Educating Creativity in Advertising School by Using Innovation in Technology

Mădălina Moraru
University of Bucharest, Faculty of Journalism and Communication Studies, Romania

Abstract

This paper aims to highlight the role of innovative technology in academia to support creative thinking and applied knowledge, during transition on the market. The Romanian advertising has been paid much attention to in the last 10 years also because of branding strategies and updating creativity. Awarded at Cannes and Golden Drum many times, Romanian campaigns revealed an unexpected paradox: creativity development despite economic and political situation. For this reason, the present study intends to investigate the extent to which creativity is related to technology in academia by using specific skills. Therefore, the main research method is a semi-structured survey applied to 156 Bachelor students from 3 different universities. Additionally, we conducted 12 interviews with tutors specialized in advertising and communication, who teach classes where students acquire professional skills and think creatively. Interviews are meant to underline the role of innovative tools in sharing their knowledge to the students, while the survey highlights the students' perception of creativity in universities. In conclusion, our study focuses on the way educational system meets the requirements of Millenials, preparing for a very competitive and creative work force.

Keywords: creativity, education, technology, academia, creative industries, advertising
JEL classification: A29

Introduction

This paper approaches the complexity of one of the human skills, briefly called creativity, starting from the theoretical framework till nowadays education of this ability in special context like academia. The context of investigating this aspect is very simple and this analysis could be easily extended: Romania is still in transition and its only chance to escape the economic gap between traditional democratic and young democratic countries has become its creative potential. To put it synthetically: the less political and economic resources Romanian has, the more innovative the country expresses worldwide, being perceived as a creative hub. In this study, we will focus on educating creative thinking by academia and understanding the role of technology in preparing future employees for work market.

This research aims to analyse both perspectives: the students' view on the relationship between creativity and technology and professors' opinion regarding creative education. Preparing students for creative industries is a challenging responsibility, because they equally need skills and knowledge on the one hand, but also keep up the updating technology, on the other. As Carey and Matlay (2010) state, creative industries compass various sectors such as: advertising, architecture, art, crafts, design, film and video, musing, performing arts, software and computer

games, television and radio. The present study centres on the relationship between creativity and technology in the specific advertising and communication field.

Grasping the role of educating creativity involves being aware of students' potential, who have the chance to express themselves to the best of their ability. This means switching the focus from professor-centred method to student-centred method, based on the labour market needs. Millenials should be more prepared for entrepreneurial initiative, and, so, educating them implies "a more collaborative approach which breaks away from traditional norms and, while assessing students' abilities in a summative sense, helps them to develop an awareness of their strengths and weaknesses in a formative way" (Somervell, 1993, p. 221).

Literature Review

Creativity is meant to broadly describe people's behaviour and the way of thinking in a world that updates itself day by day in terms of knowledge and needs. The point is to what extent someone can decide how much a product is creative or not depending on its area of activity, and what are the necessary tools to develop these skills. According to El-Murad and West, creativity could be seen as "the art of establishing new and meaningful relationships between previously unrelated things in a manner that is relevant, believable, and in good taste, but which somehow presents the products in a fresh light" (2001, p. 81). Mainly, creativity relies on connecting skills, knowledge, and practical information in order to reveal new products. This perspective upon creativity is available in many creative industries, but also in daily life.

Creative thinking is a very complicated process that can be trained and always improved in many fields. Byttebier and Vullings'view on creativity rely on getting over the traditional way of processing data by defining this concept broadly: "Creative thinking is made up of different attitudes, thinking skills and techniques, and thought process that increase the probability of pattern breaking and the creation of new connections in our brain" (2015, p. 24). To sum up, this process of creative thinking refers to attitudes, skills, techniques and connections that lead us to a strong relationship with technology, the main focus of our discussion. According to the above mentioned authors, the most important creative skills, which should steadily be developed, are: creative perception, postponing judgement, flexible association, diverging and last but not least developing imagination. (Byttebier and Vullings, 2015, p. 24)

Understanding creativity in advertising implies educating skills, useful not only to elaborate challenging verbal or visual messages and strategies, but also to recognize consumers' profiles. Therefore, the creative strategy, which is either based on rational appeal or on the emotional one, should be based on detailed research. Practically, the result of this whole process of finding the best way to persuade the consumer, is called by advertisers the creative concept or simply *the big idea*. This term is explained as follows: "The big idea, or concept, is what delivers attention, impact, and memorability to the message-it produces the impression" (Moriarty, 1991, p. 100).

