

# Advertisers in the light of communication ideas: Assessment and approval

*La valoración de las ideas creativas por parte del anunciante:  
Una aproximación cualitativa*

*Avaliação de ideias criativas por parte do anunciante:  
Uma abordagem qualitativa*

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## Abstract

*Creativity plays a core role in advertising communication, but do advertisers consider it as an essential factor when judging and approving communicative ideas presented by an agency? The main aim of this article is to identify the elements that, from the advertisers' point of view, are key in their assessment and approval process regarding communicative ideas; detecting any elements that can work for or against a favourable assessment for a proposal from an advertiser and checking whether creativity is one of them. To do this, an exploratory research project was proposed with a qualitative focus, involving in-depth interviews with ten advertisers operating on the Spanish market. Using content analysis and Grounded Theory, the findings demonstrate that the agency's proposal was not assessed in isolation but that, beyond the mere idea, there is a range of intangible elements with enormous influence over the advertisers' final decision. Creativity is a characteristic that is taken for granted, it is assimilated into originality and it is used as a medium to achieve certain business objectives. In turn, the article focus will provide a vision of the advertiser that is traditionally ignored in advertising literature: they are not only broadcasters but also the target audience of the commercial communication.*

**Keywords:** Advertiser; Creativity; Creative ideas; Advertising; Target audience; Assessment

## Resumen

*La creatividad ocupa un rol nuclear dentro de la comunicación publicitaria, pero ¿el anunciante lo tiene en cuenta como un factor esencial a la hora de juzgar y dar el visto bueno a las ideas comunicativas que una agencia le presenta? El objetivo principal de este artículo es el de identificar los elementos que, desde el punto de vista de los anunciantes, son claves en su proceso de valoración y aprobación de las ideas comunicativas; detectar los elementos que pueden facilitar o dificultar que un anunciante valore favorablemente una propuesta y comprobar si la creatividad es uno de ellos. Para ello, se planteó una investigación con un enfoque cualitativo y carácter exploratorio en la que se llevaron a cabo entrevistas en profundidad a diez anunciantes que operan en el mercado español. Los resultados obtenidos, utilizando el análisis de contenido y la Teoría Fundamentada, ponen de manifiesto que la propuesta de la agencia no se*

*valora de manera aislada sino que, más allá de la idea, hay un abanico de elementos intangibles que ejercen una enorme influencia sobre la decisión final del anunciante. La creatividad es una característica que se da por supuesta, se asimila a originalidad y se equipara a un medio para conseguir unos determinados objetivos empresariales. A su vez, el enfoque del artículo proporciona una visión del anunciante tradicionalmente ignorada en la literatura publicitaria: su condición no solo como emisor, sino también como público objetivo de la comunicación comercial.*

**Palabras clave:** *Anunciante; Creatividad; Ideas creativas; Publicidad; Público objetivo; Valoración*

## **Resumo**

*A criatividade desempenha um papel fundamental na comunicação publicitária, mas o anunciante a leva em consideração como um fator essencial ao julgar e aprovar as ideias de comunicação que uma agência lhe apresenta? O objetivo principal deste artigo é identificar os elementos que, do ponto de vista dos anunciantes, são fundamentais no seu processo de avaliação e aprovação das ideias de comunicação; detectar os elementos que podem facilitar ou dificultar a um anunciante avaliar favoravelmente uma proposta e verificar se a criatividade é um deles. Para tal, foi realizada uma pesquisa com uma abordagem qualitativa e de carácter exploratório, em que foram realizadas entrevistas em profundidade com dez anunciantes que operam no mercado espanhol. Os resultados obtidos, utilizando a análise de conteúdo e a Teoria Fundamentada, mostram que a proposta da agência não é avaliada isoladamente, mas que, para além da ideia, existe uma gama de elementos intangíveis que exercem uma enorme influência na decisão final do anunciante. A criatividade é uma característica que é tomada como certa, assimilada à originalidade e equiparada a um meio para atingir certos objetivos empresariais. Por sua vez, a abordagem do artigo fornece uma visão do anunciante tradicionalmente ignorada na literatura publicitária: sua condição não apenas de emissor mas também como público alvo da comunicação comercial.*

