed). In essence, insight acts as a priming cue that sets the strategic orientation of the message proposition from which creative ideation can leap (Hackley 2003a; Steel 1998).

Schilling (2005) suggests that insight can work in five different ways, three of which should relate to improving the strategic quality of an idea, especially when the strategy is not strong. For example, an insight can: 1) complete a schema, 2) reorganise information on a problem and 3) find a problem analogue. Insight may give strength to a weak strategy by providing a missing component on how a consumer might be persuaded about the brand. Likewise, a strong insight may allow a creative to take a different perspective on the strategic problem, which could lead to a better solution. Alternatively, an insight may suggest an analogue for solving the problem that had previously been overlooked.

However, insight may not always improve the quality of the work. If the ideas creatives are exploring are highly strategic already then a solution path may exist already. Insight's role in leading to a situation is not needed and hence the role insight plays could be muted in the presence of highly strategic work. Therefore, an interaction between insight and strategy is proposed as Hypothesis 1, as follows:

H1: Insight can improve creativity when strategy is weak.

3.1.3 Insight and the Originality of Creative Execution

Another possibility is that insight is intended to liberate creatives within an original knowledge domain, from which an original creative execution can be built. Some praise insight for influencing the level of originality in advertising (Koslow 2015). This approach views insight as a tool to bring creatives into new creative territory with plenty of space for doing something different, and therefore insight is leading creatives to a decidedly more original execution.

Finding this novel knowledge domain is part of the account planner's contribution to facilitating a creative outcome (cite deliberately removed). An important element of insight is the 'Aha!' moment, which represents the emotional response to the surprising nature of the insight and the suddenness with which insight reveals a creative possibility of solving the advertising problem (Gick and Lockhart 1995). While this affective response is designed to elicit an emotive response from consumers, it is also intended to inspire creatives with an original creative solution (Zaltman 2014). Finding insight that provides ‘quantum leaps of inspiration’ is what separates insight from routine problem solving (Schilling 2005, p. 133). This involves making unexpected connections between knowledge domains (Schilling 2005; Schilling and Green 2011), or what Zaltman (2014, p. 374) refers to as ‘workable wondering’ and ‘usable ignorance’, which requires ‘imagining what is missing from what customers say’. When insight reveals itself through a new perspective, original breakthrough solutions materialise.

However, finding original insight, like finding an original creative idea, is a difficult task (Zaltman 2014). Therefore, it is not surprising that insight is not equal in the value it contributes to creatives’ originality. Unlike problem solving in other disciplines, in advertising there are often different insight pathways to a creative solution. Quality insights contain elements of appropriateness and originality, with account planners having their own assumptions about what constitutes strong insight: an original human truth that is relatable to the consumer, usable by creatives and visionary for the brand (cite deliberately removed). Subsequently, the quality of insight is likely to moderate the originality of creative work.

A number of factors are making the development of original advertising ideas more difficult and complex. An important contribution of insight is to inject more emotion into the creative idea (Mitchell 2002), which agency practitioners consider as highly important in effective creative work (Nyilasy and Reid 2009). A stronger affective appeal in advertising has grown in importance because increasingly there is a blurring of the differences in the attributes and benefits offered by competing brands across product and service categories (Drake 1984). When insight is found, it injects a creative idea into the message proposition beyond simply the attributes or benefits associated with the brand (cite deliberately removed). It is from this very idea that original creativity can leap.

Finally, Schilling (2005) suggests two ways in which insight may work in conjunction with originality. First, if a problem-solver like a creative has a mental block, insight can work to overcome this. Second, insight can help even if it is merely a random fact, because the insertion of randomness alone can inject needed originality. However, these two mechanisms only work when originality is low already. Therefore, this sets up another interaction involving insight, this time with originality. This leads to Hypothesis 2, as follows:

H2: Insight can improve creativity when originality is weak.

3.2 Method

In order to test the hypotheses an experiment was conducted, adopting a 3 x 2 design. The insight manipulation was between subjects and consisted of three levels: strong insight, weak insight and no primed insight as the control condition. The media manipulation was within subjects, and consisted of two levels: print and television.

Sample. The participants in the experiment included 60 advertising creatives, resulting in 20 participants in each of the treatment cells. Specifically, 20 creatives received a weak insight, 20 received a strong insight and 20 received no primed insight, as the control condition. The adoption of practising creatives assisted in avoiding external validity problems (Nickerson 1999).

In total, the creative participants were employed in 15 Sydney-based advertising agencies in Sydney. Thirteen of these were international advertising agency brands, and the majority of these are owned by the top five international advertising agency holding companies. The remaining two agencies were large privately owned firms. Six of the participants were working as professional creative freelancers at one of the multinational agencies on the day of the experiment. At 10% of the sample, the number of freelancers is representative of freelance participation in the Sydney advertising agency industry workforce. The average age of participants was 37.5 years, with 13.6 years of experience. The participants consisted of 20 art directors, 21 copywriters and 19 creative directors. Forty-two of the participants were male. Twenty-one respondents regularly or always worked with automotive clients, five rarely worked with an automotive client, 10 had no category experience and the remainder occasionally worked with automotive clients. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the treatment conditions.

Procedure: The creative task was modelled on Kilgour and Koslow (2009); however, the automotive category replaced household insecticide spray. The automotive category was chosen as these accounts are typically held by the multinational agencies where participants were likely to have varying degrees of category domain knowledge. The automotive category also enabled the introduction of distinctive product attributes that could be used to support the advertising message proposition.

Participants were asked to develop a television advertisement and a print advertisement for an un-named fictitious utility vehicle. Respondents were provided with an experiment booklet containing clear instructions that were reiterated by the researcher. The response booklets all contained a creative brief for the utility vehicle that outlined the advertising objectives (to persuade shoppers for competing work utility vehicles to include our brand on their shopping list), target audience (farmers and tradesmen), proposition (no harder-working utility) and several attributes (10% more power than competitors; 15% larger scratch-resistant tray; rust-resistant underbody and all-wheel drive) that formed the foundations of the reasons to believe the promise made by the brand to consumers. The attributes were deliberately added to the creative brief as prior research identified the importance of a brand-differentiating message in facilitating effective and original advertisements (Stewart and Furse 1986; Stewart and Koslow 1989). However, the booklets varied as to whether they contained strong, weak or no insight conditions.

Participants were given 40 minutes to complete the creative task experiment. They spent the first 10 minutes listing all their ideas that could be used to solve the advertising problem contained in the creative brief. They then selected their best idea for print and best idea for television, spending 15 minutes on each of these media developing their ideas into creative executions. Throughout the experiment the researcher called time at 10 minutes, 15 minutes, and at 15 minutes instructing the creatives to proceed to the next task. Those participants who received an insight in their creative brief were instructed by the research to use the insight to help inform the message proposition. The control group were not instructed to use a primed insight in the development of their creative executions; however, they were at liberty to use an insight at their discretion. When creatives finished the creative task they completed a self-evaluation questionnaire in order to establish their intrinsic motivation towards the task and their domain knowledge. The experiment took place in a meeting room in each of the advertising agencies. Creatives started and ended the experiment at precisely the same time.

Manipulations. The independent variables of insight (strong, weak, absent), category expertise and intrinsic motivation were measured between subjects to determine their impact on the dependent variable, advertising creativity (measured as a composite factor consisting of originality and strategy). Participants in the insight conditions were provided different quality insights, reflecting different levels of depth identified in the human truth that may connect the brand to the human motivation for consumption behaviour within the category among the target audience.

Pre-test: Determining strong and weak insights. The first pre-test focused on the quality of the insight. To determine the strong and weak insight conditions, nine account planners from six multinational advertising agencies were asked to identify both strong and weak insights that may be used by creatives in developing a persuasive advertising execution for the fictitious ‘utility’ brand, or ‘ute’, as referred to in Australia (or what is commonly referred to in the US as a ‘pickup truck’). Although planners suggested several insights each, there was overlap between the various insights suggested, and this was reduced down to a list of nine unique insights, listed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. List of Tested Insights

Order number	Insight
1	Blue-collar workers put out the hard yakka to build the dreams of the country and its people while silently holding dreams of their own
2	Smart people get hard-working equipment to do their dirty jobs
3	There is nobility in hard work
4	Work is physical, success is mental
5	For tradesmen and farmers their vehicle is a point of pride, like scars that prove one's toughness
6	Men do hard work
7	Tradesman and farmers don't want bells and whistles; they simply need a truck that can stand up to the punishment of a hard day's work
8	Farmers and tradesmen wear a uniform of scrapes, mud, sweat and blood
9	Everyone has a secret to hide

The list insights were next rated by a further 20 account planners on 15 items across a seven-point scale from strongly disagree (-3) to strongly agree (3). The items were drawn from prior qualitative work identifying the dimensions of quality insight (cite deliberately removed). Thus, we sought the items to load onto four scales: originality and three types of appropriateness. The three appropriateness scales were: 1) familiar and motivating to consumers, 2) fits with the strategy and message proposition and 3) usable for creatives. Each of the scales was reliable, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging between .76 and .96.

In the factor analysis presented in Table 3.2, three factors emerged from the 15-items, based on the scree plot test. Two factors had eigenvalues greater than 1, and the third was .941, which was close to the traditional cut-off of 1.0. The factors identified were: familiar and motivating to consumers; fits with the strategy and message proposition; and a final factor that combined originality and usefulness of insight to creatives. It was attempted to split this final factor into the two expected components of originality and usefulness to creatives, but they would not cleanly load as two separate factors. When a two-factor solution was forced on the eight items relating to originality and usefulness to creatives, the two factors correlated around r = .55. Although correlated scales can often show divergent validity, the plot also showed slight overlap involving one item only.

Table 3.2. Factor Structure for the Dimensions of Insights

	Originality *and* useful to creatives (combined factors)	**Fits with strategy**	**Familiar and motivating to consumers**	**Commonalities**
Items for originality				
Imaginative	.858	.184	.077	.776
Original	.842	.118	.084	.730
Unexpected	.840	.139	-.130	.741
Items for useful to creatives				
Transformative for the brand	.767	.254	.251	.715
Brand-differentiating	.744	.370	-.011	.691
Inspires quality creative	.744	.343	.215	.717
Leaves room for creative execution	.686	.336	.229	.636
Emotional in its expression	.685	-.054	.418	.647
Items for fits with strategy				
Appropriate to the proposition	.163	.894	.158	.851
A good fit with the clients proposition	.235	.881	.194	.869
On strategy	.273	.860	.296	.902
Leverages to the proposition	.293	.851	.286	.892
Items for familiar and motivating to consumers				
Is an insight familiar to consumers	-.092	.353	.784	.747
Credible to the target audience	.233	.557	.637	.771
Based on a human truth	.423	.270	.605	.618

Although we could not confirm whether originality and usefulness to creatives were a single factor or two factors, this issue became moot because one insight dominated the others and one insight trailed all others, regardless of whether a three- or four-factor solution was assumed. These two insights became the strong and weak insights.

The strong insight adopted in the experiment was, *'for tradesmen and farmers their vehicle is a point of pride like scars that prove one's toughness'*. It scored the highest across the factors. The weak insight was, *'men do hard work'* and scored the lowest, regardless of whether or not originality and usefulness to creative were separated or merged.

Pre-test: Procedures. The procedure was also pre-tested among professional creatives. The timing for the experiment had to be adjusted from 60 minutes to 40 minutes. Instructions were simplified and the number of executions required from creatives was reduced from two to one per medium.

Coding. Two senior practicing advertising creatives were used as judges to assess the quality of the creative work. The work was assessed based on the extent to which the creative ideas were on strategy, the level of originality and the judge's own view of creativity. The adoption of practitioners held several advantages, as both judges had 'hands-on' experience in advertising creative development along with experience in the category. Both judges had also strong experience in reviewing creative work prior to presenting work to clients and had experience as judges in industry awards. The judges were paid and were motivated to provide an accurate assessment of the creative work across the agreed judging criteria.

Judges coded blind to the condition given to each of the participants. However, the judges were provided with key elements across all conditions: details of the objectives, target audience, proposition and reasons to believe in order evaluate work that was considered ‘on strategy’. To measure the strategic orientation of the work the judges made assessments of whether the creative execution was ‘on strategy’, ‘a good fit with the client’s strategy’, ‘an appropriate execution against the brief’, ‘built on good strategy’ and ‘persuasive for the target audience’. To provide an assessment of the originality, the judges assessed the degree to which the work was ‘original’, ‘imaginative’, ‘unexpected’, ‘novel’ and ‘different for the category’.

To ensure consistency in the assessments between judges, an extensive training process was undertaken. Judges were provided with two samples of the print and two samples of television advertising executions. They were given a copy of the creative brief containing the generic strategy elements provided to all participants and a coding questionnaire that outlined the assessment criteria. With no further instructions they were asked to proceed in assessing the creative work. The coder assessments were collected and coders were asked to discuss any differences in their scores, with the researcher clarifying any questions surrounding the categories of evaluation. The judges were then asked to proceed with judging the first 10% of the participants’ television and print executions across a sample of the different treatment conditions. These were again checked to evaluate coder agreement. Coder agreement of the print advertising ranged from .837 to .942, averaging .910. Coder agreement for television ranged from .767 to .892, averaging .827. Each booklet took on average 15 minutes for the coder to complete.

3.3 Findings

Measures. Strategy and originality were measures by two four-item factors. Table 3.3 lists the item wordings. Based on the eigenvalues greater than -1 and the scree plot rules, a two-factor model emerged and Table 3.3 also shows the loadings. The two-factor solution also explained over 92% of the variance. All expected loadings were greater than .9, and no off-loading was greater than .2. In addition, Table 3.3 shows the Cronbach alpha values for the two constructs to be greater than .9. The four items were summed and then scaled and centred.

Table 3.3. Factor Structure for Strategy and Originality

Compared to other advertisement/campaigns with the same media approach, this advertisement/campaign was…	Strategy	Originality
'On strategy'	.967	.076
A good fit with the client's strategy	.976	.108
An appropriate strategy for the client	.935	.160
Built on good strategy	.972	.115
Original	.238	.917
Unexpected	.070	.961
Novel	.126	.959
Different	.037	.927
Eigenvalue	3.79	3.60
Cronbach's alpha	.979	.963

The perceived creativity scale was a single-item scale that asked judges to rate the creativity of an execution from far less than average (-3) to far above average. Average creativity was the mid-point (0) on the scale. A single-item scale was used because perceived creativity can be viewed as a double concrete scale (Bergkvist and Rossiter 2007, 2009). This approach has been used by Koslow, Sasser and Riordan (2003) to establish the relative weights for originality and strategy in predicting creativity. The item was scaled and centred prior to analysis.

Models. Perceived creativity was predicted with the measures for originality and strategy, plus the insight and media treatments. Hierarchical linear modelling (HLM) was used, with the respondent modelled as random effect. Thus, any individual level differences are controlled for. All two- and three-way interactions were modelled, but only significant interactions were kept. Media proved not significant, and was dropped from the final model. Only one interaction was found to be significant. The model fit well, but HLM does not have an easily interpreted measure of fit like R^2. To give an intuitive idea of the level of fit, we repeated the model with a generalized linear model (GLM), modelling each respondent as a fixed effect. In this model, the R^2 was 92%, indicating an extremely high level of fit. The final model appears in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4. HLM Output for Perceived Creativity Model

		Perceived creativity	
		Estimate	***p*-value**
Covariance parameters			
Intercept	ID	.0476	.0646
Residual		.1695	.0001
Solution for fixed effects			
Intercept		-.1001	.2314
Originality		.9240	.0001
Strategy		.2267	.0001
	Strong	.2765	.0225
Insight	Weak	.0357	.7637
	None	0	.
	Strong	-.2849	.0078
Originality x Insight	Weak	-.1971	.0589
	None	0	.
Fit statistics			
-2 Res log likelihood		171.4	
AIC		175.4	

Originality largely drove the model, with a parameter over four times larger than strategy. Strong insight also had a large effect, about the same size as strategy. However, what is notable is the interaction between originality and insight. This is plotted in Figure 1. A high level of originality was one standard deviation above the mean and the low level was one standard deviation below. When originality was high, the work was perceived as highly creative irrespective of the strength of the insight. However, when originality was low, strong insight could partially make up for the lack of originality. Thus, insight can substitute for low levels of originality.

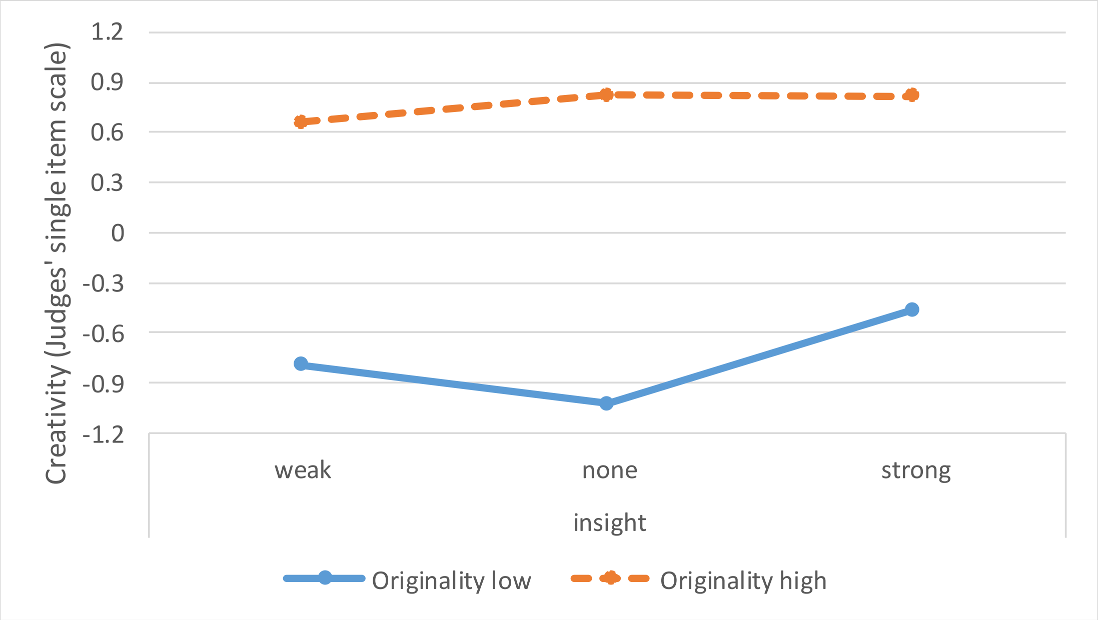

Figure 1. Perceived creativity by insight treatment and level of originality.

3.4 Discussion

Our findings demonstrate the importance of insight to originality, in contrast to the extant literature, where emphasis is placed on insight's role in focusing the strategic orientation of creatives' work. These findings support the trade-off between the creativity components (originality and strategy) observed by Kilgour and Koslow (2009). When originality is low, insight still makes the work more original than would be the case if there was weak or no insight.