In addition, creativity represents an important issue in advertising because it sis an essential aspect of effectiveness (Kim et al., 2010; El-Murad and West, 2004). For this reason, educating creativity in universities should take into consideration the interdisciplinary approach of advertising, always connected with marketing, sociology and cultural influences. Nevertheless, Shimp (2010) elaborated a model that properly describes creative advertising, which was entitled 'CAN' model and compasses three interesting issues: connectedness, appropriateness and novelty.

Connectedness refers to showing empathy to the target, appropriateness involves pertinence for the brand and novelty is based on unexpected and compelling approach of the message. All these aspects highlight the relevance of creativity for developing a brand according to target profile and market evolution, which is possible by revealing the role of technology and innovation in this equation.

Creativity vs Innovation

Given that creativity is often associated with human imagination and its ability to find solutions for various tasks and problems, it is understandable to highlight its two dimensions: novelty and utility, as some researchers asserted (Paletz and Peng, 2009; Runco and Jaeger, 2012). Everybody who works or prepares to work in advertising dreams of sparkling ideas that are meant to generate both marketing sales and memorability among consumers. Yu et al. (2016) developed a semantic network of creativity based on analysing online social media data and took into consideration the previous aspects, thus developing a theory related to an association between concepts called "nodes". Novelty is regarded as activation of as many nodes as possible in order to solve a difficult problem. In this context, stimulating novel ideas implies the capacity to discover unusual associations of "nodes" in a specific context, which triggers further innovation in many ways. Utility refers either to the pragmatic dimension of creativity (rationality), or to "ideas that are converged together" (Yu, 2016, p.3). From another viewpoint, utility can be employed to boost creativity according to the appropriate purpose.

In advertising, utility is regarded often as effectiveness or at least connected with this concept. The extent to which a campaign appeals to its target and brings about brand recall depends not only on inspiring ideas, but also on the creative product itself. Professionals are quite aware of about this balance between novelty seen as message and innovation in execution to reach the campaign effectiveness and the connectedness to the target. As Sheinin et al. assert "Most often, advertisers seek to accomplish this task by diverging from expectations through novelty in execution and being relevant by providing useful information." (2011, p. 1). Obviously, creativity represents the result of both concepts, innovative execution and meaningful information, which always go hand in hand in design, advertising and other visual art.

Innovation is a term widely explained by researchers over the years and related to various specific fields, which sometimes causes confusion among other issues concerning creativity. There is no doubt that this process of innovation should be recognized based on specific criteria such as developing new product dimensions, updating its functional features, adding new services to a system as well as any other practical improvement. This perspective is meant to justify the utility of novel ideas and to make the difference between innovative as an attribute and innovation as a process. Edquist is one of the researchers who diminished the confusion regarding too many previous definitions of innovation by saying: "Product innovations are new-or better-material goods as well as new intangible services. Process innovation are new ways of producing goods and services" (2005, p. 181).

At this point, creativity is strongly bounded with innovation in several areas like business, computer science, marketing, entrepreneurship, banking services, education. For the purpose of this paper, innovation means developing new educational models and tools to motivate both academics and students for creating tangible results by making use of technology. Besides, the future employees should be able to build the entrepreneurial skills, because the market has new needs fulfilled by applied knowledge.