**Palavras chave:** *Anunciante; Criatividade; Ideias criativas; Publicidade; Público-alvo; Avaliação*

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# 1. Introduction

Advertising is traditionally understood and studied as part of marketing intended to meet a market goal and that, for this purpose, devises a series of messages for a set of consumers categorised as the target. Just like any communication, advertising thereby has a sender and a receiver. However, when we talk about a target audience, the interest is focussed on the final receiver of the message, ignoring that the target concept in advertising might be considered dual (Fajula, 2015). The advertiser, the person who initiates the advertising assignment, is in turn the person who assesses it and approves or rejects the proposals at the outset. Without their approval, the ideas will not reach the final target audience of this advertising project (Navarro, 2010). It is therefore usually little known that advertising's initial receiver is the person who has commissioned the advertising job: the advertiser (Mayle, 1999).

The people entrusted with presenting the ideas must firstly convince the advertising client that these ideas are suitable. Communication is a particularly slippery field when attempting to guarantee certain results where, in the end it usually all comes down to a matter of trust and the ability to persuade (Ricarte, 1998). It must be possible to create the expectation that what will be obtained in exchange for the invested money is worth it (Mayle, 1999), often based on barely-developed ideas, accompanied by a verbal explanation (Hill, 2006) and with the ultimate aim of getting the advertiser to "buy the campaign" (Liria, 1994, p.143). In short, this means fanning the flames of their enthusiasm (Farran, 2010) as they alone stand between the message and the final receiver.

It is no easy task to delve into what gets an advertiser to approve an advertising idea as most services offered by an advertising agency are basically intangible (Hill & Johnson, 2004; Lovelock, 1983; Solanas & Sabaté, 2008) where creativity is the main aspect that agencies can offer (Dahlén, Rosengren & Törn, 2008; El-Murad & West, 2004; Koslow, Sasser & Riordan, 2003; Reid, Whitehill & DeLorne, 1998) and one of the basic components required by advertisers (Kalasunas, 1985; Mitchell, 1984; Rossiter & Percy, 1997; Dowling, 2004). This is the field of customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction while understanding the advertiser to be the client,

according to Hill (2006); this area has been scarcely studied within the field of B2B (Nowak & Washburn, 1998; Patterson, Johnson & Spreng, 1996) due to its complexity when assessing services that, just as in advertising agencies, stand out for their great intangibility (Patterson et al., 1996).

The consumer satisfaction bibliography shines a spotlight on the “expectations” and “results obtained” concepts although it also concludes that these factors are tinged by other contextual aspects such as the level of implication of the person responsible for the assessment, the cost, the risk that is perceived and/or assumed in this work, prior experience working with the agency, the perceived experience of the agency that would develop the creative work, the level of professionalism attributed to it, the agency staff, the client-agency working relationship and atmosphere, the information available to the advertiser, the timing and exceptional aspect of a particular commission, competitive intensity and market dynamics (Li, Dou, Wang & Zhou, 2008). Combining all these elements within the framework of expectations and results will lead to a positive or negative evaluation from the advertiser (González Lobo & Prieto, 2009; Oliver, 1980, 1993).

It is undeniable that the advertiser’s approval is essential within the advertising process (Devinney, Dowling & Collins, 2005). Consequently, presenting the ideas becomes a particularly important task within the advertising business (Mayle, 1999), as a high rate of rejected ideas not only represents economic losses for agencies but also affects group morale (Mayle, 1999) and client-agency relations. As Mayle mentions (1999, p.56), “la campaña es buena en la medida en que está vendida”<sup>1</sup>.