Insight acts as a convergent priming cue to constrain itself into an original knowledge domain. By directing the creative orientation of advertising execution and providing a platform from which the creative can leap, the account planner is playing an extremely influential role within the creative development process.

This is a significant study that uses practising creatives to contribute to our knowledge of how insight affects creativity. While insight is a well-researched phenomenon for problem solving in psychology (Schilling 2005), our understanding of insight in an advertising context has been rather elusive. This is surprising, given the large community of planning practitioners who adopt insight to develop the message proposition.

In hindsight, it should not be surprising that the originality and useful to creatives factors merged in the pre-test factor model. If insight predominately helps creatives by giving them an original direction to go in, then what is useful to a creative would necessarily be originality.

Limitations. As is the case in all experimental research, this study contains a number of limitations. First, many aspects such as time, instructions and experimental conditions can impact the results (Harrington 1975). In particular, the timeframe given to creatives to develop the print and television advertising was extremely short compared to what would usually be the case in practice. This limited timeframe impairs the capacity for the divergent thinking necessary in creative problem solving. An extended timeframe would assist creatives in making further connections between distant knowledge as well as provide creatives with the opportunity to reflect on, evaluate and modify their ideas in the important incubation period (Wallas 1926). Similarly, the creatives in this experiment had to focus on creating two separate ideas for the print and television campaigns; however, in practice, the creatives would be asked to develop a campaign consisting of a ‘big idea’ that could transcend both media. Finally, although practising creatives were used in the experiment they completed the experiment individually. In practice, the art director and copywriter work together in the construction of the big idea. The team orientation and social construction of ideas may influence the overall results, given the specialised craft skills of the art director and copywriter disciplines.

Future research. The study highlights a number of areas for future research. First, how does insight influence the key factors associated with individual creativity: creativity skills, intrinsic task motivation and domain knowledge (Amabile 1988)? For example, can insight compensate for a creative’s weak knowledge domain? Does a strong insight improve motivation towards the advertising task because of the inspiration it provides, or does it make creatives lazy because the planner has executed a large part of the creative thinking? These remain important questions regarding the contribution of insight to the creative development process. Second, understanding the impact of insight and its role in shifting the orientation of creative execution towards more emotional appeals needs to be more clearly understood, particularly given the importance placed on emotional appeals by practitioners (Mitchell 2002). Finally, we need to develop our understanding of insight across a broader range of media, including outdoor media and the emerging digital space.

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Chapter 4: The Role of Consumer Insight in Creative Advertising Development: Essential Aid or Cognitive Bias?

Abstract

Advertising professionals praise the role of consumer insight in solving advertising problems creatively. Account planners claim to use insight to inject the necessary strategy into a campaign, building a creative platform upon which a brand connects with consumers. Although insight is widely seen as an invaluable aid, another perspective is that insight can create *mental set fixation*, a cognitive bias that reinforces only limited perspectives on a problem, thus inhibiting creativity. This study examines whether strong, weak or no primed insight conditions help or hinder professional creatives to develop highly creative advertising ideas, testing across two media, print and television. Support is found for insight's enhancement of the creative quality of print advertising, primarily by boosting originality. However, insight may create mental fixation when developing television advertising. Although we show consumer insight can improve the quality of creative ideas, it should be carefully managed to produce consistently high-quality creative work.

Advertising practitioners and academics alike praise the ability of consumer insights to enhance the quality of advertising (see Fallon and Senn 2006; Gordon 2002; Hackley 2003a, b; Morrison and Haley 2003, 2006; Steel 1998). Practitioners like Fallon and Senn (2006) see consumer insights as a tool to provide strategic direction to the creative development process. Mitchell (2002) stresses the importance of insight in feeding the creative process. Hall (2002) notes how insight can stimulate creatives to find a creative idea that makes the advertisement meaningful to consumers.

Advertising scholars also value insight in both guiding and enhancing the creative process. For example, Hackley (2003a, b) explains how insight is central to improving the creative process by serving as a central creative platform for advertising campaign development designed to bring the consumer and the brand closer together. Morrison and Haley (2003, 2006) provide additional studies reinforcing insight's role in advancing the creative process to produce strategic and more creative advertising. Jacobi, Freund, and Araujo (2015) identify the role of the account planner as central to creating an advertising message that embodies the reflexive nature of the product characteristics, consumer insights and competition relationships. O'Connor et al. (2016) report that consumer research insights predominately improve the strategic aspects of creative work. Thus, both the practitioner and academic literature argue that insight is an essential aid to good creative work because it injects a needed strategic orientation into advertising.

However, insight could also be seen as imposing a potential bias in the creative thinking process. From a creative thinking perspective, providing an insight may sometimes constrain divergent thinking and unintentionally limit the ability to arrive at an original idea. Specifically, an insight can be viewed as a priming cue that fixates the creatives on a more or less divergent area, depending upon the quality of the insight. In this context, creativity scholars (e.g., Ford 1996; Marsh et al. 1996; Schilling 2005; Wiley 1998) would argue that what planners call insight could impose *mental set fixation*. A hindrance to genuine creative thinking, mental set fixation is a subtle process rarely recognized by those who are subject to it. Thus, not only can mental set fixation bias divergent thinking into a narrow area, but it also biases one to not being able to see the effect in one's own creative work.

For example, advertising practitioners may view insight as enhancing their work, but whether or not it does is a separate issue. Insight could be an essential aid to good advertising work—or insight could limit creativity such that those involved with the work are blind to the biases imposed by fixation. Unfortunately, differentiating between the positive and negative effects of insight is complicated by the fact that few creative thinking experiments have been performed on professional creatives. One of the few study studies, Kilgour and Koslow (2009), manipulated the priming of a past, failed campaign—which should have been ignored. This dampened creativity, as those past failed themes showed up in subsequent creative work.

To understand the contrasting effects for insight, the concept needs to be set in a broad theoretical context, yet creativity's dynamic nature complicates that context. For example, Verbeke et al.'s (2008) explored a highly creative setting—advertising agencies—to study environment's effects on creative performance and finds dramatically different signs than prior work that used more typical workplaces. That is, creativity research is prone to interaction effects that need to be incorporated, but most researchers only focus on one, or maybe two, constructs rather than set out a more comprehensive model (see Amabile and Pratt 2016)—but we need to look at creativity in that wider context.

To provide a broad framework for understanding insight's role in the advertising development process, this study draws on what is the most widely used model of creativity, the Componential Model which was first proposed by Amabile (1996) and later updated by Amabile and Pratt (2016). They argue that three main components predict creativity: 1) creative idea generation skills, 2) intrinsic task motivation and 3) domain knowledge. Although the Componential Model (Amabile and Pratt 2016) has dramatically influenced thinking on creativity, the source of empirical measurement presents a challenge.

An important issue is what construct is being measured by whom. For example, when Amabile (1996) first proposed the model, the primary data were based on experimental work demonstrating that extrinsic motivation reduces creativity. It was then *inferred* that intrinsic motivation must necessarily increase creativity. Although supporting evidence of intrinsic motivation's positive influence has since been provided (e.g., Amabile and Pratt 2016; Sasser and Koslow 2012), these few studies are primarily based on creative outcomes measured by self-reports. With regards to domain knowledge, most of the evidence is again inferred, rather than directly measured. One of the few studies with objective creativity measurements, Simonton (1997) showed an inverted U-shaped relationship, meaning that if one focuses on those in the upper range of domain knowledge, the influence of knowledge on creativity is *negative*, rather than positive. Thus, it is all the more critical that key aspects of the Componential Model are integrated with other approaches, like mental set fixation, to investigate whether insight is a help or hindrance to creative work. Hence, we offer the research question: what is the net influence of insight on creativity?

This research addresses all three dimensions of the Componential Model, emphasizing two of these. High skilled professional advertising creatives participated in an experiment that included measures of intrinsic motivation and domain knowledge. However, it may be the case that creatives themselves perceive insight to have a positive influence on creativity when objective professional observers do not (see Malle 2006). Therefore, actor-observer differences were also incorporated by measuring creativity both through self-report as well as assessments of independent judges, who were also professional creatives.

To test the hypotheses, an experiment compared strong, weak or no primed insight conditions. All respondents were professional creatives working for major agencies in Sydney, Australia. A total of 60 creatives participated in this study, with 20 respondents in each of the three conditions. Each creative produced two creative ideas, one in print and the other in television, for a total of 120 creative advertising ideas. Two external judges assessed all advertisements, and they had a high level of agreement. One judge was a senior art director and the other a copy-based creative director, both with multinational agency experience currently working in Sydney, Australia. This approach to creativity's measurement incorporated the two-factor originality-appropriateness framework (Runco and Jaeger 2012). That is, something is creative only when it is both an original and appropriate solution to an advertising problem (Sasser and Koslow 2008; Koslow, Sasser, and Riordan 2003).

Results confirm that models based on self-assessment measures of creativity are consistent with a perception of insight's uniformly positive influence on creativity. However, models using assessments by professional judges show a more complex and nuanced role for insight. By comparing both self- and judge-assessments, the study shows: a) when providing an insight may enhance the quality of creative work and b) when insight may introduce bias by narrowing the range of divergent thinking—while at the same time making creatives less able to evaluate their own work objectively. The implication is that using consumer insights provides benefits, but also imposes costs. Thus, managers need to manage the use of insight across media carefully.

4.1 Theory Development

Before one can understand insight's role in the creative process, it is first necessary to understand the key drivers of individual creativity. The Componential Model of creativity (Amabile 1996; Amabile and Pratt 2016) identifies three primary drivers of creativity: creativity-relevant skills, intrinsic task motivation and domain-relevant skills. Creativity-relevant skills relate to a person's divergent thinking capability in identifying new perspectives for a creative problem-solution pathway. In advertising agencies, creatives find original ideas that are motivating to consumers, yet differentiated from the competition. Kilgour and Koslow (2009) show differences in the work developed by creatives, account executives, and students who display different levels of creativity-relevant processes. The amount of effort directed towards the creative task is moderated by the degree of intrinsic motivation (Amabile and Pratt 2016). Creative briefs that are more inspiring and provide a platform for divergent thinking are more likely to encourage creative effort. However, creatives must draw upon their own knowledge domains to arrive at a breakthrough creative solution.

However, individual creatives have different levels of domain knowledge, and the breadth and depth of these knowledge domains have been shown to influence creativity (see Gardner 1993; Hayes 1989; Schilling 2005; Simonton 1995). One way to look at these three components is to interpret them through Runco and Jaeger's (2012) standard definition of creativity. This definition identifies two elements essential for creativity: originality and appropriateness. In advertising, Sasser and Koslow (2008) note how most scholars emphasize the role of originality, or other synonyms like “novelty.” For the appropriateness dimension, some call it “strategy,” while others use “relevance” or “value,” yet these are all types of appropriateness. These two concepts are important because they relate to two crucial thinking techniques adopted by creatives in the search for original and appropriate ideas: divergent and convergent thinking.

In the Componential Model (Amabile and Pratt 2016), several factors appear to have varying degrees of influence over appropriateness and originality. For example, intrinsic motivation is widely seen as influencing the originality aspect of creative advertising. Creating advertising is challenging work, and therefore there is great value in the ability to stay motivated to solve a seemingly impossible problem. Domain knowledge influences the appropriateness of the work resulting from its contribution to the relevance, meaningfulness, and content of advertising. Within this context, insight acts as a type of domain knowledge and should have an effect on how appropriate the advertising is. With this as background, one can next understand the role of insight in this process.

4.1.1 Insight, Domain Knowledge and Creativity

Definitions of insight in an advertising context emphasize both its objective, factual nature, but that it also somehow motivates creative work. For example, Zaltman (2014) suggests, “insight is a realization—an idea—that feels correct; it is a thought experienced as true at the moment it reaches awareness,” (p. 373). He differentiates an insight from facts in that insight incorporates other tacit knowledge to give meaning and context to factual information. Similarly, Hackley (2003a, b) suggests insights are research findings about consumers that can be readily integrated into the creative development process.

Practitioners focus on insight as “truths” about ordinary people and their relationship with a brand or category, which can be used to inspire creative advertising (Fallon and Senn 2006; Gordon 2002; Steel 1998). Revealing themselves in research, mining for insights involves delving deep into the motivation of consumers to unlock truths that consumers may not be consciously aware of (Zaltman 2014), openly willing to share, or that may help bridge the gap between what they say and what they do (Steel 1998).

Building off these works, qualitative research on account planners (e.g., cite deliberately withheld) concludes by defining insight as a “human truth” that meets three criteria: “(1) a succinct socio-cultural expression of human motivation or need, which (2) contains an inherent tension that can be resolved by the brand attribute or benefit, in a manner that is (3) original because it has not previously been applied in the category,” (p. X). The key facts incorporated into insight, then, relate to human motivation, but that they also involve some tension off which creatives are allowed build. For example, a brand of deodorant targeting young men, may use the insight that young men are sexually aspirant but social insecure. The brand resolves this tension by providing confidence.

A fundamental characteristic of insight is the “Aha!” moment, which represents the affective response to the surprising and sudden way that insight provides a solution to the problem (Gick and Lockhart 1995). In the advertising context, the quality of insight into consumer motivation mediates the degree of emotional reaction from the “Aha!” moment (Mitchell 2002). When the account planner reveals a profound truth about the motivations of a target audience, this insight unlocks a creative pathway for the advertising problem to be solved. This insight makes its way into the creative brief designed to advance the affective appeal of the promise made by the brand to consumers and to provide a strategic platform from which creative execution can leap (Hackley 2003a; Mitchell 2002; Steel 1988).

Of Amabile and Pratt's (2016) three causal factors of creativity, the literature tends to suggest that insight should work by enhancing knowledge in the task domain to have a positive influence on creativity (Amabile 1996; Csikszentmihalyi 1996). Domain knowledge refers to the degree of expertise of the individual in the specific problem domain (Schilling 2005). This expertise is developed through practiced pathways and the experience gained through the resulting success or failure in identifying a congruent creative solution to the problem at hand (Dosi 1988; Schilling and Green 2011).

In the advertising context, domain-relevant skills largely pertain to the expertise gained through past experience in developing advertising in a specific product or service category. This may include factual knowledge of consumers, the brand, the product category and competition that help in identifying a solution to the advertising problem. Some researchers find that broad knowledge improves creative problem solving because it enables the individual to make random connections between different knowledge domains (Dosi 1988; Schilling 2005; Simonton 1995). While this random approach may limit the number of successful creative outcomes, the possibility of breakthrough ideas is more likely (Fleming 2001; Katila and Ahuja 2002; Schilling and Green 2011).

Other academics have emphasized the importance of narrow and deep expertise in domain knowledge. From this perspective, a rich understanding of the domain provides the specialization required for breakthrough thinking (Gardner 1993; Hayes 1989). However, some researchers suggest that this is more likely to deliver incremental, rather than original or disruptive solutions (Schilling 2005).

Insight should enhance domain knowledge by identifying a human truth that deepens understanding of the consumer motivation (Steel 1998). In this way, insight more closely aligns the consumer with the advertising message strategy process (Barry, Peterson, and Todd 1987; Hackley 2003a, b; Meyers 1986). By providing the creative team with a consumer insight, account planners provide a “central creative platform” for the advertising campaign (Hackley 2003a, p. 449). This insight is ultimately the result of the account planner’s divergent thinking process, designed to converge creatives’ thinking into an appropriate knowledge domain. This is an important function because insight aids in identifying a solution to an advertising problem by highlighting the motivation most susceptible to drive consumer fulfillment of the unmet need. The account planner seeks to unlock an insight that will strengthen the affective appeal of the advertising message and act as a seed from which a creative execution can be built (Fallon and Senn 2006; Gordon 2002; Hall 2002; Mitchell 2002; Steel 1998). In this instance, insight connects consumer motivation to a knowledge domain, providing a solution to the advertising problem.

If insight’s role is to bring the brand closer to the consumer, insight should enhance the domain knowledge of a creative. However, not all insights are equal in the domain knowledge to which they contribute. Strong insights work to connect consumers with unconscious motivations and are typically associated with an affective “Aha!” moment that arises from the unexpected and sudden way that insight reveals a connection between the consumer and the brand (Gick and Lockhart 1995; Schilling and Green 2011). Weak insights tend to lack the “Aha!” moment that mediates the affective appeal necessary for the desired consumer response. Thus, the way insight is supposed to work is as an interaction between the quality of the insight and the level of domain knowledge. If a creatives’ domain knowledge is weak the priming cue provided by a strong insight should greatly enhance how strategic the creative execution is. However, for creatives with a high level of domain knowledge, the relative enhancement of the strategic nature of creative execution should be less. Weak insights may still have positive effects on how strategic the work is, but only when the creatives' domain knowledge is unusually low. There is no reason to believe that there should be differences in the effects observed by self- or judge assessments.

> **H1: Insight and domain knowledge interact such that 1) when domain knowledge is low, insight greatly enhances the strategy of the advertising execution, however 2) when domain knowledge is high, insight modestly enhances the strategy.**

4.1.2 Insight, Intrinsic Task Motivation and Creativity

The Componential Model proposes that high levels of intrinsic motivation should enhance the degree of creative effort towards the advertising task. Intrinsic motivation relates to an individual's inner-directed passion for completing a task. Various research highlights the importance of intrinsic motivation to creativity (Sasser and Koslow 2012; Young 2003). Intrinsically motivated behavior is driven by internal rewards that are enjoyable and purposeful enough to encourage persistence (Pinder 2011). These can be distinguished from extrinsic influences that consist of incentives provided by an external agent as a reward for performance (Amabile 1996; Cerasoli, Nicklin, and Ford 2014). In contrast, extrinsic motivations, such as financial or promotion rewards for creative effort, can reduce creativity (Amabile 1996; Torr 2008).

These motivational influences have essential implications in their influence over the direction, effort and persistence in the creative attempt (Kanfer, Chen, and Pritchard

2008). When individuals find a task enjoyable and more compatible with their self-directed goals, motivation towards the task is heightened (Patall, Cooper, and Robinson 2008), more effort is extended, and effort is more persistent (Deci 1972). Creatives should be able to observe their own level of intrinsic motivation and believe that when they apply effort to divergent thinking tasks the originality of their creative execution should be enhanced. Thus, more intrinsic motivation should ordinarily mean creatives self-assess their work as being more original.

H2: Use of insight increases self-assessments of originality of a creative execution.