Updating Creative Skills Through Technology

Due to the previous theoretical framework in this study, the nowadays society encourages creativity to promote innovation also because of the daily changes of technologies that require a new perspective in many fields, including education. When describing the knowledge economy, which replaced the industrial economy, several issues were identified as main drivers of society development, among which technology, information, globalization and competitiveness are quite salient. Some years ago, technological skills were associated with specific tools and with ability to use them. Nowadays, this meaning has changed, given that they became part of people's life, no matter what they do. Nonetheless, competitiveness implies reconsidering the role of technology in many areas, because the market is most generous and people's needs have become quite specific. However, people are able to reinvent technology and often use it differently, as they are so much interested in updating their skills. For example, social media have triggered a real refreshment of expressing brand message in advertising, given that consumers are directly appealed and listened to.

In this context, we face a radical change of understanding technology, because it has started being connected with human imagery and it is extremely personalized. A new dilemma was noticed by scholars when they tried to make the distinction between technological creativity and creative technology. (Chiu and Yeh,1998). Apparently, it looks like wordplay, but these concepts do synthesize the relationship between creativity and technology. According to Wo et. al. "Technological creativity is also the integration of domain knowledge with the process of the formation of creative thought, and the results of formative and creative thinking. " (2012, p. 65) Creative technology is concerned about improving itself, by developing tools and upgrading instruments like software. To be more specific, a mobile-phone generation is the result of creative technology, due to its new applications and characteristics. Nowadays, developing creative thinking in the most efficient way does not reject technology, yet it requires technological issues to apply theoretical knowledge per se.

Returning to the initial purpose of this study, in the following lines we will look comparatively into the process of developing creativity in relationship with technology by analyzing both professors' and students' attitudes towards the above two mentioned aspects. We are concerned about the extent to which professors' teaching approach meets the students' expectations in terms of creative and compelling training for the future career on the communication and advertising market. Obviously, educating creativity is the main issue that involves investigating innovative methods and their connection with technology.

Methodology

The present research study is driven by a mixed methodology, both qualitative and quantitative, involving a double perception towards creativity: the tutors' one and the ones educated in this spirit. Briefly speaking, it is about both the professors' opinion regarding the relationship between creativity and technology and the students' view towards the same issues. Our subjects were chosen from different universities and specializations somehow related to creative thinking and technology, in areas as: communication, advertising, marketing, public relations and visual arts. In order to confront both perceptions of creativity related to technology, I decided to apply two different methods for each target category and compare the r esults. Therefore, I conducted 12 semi-structured interviews with tutors specialized in advertising, communication and marketing who are supposed to creatively teach

their classes. The interviews were audio-taped between February and April 2017, either during face-to-face or via Skype, then, subsequently, transcribed. All interviews lasted between 35-50 minutes. Respondents are 5 men and 7 women, aged between 38 and 44, with an experience in academia between 3 and 18 years.

As for the students, their opinion on creativity was investigated by using a semi-structured survey applied to 300 subjects from different universities involving creative areas of studying via online between March 1st and April 15th. Finally, the research is based on 156 answers to the survey. The respondents' age is between 19 and 48, given that we took into consideration Bachelor and Master students as well. Both interview and survey focus on the following matters: the features of creative thinking, tools for educating creativity, the relationship between creativity and technology and the professors' creative profiles. The main research question in this paper arises from analysing all this previous aspects: To which extent is creative thinking connected with technology and can it be educated? In order to achieve our purpose, we will also use content analysis to reveal the essential ideas provided by interviews and open-question surveys, which will, ultimately, lead us to a comparative method.