The research presented here is an exploratory study that aims to look in greater depth at this traditionally ignored figure of the advertiser, their role as a target, and answer the following questions:

- Which are the key elements for an advertiser to approve advertising pitches presented by the agency?
- Which factors ease or work in favour of its approval?

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- Considering the core role of creativity within advertising services, is this a key component for an advertiser?
- What does an advertiser understand by creativity?

### 1.1. The advertiser as a gatekeeper for advertising communication

Creativity has traditionally been analysed from four different perspectives, what are known as the 4Ps for creativity stated by Rhodes (1961): *person, process, press, products*. Each of them emphasises a different part of the advertising process. These areas of interest highlighted by Rhodes have been maintained, with a few variations, in subsequent literature (de los Ángeles, 1996; El-Murad & West, 2004; Golann, 1963; Ricarte, 1991, 1998; Romo, 1997; Sasser & Koslow, 2008; White & Smith, 2001).

To focus this article, the environment perspective is particularly interesting as it looks at how this aspect influences both behaviour and the creative result. Contributions by Amabile and Pillemer (2012) and Csikszentmihalyi (1998) are particularly relevant. The former talk about the “central role that social-environmental forces play in creativity” (Amabile & Pillemer, 2012, p.12). In turn, Csikszentmihalyi contemplates creativity as a systemic phenomenon which is the result of interaction between a person and their socio-cultural context, as a last resort, the result of the interaction of a system comprising three parts: “una cultura que contiene reglas simbólicas, una persona que aporta novedad al campo simbólico y un ámbito de expertos que reconocen y validan la innovación”<sup>2</sup> (Csikszentmihalyi, 1998, p.21). These experts are entrusted to evaluate the projects and give their verdict so the author identifies them as competent people who are experts in the field that they must evaluate. Transposing this to the field of advertising creativity, it seems obvious that creatives should be these gatekeepers. In fact, it is the creative or creative team that, above all, selects the idea that they consider to be the most relevant to develop it and present it to the client. Secondly, the creative director should give the green light to the idea so that it might flourish. Let us not forget that creatives in the most internationally acknowledged positions, hand out the major awards in the sector, acknowledging projects that deserve to form part of the history of advertising creativity.

However, we cannot forget that it is the advertiser who ends up deciding which ideas will come to fruition meaning that, with very few exceptions, the advertiser is the primary gatekeeper at the door to advertising creativity (Fajula, 2015). In this respect, it seems clear that the field might have a decisive impact on the quantity and quality of new ideas that people can provide. This doubtlessly explains why some authors have not hesitated in stating that advertising actually reflects the advertisers (Mayle, 1999) and that good advertising projects arise because the clients decide and want this (Moliné, 1999).

## **1.2. The advertiser's ability to strengthen or inhibit creativity**

The advertiser ends up playing a decisive role in selecting advertising ideas. However, this key role is not only limited to the moment of approval but leans heavily on the creativity of the advertising agency (Hill, 2006; Hill & Johnson, 2003, 2004; Koslow, Sasser & Riordan, 2006) and its influence can reach far wider. The client's attitude can act as a mechanism that encourages or discourages creativity (Aprile, 2000). Considering that creativity can achieve visible results in marketing items (Li et al. 2008), advertisers should back innovative ideas.

Segarra (personal communication in del Río, 2007) and Michell (1984) point out the importance of the client in a successful job. A good client lets you get on with the work, trusts the agency and is available to listen and change their mind when presented with strong arguments (Mayle, 1999). Advertising work remains a team project so personal relations should not be ruled out as a factor (Billorou, 2001; González, personal communication in del Río, 2007).

On the other hand, there are also voices that highlight the negative impact of the client on the ideas' end result. Advertisers that, due to their own business structure, take a coercive role in creativity (Liria, 1994). The ego, of both advertisers and creatives, can also damage good creative results (Daniels, 1974).

In short, the advertiser as a judge and, in some cases censor, of creativity is the person who decides which ideas will end up forming part of the brand communication, which ideas will reach the consumers and will populate the media landscape.