4.1.3 An Alternative Perspective on Insight: Imposing Mental Set Fixation

In contrast to the Componential Model approach to intrinsic motivation, another perspective is that the use of insight could operate as a priming cue that imposes a cognitive bias. Although domain knowledge is important for strategic work, that same knowledge may induce functional fixedness, which directly constrains divergent thinking (Birch and Rabinowitz 1951; Simonton 1995; Wiley 1998). This concept involves the failure to use familiar domain knowledge in an unfamiliar way. Functional fixedness results when people experience difficulty moving past the traditional conventions that guide thinking in respect of a knowledge domain or because they automatically arrive at a preconditioned idea (Duncker and Lees 1945; Gick and Lockhart 1995; Schilling 2005; Wiley 1998) or a familiar problem–solution combination (Luchins1942). Fixation may not only inhibit the production of ideas *per se*, but it may also make those ideas less original (Smith, Ward, and Schumacher 1993). Fixation can originate from existing domain knowledge, or it can come about from informational cues that prime creatives to specific knowledge domains (Kilgour and Koslow 2009; Marsh, Landau, and Hicks 1996; Smith, Ward, and Schumacher 1993).

However, regardless of the source of fixation its effect is not readily observable to those doing the creating. A widespread cognitive bias, fixation seems to be extremely problematic in innovation and creativity settings (see Zynga 2013). This unseen bias affects both novices and experts, but sometimes these biases affect experts more than novices in that experts carefully train themselves to solve problems in set routines efficiently. Thus, if insight is acting as fixation and impairing the originality in creatives' divergent thinking, it should be observable by comparing self-assessment of one's own creativity with assessments by external judges.

Objective external judges can see the effects of fixation. By merely providing insight—any insight, strong or weak—this should restrict the range of ideation possible, thus restricting the originality in an execution. Insight creates a strategic focus that creatives may feel limits their ability to jump across to unusual knowledge domains to solve the advertising problem. That is, insight puts creatives in a narrow box or intellectual "straight-jacket," which is hard to break out of, no matter how much effort is expended. It may be that insights keep one on a strategic orientation, but the level of originality is merely a function of the narrow range of ideas within which the ideation is kept. Thus, when creatives are in a situation where they are expected to do well—as when they have high intrinsic motivation—then providing insight may negatively influence their originality.

However, fixation can still enhance originality if the domain one fixates on provides a fertile area for ideation. That is, if an insight is strong, originality may appear to increase, but not due to the usual route of a creative's hard work resulting in an outstanding execution. Koslow (2015) suggests a situation where creatives literally execute a strong insight and find that the quality of the work is greatly enhanced. In effect, when planners are providing a strong insight to creatives, planners are providing the necessary level of originality for an outstanding execution and all the creative needs to do is execute it.

It may be that the strongest effects of insight are in poorly motivated creatives. Ordinarily, low levels of intrinsic motivation should lead to unoriginal executions. However, if a creative with low motivation uses an insight, the originality is determined by the quality of the insight, not the minimal effort the creative expends. It may still be that a creative with a high level of intrinsic motivation does well at developing original executions, but a strong insight in the hands of a poorly motivated creative may lead to a good outcome as well.

Although judges should be able to detect higher levels of originality when creatives are highly motivated or using a strong insight, it is not clear what the creative who produce the work will perceive. It may be that a poorly motivated creative is aware that his or her work is merely a literal execution of a strong insight—and thus may be original. Alternatively, it could be that he or she infers it must be unoriginal given the low effort applied. But external judges should still always see the increased originality.

H3: Judges' assessments of the originality of a creative execution are highest when (a) creatives have high intrinsic motivation and have been given no insight and (b) creatives have low intrinsic motivation and have been given a strong insight.

4.1.4 Summary: Strategy, Originality and the Net Effect on Creativity

To review the two contrasting perspectives on domain knowledge, both positive and negative effects may be observed. If creatives think that insight solves the advertising problem it may enhance the strategic orientation of the execution. However, it may also induce mental set fixation, resulting in creatives reverting to their primed knowledge, with the originality of the idea dependent upon the strength of the insight. However, if creatives see the insight as providing a platform from which creativity can leap they will view insight as a new pathway to an original solution to the advertising problem. The first of these alternatives is not an effortful process, but the second one clearly is. This suggests that insight is related to the level of intrinsic task motivation. Given the positive and negative influence on both strategy and originality—both facets of creativity—it would be difficult to make specific predictions regarding creativity.

4.2 Method

To test the hypotheses, an experiment was conducted that used a 3 x 2 factorial design. Insight was manipulated between subjects, and had three levels (strong insight, weak insight, no primed insight groups). Media had two levels (print versus television) within subjects, as participants produced both a print and television campaign in any order of their choosing. Overall, six models were fitted; three for self-assessments of strategy, originality and creativity, and three for judge assessments of strategy, originality, and creativity.

Sample. The experiment was conducted across 60 advertising agency creatives, consisting of 20 subjects per treatment. That is, one group of 20 creatives received no primed insight as the control condition. The second group of 20 creatives received a weak insight in their creative briefs, while the third group of 20 creatives received a strong insight.

The respondents were employed across 15 advertising agencies in Sydney, 13 of which were part of large international agency networks, most being part of the top five international holding companies. Two were large privately owned independent agencies. Six respondents were freelancers who were working at multinational agencies on the day of data collection. At 10%, this percentage of freelancers is representative of the Sydney creative workforce. The average age was 37.5 years, with 13.6 years of experience in the advertising industry. Twenty-one respondents regularly or always worked with an automotive client, five said they rarely worked with an automotive client, ten said they never worked with automotive clients, and the remainder occasionally worked with automotive clients. About one-third were art directors (20), one-third were copywriters (21), and the rest were creative directors (19). Forty-two of the respondents were male. Thirty-three respondents were single; the remainder were married, partnered or in *de facto* relationships. The adoption of agency practitioners assisted in avoiding external validity problems (Nickerson 1999). The assignment to test conditions was random.

Procedure. Subjects were asked to develop a print advertisement and a television advertisement for a fictitious automotive brand. The automotive category was selected, as these accounts are held by a select number of agencies and likely to have respondents with a wide range of category knowledge and experience. The automotive category also had distinctive product attributes that could be used in support of the advertising message proposition.

Respondents were provided an experiment booklet containing clear instructions that were reinforced by the researcher. The response booklets all contained a creative brief for the utility vehicle that outlined the advertising objectives (to persuade shoppers for competing work utility vehicles to include the test brand on their shopping list), target audience (farmers and tradesmen), proposition (no harder-working utility) and several attributes (10% more power than competitors; 15% larger scratch-resistant tray; rust-resistant underbody and all-wheel drive) that formed the foundations of the reasons to believe the promise made by the brand to consumers. These attributes were added as prior research identified the importance of a brand-differentiating message in facilitating effective and original advertisements (Stewart and Furse 1986; Stewart and Koslow 1989). However, the booklets varied as to whether they contained a strong, weak or no insight.

Each respondent had 40 minutes to complete the experiment. Respondents spent the first 10 minutes generating and recording a list of potential ideas in solving the advertising problem. They then selected their best idea for print and their best idea for television and spent 15 minutes on each medium developing them into advertising executions. Time was called after 10 minutes, 15 minutes, and 15 minutes when subjects were asked to proceed to the next task. Participants provided with an insight condition were instructed to use the insight contained in the creative brief to help inform the advertising message proposition. The control group was not told to use a primed insight in the development of their creative executions and was therefore at liberty to use an insight at their discretion. At the completion of the creative task, respondents completed a self-evaluation questionnaire to establish their intrinsic motivation towards the task and domain knowledge. The experiment was conducted in a meeting room in each of the advertising agencies, with creatives starting and completing the experiment at the same time.

Manipulations. The independent variables of insight (strong, weak, absent), category expertise and intrinsic motivation were measured between subjects to determine the impact on the dependent variable, advertising creativity (measured as a composite factor consisting of originality and strategy). Participants in the insight conditions were primed with a strategic direction that provided varying degrees of depth to the human truth underpinning consumer motivations in the category.

Pre-test. The experiment underwent two pre-tests, one for the insight quality and the other for the procedure. To determine the strong and weak insight conditions, nine account planners from six Sydney advertising agencies were asked to develop an insight relevant to the fictitious brand of "ute" (i.e., the term for "pickup truck" in Australian English). A compilation of nine insights was later rated by a further 20 account planners across a seven-point scale from strongly disagree (-3) to strongly agree (3). These nine insights were assessed on 15 items corresponding to the four dimensions of insight identified by (cite deliberately withheld). These factors were: "originality" plus three types of appropriateness or strategy ("familiar and motivating to consumers;" "fits with the strategy and message proposition;" and "usefulness for creatives"). Each of these four expected factors showed high levels of convergent validity, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .76 to .96.

The 15 items were factor analyzed, but only a three-factor solution emerged, with the factors identified being "familiar and motivating to consumers," "fits with the strategy and message proposition" and a third factor that combined "originality" and "usefulness of insight to creatives." Attempts to split this third factor into the two expected two components of “originality” and “usefulness to creatives,” were unsuccessful as they would not load cleanly as two separate factors even when allowed to correlate. When a two-factor solution was forced on the eight items relating to originality and usefulness to creatives, a factor plot showed the two factors correlated at around r=.55. Although correlated scales can often show divergent validity, the plot also showed slight overlap involving one item only. Although it was not possible to confirm whether originality and usefulness to creatives was a single factor or two factors, this issue became moot because one insight dominated the others and one insight trailed all others, regardless of whether a three- or four-factor solution was assumed.

The strong insight was *“for tradesmen and farmers their vehicle is a point of pride, like scars that prove one’s toughness.”* It scored the highest across factors whether or not originality and usefulness to creatives were separate or merged. The weak insight was *“men do hard work,”* and scored the lowest, regardless of there being three or four factors.

The procedure was also pre-tested among professional creatives. As a result, the instructions were simplified, the time limit reduced from 60 minutes to 40 minutes and executions cut from two per medium to one per medium due to participant time constraints.

Coding. Two senior practicing advertising creative (a creative director and a senior art director) judged the originality and the extent to which the work was on strategy. Using advertising practitioners had several advantages, as both judges had experience in advertising development, experience in the automotive category, and held extensive expertise in the evaluation of client work prior to client presentation along with industry award judging experience. The judges were paid and were therefore well motivated to provide an accurate reflection of the judging criteria.

For judges to accurately identify the extent to which the work was on the proposed strategy they were provided with details of the advertising objectives, target audience, proposition and reasons to believe. However, the judges coded blind to the insight condition. To measure strategy, judges made discretionary decisions pertaining to the extent that the work was "on strategy," "a good fit with the client's strategy," "an appropriate execution against the brief," "built on good strategy" and "persuasive for the target audience," To measure originality, the judges focused on the extent to which the work was "original," "imaginative," "unexpected," "novel" and "different for the category".

The judges participated in an extensive training programme to ensure consistency in the evaluation of the creative ideas. In addition to the brief, judges were provided with a detailed coder's questionnaire outlining the elements to be evaluated. Next, the judges examined sample executions, two in print plus two in television. Without further instruction, they were asked to judge the sampled work. The coder responses were collated and they discussed differences in their scores. The researcher clarified any categories of evaluation sought by the coders.

At the completion of the initial training, the judges proceeded to assess 10% of the respondents' print and television executions, across a sample of the different treatments. The scores were then checked confirm the degree of coder agreement. The correlation between judges for each item for print advertisements ranged from .873 to .942, averaging .910. The correlations for each item for television advertisements ranged from .767 to .892, averaging .827. On average it took 15 minutes for the judges to code a response booklet.

4.3 Findings

Manipulation checks. To confirm the quality of the manipulations, several checks were used. Subjects were asked, "was there an insight explicitly stated in the brief you were given?" with responses ranging from "definitely no" (1) to "definitely yes" (6). The strong and weak insight conditions had means of 4.9 and 4.55, respectively, which were not statistically different from one another (p=.33). The no primed insight control had a mean of 2.55, which was significantly different from the two insight groups (p<.0001 in both cases). Subjects were also asked to rate how strong the insight in the brief was, with possible responses ranging from extremely weak (1) to extremely strong (6). The strong insight condition had a mean of 4.25, which was statistically different from the means for the weak and no insight conditions, at 2.35 and 3.0 (p<0.0001 and p=.0002, respectively). The lack of insight did not affect perceptions of client quality. Responses to this item ranged from far below average (1) to far above average (7), but there were no mean differences across the three treatments (p=.39).

Measures. Parallel analyses were undertaken for both self-assessment and judge assessments of the dependent variables. The items and scales for strategy and originality were drawn from Koslow, Sasser, and Riordan (2003), and were identically worded for both respondents and judges. The scores for judges were taken as the average between the two.

Table 4.1 shows the factor analysis loadings, eigenvalues and Cronbach's alpha values for the two analyses. In both analyses, two factors were identified by both the scree plot elbow and eigenvalues-greater-than-1 rules. The self-assessed factor model had an explained variance of 77.15%, while the judge-assessed model achieved 92.35%. The structures appear parallel and clean, and replicate Koslow, Sasser, and Riordan

(2003), except for the cross loading of "built on good strategy" for the self-assessment data. Given the high correlation between the two factors (*r*=.39) and the modest number of respondents (60), some lack of clean fit would not be unexpected. The models predicting strategy both with and without this item were fitted, and the results were substantially the same. Given the measurement structure largely confirms prior work with only this one exception, the item was accepted despite its imperfections.

Table 4.1. Factor Structure of Strategy and Originality for Self- and Judge-Assessed Items

Compared to other advertisement/campaigns with the same media approach, this advertisement/campaign was…	Self-assessed factor structure		Judge-assessed factor structure	
	Strategy	Originality	Strategy	Originality
'On strategy'	.835	.112	.967	.076
A good fit with the client's strategy	.886	.094	.976	.108
An appropriate strategy for the client	.812	.292	.935	.160
Built on good strategy	.503	.492	.972	.115
Original	.372	.831	.238	.917
Unexpected	.140	.929	.070	.961
Novel	.136	.902	.126	.959
Different	.141	.930	.037	.927
Eigenvalue	2.59	3.58	3.79	3.60
Cronbach's alpha	.808	.942	.979	.963

The measure for creativity followed the recommendation of O'Connor et al. (2016) that a Cobb-Douglas function combining originality and strategy be used. As Runco and Jaeger (2012) note, the standard definition of creativity is something that is both original and appropriate. Thus, a multiplicative function of both strategy and originality is ideal. A Cobb-Douglas function takes the square root of originality and strategy and then multiplies them together. In all cases, the measures for originality, strategy and creativity were all centred and scaled prior to the next phase of analysis.

Two independent variables were evaluated using factor analysis: 1) intrinsic motivation and 2) knowledge and expertise. The first scale had five items and the second four. The two-factor model met the eigenvalue-greater-than-1 and scree plot elbow rules and had a total explained variance of 79.8%. Table 4.2 shows that the model fits cleanly, with all items loading as expected.

Table 4.2. Factor Model of Intrinsic Motivation and Knowledge and Expertise

	Intrinsic motivation	**Domain knowledge**
Working on this advertisement campaign was personally rewarding	.883	.161
Working on this brand was stimulating	.878	.129
Developing advertisements for this product was fun	.872	.035
Working on this advertisement campaign was interesting	.859	.169
Working on this category was exciting	.838	.242
I have a lot of expertise in developing automotive advertising	.092	.946
I understand the peculiarities involved in creating advertisements for the automotive category	.114	.903
I have worked on several campaigns in the automotive category in the past	.168	.901
I am knowledgeable about advertisements in the automobile category	.215	.824
Eigenvalues	3.85	3.33
Cronbach’s alpha	.922	.923

Model. HLM was used to assess the structure of the six models, with Table 4.3 showing key outputs. Strategy, originality and creativity were predicted, with three models for self-assessed measures and three for judge-assessed ones. All one-way factors were included in the model initially and a forward-stepwise procedure was used to include two- and three-way interactions significant at the $p<.05$ level. However, one interaction term—media, insight and intrinsic motivation—influencing judge-assessed originality—was significant at the $p=.059$ level. This was included in the final models due to the closeness to the .05 cut-off. Non-significant parameters not involved with significant interactions were then backwards deleted to obtain the final models. The random effects parameter for individual differences was kept in all models. Although HLM does not have an explained variance measure similar to regression's R^2, one can illustrate the level of fit assuming a GLM structure with fixed effects for individual differences. In this case, the R^2 values ranged from .34 to .39 for the self-assessed models and .57 to .68 for the judge-assessed models.

Table 4.3. HLM Output for Strategy, Originality and Creativity Model

			Strategy				**Originality**				**Creativity**			
			Self		**Judge**		**Self**		**Judge**		**Self**		**Judge**	
			Estimate	**p-value**	**Estimate**	**p-value**	**Estimate**	**p-value**	**Estimate**	**p-value**	**Estimate**	**p-value**	**Estimate**	**p-value**
Covariance parameters														
Parameter	Subject													
Intercept	ID		.3945	.0001	.2028	.0448	.2243	.0108	.0298	.4039	.3210	.0003	.1310	.1394
Residual			.2628	.0001	.6638	.0001	.4877	.0001	.8642	.0001	.3023	.0001	.7678	.0001
Solution for fixed effects														
Effect	Media	Insight												
Intercept			-.2277	.1707	.3971	.0635	0	1.000	.1412	..5266	-.1328	.3966	.3415	.1135
Media	Print				-.0731	.7777							-.3419	.2223
	TV				0	.							0	.
Insight		Strong	.6289	.0085	-.9230	.0028			-.2354	.4457	.4711	.0353	-.7127	.0209
		Weak	.0543	.8201	-.4877	.1111			-.0705	.8231	-.0726	.7484	-.3080	.3142
		None	0	.	0	.			0	.	0	.	0	.
Media X Insight	Print	Strong			.8233	.0277			1.0135	.0209			1.0543	.0093
	Print	Weak			-.1654	.6515			.2981	.4946			-.0363	.9264
	Print	None			0	.			0	.			0	.
	TV	Strong			0	.			0	.			0	.
	TV	Weak			0	.			0	.			0	.
	TV	None			0	.			0	.			0	.

			Strategy				Originality				Creativity			
			Self		**Judge**		**Self**		**Judge**		**Self**		**Judge**	
			Estimate	**p-value**	**Estimate**	**p-value**	**Estimate**	**p-value**	**Estimate**	**p-value**	**Estimate**	**p-value**	**Estimate**	**p-value**
Intrinsic motivation			.2688	.0103	-.2418	.0213	.5457	.0001	.5273	.0069	.4310	.0001		
Media X Intrinsic motivation	Print								.8335	.0254				
	TV								0	.				
Insight X Intrinsic motivation		Strong							-.7377	.0046				
		Weak							-.5292	.0266				
		None							0	.				
Media X Insight X Intrinsic motivation	Print	Strong							-.8761	.0710				
	Print	Weak							-.8263	.0708				
	Print	None							0	.				
	TV	Strong							0	.				
	TV	Weak							0	.				
	TV	None							0	.				
Domain knowledge			.3645	.0007	.2408	.0220			.2142	.0306	.2485	.0123	.2319	.0189
Fit statistics														
-2 Res Log Likelihood			269.4		325.5		297.5		331.5		271.8		330.0	
AIC			273.4		329.5		301.5		335.5		275.8		334.0	

Results. First, the overall results of the six models will be discussed, then each of the hypotheses will be addressed, and finally the research question. For the self-assessed models, the patterns of results in Table 4.3 are straightforward. When predicting both self-assessed strategy and creativity, there were significant one-way effects for insight, intrinsic motivation and domain knowledge, but no interactions. Of the three insight conditions, only the strong insight produced an increase in self-assessed strategy and creativity. The parameters of intrinsic motivation and domain knowledge were both positive. For self-assessed originality of the creative execution, only intrinsic motivation had a significant effect, and this was positive.