Results

The Feature of Creative Thinking

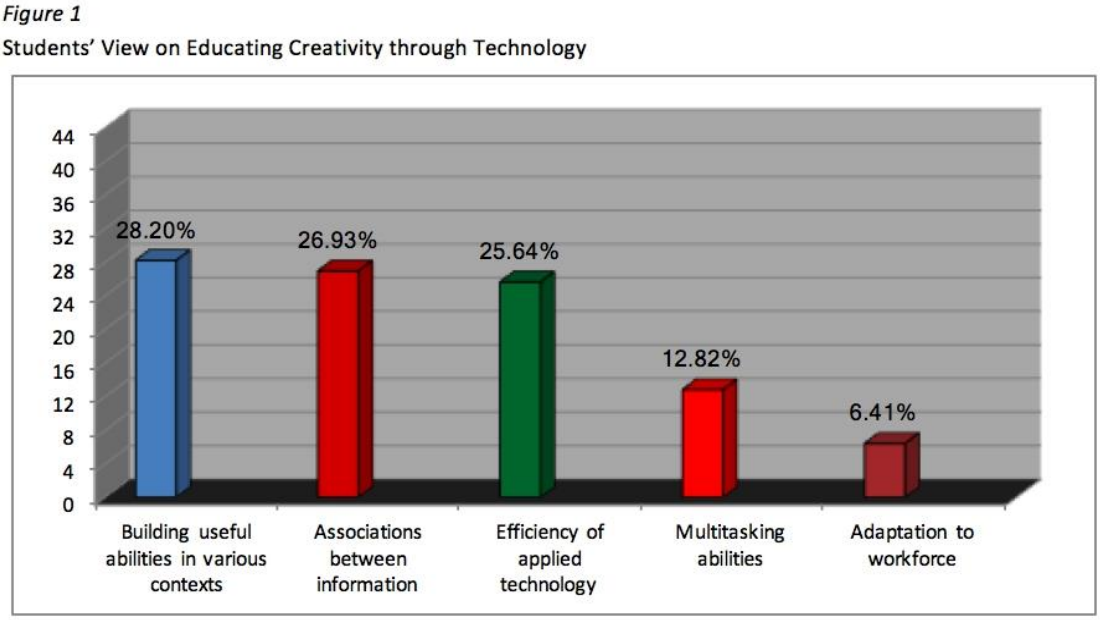
First of all, we aim to investigate the way creative thinking is understood by professors and students alike at the same time using both a qualitative and a quantitative approach. At this question, one category of interviewees agreed that creativity should involve innovations and technological resources, while the other one explains it as an activity which develops students' imagination by using unconventional tools, regardless of the interest area. One of the most compelling opinions draws attention on the connection with the students by asserting: "Creativity depends on the relationship with the student as well, without him being a mere creative planning of the activity itself." This perspective improves the very meaning of creativity by associating it with essential words such as: interactivity, modernity, autonomy and practical issues. From students' perspective, creative thinking could be variously defined, according to the following dimensions: applied knowledge, open discussions, unconventional methods, problem solving, giving up on stereotypes and stimulating originality. In a metaphorical way, one respondent presented this matter of educating creativity by employing an inspired pan: "Taming a lion or a lion in a circus" which means connecting one's whole personality and knowledge resources to reach the desired success. The answers' variety among survey's respondents can be explained through their different background and experience, given that their age and studying context are not the same.

Educating Creativity

Answering this question on educating creativity, however, was quite challenging for tutors, not for students, because most of the professors, except one, are aware of this shortcoming of the Romanian academic system and even more. One single professor points out the necessity of educating critical and constructive thinking, which refer to a high level of involvement coming from both tutors and students. Nonetheless, interviewees agreed with several homogeneous barriers of educating students in a creative spirit, meaning: focus on memory, not on abilities, a bureaucratic and traditional academic system, not easily updated according to

meet the labour market request. The way students defined the process of educating creativity through technology reveal significant numbers in *Figure 1*.

Figure 1
Students' View on Educating Creativity through Technology



Source: Author's illustration

Source: Author's illustration

The Relationship between Creativity and Technology

Moving further, the relationship between creativity and technology seen by tutors uncovers a clear differentiation: 8 out of 12 respondents believe that technology entirely supports creativity, whereas other 4 professors did not observe any direct connection between both concepts.