It follows that the attitude they take towards creativity will help them strengthen it or, on the contrary, inhibit it. They are often responsible for the greatest share of a brand's advertising success, without even realising it.

## 2. Materials and methods

The in-depth qualitative interview method was chosen to answer the research questions, as a convenient data collection technique when "el objeto de investigación está relacionado con la vida, experiencias, ideas, valores, representaciones o estructura simbólica del entrevistado"<sup>3</sup> (Biagi, 2010, p.95).

It was decided to interview advertisers with a heterogeneous profile (different business sectors and different company sizes) and, irrespective of the size of the agencies they work with, they provided a far more creative profile. Consequently, subjects were selected for their characteristics (Corbetta, 2007). Given that the research was approached from an exploratory qualitative perspective, sample representativity was not sought from a statistical point of view but it compiled study subjects' opinions, experiences, feelings and behaviour (Corbetta, 2007).

The final sample comprised the following advertisers (see table 1):

Person	Company	Position
1. Nuño Pasqual del Pobil	De Agostini	Chief Marketing Officer
2. Ramon Rovira	Banc Sabadell	Subdirector, Communication Director and Institutional Relations Director
3. Ignacio Sala	Atrápalo	Founder and Marketing Director
4. Ingrid Rahola	Llagurt	Founding partner
5. Glòria Salomó	Llagurt	Founding partner
6. Miquel Campmany	Nestlé	Creativity and Content Manager
7. Beatriz Gómez	Skoda (Grupo Volkswagen)	Advertising manager
8. Sara Anducas	Isdin	B2B platform Product Owner



Person	Company	Position
9. Carlos Eiroa	Asisa	Advertising, brand and sponsorship director Commercial and marketing area
10. Oihana Parera	Holaluz	Marketing manager

**Table 1:** Interview subjects .  
Source: own work.

An interview guide was designed featuring the basic topics that we were interested in eliciting in the open, semi-structured interview. The main topics covered in the interviews related to this research are given below (see table 2). It should be noted that only relevant sections were picked in relation to the purpose of this article:

Main topics	Content
Evaluation and approval of ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•What is evaluated</li> <li>•Criteria</li> <li>•Key elements to <i>buy</i> an idea</li> <li>•Attitude to ideas</li> <li>•Factors that facilitate the approval task</li> </ul>
Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•What is creativity?</li> <li>•What is a creative idea?</li> </ul>

**Table 2:** Main topics covered in the interviews with advertisers.  
Source: own work.

The interviews took place in two waves: the first during October 2015 and, in this case, held in person in the companies where the participants worked. Advertisers 1 to 6 were interviewed in this first phase. They all lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and were recorded with a digital recorder. The second round took place on-line (except for Parera who answered a questionnaire by email) in April 2021 and lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. This second phase repeated the interview with the first six advertisers (except for Rovira who no longer held that position in the company) and opinions were added from advertisers who appear numbered from 7 to 10 in table 1.

Analysis of the results was tackled from two perspectives: content analysis and Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Content analysis was used to describe the results. We used grounded theory to identify the topics and key concepts to

move beyond the more restrictive vision of the description (Andréu, García-Nieto & Pérez Corbacho, 2007). This interpretative perspective was particularly useful when drawing conclusions.

The availability of raw material (direct interview, transcribed by the actual researcher) made it possible to expand the results by evaluating elements that went beyond the words that appeared on paper. Intonation or possible emphasise from the interviewee on a certain aspect or nonverbal communication are all aspects that enrich the analysis.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Evaluation and approval of ideas

The act of presenting the advertising pitches culminates with a verdict where the advertiser praises and approves the agency's ideas, suggests changes or, on the contrary, decides not to accept them. The main aim of the research is precisely to identify aspects that, from the advertisers' point of view, are key in their appraisal and approval process for advertising ideas and check whether creativity is one of them. The results obtained were as follows:

- It should be coherent: the proposal should match the brand's values, philosophy and communication line. An advertiser will not approve an idea that does not fit the essence of their brand. The proposal must be aligned with the company's vision and how it runs its communication. The interviewees talk about factors linked to brand values, nuances related to the company philosophy and they mention that advertising is adorned with a sheen of its corporate DNA. Of course, it should also get the brand tone and personality right.
- It should build the brand. An idea must help strengthen the brand, create solid foundations that guarantee its long-term survival while launching it into the future. Parera talks about positively constructing the company's values, positioning and value proposal.