A different pattern emerged for the judge-assessed effects, and in all three models dependent variables were predicted with interactions. Although the judge-assessed strategy model confirms the positive effect that domain knowledge had on self-assessed strategy, the effects of intrinsic motivation differed between the models. For judge-assessed strategy, intrinsic motivation had a *negative* parameter, or the opposite sign as that of the self-assessments. That is, a high level of intrinsic motivation led to less strategic executions in the eyes of the judges. Judge-assessed originality was positively influenced by domain knowledge, which was not significant in the model predicting self-assessed work.

H1 suggests an interaction between insight and domain knowledge to predict strategy. No model finds this interaction significant, but there are other effects for domain knowledge and insight. Domain knowledge did lead to higher levels of strategy in both self- and judge-assessed cases. However, there were differences in the way that insight influenced strategy. The parameter patterns of the self-assessed model of Table 4.3 suggest that only strong insight leads to better strategy. However, there was an interaction between insight and media when predicting judge-assessed strategy. This interaction is shown in Figure 1. When compared to the no primed insight control condition, insight has a *negative* effect on judge-assessed strategy in three of four situations. Only in print media with a strong insight do we not see a reduction in the levels of judge-assessed strategy—and in this case the level of judge-assessed strategy remains level, rather than rises. That is, insight does not actually improve judge-assessed strategy in any case. Thus H1 is not supported.

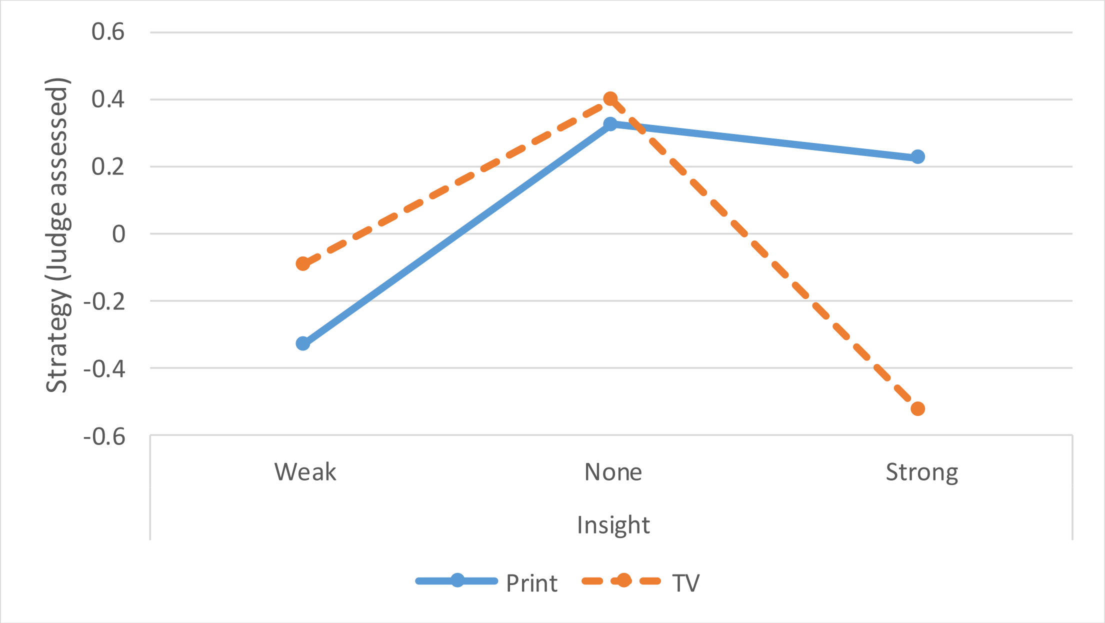

Figure 1. Judge-assessed strategy by insight treatment group and media.

H2 suggests that intrinsic motivation should increase self-assessed originality. The parameter for the construct in Table 4.3 is positive, and therefore H2 is supported.

H3 suggests an interaction between insight and intrinsic motivation to predict originality for judges. The model involved a three-way interaction shown in Figures 2a and 2b, separating out print from television. Low intrinsic motivation is one standard deviation below the mean and high intrinsic motivation is one standard deviation above the mean. Figure 2a shows the insight–intrinsic motivation interaction in print. As expected in H2a, the no primed insight control condition leads to a high level of originality when intrinsic motivation is high. However, when intrinsic motivation is low, the dominance of the strong insight condition is clear, which is consistent with H2b. With television, a different pattern emerges. The strong insight condition reduced originality, which is more typical of a fixation situation. H3a and H3b are therefore supported in print, but not television.

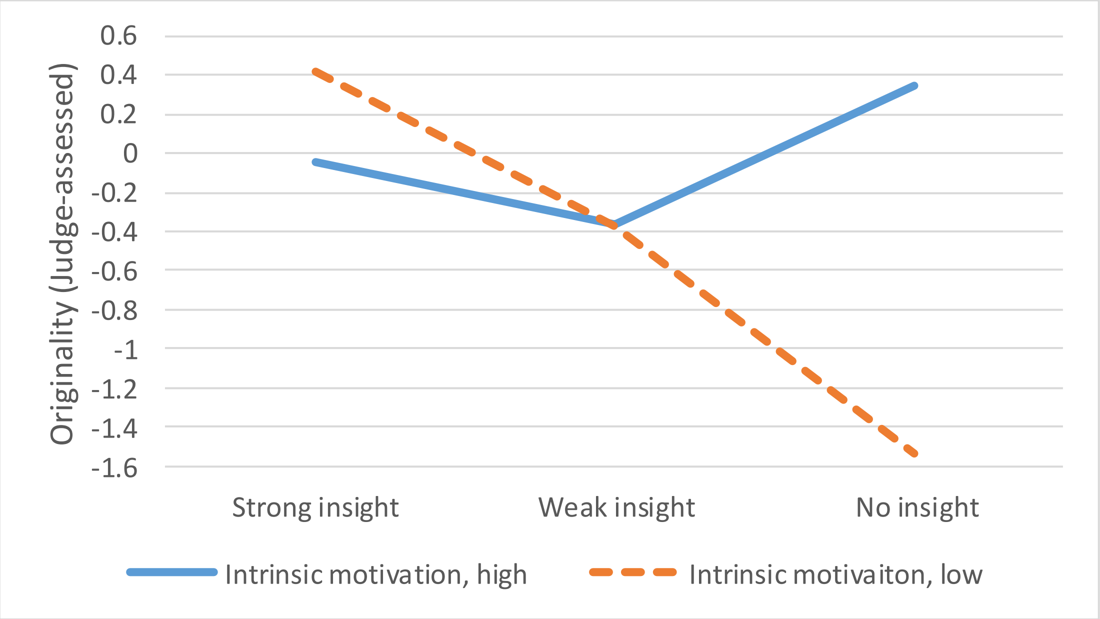

Figure 2a. Judge-assessed originality by insight treatment group and intrinsic motivation in print.

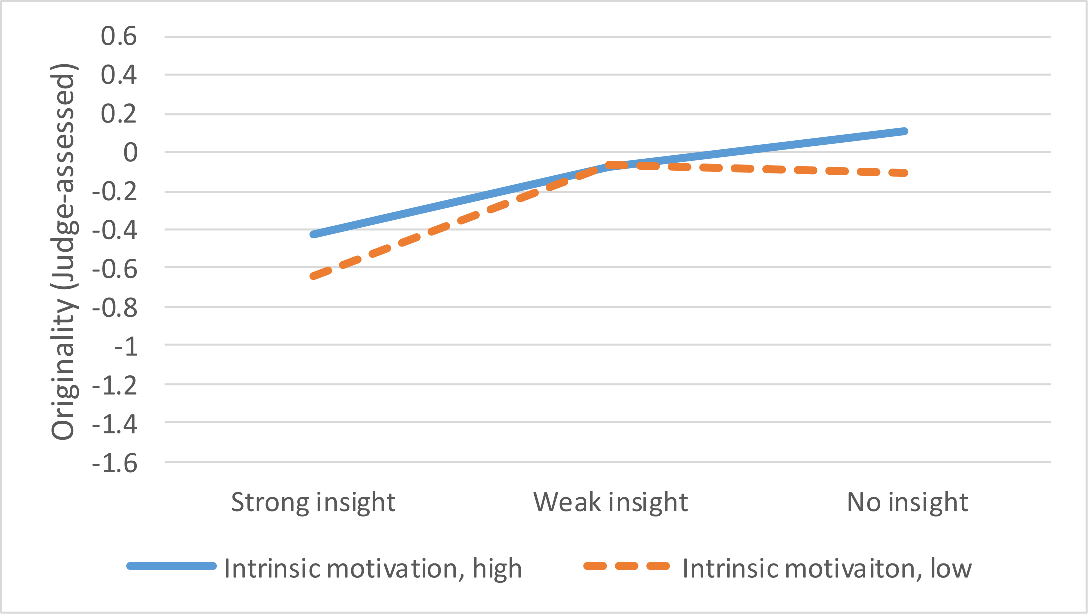

Figure 2b. Judge-assessed originality by insight treatment group and intrinsic motivation in television.

To address the research question concerning the net effect on creativity, there are a number of overall effects, and these are often different depending on whether self- or judge-assessment are used. The final model for judge-assessed creativity shows an interaction between media and insight, as presented in Figure 3. Only in print media is it clear that strong insight improves overall judge-assessed creativity. In television, strong insight actually *decreases* judge-assessed creativity. This interaction did not occur in the self-assessed model. Instead, strong insight is perceived to have a large positive effect on creativity, with weak insight having a smaller, positive effect, which was not statistically different from the control group. Self-assessment also highlighted the positive role of intrinsic motivation, whereas this parameter was not significant in the judge-assessed model. Intrinsic motivation improves the level of creativity in the self-assessed models only. However, domain knowledge improves both self- and judge assessments of creativity.

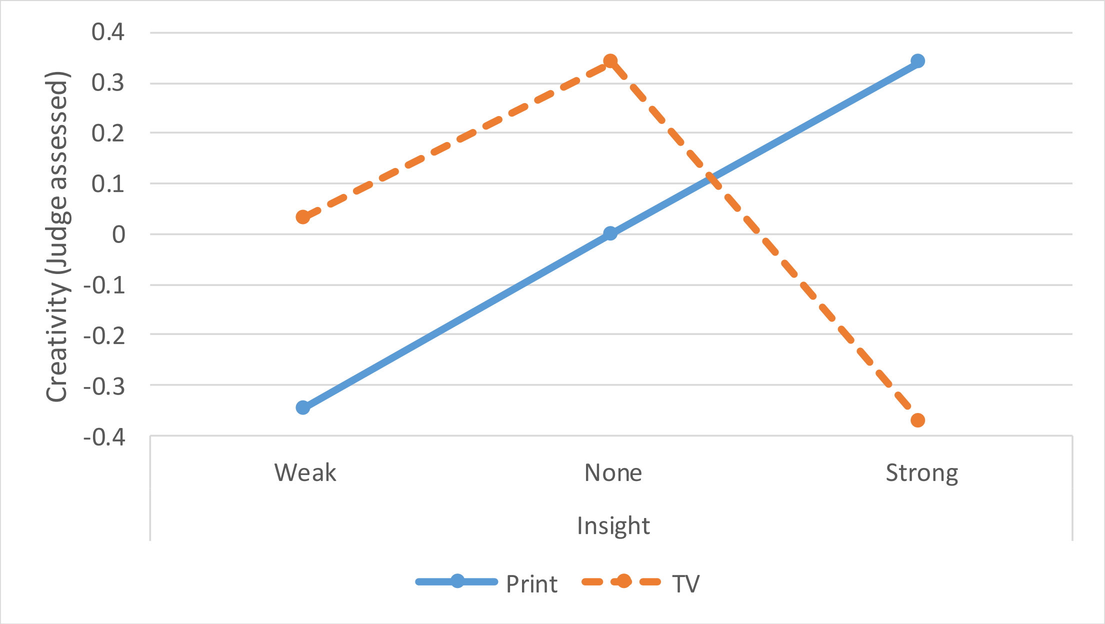

Figure 3. Judge-assessed creativity by insight treatment group and media.

4.4 Discussion

Our results indicate that while insight is seen as an important tool in practice, the contribution of insight to creativity is less straightforward. Insight can be effective, but there are trade-offs between originality and strategy, which were not expected. Subsequently insight does not always lead to more creative advertising. The print advertising benefited from the consumer insight, becoming more original but holding constant in the level of strategy. The television work did not show the benefits of using consumer insight.

For print, at least, a key finding is that when insight is present, insight can drive the originality of the creative work—for its benefit or detriment. As Figure 2a indicated, in print when no insight was provided, the creative’s own intrinsic motivation drove the quality of the originality. However, when an insight was offered, intrinsic motivation no longer mattered and instead it was up to the quality of the insight to drive performance. As Figure 2b shows, in television it was a different story, more consistent with mental set fixation. Here, the strong insight did not perform well, and instead weakened the quality of the work.

It is worth pointing out the judges' top three scoring print campaigns, which are presented in Figure 4. The first of these was developed under the no insight condition and the other two under the strong insight condition. The highest rated ad likens a hammer to the truck and is a classic example of Goldenberg et al.'s (2009) *Metaphor* creative template. For the latter two, these print advertisements are literal visual representations of the insight, focusing on pride and scars respectively. They are also variations of the *Metaphor* template. With both the second and third advertisements, the planner has effectively done a large amount of the creative thinking, leading them to play the insight back to consumers in the execution.

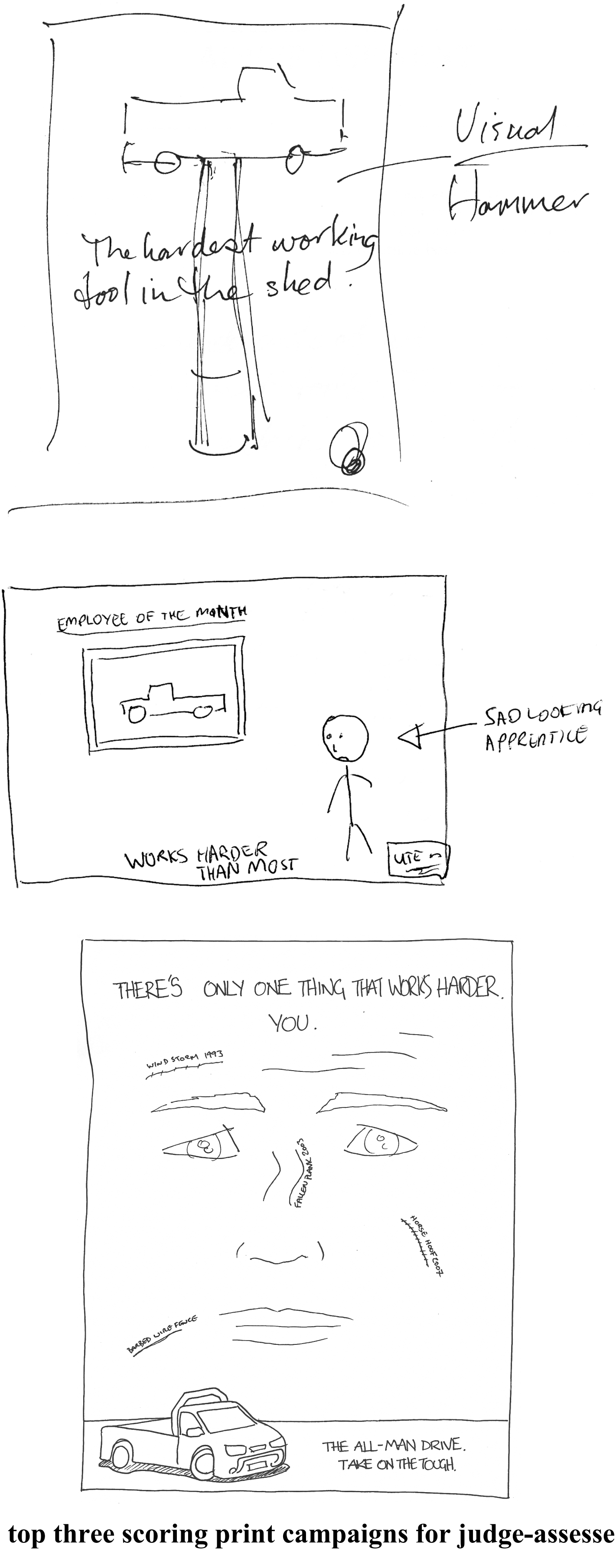
Visual Hammer
The hardest working tool in the shed.
EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH
SAD LOOKING APPRENTICE
WORKS HARDER THAN MOST
UTE
THERE'S ONLY ONE THING THAT WORKS HARDER.
YOU.
WIND STORM 1993
FALLEN PLANK 2003
HORSE HOOF 2007
BARBED WIRE FENCE
THE ALL-MAN DRIVE.
TAKE ON THE TOUGH.

Figure 4. The top three scoring print campaigns for judge-assessed creativity.

These top three print campaigns also suggest why the strong insight may have worked on print, but not television. As (Cite deliberately withheld) note, an important part of an insight is a tension, which in the strong insight is provided by the contrast between *'point of pride'* and *'scars that prove one's toughness.'* Both elements in the strong insight treatment are elements that can be visually represented using *Metaphor*. Importantly, Goldenberg et al (2009) call *Metaphor* a media-dependent template because it tends to be tied to using elements of the media it uses—and most of the cases discussed identified that where *Metaphor* excels is in print. Thus, print lends itself to a visual representation consistent with the style of the strong insight.

In contrast, the three highest rated television ads all used variations of Goldenberg et al's (2009) *Extreme consequences* template. The top two ads were from the control condition with no insight provided and the third place ad from the low insight condition emphasized hard work. The top TV ad told the story of a tug-of-war between two trucks in a post-apocalyptic *MadMax* world, while the second place ad humorously pictured a rough tradesman at home doing knitting and baking because his truck was able to help him do his trade work faster. The third placed ad showed a gritty farmer using his truck to tow away a dangerous storm. While this last ad follows the weak insight by showing a man doing hard work, it goes beyond the insight by tying in control of the weather. Thus, it is not as literal as the use of insight as is the case in the strongest print ads.