Analyzing the students' quiz regarding creativity vs. technology, we no tice a considerable difference between their view and the tutors'. Thus, 82,1% strongly believe that technology plays an important role in educating creativity, 14,1% do not agree with this aspect, while the rest of them (3,8%) are not decided. Obviously, tutors supported their answers with the pedagogical experience, whereas, teens feel very connected to this daily updating world of technology.

Stimulating Creativity through Technology

Being asked about three activities, meant to educate young people by using creativity, students offer many example of educating this skill through technology. They provided interesting answers based not only on their previous experiences, but also on their expectations. Applied projects, internships, interactive discussions and assignments represent 74% out of their choices. 12% suggest team activities, more debates to educate their trust and encourage their ideas. There are several respondents (6 %) interested in extracurricular activities such as cultural events, real campaigns, chances to get acquainted with the industry. Few others (4%) notice, however, that tutors' approach is equally important in educating their creativity. Equally, 4% were not decided upon specific activities whose final purpose is developing creativity in academia. As for the tutors' perspective, the content

analysis does not display such a wide range of proposals. Most of them discussed about practical activities and visual or interactive representations of knowledge, on general level, and only few professors brought up the topic of specific online software such as In Design, Adobe Premiere, Photoshop.

The Tutors' Creative Profile

Investigating the tutors' profile from their own perspective, by using content analysis, this study identified two categories of creative educators: the first one is more concerned about teaching style (alternative methods, interactivity, always updating classes to new trends); the second one remains fully connected with its audience, being preoccupied by empathy, spontaneity, adapting to the young ones and their technological skills. Unfortunately, the first direction is dominant, showing less responsibility for educating creative thinking. As for the students' perception regarding this creative aspect, more than half of the respondents (54,43) point out the relevance of tutors' degree of involvement in students' activity. On the contrary, only 7,59% suggest the successful methods used by an inspiring mentor as main indicator of his/her creative profile. The last category of students describing the creative features of an ideal mentor focuses on his personal qualities, such as: being open-minded, patient, receptive, communicative, sympathetic, and compassionated and so on. Only 3 respondents failed to draw a specific portrayal of creative professors.

Discussion

Even if, the concept of creative thinking stirred real debates among advertising and communication tutors, students seem to understand it empirically, hence they came to identify many situations of developing this skill. Comparing both factors involved in academia, students have a wider view towards methods for educating creativity than tutors, because they are more aware of their needs and are close to their personal purpose. The more complex the process of creativity is, the more diverse the solutions to educate it are. Besides, the students' needs generate a range of creative possibilities to use technology, while some of their tutors still remain at the old traditional methods instead. Summarizing all previous discussions about research subject, tutors consider that creativity needs technology, but always under control, while students claim that technological advantages for creative purposes become more realistic in some circumstances.

Interestingly, the students' and professors' view on a creative teaching profile/mentor hardly corresponds to each other's given the different roles technology plays for both generations, even if they live in the same society and share the same educational environment. While for the former, technology' is part of their life, for the latter, it is just a tool which still withholds certain secrets. As a result, educating creativity through technology should knock down the age barriers to achieve a high educational standard demanded by the labour market, as well.

Conclusion

Comparatively, both types of respondents refer themselves differently to the relationship between creativity and technology, which slows down the process of building a bridge between both concepts. Unexpectedly, young people were more willing to provide solutions for understanding the role of technology in academia to achieve the wide purpose of it, namely training the Millenials (and the future generation) in the spirit of constructive and creative thinking. Moreover, they insisted

on practical issues coordinated by their professors, which should give them a better grip on the real labour market. In terms of research limitations, the respondents' number was not totally relevant, they initially ignoring the survey. Second of all, another issue came from the different approach to creativity both to the interviews and to open-questions survey, which made it difficult for the ongoing coding process and for the comparison at the end. Additionally, some respondents did not provide real solutions for developing creative skills related to technology, because they seemed either to consider these concepts separately or reject one of them. Tutors were excited about the subject, but still not always so open to discussions or willing to further their initial perspective. Definitely, this research could be extended by using other methods like focus groups and also increasing the number of respondents. Besides, a future research should compare the academic view on creativity with the professionals'one (experts invited to teach occasionally), thus realizing the relationship between both categories. It would also be beneficial to identify the influencers from both sides for a better understanding of creativity in daily life.