- The message should be understood. The advertisers mention that it is important for the message to be clear, that it reaches the target audience who can decipher it correctly. Notoriety is all very well, although it should not sacrifice comprehensibility.
- The proposal should be different, original, innovative. None of the advertisers referred explicitly to creativity as an element that they consider when evaluating and approving communication ideas. In any case, they all mentioned features very close to this concept such as originality, notoriety, differentiation or innovation.
- It should generate sales. For the advertisers, it is very important to see or perceive that the pitch is focused on the sales targets and that it will be capable of generating sales. An effective idea should have a positive impact on business.
- It should adapt to the product's requirements and needs. They also mention that the idea that is presented should be appropriate for the product, it should understand and respect its specific nature and resolve its needs. In the case of international advertisers, adaptation to the brand's local positioning is important, and adaptation to its media plan. In the same way, it is important for the pitch to respect the budgetary parameters set by the advertiser.
- It should meet the set targets. The advertisers mention that the ideas cannot be free but should be clearly useful for anyone who wishes to win over the client with that advertising action. The idea should respond to the advertising commission and meet the brief.
- It should be thrilling. The advertisers refer to good ideas as any that can connect emotionally with the target audience and prove popular with them. Ideas should be able to thrill to connect with the consumer and generate buzz for the product. It is important that potential can be seen to arouse attention and interest among the audience and generate sympathy for the brand.
- It should be powerful. A powerful idea is understood to be an idea that can outlast a particular campaign or advertising action. A powerful idea is the

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opposite of a notion or fancy, that they define as an idea that can be highly notorious although only fleeting. A powerful idea is intended to last; it can be broken down and adapted to various media and supports. Campmany talks about big idea and Sala refers to ideas that can be attacked from different sides and still hold fast.

- They should make a positive first impression. Finally, one important aspect when evaluating the pitches is that the idea should make a good first impression. The personal, subjective, visceral and intuitive component is also decisive. Rahola refers to this first impact as one that should be “a feast for your eyes” and Pasqual del Pobil talks about an “electric jolt”. Campmany justifies the importance of a first impression because it is the closest to what the consumer will feel, an initial impact without judging the proposal in depth. In turn, Rovira recognises that this is a very personal topic but, despite this, he considers that, based on his experience, if the idea feels good when it is presented, then it usually works well. On the contrary, when it is not a clear winner from the start, the results are usually questionable.

### **3.2. Aspects that make it easier or more difficult to evaluate and approve ideas**

Creative ideas, the pitches that agencies present to advertisers, are not judged in isolation but come with a presentation. In this setting, agency members might resort to a series of elements that facilitate approval. The advertisers consider that the most relevant in this respect are:

- Justification of the idea (arguments). Advertisers believe that arguments that present the idea properly endorse, justify and ease understanding. It should not be “because we had this idea” but it should be well-founded and strategically justified.
- Enthusiasm in the presentation. An agency will find it hard to convince a client that something is a good idea if the team that presents it and defends it does not believe in it. Doubts about the proposal can be perceived and transferred to the advertiser through the varying passion and enthusiasm demonstrated by the persons in charge of the presentation.