Goldenberg et al (2009) also refer to the *extreme consequences template* as a message-dependant technique, which may do better for television. While one might find it worthwhile to consider the extreme result of hard work, as in taming a storm in the third placed, weak insight advertisement, it's not obvious how one can find an extreme situation related to the strong insight's focus on pride and scars. The highest rated advertisement that used the strong insight ranked only 7th, and it told the story of a tradesman boasting with friends about his adventurous exploits over the weekend. All events retold should have scratched the truck bed, which was pristine, and the boasting tradesman's colleagues didn't believe him. Then, when the tradesman drove away, one could see evidence of the adventures hanging off the rear of the truck. This is a combination of *Extreme consequences* and *Inversion*, and the truck failed to show the scars that prove one's toughness—the opposite of where the insight led.

Possibly, adding a novel tension to the *'men do hard work'* insight may have strengthened the weak insight for television. Alternatively, the strong insight may have performed better in television if it incorporated some element that could be taken to extremes, while still supporting the proposition that there is no harder working utility. Overall, the strong insight does not easily provide a story-like narrative that can be dramatized via television. Said another way, insight may need to be consistent with the medium in which the message will be articulated, rather than purely focus on the strategy *per se*. Further, insight may also interact with the types of ideation processes used.

Another consideration is that insight acting as a cue to prime domain knowledge may also limit the opportunity for chance connections that can lead to more original creative execution. In the absence of an insight, divergent thinking may enable chance connections of knowledge domains that facilitate new ways to solve the advertising problem. This may be important for the incubation period associated with problem solving (Wallas 1926). This incubation period may allow for new domain knowledge to be accessed and combined in order to achieve creative solution improvements (see Wells 1996).

While intrinsic motivation is widely acknowledge as being important to the creative development process (Amabile 1988; Amabile and Pratt 2016), these findings suggested that intrinsic motivation only assisted consistently in creatives' own perceptions of the creativity of their work. In judge assessments, insight and high levels of intrinsic motivation often led to less strategic, original and creative work. The unconstrained no insight condition, where there was no fixation, opens the opportunity and inspiration for creatives willing to deploy more divergent thinking in the search for more original ideas. However, when motivation is low a strong insight can improve the judge-assessed originality of the work. Under these conditions, presumably insight acts to orientate an unmotivated creative towards an original creative solution pathway.

A concerning finding is that self-report models for strategy and creativity showed that strong insight worked well. The self-perceived role of insight was consistent with a straightforward story in which insight operates by enhancing strategy and in turn, creativity. Self-report models also suggest that insight does not enhance originality. It is as if creatives think that if they have a strong insight, they must produce work that is on strategy.

Of course, the comparison of self- and judge assessments only demonstrates the actor–observer cognitive biases at play. The external judges saw a complex, nuanced story that is fairly different from respondents, with insight—when it does work—working through originality, not strategy. Where respondents may have thought of insight as a strategic tool, it seems to operate more like a tool to produce original work when intrinsic motivation was lacking. In this instance, a creative does not need to apply the effortful divergent thinking normally required to arrive at a more original execution. That is, insight may be better thought of as a *lazy creative's route to original work*—a method that relies on the account planning doing a creative's divergent thinking for them.

Limitations. In any creativity experiment the time allowed to complete the task and the artificial condition associated with the environment can affect the results (Harrington 1975). The creatives developed a print and a television campaign in what practitioners would describe as an unrealistic timeframe. This is particularly true of developing a creative idea in television, which requires more elaborate craft skills in building the narrative behind the idea. Giving professional creatives more time may improve divergent thinking capability, allowing them to arrive at more original and appropriate ideas.

The experiment also focused solely on the automotive category, where product attributes supported the reasons to believe the proposition. While the strong insight was intended to elevate the emotional connection with the user, more emotive work may have resulted from other categories centred around more emotive benefits.

In a further limitation, individual creatives developed the creative work as part of the experiment. In practice, most creatives work in teams, so the creative development process is a social phenomenon (Anderson, De Dreu, and Nijstad 2004; Lynch and West 2017). This involves a collaborative effort between the art director and the copywriter, and increasingly, an extended team of digital specialists. A more social context where teams work together to develop work may facilitate a greater divergent thinking capability than that of the individual.

Implications. This study has important implications for academics and practitioners. From an academic perspective, insight informs that mental set fixation is still a concern, but sometimes insight leads creatives in an original direction—if it is the 'right' kind of fixation. Critically, this process happens without creatives being aware of it. Although problems of mental set fixation have long been known, one would think that professional creatives would be more cognisant of fixation. We certainly need a better understanding of the fixation process to teach creatives when they are fixated so that they can escape these intellectual ruts.

For agencies, insight has implications for the type of people they should be placing into creative and account planning roles. The importance of both intrinsic motivation and domain knowledge was reaffirmed. Both are needed to do good work as a creative. Account planners frequently come from a market research or account service backgrounds. However, given the creative nature of insight and its potential to constrain or extend the creative process for creative, it may well be that more creative divergent thinking is required to identify an insight most likely to facilitate originality at the 'big idea' stage of the creative development process.

Practitioners and academics alike seek out the processes or techniques that reliably improve creativity, with consumer insight being just one suggested route to originality. Find that magic elixir to creative nirvana and one may discover the key to the universe—or at least the next Cannes Lions winner. However, while a variety of methods can sometimes increase creativity the tools always seem to come at a cost (e.g., Kilgour and Koslow 2009). Unfortunately, use of consumer insight is no different than any other creativity tool, with creatives often blind to those costs.

Surprisingly, use of insight is more focused on enhancing originality than strategy, the converse of what is usually assumed. Also, creativity is still best pursued when domain knowledge and intrinsic motivation are both high—and nothing in this research undermines this. However, consumer insight does define the space of the creative territory—colloquially called a *playpen*—for good or bad. Choose the wrong consumer insight and creatives will find it hard to succeed, with that poor insight introducing a cognitive bias blinding creatives to why it hinders them. But choose the right insight in the right situation and account planning demonstrates its critical contribution as an essential aid to the creative advertising development process.

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Chapter 5: Consumer Insight Supports the “Leap” to a Creative Idea by Shifting the Advertising Appeal from Functional to Emotional.

Abstract

Marketing clients and account planners identify and articulate a key strategic resource, consumer insight, from which creative ideation is said to “leap.” Although this is a valuable analogy, the mechanisms by which that “leap” is made need more elaboration. A critical issue is whether consumer insight is the starting or ending point of creative ideation. If insight is the ending point, then the finished work should be obviously related to the insight, and most likely a literal translation. Instead, we argue that insight allows creatives a creative license to develop emotional advertising that connects with consumers. To determine which kind of leap insight supports, an experiment is performed using 60 working creatives who developed creative advertising ideas in response to three treatments, a strong insight, a weak one and a no primed insight control. It is shown that the content themes of the three conditions are not different from each other. However, strong insight leads to more emotional appeals rather than functional ones.

The inherent conflicts that exist between creatives, and other industry actors such as account planners, researchers, and clients are well documented (see Hirschman 1989, Duckworth 2005, Hackley 2003b; 2003c, Grant, McLeod and Shaw 2102). Creatives are often passionate about their work to such an extreme, and they play political games to thwart others in the agency and force clients to buy the creatives' preferred work (Kover and Goldberg 1995). Creatives will at times circumnavigate mandatories requested by the client in creative execution and frequently place personal interests such as winning awards ahead of their client interests (Hirschman 1989). Creatives are also often vocal on the role of creative development research, claiming it destroys, rather than assists to inform the strategic direction of good creative ideas (Grant, McLeod and Shaw 2012). Thus, it is hardly hyperbole to conclude that creatives have made resistance to being managed an art form. Subsequently, creatives still need to be managed to keep executions on-strategy.

One approach to how account planners manage creatives in the advertising development process is through the creative brief. A critical element increasingly adopted in the creative brief is insight (Hackley 2003a; Gordon 2002; Morrison and Hayley 2006; Fallon and Senn 2006). An insight in advertising can be defined as a human truth that is (1) a succinct socio-cultural expression of a human motivation that (2) contains an inherent tension that can be solved by an attribute or benefit, in a way that is (3) original because it has not previously been applied to the category. The idea behind insight is that when the account planner identifies a deep human truth about consumer motivation, it is used to inform the advertising message proposition (cite deliberately removed), to give creative executions a stronger strategic focus (Steel 1998; Hackley 2003a). In essence, insight acts as a priming cue that constrains the strategic orientation from which creative ideation can leap (Steel 1988; Hackley 2003a). Whilst constraining the strategic knowledge domain that will solve the advertising problem, insight should nonetheless liberate creatives divergent thinking within this domain space (cite deliberately removed). That is, insight should provide the context for the advertising, but not actually be the idea.

If insight does help manage the creative development process, then its positive effects should be apparent in the work creatives develop. To assess the influence of insight on advertising, there are at least two different ways to look at its effect on creative work. The first is to confirm if creatives actually adhere to the literal strategic directions planners are trying to provide through insight. In this case, the knowledge domains of the insight's content themes should appear in finished advertising.

The trouble with this form of assessment is that even though creatives might accept a consumer insight as a starting point of ideation that does not mean this is also the ending point. That is, it is entirely possible that creatives will use insight to initiate concepts that once completed, appear to have little to do with the insight initially provided. Creatives may indeed try to follow direction from account planners, but given the unpredictable path of creative thinking, creatives may still start with the knowledge domain implied by an insight, but finish in an entirely different domain.

A second route to confirming insights influence on creative comes from Mitchell (2002) who suggests that from a practitioner perspective, insight helps creatives get to a more emotional advertising appeal. By shifting the emphasis from a functional to an emotional appeal, insight can be seen as encouraging emotional communication rather than a focus on unique selling propositions (USPs). Given the "blurring of product differences in many market categories" (p. 45), many creatives do not want to tell stories about products' USPs, but instead stay connected with consumers by bringing them into the creative process (Drake 1984). So, giving creatives a consumer insight allows creative license to tell narratives about people in the context of products and thus build the emotional connection between the brand and consumer. Insight has more influence on the advertising *appeal* than its *content*.

To explore the role of insight, this research performs an experiment using 60 professional creatives from Sydney, Australia. They are asked to create both a print and television advertisement for a situation that is typically functionally-oriented. We then test if adding a consumer insight to the brief can alter the balance of functionality and emotionality, shifting from the former to the latter.

First, we show that while creatives themselves claim to use consumer insights, and can distinguish between strong and weak ones, other creatives who judge the work cannot see this in the final advertisement. However, judges can identify which campaigns are based on insight—*any* insight—and which are not. Second, we predict emotionality and functionality with the use of a strong and weak insight and a no primed insight control, and demonstrate the trade-off between these appeals.

5.1 Theory Development

5.1.1 Insight as a Starting Point in Creative Ideation

A problem faced by advertising agencies is that in increasingly competitive markets, finding a differentiated expression of a brand benefit in advertising can be challenging to uncover. That is because product attributes and functional benefits can be quickly superseded, and increasingly emotional benefits are feeling like commodities (Tikkanen and Vaariskoski 2010). Although some observers can be inferred to assume that advertising agencies can perform magic, a more realistic perspective is that one has to manage the creative process well. The starting place for managing the process is often account planning (Koslow 2015).

Account planners in advertising agencies facilitate four essential functions: 1) they act as the consumer voice, 2) provides strategic direction for the brand, 3) inspire creativity amongst creatives and 4) protect the client's interest (Crosier, Grant and Gilmore 2003; Haley, Taylor and Morrison 2014). Central to achieving these functions is the account planner's role in developing a creative brief that connects the brand with the consumer and provides inspiration to creatives in their execution of the creative strategy (Steel 1998; Haley, Taylor and Morrison 2014). To achieve this, account planners strive for useful insight. This is because it is believed that unlike USPs, a strong insight can bring the brand closer to the human motivation for consumption (Hackley 2003a; Steel 1998).

In the advertising context, the term insight takes on a unique form. It resides in what account planners refer to as a human truth. (Cite deliberately withheld) define insight as, "(1) a succinct socio-cultural expression of human motivation or need that can (2) serve as a potential tension that can be exploited by the brand benefit, which is (3) original because it has not previously been applied to the category." By example, (cite deliberately withheld) suggest a human truth that "teenage boys are sexually aspirant but socially insecure" which can be resolved by the brand benefit of "social confidence." The insight and benefit are ultimately linked through the message proposition; Brand X is "your best first move." This message proposition represents a succinct expression of the core promise made by the brand to the consumer. At the heart of the proposition is the insight that has 'set up' the idea for creatives to exploit.

However, finding quality insight is a complex task. The strength of a compelling human truth resides in its power to connect with the consumer motivation in a manner inspirational to creatives, and relevant to the brand. Haley et al. (2014) suggest account planners must identify "basic truths" and "interpret culture" in order to identify insights that will inspire creative execution. Similarly, planning practitioners refer to insight as "truths" that deepen the understanding of the relationship between consumers, the brand, category and competition (Fallon and Senn 2006; Gordon 2002; Steel 1998).

However, the question remains whether creatives would actually use the insight provided by the account planner. They may not. For example, Keane (2018) notes how UK telecommunications provider, Three, started with the data-driven insight that customers used 71 times the amount of data while on holiday. The resulting advertising idea took an extreme consequences approach (see Goldenberg, Mazursky and Solomon 1999) and featured a spokesperson for Three making a formal apology for all the "Holiday Spam" it had unintentionally created. Similarly, UK fast food chain, Pret A Manger, started with an insight that noted Britons were moving away from snacking on cakes and biscuits, and toward vegetables. The creative idea developed was to help customers see vegetables in a new perspective, which was then executed as vegetables arranged with stunning art direction. Again, one can see where the ideas come from, but the theme of shifting from cakes to vegetables is not apparent from the final product.

The point here is that insight, then, is merely the starting place for creative ideation, but it need not be the ending place. Neither does starting with an insight mean that the creative idea will be a literal interpretation of the insight. Instead, quality insight just leads a creative in the insight's direction but they could—and probably should—

take the insight in less literal, but more original directions. This informs our first hypothesis:

H1: When creatives use a prescribed insight as a starting point for ideation, a) the advertising is no more likely to reflect the content themes of the insight, than when insights are not provided. However, b) the resulting advertising will reflect increased use of a human truth.

5.1.2 Insights Encourage Emotional Advertising

If a human truth is a special form of insight in advertising development, one must consider its influence on the type of advertising appeal it orientates creative towards. Much has been discussed about advertising appeals, which is simply an executional approach creatives adopt to assist in communicating a brand promise. While practitioners were debating whether to focus on Rosser Reeve's rational USPs or Leo Burnett's emotional "inherent drama," (Wright and Tully 1974), advertising scholars, on the other hand, were making other parallel categorizations of advertisements which can be broadly separated into rational and emotional appeals (See MacInnis and Jaworski 1989; Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis 1986; Shimp and Andrews 2013).

Emotional appeals represent an attempt to elicit an affective consumer connection to a brand by focusing on consumers' hedonic needs (MacInnis and Jaworski 1989; Dahlén et al. 2010), which can be positive (for example love, joy, or hope), or negative (for example guilt, shame or fear) depending on the intended affective response (See Panda et al. 2013; Keshari and Jain 2014). Rational appeals, on the other hand, tend to be more about informational content. Stafford and Day (1995) suggest that rational appeals are a straightforward presentation of factual information. In this way, rational appeals focus on the products utilitarian benefits informing key functional characteristics of a product (Resnik and Stern 1977; Johar and Sirgy 1991).

The reason advertising appeals are important is because they activate broadly two different buying motivations: utilitarian or hedonic. Utilitarian needs relate to rational buying motivations whereas hedonic needs involve the social, experiential, and sensory aspects that underpin our emotional consumption motivations. Rational appeals are more appropriate for products that satisfy predominantly utilitarian needs (e.g., washing detergent, insurance) while emotional appeals are more appropriate for products that fulfill predominantly hedonic needs (e.g., beer, sports cars) (see Armstrong 2011; Johar and Sirgy 1991; Sirgy and Johar 1992). However, these two need states are not mutually exclusive, as both can be filled simultaneously (Voss, Spangenberg and Grohmann 2003). For example, a farmer or tradesman considering purchasing a new utility vehicle may care for functional features (such as a large tray top), as well as hedonic features (such as a desired ‘macho’ self-image).

Researchers have demonstrated that the advertising appeal should match the choice of product being advertised. This is because different levels of consumer involvement with product and services require different levels of elaboration in the processing of marketing information (See Petty and Cacioppo 1984). For example, some researchers suggest that emotional advertising appeals that focus on hedonic needs are more effective when involvement is low, while rational appeals that focus on utilitarian needs are more effective when product involvement is high (Johar and Sirgy 1991; Sirgy and Johar 1992). Others argue that emotional advertising appeals are more appropriate where there is little differentiation between brands in a category (Belch and

Belch 2004), or that emotional benefits are most appropriate when there is little rational reasoning that can be associated with a product benefit (Panda et al. 2013). These themes suggest the level of involvement, the type of need the product fulfills and the degree of competition influences the type of appeal appropriate.

Despite all the discussion of emotional and functional appeals and benefits, a more difficult problem is how to design such executions in the first place. Rossiter (2008) argues that the starting point is identifying the *key benefit claim,* which will then direct creative ideation. This claim is essentially the persuasive key to selling the brand, which is often called the *campaign theme* or *copy platform*, or underlying strategy of a campaign (Koslow, Sasser and Riordan 2006). Such a claim may or may not be stated in the ad, and sometimes it’s explicit and at other times implicit. Rossiter (2008) provides useful examples, but does not include a formal definition, or identify how a fundamental benefit claim is chosen in the first place.

However, a root problem is most of the categorizations of advertising appeals tend to be tautological in that there is an implicit assumption that account planners and clients can manage the creative process by choosing from the list of appeals and then achieve that desired appeal. That is, researchers used the *finished* executions to identify and evaluate whether a rational or emotional appeal was strategically *intended* rather than examine how the appeals came to emanate from the information provided to creatives in the creative brief. This distinction is all the more critical if the starting points of ideation are different from ending points. It is therefore essential to our understanding of how advertising manifests as either an emotional or functional appeal as a consequence of the elements of message strategy contained in the creative brief, that direct creative ideation of the big idea.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the previous advertising academic literature says little about the role of consumer insight in helping shape the advertising appeal. If consumer insight can help set the direction of the creative process (cite deliberately withheld), the next question to ask is what is what kind of appeal usually results? Since human motivation is defined as a critical part of consumer insight, when creatives use consumer insight, the outcome is likely to be an emotional advertisement. In other words, linking the brand to the human motivation would now orientate the strategic focus of the advertising towards an emotional benefit (Mitchell 2002), rather than a USP based on a functional appeal. In many ways, this orientation is very similar to Leo Burnett's idea of finding the "inherent drama" in a brand (see Başal 2017) in contrast to Reeves' USP style of advertising. This informs our second hypothesis:

H2: Providing creatives with insight will lead to an increased use of emotional appeals, but decreased functional appeals in advertising.