In conclusion, educating creativity through technology is still in process in the Romanian academia, given the big gap between generations, mentalities and the fast-growing demands of the creative industries (advertising and not only).

References

1. Byttebier, I., Vullings, R. (2015), Creativity in Business, The Basic Guide for Generating and Selecting Ideas, BIS Publishers, Amsterdam.
2. Carey, C., Matlay, H. (2010), "Creative disciplines education: a model for assessing ideas in entrepreneurship education?", Education+ Training, Vol. 52 No. 8/9, pp.694-709.
3. Chiu, H.C., Yeh, Y.C. (1998), "Definition of Technological Creativity", published at the 1998 Technological Creativity Symposium in Kaohsiung, Sun Yat-Sen-sen University, Kaohsiung, pp. 21-34.
4. Edquist, C. (2005), "Systems of Innovation, Perspectives and Challenges", in Fagerberg, J., Mowery, D.C., Nelson, R.R. (Eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Innovation, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 181-208.
5. El-Murad, Z., West, D.C. (2004), "The definition and measurement of creativity: what do we know", Journal of Advertising Research, Vol. 44, pp.188-201.
6. Kim, B.H., Han, S., Yoon, S. (2010), "Advertising creativity in Korea: scale development and validation", Journal of Advertising, Vol. 39 No. 2, pp. 93-108.
7. Moriarty, S. E. (1991), Creative Advertising, Theory and Practice, 2nd edition, Prentice Hall, New Jersey.
8. Paletz, P., Peng, K. (2009), "Problem finding and contradiction: examining the relationship between naïve dialectical thinking, ethnicity, and creativity", Creativity Research Journal, Vol. 21, pp. 139-151.
9. Runco, M. A., Jaeger, G. J. (2012), "The standard definition of creativity", Creativity Research Journal, Vol. 24, pp. 92-96.
10. Schimp, T. (2010), Integrated Marketing Communication in Advertising and Promotion, 8th edition, Cengage Learning, South Western.
11. Sheinin, D. A., Varki, S., Ashley, C. (2011), "The differential effect of ad novelty and message usefulness on brand judgements", Journal of Advertising, Vol. 40 No. 3, pp. 5-18.
12. Somervell, H. (1993), "Issues in assessment, enterprise and higher education: the case for self, peer and collaborative assessment", Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, Vol. 18 No. 3, pp. 221-233.
13. Wu, C. S., Lee, C.J., Tsai L. F. (2012), "Influence of creativity and knowledge sharing on performance", Journal of Technology Management in China, Vol. 7 No.1, pp. 64-77.

14. Yu, F., Peng, T., Peng, K., Zheng, S.X., Liu, Z. (2016), "The semantic network model of creativity: analysis of online social media data", Creativity Research Journal, Vol. 28 No. 3, pp. 268-274.

About the author

Mădălina Moraru, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor and researcher at the University of Bucharest, Romania. Her main interests are the anthropological and narrative approaches of advertising. From 2010 to 2013 she received postdoctoral fellowships from The University of Oklahoma, USA, Staffordshire University and Buckinghamshire New University, UK. From October 2010 - March 2013 she conducted the grant POSDRU/89/1.5/S/62259 on glocalization Romanian advertising, authored many chapters, over 20 articles, as well as two books. Most work was presented at international conferences, as a result of her wide scientific activity. She actively gets involved in the Romanian industry's projects, being invited to significant events such as Advertising Day, Fibra Award, Romanian Effie Awards. Author can be contacted at **madalina.moraru@fjsc.ro**.