Method

To test the hypotheses, an experiment was undertaken adopting a 3x2 design. Manipulations were between subjects across three levels: strong insight, weak insight and no primed insight as the control condition. Media had two levels (print and television) within subjects.

Sample. The study was conducted among 60 Sydney based advertising agency creatives. 20 Participants were assigned to each of the three conditions. Specifically, 20 creatives received a strong insight, 20 creatives received a weak insight and 20 creatives received no primed insight as the control. The use of professional creatives was a deliberate design feature to assist in avoiding external validity issues (Nickerson 1999).

The participants were all employed as professional creatives in 15 Sydney based advertising agencies. Thirteen of the agencies involved were international agency networks, and two were large privately owned agencies. Six of the participants were professional freelancers working at one of the multinational agencies on the day of the experiment. The average age of the participants was 37.5 years, with an average 13.6 years industry experience. Among the participants were 20 art directors, 21 copywriters, and 19 creative directors. There were 42 male and 18 female participants. Twenty-one participants had either regularly or always worked on an automotive client, twenty-four occasionally, five rarely, and ten had no category experience. The participants were all randomly assigned to a treatment condition.

Procedure. The task involved developing a television and a print advertisement against a fictitious brief for an automotive brand. This creative task was modelled on Kilgour and Koslow (2009) however an automotive utility (or pick up truck) was substituted for insecticide spray. The automotive category was chosen given the anticipated differences in creatives experience levels across the category, and because advertising in the automotive category frequently communicates product attributes and functional benefits.

Participants were provided with an experiment booklet containing clear instructions. All the response booklets contained a creative brief that outlined the advertising objectives (to persuade shoppers for competing work utility vehicles to include our brand on their shopping list), target audience (farmers and tradesmen), proposition (no harder working utility vehicle) and several product attributes (10% more power than competitors; 15% larger scratch-resistant tray; rust-resistant underbody and all-wheel drive). However, the booklets varied as to whether they contained a strong, weak or no insight condition.

The creatives were given 40 minutes to complete the advertising creativity task. The first 10 minutes was used to brainstorm ideas to solve the advertising problem. They then chose their best idea for print and their best idea for television and spent 15 minutes preparing each of the advertising executions. The researcher called time at the following intervals: 10 minutes, 15 minutes and 15 minutes. The experiment took place in a meeting room at each of the advertising agencies involved. All creatives commenced and finished the experiment within the same time frame. Those participants who received an insight in their booklet were instructed to use the insight to help inform the advertising message proposition. The control group were not instructed to use an insight of their choosing, however there was nothing to prohibit them using an insight at their discretion. At the completion of the experiment, participants completed a self-evaluation questionnaire.

Pre-test: Identifying the strong and weak insights. The quality of insight was pre-tested among account planners to determine the strong and weak insight conditions. Nine account planners submitted insights they believed relevant to advertising the fictitious utility vehicle. There was an overlap in some of these insights that were ultimately reduced to nine unique insights. These insights were then rated by a different sample of 20 account planners on 15 items across a seven-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (-3) to strongly agree (3). The insights were loaded onto four scales. These included originality and the following three measures of appropriateness: familiar and motivating to consumers, fits with the strategy and message proposition, and usable for creatives. Each of the scales was reliable, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging between .76 and .96.

The strong insight adopted in the experiment was *'for tradesmen and farmers their vehicle is a point of pride, like scars that prove one's toughness'*. The weak insight adopted was *'men do hard work'*.

Coding. The creative work completed by creatives was evaluated and subsequently coded by two senior practicing creatives. The first judge was a senior art director while the second was a copy based creative director. Both had extensive international agency experience, automotive category experience and had participated in industry award judging. The judges were paid and highly motivated to score the work accurately. The judges also coded blind to the treatment conditions.

Creativity of the work was assessed based on the strength of the strategy and level of originality To measure strategy, judges made assessments of whether the work was 'on strategy', a 'good fit with the client strategy', 'an appropriate execution against the brief', 'built on good strategy' and 'persuasive to the target audience'. To evaluate originality, the judges rated the extent to which the creative work was 'original', 'imaginative', 'unexpected', 'novel' and 'different for the category'.

To achieve consistency in the assessments between judges, extensive training was undertaken. The judges were provided with two print and two television advertisements. They were given a copy of the generic creative brief, minus any insight condition. After assessing the work, the coders discussed any differences in scores and the researcher clarified any outstanding questions. The judges then proceeded to evaluate 10% of the print and television executions within the different treatments.

These were again checked, and the coder agreement was recorded as averaging .910 for print and .827 for television.

Multi-item scales. Two three-item scales were constructed to measure functionality and emotionality. Functional advertising is that which uses functional and rational appeals as well as focus on product features. Emotional advertising is that which uses emotional and non-rational appeals as well as focus on image. The appeals items were measured with the request to "Rate the creative work in its ability to express the follow consumer appeals." These appeals were phrased as "Functional appeal", "Emotional appeal," "Rational appeal" and "Non-rational appeal." The other two items asked judges to "Rate the extent to which the focus of the creative is about" followed by the phrases "A human truth" and "Consumer insight". All six items were measured with the same seven item response scale ranging from "Not at all" (0) to "Very much so" (6).

Table 5.1 shows the factor analysis loadings for functionality and emotionality. Two factors were identified by the scree plot and the eigenvalues>1 test. The two factors explained 75.8% of the variance. All the expected loadings are above .6, and the highest cross loading is less than -.35. Overall, a good fit was achieved.

Table 5.1. Factor Loadings of Emotionality and Functionality

	Functionality	Emotionality
Rational appeal	.957	-.061
Functional appeal	.929	.079
Features focus	.683	-.247
Non-rational appeal	-.023	.921
Emotional appeal	.049	.900
Image focus	-.349	.672
Cronbach's Alpha	.825	.793

NOTE:—VARIMAX rotation used.

However, to explore whether or not judges could see the insights used, four single-item scales were used. Two of these asked the judges to "Rate the creative work in its ability to express the following insights." The two insights provided were the strong and weak insights, and the response scale ranged from "very much so" (6) to "not al all" (0). Also. Judges were asked to "Rate the extent to which the focus of the creative is about" and offered two ending phrases, "Human truth" and "Consumer insight." The same seven-point response scale was used as well.

5.2 Findings

The data were analyzed in two steps. First, we confirmed whether the creatives or judges could see whether the creatives kept to insight themes offered by the treatments or used insights at all. Second, we modeled functionality and emotionality with insight. The models used were all HLM models with the individual respondent

(ID) used as a random effect. In all models, a variable indicated the media used, print or TV, was used as a control, whether or not it was significant.

Individual creative participants could identify when they were given an insight and claimed they used them. To check this, subjects were asked, "was there an insight explicitly stated in the brief you were given" with responses ranging from definitely no (1) to definitely yes (6). The strong and weak insight conditions had means of 4.9 and 4.55 respectively which were not statistically different from one another (p=.33). The no primed insight control had a mean of 2.55, which was significantly different from the two insight groups (p<.0001 in both cases). Subjects were also asked to rate how strong the insight in the brief was with possible responses ranging from extremely weak (1) to extremely strong (6). The strong insight condition has a mean of 4.25 which was statistically different from the means for the weak and no insight conditions 2.35 and 3.0 (p<0.0001 and p=.0002 respectively).

Each of the four scales was modeled in HLM using media and insight conditions as independent variables. In the case of the two items measuring whether the insight is a literal application of the two insights use in the experiment, there were no significant differences regarding insight treatment. That is, judges' rating of whether or not the scar/pride insight is expressed is not different among the three strong, weak or no insight conditions (p=.166). The judges' rating of whether or not the hard-work insight is expressed is again not different among the three conditions (p=.384). However, for the other two items relating to "Human truth" and "Consumer insight", both were predicted by insight condition (p=.0002 and p=.0004 respectively). Figure 1 plots the mean levels from the analyses.

In Figure 1, the right side shows the two items relating to the literal application of the two insights. On the left are the two items relating to the judges seeing any human truth or consumer insight in a creative execution. Although the two play-back items have higher means than the other two, the play-back items are still only mid-point on the response range, between somewhat and moderately. For judges' perceptions of human truth or consumer insight, there is more discrimination between the treatments, but the levels are lower. The no primed insight control is perceived to use insight "very little" while the weak insight uses insight "A little". The strong insight condition level is just shy of "somewhat" being perceived as using either a human truth or consider insight. Although creatives are not noticeably using the insights provided in the treatments, those given a stronger insight do end up being observed as employing some kind of insight, whether or not it was the one provided. Thus, H1 is supported.

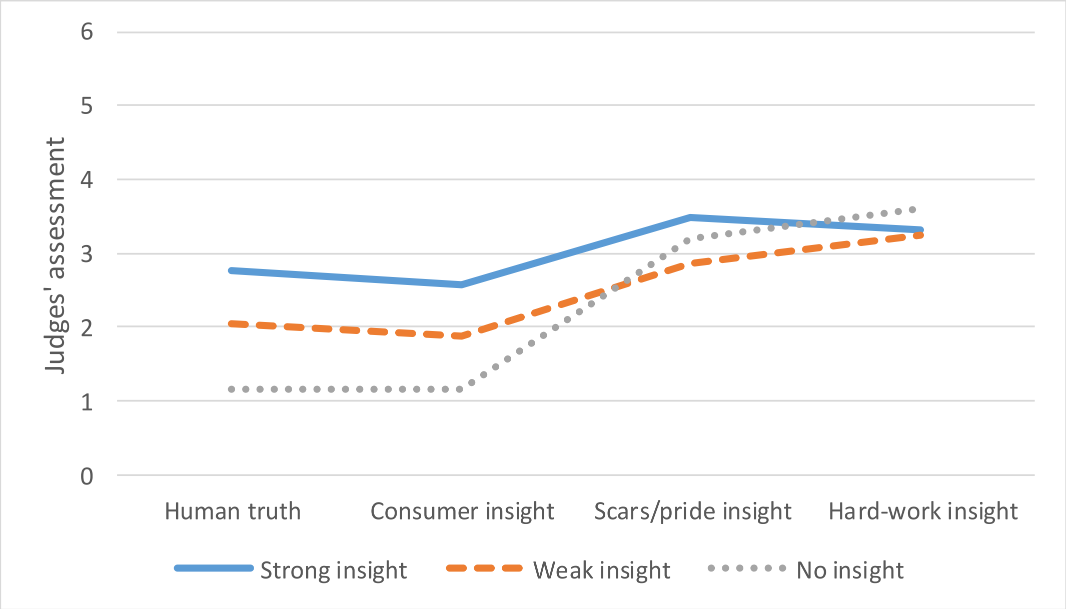

Figure 1. Judges' Rating of How Different Insights are Portrayed by Creatives when Under Strong, Weak or No-Insight Conditions.

The emotionality and functionality of the creative executions are modeled in Table 5.2 as HLM models. In both cases, the fit is high. Although HLM does not provide the familiar R^2 measure of fit, some idea of the level of fit can be inferred by comparing similar models. If the models were fit as repeated measures models with fixed effects for respondent differences, the variance explained would be 65% and 67% for emotionality and functionality respectively. The insight condition predicts both emotionality and functionality but does so differently in each model.

Table 5.2. HLM Model of Insight's Influence on Emotionality and Functionality

		Functionality		Emotionality	
		Estimate	*p*-value	Estimate	*p*-value
Covariance Parameters					
Intercept	ID	.162	.082	.187	.054
Residual		.708	<.0001	.673	<.0001
Solution for fixed effects					
Intercept		.561	.003	.056	.025
Media	Print	-.048	.756	-.683	<.0001
	TV	0	.	0	.
Insight	Strong	-.692	.004	.526	.025
	Weak	-.920	.001	.331	.153
	None	0	.	0	.
Fit statistics					
-2 Res Log Likelihood		325.1		322.9	
AIC		329.1		326.9	

To show the mean level effects of the insight conditions consider Figure 2. Expressed in standard units, the figure shows the influence of insight conditions influencing emotionality and functionality simultaneously. The means for the three conditions are plotted along with ovals, representing their means’ 95% joint confident regions. In the lower right of the figure is the mean for the no primed insight control condition. Although more functionally oriented than the other two conditions, it is lower on emotionality. Both insight conditions are on the upper left, showing that they increased emotionality at the expense of functionality. However, the strong insight condition is to the upper right of the weak insight condition, and the means are jointly separated. That is, the strong insight condition reduced functionality less while increasing emotionality more. That is, the strong insight condition is more efficient in making the trade-off between emotionality and functionality. Therefore, H2 is supported.

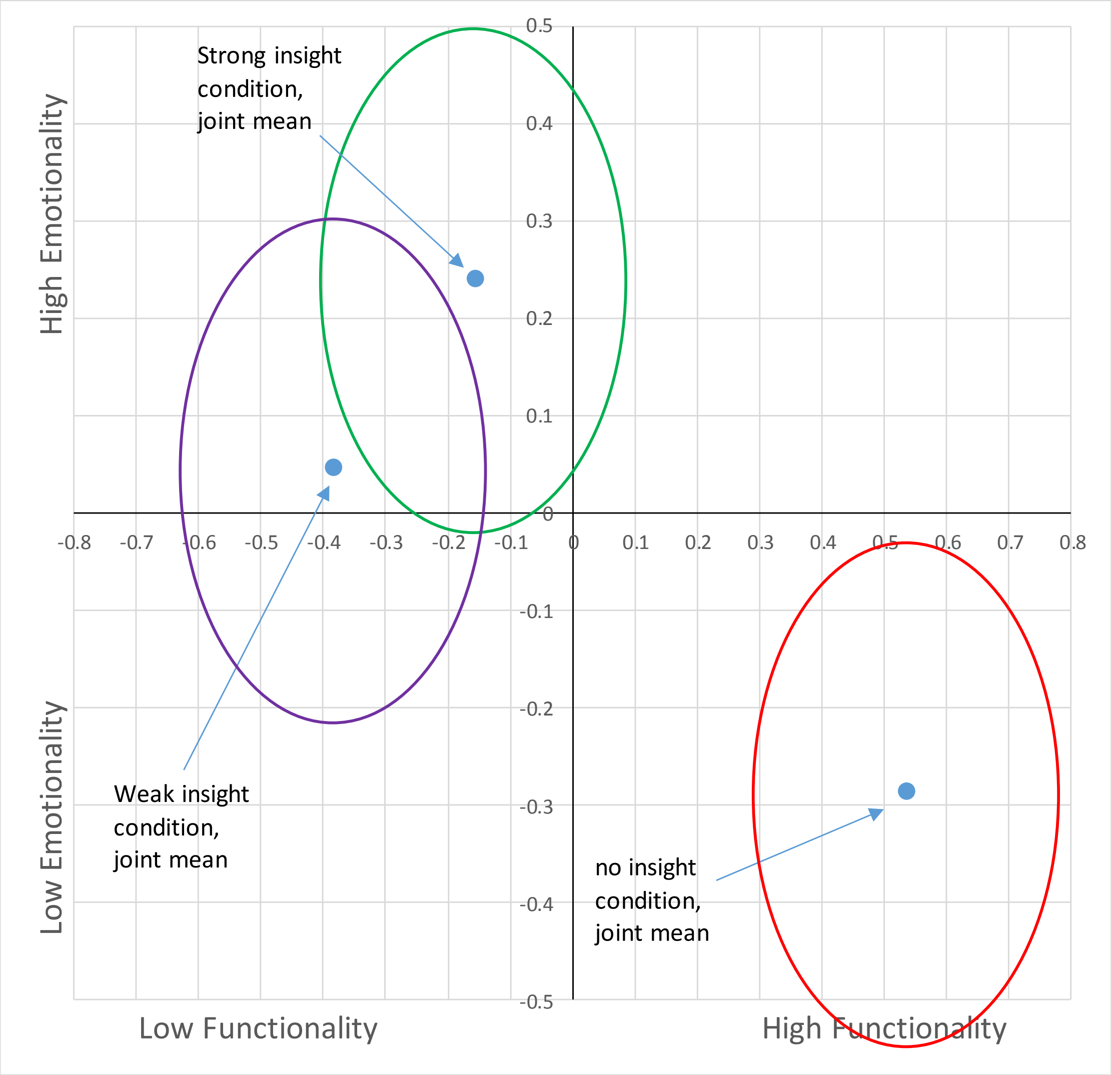

Figure 2. Trade-off of Emotionality and Functionality among Strong, Weak and No-Insight Conditions.

5.3 Discussion

Our results indicate that while insight is seen as an important tool in practice, its contribution to creativity is less straightforward. Consumer insight is not something that tells creatives what kinds of content themes to express. Nor is an insight that supports genuinely creative ideation something that becomes apparent when one inspects the finished advertisements. Insight guides creativity liberating creatives to tell narratives about people, but mysteriously leaves no "footprints" or "breadcrumbs trail" behind to say it was ever there. While it is possible to translate an insight into an advertising idea literally, no one would consider this being creative anyway—unless it is the account planner's creativity being demonstrated through developing the insight in the first place (citation intentionally deleted).

Where consumer insight comes into its own is how it relates to the use of advertising appeals. In the current study, functional appeals were common in the automotive "Ute" category explored. But this study found that it is the strong insight that results in an execution that has an emotional appeal of the human truth. From this, it is shown that insight gave creatives a starting point, or a motivational angle from which they could work. The actual content of the advertisement is secondary to the persuasive tool of emotional appeals used.

5.3.1 Future Research and Limitations

The current findings suggest new avenues for future research. This study investigates if insights made creative execution more emotive, through the lens of creative judges. Further work is required to validate the extent by which insight makes the creative work more emotive to consumers. In moving the brand closer to the human motivation, an insight is likely to effect consumer evaluations of the brand more favorably. These may include investigating measures including, for example, attitudes towards the advertising, attitudes towards the brand and purchase intent. This could also extend to brand recall as emotional advertising tends to be remembered more than rational messages (Madison 1999).

Insight may challenge the taxonomies and the consumer involvement level and appeal pairings they suggest. As brand categories become increasingly difficult to create and maintain functional differences insight may provide the strategic framework that enables meaningful and differentiated emotional connections with varying target audiences. For example, this study shows how a utility vehicle, that is arguably a high involvement item for a farmer or tradesman can be paired with a strong emotional appeal. However, what we do not show in this study is whether it would elicit stronger consumption behaviour compared to a more rational advertising appeal.

Similar to any creativity experiment this study has some limitations. First, the time allowed to complete the task and the artificial condition associated with the environment under which the experiment is conducted can affect the results (Harrington 1975). The time frame given to creatives to complete the experiment was extremely short compared to that afforded in practice. This would naturally impair the quality of divergent thinking capability of creatives in the elaboration of their ideas. Second, the creatives were asked to prepare a print and television commercial using different ideas. In practice, they would most likely develop a single-minded campaign idea relevant to both media. Third, the experiment deliberately focussed on an automotive category where product attributes frequently support the brand promise. However, replacing these product attributes with non-product attributes or an experiential or symbolic benefit may have further advanced the emotional appeal of the advertising. Finally, the experiment was conducted among individual creatives, whereas in practice, creativity is socially constructed between art director and copywriter and other agency actors.

5.3.2 Implications

This study has significant implications for academics and practitioners. For academics, several scholars assume that creatives are primarily free to choose between appeal types. For example, Armstrong (2011) lists almost 200 “advertising principles” or execution factors that one may choose when developing advertising, including 30 rational execution elements and nine emotional ones. The assumption made is that advertisers are free to choose their appeals. In an ideal world possibly it can be a free choice, but in practice, use of appeals is limited by the kinds of information contained in the creative brief. Functional information is typically available from clients, who can describe the product or service in great detail. However, to have the option of an effective emotional appeal, one typically needs a powerful consumer insight to base the appeal on. If insight is lacking or weak in quality, attempting to develop emotive advertising may not be successful. Few advertising scholars explore how the planning function limits or enables creative ideation, but future research desperately needs to understand these critical planning inputs.

It is unfortunate that experiments using professional creatives are still an uncommon practice. However, the potential for understanding creativity theory, by studying practitioner practices is immense. No experiment in advertising development uses a large sample size of professional creatives, and only one other study, Kilgour and Koslow (2009), uses a modest-sized sample. But both suggest that advertising practices impose real constraints on creative thinking, sometimes aiding creativity, but sometimes holding it back. Although one can use populations of advertising students to understand some aspects of creative thinking (e.g., Griffin 2008), studying those at the upper end of creative ability provides a unique opportunity for pushing the boundaries of our knowledge of creative thinking.

This study also has important implications for practitioners. If marketers and advertising agencies want rational advertising, then they should not rely on insight. Not only is the effort of developing insight wasted, providing insight to a creative means they will work to use it in some way—by developing emotional advertising and leaving more functional appeals aside. However, if marketers are seeking more narrative based advertising with a strong emotional orientation to engage consumers, then insight provides a vehicle to deliver this communication objective.

For a long time in advertising, both practitioners and academics have tried to build inherent drama into advertising. Practitioners currently call this “narrative” but Leo Burnett coined the term “inherent drama”. Alternatively, that same style is called emotional appeals by more straight-laced academics who have been discussing them in the literature for decades. Yet the idea that emotional appeals are valuable and powerful was old even in Burnett’s 1950s Chicago agency landscape. With the 1920s publication of the Jordan Motor Car Company’s “Somewhere West of Laramie” print advertisement in the *Saturday Evening Post,* positioning the Playboy automobile toward a female market segment, the concept of emotional appeals was old even then.

However, the assumption always made was that finding that emotional angle to build an emotional appeal around was something that came naturally to good creatives—and at least in this aspect of creatives’ work, they didn’t need management. That is, emotional appeals were assumed always to be there, close at hand, ready to use, if the client needed them and was open to using them. The assumption was also made that where creatives need managing is to keep them on-strategy, and hence providing consumer insight in a creative brief was viewed as critical. But supplying insight to creatives only gives them the starting point for ideation, not the ending point, so insight doesn’t really manage advertising content. How consumer insight operates is in a less expected way as a tool to get to emotional advertising—especially in a functionally oriented category—by finding a consumer insight based on a deep human truth. Overall, this study provides a roadmap to finding emotional advertising, something that starts with consumer insight.

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Chapter 6: Conclusion and Discussion

Insight has an important role in the development of an advertising message proposition. Account planners in advertising agencies deploy insight to advance the affective appeal of the promise made by the brand to the target audience (Mitchell 2002), to strengthen the differentiation of the brand in increasingly competitive markets and to provide a strategic platform from which creative execution can leap (Hackley 2003a; Steel 1998). Insight acts as a priming cue designed to enhance creatives' knowledge in the task domain in order to solve the advertising problem. However, priming cues have been shown to induce mental set fixation, which impairs divergent thinking (Jansson and Smith 1991; Marsh, Landau, and Hicks 1996; Runco and Chand 1995). For creatives to think divergently within the domain knowledge of insight requires a large amount of cognitive effort. Therefore intrinsic motivation is an important factor in moderating the degree of creative effort towards the advertising task at hand.

The aim of this thesis is to explore the role of insight in the creative ideation process. Specifically, in Paper 1, presented in Chapter 2, a qualitative study through the lens of the account planner investigates how insight is used to construct a compelling advertising message proposition, the mechanisms that are adopted by the account planner in illuminating insight and the attributes of quality insight. In Paper 2 (Chapter 3), Paper 3 (Chapter 4) and Paper 4 (Chapter 5) an experiment conducted with 60 Sydney-based practising advertising creatives explores insight and its influence on domain knowledge, intrinsic motivation, media and emotional versus functional advertising appeals. The research questions, theoretical frameworks, hypotheses, research method and results of the studies were presented in their relevant chapters. This chapter presents the discussion and conclusion of the research findings.

6.1 Summary of Findings

Chapter 2 (Paper 1) explores insight's definition as critical knowledge about consumers that has the potential to motivate consumption behaviour. Insight can be defined as a serendipitous discovery of a human truth that deepens our understanding of consumer motivation. The human truth contained in insight creates a tension that can be exploited by the brand benefit in order to provide a creative platform for the development of an original message proposition. An important finding is that insight can be identified through other techniques beyond consumer-based research. In fact, the search for insight is an intensive creative problem solving process, with the study revealing five methods account planners use to uncover insight: (1) research, (2) personal knowledge domains, (3) challenging conventions, (4) borrowed sources and (5) central narrative extension. However, not all insights are equal in their contribution to facilitating creative work. Since not all insights are of equal quality, this study also uncovers the implicit assumptions account planners hold on what constitutes valuable insight: originality, relatability, usability and vision.

Two experimental papers (Paper 2 and Paper 3 in Chapters 3 and 4, respectively), explore how insight influences creativity. They differ in the way that the measures are operationalised. Chapter 3 (Paper 2) takes the more straightforward approach and explores strategy, originality and perceived creativity, all as independently measured constructs from external professional judges. Although the literature tends to emphasise that insight works through strategy to influence creativity, the study finds that insight interacts with originality instead. That is, an insight can partially substitute for originality—not strategy—in a judge's perceptions of what is creative.

Chapter 4 (Paper 3) takes a measurement route that operationalises creativity as a Cobb-Douglas function of originality and strategy (O'Connor et al. 2016). It also compares self-assessments of strategy, originality and creativity with the same constructs scored by independent professional judges. Given that the measure for creativity incorporates both strategy and originality in a theoretically derived fashion, predicting creativity with either strategy or originality—such as Paper 2 does—is not appropriate, as it would bring up issues of part-whole correlation problems. Therefore, the modelling approach changes to predicting strategy and originality with use of insight. Creativity is still predicted with insight, but strategy and originality should not be used as a dependent variable in this specific model because they are already used as creativity's components.

Substantively, Paper 3 investigates if insight operates as a priming cue that focuses a creative on a specific knowledge domain, thus inducing mental set fixation by constraining divergent thinking. While insight does direct creatives to travel to potentially more productive creative territory, there are both advantages and disadvantages associated with insight. Insight does not improve strategy; rather, the advantages insight provides flow from its contribution to originality. However, the study found that insight improved advertising creativity only in a print medium. In television, the strong insight condition reduced originality. This pattern is consistent with mental set fixation, which is when one is focused on a specific solution path and thus one finds it difficult to get out of the mental rut, limiting originality.

Paper 3 also uncovers an interesting finding with intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation only improves creativity in creatives' own self-assessments of their work. In the presence of insight, strong levels of intrinsic motivation lead to less creative executions, as judged by professional assessments of their creative work. When an account planner has a strong insight, the insight provided by the planner does much of the work for the creative; presumably because less cognitive effort is required on the part of the creatives. When intrinsic motivation is low however, it is the strong insight condition where originality is the highest. When intrinsic motivation is high, the no insight condition actually led to a higher level of judge-assessed originality. Surprisingly, domain knowledge did lead to higher levels of strategy in both judge- and self-assessments of creative work.

Although Paper 3 takes a more sophisticated measurement approach than Paper 2, both papers tell the same story: insight works through making more original work, not more strategic work.

Insight's effects were extended to understanding other aspects of creative advertising: use of appeals. Most appeals tend to fall into along a continuum from either functional or emotional in orientation. What insight is presumed to do is aid creatives in developing more emotionally relevant work that connects effectively with consumers. If so, then it will have to shift creative work from more functional to more emotional. This was supported, and future work needs to consider if this is a key mechanism of how insight works in the first place.

6.2 Contribution

Insight and its role in problem solving are widely studied in the discipline of psychology (See Mayer 1995; Ohlsson 2011; Pols 2002; Schilling 2005; Schilling and Green 2011). Using testable insight problems that have a single solution pathway, researchers have established the characteristics of insightful problem solving, compared to routine problem solving (Schilling 2005). However, despite a substantial 'community of practice' little is understood about the role of insight in the context of advertising problem solving, where insight may give rise to multiple pathways to a creatively congruent solution to the advertising task at hand.

This thesis contributes to the academic literature on the role of insight in the creative development process. The qualitative study addresses calls for more research in advertising using qualitative methods to develop theoretical understanding (Hanson and Grimmer 2007), develop research into the advertising practitioners' knowledge (Wierenga 2011) and to the generate a more thorough comprehension of the characteristics, context, issues and actors involved in micro-strategy work (Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009).

First, a formal definition of insight is provided to add meaning and understanding to the term in the advertising context. Insight can be defined as a serendipitous discovery of a human truth that deepens understanding of consumer motivation. Second, while the importance of insight is acknowledged, the study details how account planners integrate insight into the creative development process. In developing an understanding of a human truth, account planners can link this truth to a product attribute or benefit in order to arrive at a persuasive advertising message proposition. Third, it is revealed that insight is a creative process by the account planner designed to constrain creative ideation to an appropriate and original knowledge domain to optimise the creativity of advertising work. Fourth, the academic literature suggested that insight was unearthed in research from consumer accounts of their interaction with the brand, category or competition. However, this study illustrates that the account planner can reveal insight through other techniques in order to solve an advertising problem. Finally, as not all insights are equal, the study contributes to the literature by identifying the appropriate and originality aspects that embody quality insight.

The quantitative study provides an empirical exploration of the contribution of insight to the individual creative's advertising development process. First, the research focuses on the contribution of insight to creativity, originality and strategy across print and television media. Second, it investigates the impact of insight on two important components in Amabile's (1996) componential model of creativity that predict individual creativity: domain knowledge and intrinsic motivation. The last component, creativity skills, is assumed given the study is conducted with senior professional industry creatives. Third, it identified that insight can induce mental set fixation, adding to the extant literature on the role of priming cues, such as recently triggered information or the signalling of previous examples. Finally, it confirms through an experiment the anecdotes of account planners who suggest that insight makes the advertising execution more emotional.

6.3 Theoretical and Practical Implications

The aim of this thesis was to further understanding of the role of insight in the advertising creative development process. The extant academic literature is surprisingly sparse on account planning and the role of insight within the advertising discipline (see Barry, Peterson and Todd 1987; Hackley 2003a, 2003b; Morrison and Haley 2003, 2006; Haley, Taylor and Morrison 2014). This thesis ambitiously tries to develop our understanding of insight as an idea developed by the account planner and used by the creative in the development of advertising work. Paper 1 studies insight through the lens of the account planner, drawing on the limited existing literature scribed by academics and practitioners. In a grounded theory study, it moved from an inductive analysis of the data to a deductive analysis within existing theoretical frames on insight and Schilling's (2005) network theory of cognitive insight. The study provides a clear definition of insight that gives meaning, significance and context to the term within the advertising discipline; illustrates how insight is used to construct a creative message proposition; extends the theory of how insights are revealed by the account planner and provides the conceptual attributes that are important measures for the development of constructs. From a management perspective, these findings provide a basis for the improvement in the development of a message proposition and inform on the skill set required by a strong account planner.

Papers 2 and 3 studied insight and its effects on creatives in the ideation process, relying on various theoretical frames: insight (Hackley 2003a), mental set fixation (Birch and Rabinowitz 1951; Marsh, Landau and Hicks 1996), the componential model of creativity (Amabile 1996), and the trade-off theory of creative components (Kilgour and Koslow 2009). Paper 2 tested the effect of insight on perceived creativity, originality and strategy, demonstrating that insight interacts with originality, not strategy. The study takes insight theory and demonstrates that insight can take creatives to a more original knowledge domain. This suggests that scholars must be clearer about the role of insight on strategy and originality.

Paper 3 investigated insight's role as primed knowledge, suggesting insight can induce mental set fixation. The study also evaluated insight within Amabile's (1996) componential model of creativity and investigated the interaction between insight and intrinsic motivation, showing that while creative themselves believe that intrinsic motivation improves the quality of their work, judge assessments suggest strong intrinsic motivation leads to less original work. The study did demonstrate the importance of domain knowledge on the strategic orientation of creative work, showing domain knowledge does increase strategy in self- and judge assessments.

Both Amabile's (1996) componential model and Kilgour and Koslow's (2009) trade-off theory received support, but in a surprising way. Consistent with the componential model, domain knowledge consistently increased judge-assessed creativity, both in its strategy and originality components. At the same time, self-assessments only supported the role of domain knowledge on strategy. A different pattern was evident with intrinsic motivation. Judge-assessed models supported the idea that strategy and originality traded off against each other, in that intrinsic motivation could improve originality, but at the expense of strategy. However, the self-assessment models showed support only for the componential model's positive effects of motivation on creative performance.

Although extensive advertising scholarship has considered functional and emotional appeals, little of this has connected use of appeals with the mechanism by which creatives much develop those styles. For example, scholars may have noted that some advertisements tend to couch their persuasion approach in functional or emotional terms, but with little connection to what creatives need to know to develop executions of either creative flavour. Insight then, provides the tool creatives can use to find a useful “inherent drama” and make an effective emotional connection with consumers.

The findings in the quantitative study also have important practical implications. They suggest that there are implications for how advertising agencies and their clients manage the creative development process. If one has a well-motivated creative team, it is not clear if one requires an insight. Insight seems to work best in two situations: 1) when intrinsic motivation in creatives is low or 2) when making an emotional connection with consumers is required for the competitive situation.

Another critical concern is the differences between self- and judge assessments, each telling a different story about insight. These differences suggest that future researchers need to take both sets of measures to genuinely understand creativity. As a final word of caution, insight is perceived to work, even when objectively it does not, so agencies and clients must not assume the work is better just because there is insight. That is, having an insight does not mean the work is automatically powerful—and doesn’t need formal testing. Independent judges (and copytest scores) see things individuals cannot, but this only illustrates how one can get too close to one’s own work and highlights that value of objectively reviewing the work.

6.4 Limitations and Future Research

As is the case with all research, this thesis contains limitations resulting from necessary research design choices. In the qualitative study, Chapter 2 (Paper 1) there are a number of limitations that need to be addressed. First, the study only focused on the phenomenon of insight through the lens of the account planner. In practice, the creative development process is often a shared social activity, including account executives, creatives, media personnel, external researchers and the client (Lynch and West 2017; Vanden Bergh and Stuhlfaut 2006). Other actors may have unique theories about the workings of insight. Second, the study only focused on oral accounts of the insight phenomenon within the account planning function. While it was a deliberate design of the study to use in-depth interviews, written artefacts, such as the creative brief, could further complement understanding of insight. Finally, the study only focused on one geographical area. While qualitative studies do not have the population representativeness requirements of quantitative studies, research undertaken in different countries beyond Australia might enhance the validity of the findings.

Similarly, the quantitative studies embody limitations also. First, in any creative experiment the time allowed to complete the creative task and the artificial environment surrounding the experiment can affect the results (Harrington 1975). The timeframe available in the experiments to develop a print and television execution is what practitioners would describe as unrealistic. In practice, creatives have longer incubation times to evaluate, develop and refine their ideas. This is particularly true of television, which requires more elaborate craft skills in constructing the idea. Second, each creative was asked to develop a print advertisement and a television advertisement using different ideas. In practice, creatives will typically develop a campaign idea that straddles various media. Allowing creatives to focus on a single campaign idea across both media may have improved the creative ideation process by focusing the creatives on a single executional knowledge domain. Third, the experiment focused on the automotive category, where attributes supported the reasons to believe the brand promise. While the strong insight condition was designed to elevate the emotive appeal of the advertising with the target audience, more emotive work may have resulted from categories that inherently have more emotional benefits. Finally, creatives often develop creative advertising within a team environment, consisting of art director and copywriter, and increasingly a team of digital specialists. Exploring the creative development process in this more social context may facilitate a divergent thinking capability greater than that of the individual actor.

It is concerning that in Paper 3, insight worked only in print, but not television. In print, insight was able to enhance originality when motivation was low, but for television, the drop in originality showed problems with mental set fixation. The insight was particularly visual—that is, scars to prove one's toughness—so may have been more easily executed in print. Television, a more storytelling media, may need a more narrative style of insight that lends itself to drama execution. More research on a wider range of insights and media are needed.

Since the qualitative study is the first study to examine the ideation process of account planners, the findings suggest new avenues for future research. The contribution to insight by other advertising, research and client actors may differ based on country differences, agency size and occupational roles and differing practitioner backgrounds. For example, US account planning has been seen as being different from models in the UK (Hackley 2003b; Stewart 1987), and Patwardhan et al. (2009) have identified differences in the planning function in India. In addition, some techniques for illuminating insight may offer more assistance than others. As an example, challenging conventions may be a more appropriate mechanism in finding insight when repositioning a brand.

There are also a number of future research directions that emerge from the quantitative studies. First, further research is required to better understand the influence of insight on television. Extending the timeframe for creatives to complete an experiment may improve the incubation period necessary in divergent thinking processes (Wallas 1926). Providing a longer incubation period to allow creatives time to search new knowledge domains in order to access and combine new connections may improve the creativity of the advertising work. Second, there is an opportunity to develop our understanding of insight across different media, such as outdoor and digital media. Third, it is important to further develop our understanding of insight and its relationship with emotional benefits. Further research can be conducted looking at the contribution of insight comparing functional benefits to experiential and symbolic benefits; for example, in highly emotive product categories with typically low levels of brand differentiation. Fourth, it would be interesting to understand if insight, as a creative technique deployed by the account planner, can substitute for other creative techniques such as Goldenberg, Mazursky and Solomon's (1999) creative templates. Finally, as insight is intended to bring the brand closer to the consumer it would be valuable to understand the relationship between different insight conditions (strong, weak and no insight) and consumer attitudes towards the brand, the advertising and measures of purchase intention.

6.5 Conclusion

Since the 1960s, account planning has been advocated for better creative work. For some in the advertising industry, advocacy of account planning teetered on obsession, as if great work can only come about from great planning. No doubt much great work owes a large debt to the planning function. However, it is ironic that for over half a century, no formal testing of the planning–creativity connection has been done. Usually advocates of account planning focus on describing the approach to the uninitiated, as well as attempting to win over the sceptical, but these advocates did not try to tie the concept into a theoretical understanding of creativity, let alone conduct formal experiments.

This research started with an in-depth investigation of what planners think of account planning and why it works (Paper 1). Two broad themes came out. The first is that planning is perceived to inject needed strategy in the process. The second is that planners effectively do the divergent thinking task of creatives, who can coattail off a strong insight.

Following up the qualitative interviews, experiments were performed on working creatives to design advertisements with strong, weak and no primed insight controls. Two different methodological approaches (Papers 2 and 3) find a similar story. Insight did little to enhance strategy. What insight did was raise originality when the creatives lacked motivation—with some of the best work being literal articulations of the insight. In no case could a strong insight beat a highly intrinsically motivated creative. Insight, however, did enhance the emotional appeal of advertising, but did so at the cost of a functional orientation (Paper 4).

Overall, this research has shown that insight has an effect on creativity. However, insight's effect is not necessarily salubrious in all cases. Instead, insight is a tool, which when used well in the right situation, presents more benefits than costs. Like Kilgour and Koslow's (2009) trade-off approach, the value of insight depends on whether you need what the tool provides—and what it provides is primarily an injection of originality, compliments of the account planning department.

Insight is a critical element of message strategy, and this research has shown that insight is the critical link between the strategy and the creative execution. In all four empirical approaches, insight proved to be a decisive path creatives take in developing work. Sometimes this path worked well, whilst at other times it was less effective. Uniformly, it improved the emotionality of advertising, and if matched well to the media, it can enhance the quality of creative work. Most importantly, it does not always work the way it’s perceived to work, and more research is desperately needed.

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Appendices

Appendix (A)

Interview Consent Form

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

Department of Marketing & Management
Faculty of Business & Economics
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109
Phone: +61 (02) 9850 8459
Email: scott.koslow@mq.edu.au

Chief Investigator Name: Professor Scott Koslow
Second Supervisor’s Name: Associate Professor Lawrence Ang
Co-Investigator: John Parker

Information and Consent Form

Name of Project: The role of insight in account planning

You are invited to participate in a study on the role of insight in account planning. The purpose of the study is to understand the role of insight in the development of advertising.

The study is being conducted by Professor Scott Koslow (Chief Investigator: Professor at the Department of Marketing & Management), contact telephone number (02) 9850 8459 and email: scott.koslow@mq.edu.au. This research is being conducted by John Parker to meet the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree under the supervision of Professor Scott Koslow (scott.koslow@mq.edu.au) and Associate Professor Lawrence Ang, Department of

Marketing & Management (Lawrence.ang@mq.edu.au), contact phone number (02) 9850 9135. Specifically, this research will be used for the purposes of preparing a thesis, which John Parker is completing as part of his Doctor of Philosophy degree programme. The above stated Chief Investigator is the supervising professor of this postgraduate degree. The results of this study may also be published in peer-reviewed academic journals and presented at academic and professional conferences.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in one audio-recorded interview lasting between 60–90 minutes. You will be asked a series of questions relating to insight and its role in brand strategy planning. This interview will be scheduled at a convenient time and location for you and be conducted by John Parker. You may be contacted for further follow-up interviews to gain a deeper understanding of your initial interview responses.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential (*except as required by law)*. No individual, brand or organisation will be identified in any publication of the results. Only the named chief investigator, second supervisor and John Parker will have access to the data. We are able to provide participants with a transcript of the interview to verify the accuracy of the information on request.

All data collected in this study, including the audio transcript of this interview and your email addresses will be stored in a password protected hard drive on the Chief Investigator's work computer at Macquarie University as well as on an external hard drive of the co-investigator, John Parker, which will be stored in a locked filing cupboard at his personal residence. A hard copy of your consent form will also be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the Chief Investigator's office at Macquarie University.

Copies of the academic thesis completed by John Parker will not be made available to participants; however, any academic journal articles that result from the study will be supplied to participants, upon journal publication, in PDF form, via the email address they have supplied to the researcher as part of this study.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence. You can request that I stop the audio recording of this interview at any time. Refusal to participate or withdrawal of participation from research will not prejudice you in any way.

I, ____________________________ have read *(or, where appropriate, have had read to me)* and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: ____
(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: ____________________________Date: _____________________

Investigator's Name: JOHN PARKER____
(Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: _______________________ ___Date: ____________________

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may in Australia contact Scott Koslow (telephone (02) 9850 8459, scott.koslow@mq.edu.au) or the Macquarie University Ethics Committee through the Director, Research Ethics (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

INTERVIEWER'S COPY

Appendix (B)

Experiment Consent Form

Department of Marketing & Management
Faculty of Business & Economics
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109
Phone: +61 (02) 9850 8459
Email: scott.koslow@mq.edu.au

Chief Investigator Name:	Professor Scott Koslow
Second Supervisor's Name:	Associate Professor Lawrence Ang
Co-Investigator:	John Parker

Information and Consent Form

Name of Project: Creativity in advertising

You are invited to participate in a study on creativity in advertising. The purpose of this study is to evaluate how creatives respond to elements of advertising message strategy.

The study is being conducted by Professor Scott Koslow (Chief Investigator: Professor at the Department of Marketing & Management), contact telephone number (02) 9850 8459 and email: scott.koslow@mq.edu.au. This research is being conducted by John Parker to meet the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree under the supervision of Professor Scott Koslow (scott.koslow@mq.edu.au) and Associate Professor Lawrence Ang, Department of

Marketing & Management (Lawrence.ang@mq.edu.au), contact phone number (02) 9850 9135. Specifically, this research will be used for the purposes of preparing a thesis, which John Parker is completing as part of his Doctor of Philosophy degree programme. The above stated Chief Investigator is the supervising professor of this postgraduate degree. The results of this study may also be published in peer-reviewed academic journals and presented at academic and professional conferences.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in a creative experiment lasting 40 minutes. At the completion of the experiment you will be asked to take 20 minutes to fill in a questionnaire relating to the creative task you have just completed. The experiment will be scheduled at a convenient time and location for you and be conducted by John Parker. Your creative response and questionnaire will be anonymous. Two senior agency creatives will independently judge the creative ideas developed by each participant.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential (*except as required by law)*. No individual, brand or organisation will be identified in any publication of the results. Only the named chief investigator, second supervisor and John Parker will have access to the data. We are able to provide participants with a transcript of the interview to verify the accuracy of the information on request.

All data collected in this study, including the audio transcript of this interview and your email addresses will be stored in a password protected hard drive on the Chief Investigator's work computer at Macquarie University as well as on an external hard drive of the co-investigator, John Parker, which will be stored in a locked filing cupboard at his personal residence. A hard copy of your consent form will also be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the Chief Investigator's office at Macquarie University.

Copies of the academic thesis completed by John Parker will not be made available to participants; however, any academic journal articles that result from the study will be supplied to participants, upon journal publication, in PDF form, via the email address they have supplied to the researcher as part of this study.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence. You can request that I stop the audio recording of this interview at any time. Refusal to participate or withdrawal of participation from research will not prejudice you in any way.

I, ____________________________ have read *(or, where appropriate, have had read to me)* and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: ____
(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: ____________________________Date: _____________________

Investigator's Name: JOHN PARKER____
(Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: _______________________ ___Date: ____________________

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may in Australia contact Scott Koslow (telephone (02) 9850 8459, scott.koslow@mq.edu.au) or the Macquarie University Ethics Committee through the Director, Research Ethics (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

INTERVIEWER'S COPY

Appendix (C)

Strong Versus Weak Insight Pre-test

Strong Versus Weak Insight Pre-Test

We want you to evaluate the quality of several insights proposed for an automotive brand, which is developing a new advertising campaign for a new utility truck being launched in Australia. This vehicle will be targeted to tradesmen and farmers who are seeking to purchase a utility vehicle to assist in their day-to-day work. The following insights have been proposed, in support of the proposition '**No harder-working utility**', to aid in the development of the creative work.

1	Blue-collar workers put out the hard yakka to build the dreams of the country and its people while silently holding dreams of their own.
2	Smart people get hard-working equipment to do their dirty jobs.
3	There is nobility in hard work.
4	Work is physical, success is mental.
5	For tradesmen and farmers their vehicle is a point of pride, like scars that prove one's toughness.
6	Men do hard work.
7	Tradesman and farmers don't want bells and whistles; they simply need a truck that can stand up to the punishment of a hard day's work.
8	Farmers and tradesmen wear a uniform of scrapes, mud, sweat and blood.
9	Everyone has a secret to hide.

Please use the scale below to tell us to what extent you agree with the statements in the table below. Please write the appropriate numbers in the boxes to the right of each statement.

If your answer is…	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Put this number in the box…	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3

Q1. Based on the required advertising objectives of this brand this insight is…

INSIGHT NUMBER	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Appropriate to the proposition									
Original									
Based on a human truth									
A good fit with the proposition									
Imaginative									
Emotional in its expression									
Unexpected									
Credible to the target audience									
Is an insights familiar to consumers									
Brand-differentiating									
Economically expressed									
Leverages to the proposition									
On strategy									
Leaves room for creative execution									
Motivating to consumers									
Transformative for the brand									
Inspires quality creative									

Appendix (D)

Creative Task Booklet

(This experiment booklet is for the *strong* insight condition)

RESPONSE BOOKLET INSTRUCTIONS

Instructions:

You have been asked to develop creative work for a new utility vehicle being launched in Australia by a global automotive brand in the coming months.

You have 40 minutes to come up with two different creative executions. You are required to develop one advertisement for TV and one for print. After completing this, you will fill out a questionnaire.

Please spend the first 10 minutes generating and recording as many different ideas as possible on the page entitled ‘Idea Development Page’.

Then select your best idea for TV, and your best idea for print, and spend 15 minutes each developing them into ads. You can start with either TV or print. Please do not use the same concept for both executions.

When generating your ideas please use the creative brief on the following page to guide you with your creative development.

THE BRIEF

Advertising Objectives:

The advertising needs to persuade shoppers interested in competing work utility vehicles to include our brand on their list.

Target Audience:

This new utility vehicle will be targeted to tradesmen and farmers. The target is a male blue-collar worker, 25–45 years of age.

Insight:

For tradesmen and farmers their vehicle is a point of pride, like scars that prove one's toughness.

Proposition:

No harder-working utility.

Reasons to Believe:

- 10% more power than competitors
- 15% larger scratch-resistant tray top
- Rust-resistant underbody
- All-wheel drive

IDEA DEVELOPMENT PAGE

To commence, list all the creative thoughts and ideas you generate. Then choose the final two concepts you wish to develop into your TV and print executions.

ADVERTISEMENT
1

Take one concept from your ideas page and develop that idea into a print or television commercial. You are at liberty to start with either medium. You may describe your idea in words, draw visuals or utilise both words and visuals in your advertising development. Please feel free to ask for extra sheets of paper or use the back of this booklet.

ADVERTISEMENT
2

Now take your second concept from your ideas page and develop that concept into a print or television commercial. Remember, if your first idea was a TV execution, then this should be your print execution and vice versa. You may describe your idea in words, draw visuals or utilise both words and visuals in your advertising development. Please feel free to ask for extra sheets of paper or use the back of this booklet.

EXTRA PAGE

Please feel free to ask for extra paper if required.

Appendix (E)

Creative Task Self-evaluation Questionnaire

Advertising Creativity Task Survey

Thank you for helping us with this study! It does not require any confidential information. Please answer the questions below by drawing a circle around the number that represents your response.

*Using your own subjective definition of creativity, **rate the creativity of the executions** you developed in the just-concluded exercise.*	Far less than average	Less than average	Somewhat less than average	Average creativity	Somewhat above average	Above average	Far above average
Print Execution	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
Television Execution	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3

*Using your own subjective definition of advertising effectiveness, **rate the effectiveness of the executions** you developed in the just-concluded exercise.*	Far less than average	Less than average	Somewhat less than average	Average	Somewhat above average	Above average	Far above average
Print Execution	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
Television Execution	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3

*Was there an **insight** explicitly stated in the brief you were given?*	Definitely No	No	SomewhatNo	SomewhatYes	Yes	DefinitelyYes
*If there was no **explicit** insight in the brief did you **infer** an insight from the brief?*	Definitely No	No	SomewhatNo	SomewhatYes	Yes	DefinitelyYes
*How **strong** was the insight in the brief whether explicit or inferred?*	Extremely Weak	Weak	Somewhat Weak	Somewhat Strong	Strong	Extremely Strong
*Did you **use** the insight provided in the brief (whether explicit or inferred)?*	Definitely No	No	SomewhatNo	SomewhatYes	Yes	DefinitelyYes
*Did you use a **different** insight that was not*	Definitely No	No	Somewhat No	Somewhat Yes	Yes	Definitely Yes

explicit or inferred?						
*How **strong** was this other insight?*	ExtremelyWeak	Weak	SomewhatWeak	SomewhatStrong	Strong	ExtremelyStrong

Now turning to the creative work you have developed, using the scale below, tell us to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Write your response numbers in the boxes to the right of each statement.

If your answer is…	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Put this number in the box…	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3

Compared to other campaigns in the same product category, the campaigns I just created for the utility vehicle are…	Campaign	
	Print	TV
'On strategy'		
Original		
A good fit with the client's strategy		
Imaginative		
Unexpected		
Novel		
An appropriate strategy for the client		
Different		
Built on good strategy		

In the campaigns I just created for the utility vehicle, I showed that I understood…	Campaign	
	Print	TV
The target consumer		
The brand		
The product category		
The client's strategy		
Marketing strategy in general		

Please tell us to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Draw a circle around the number that represents your response.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Developing an advertisement for this product was fun.	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
I have a lot of expertise in developing automotive advertising.	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Working on this brand was stimulating.	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
I am knowledgeable about advertisement in the automobile category.	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Working on this category was exciting.	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Working on this advertisement campaign was personally rewarding.	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
I have worked on several campaigns in the automotive category in the past.	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Working on this advertisement campaigns was interesting.	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
I understand the peculiarities involved in creating ads for the automotive category.	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3

Section 2

Now, please tell us about yourself. Your responses will be used for classification purposes only.

Have you ever worked on an automotive client in the past?

☐ Never
☐ Rarely
☐ Occasionally
☐ Regularly
☐ Always

How many years have you worked in advertising? ____________ (Write in)

What is your job title?

Which area of the advertising business best describes your current position?

☐ Creative (art)
☐ Creative (copy)
☐ Creative director (art)
☐ Creative director (copy)
☐ Other ________________________

What is your gender?

☐ Male
☐ Female

What is your marital status?

☐ Married
☐ Single

THANK YOU.

Appendix (F)

Judges’ Coding Questionnaire for the Creative Task

Advertising Creativity Coding Sheet Creative execution code number: ___________________

Please rate the ***PRINT*** advertisement using the following questions below, by drawing a circle around the number that best represents your response.

Rate the PRINT execution	Far less than average	Less than average	Somewhat less than average	Average creativity	Somewhat above average	Above average	Far above average
Creativity	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
Effectiveness	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3

For the following questions if your answer is…	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Put this number in the box…	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3

Against the creative brief provided to you ***please rate the creative execution*** against the following criteria	PRINT
‘On strategy’	
Original	
Contained a well-polished idea	
A good fit with the client’s strategy	
Imaginative	
Unexpected	
Novel	
An appropriate execution against the brief	
Showed strong ad execution skills	
Different for the category	
Was a complete coherent advertisement	
Built on good strategy	
Persuasive for the target audience	
Had highly elaborated ideas	

Rate the creative work in its ability to deliver against the proposition below:	Not at all	Very little	A little	Somewhat	Moderately	Largely	Very much so
‘No harder-working utility’	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
‘The ute for men proud of their toughness’	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
‘The ute that works as hard as you’	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Rate the creative work in its ability to express the following consumer appeals	Not at all	Very little	A little	Somewhat	Moderately	Largely	Very much so
Functional appeal	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Emotional appeal	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Rational appeal	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Non- Rational appeal	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Rate the extent to which the focus of the creative is about	Not at all	Very little	A little	Somewhat	Moderately	Largely	Very much so
The user	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
The product	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
The competition	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
A human truth	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Image	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Consumer insight	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Product features	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Rate the creative work in its ability to express the following insights	Notat all	Verylittle	A little	Somewhat	Moderately	Largely	Very much so
‘For tradesmen and farmers their vehicle is a point of pride, like scars that prove one’s toughness’	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
‘Some vehicles are built for work and pleasure’	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
‘Men do hard work’	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
‘The right tools make the job easy’	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Appendix (G)

Ethics Approval Letter

MACQUARIE
UNIVERSITY

Dear Dr Koslow,

Re: 'The role of insight in enhancing advertising creative execution.'

Reference No.: 5201500267

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your response has addressed the issues raised by the Faculty of Business & Economics Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee. Approval of the above application is granted, effective "19/06/2015". This email constitutes ethical approval only.

This research meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The National Statement is available at the following web site:

http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e72.pdf.

The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Associate Professor Lawrence Ang
Dr Scott Koslow
Mr John Rohan Parker

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

2. Approval will be for a period of five (5) years subject to the provision of annual reports.

Progress Report 1 Due: 19th Jun 2016
Progress Report 2 Due: 19th Jun 2017
Progress Report 3 Due: 19th Jun 2018
Progress Report 4 Due: 19th Jun 2019
Final Report Due: 19th Jun 2020

NB. If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report for the project.

Progress reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/

human_research_ethics/forms

3. If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

4. All amendments to the project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee before implementation. Please complete and submit a Request for Amendment Form available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/

human_research_ethics/forms

5. Please notify the Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

6. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University. This information is available at the following websites:

http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/
http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/

human_research_ethics/policy
If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external
funding for the above project it is your responsibility to provide the
Macquarie University's Research Grants Management Assistant with a copy of this email as soon as possible. Internal and External funding agencies will not be informed that you have approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Management Assistant has received a copy of this email.

If you need to provide a hard copy letter of approval to an external
organisation as evidence that you have approval, please do not hesitate to contact the FBE Ethics Committee Secretariat, via fbe-ethics@mq.edu.au or 9850 4826.

Please retain a copy of this email as this is your official notification of
ethics approval.

Yours sincerely,
Dr. Nikola Balnave
Chair, Faculty of Business and Economics Ethics Sub-Committee
Faculty of Business and Economics
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