- The excitement and the enthusiasm (implication). The client appreciates that the team sees the project as an exciting challenge as it interprets it as a sign of valuing and respecting them, their business, their products and their brands. This component is also related to the quantity and *quality* of agency staff who are involved in the project. It is important that the idea has been the result of consensual teamwork. Often, the fact that a high-ranking manager from the agency (general creative director, agency founder, etc.) is taking part in the campaign is highly valued by the advertiser.
- The authority of the presenter and the agency's prestige. This aspect makes a major difference to advertisers and it is raised as a decisive factor. Sala states that the prestige of Daniel Solana from Doubleyou (an agency that his company usually worked with before the crisis caused by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic) intervenes decisively in his approval of their ideas. The grandeur and charisma of the main spokesperson representing the agency in the presentation inspires confidence and makes it easier to persuade the advertiser and therefore they are more likely to "buy" the pitch. The agency's prestige is bound to this aspect. Its name, its reputation, the awards it has won, its expertise...are all aspects that lavish justification and credibility on the idea supplier and increase their power of persuasion.
- The capability of the presenter. Aside from the personality and the charisma of the presenter, it is important to demonstrate their capability to connect with people and put the proposal across correctly, in short, their degree of verbal and interpersonal intelligence. Anducas highlights that it is clear whether the person presenting the idea is the person who came up with it, or not.
- Trust. Mutual knowledge and a lasting relationship have an impact on the advertiser's trust in the agency, therefore trusting that the agency's ideas are relevant and appropriate. A symbiotic relationship takes place where the probability of approval increases with trust. However, Anducas and Gómez also point out that trust can work against an agency if this makes it too complacent. From their point of view, they perceive that agencies work harder when they are new or competing with each other. Eiroa talks about the importance of a joint agency-client creation.

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- Support material and staging. Providing references, presenting with high quality material, the items' level of polish, attention to detail, a watchable presentation...are aspects that the advertiser also weighs up when evaluating the ideas being presented to them.

### 3.3. Creativity

Creativity is not an element that can be spontaneously conjured up by advertisers as a decisive component when evaluating and approving advertising ideas. However, it is worth mentioning that all the interviewees refer to it indirectly when talking about a proposal's originality, differentiation and innovation components. In other words, they do not say the word explicitly, but they refer to the concept.

When the interviewer asks the question directly, they unanimously agree that creativity is at the centre of their decision-making process.

Regarding what creativity means to advertisers, they usually define it as above. They talk about something that jolts the receiver (Rahola), that elicits surprise and innovation (Sala), that has spark (Sala), that veers away from the norm (Eiroa), that is daring and breaks the mould (Anducas) or that brings out the message within the advertising noise (Gómez) or in relation to the competition (Parera). It is important to highlight that the advertisers consider that creativity is something that should be used to work on the advertiser's brief. Salomó refers to this capacity as follows, "Being creative means having a good idea of what you need and dressing it up to make it look really good. That's it." (Salomó, personal communication, 15 October 2015). In turn, the founder of Atrápalo points out that, from his point of view, what is creative for a client does not always coincide with what is creative for an agency and understands that creativity should go hand in hand with the company's needs. In a similar way to Sala, Parera states that creativity should serve the company's business goals. Eiroa demonstrates this by stating that this is what allows the brand to "tell new stories and seize a territory and a language" (Eiroa, personal communication, 14 April 2021).

## 4. Conclusions and discussion

Creativity is something that the advertiser assumes they are going to obtain when they ask an agency to address an advertising brief. In fact, it can be interpreted from their comments that this is exactly why they turn to an advertising partner and entrust their brand communication to them instead of doing this job themselves. Even though they do not mention creativity directly as a decisive factor when assessing the communication proposals, all of them without exception highlight it as a basic component when asked directly.

Creativity is a primordial element within the advertiser's evaluation and approval of advertising ideas, but it is neither the only aspect nor the most important.

The advertiser assimilates creativity in terms such as originality, novelty, innovation and differentiation from the competition. For them, creativity is a means and not an end. The idea is not for the proposal to be creative, but that it should be able to help generate positive results for sales and the brand image. Proposals are creative if they make it possible to meet certain market goals and point to the existence of different conceptions that an advertiser or a creative might consider as creativity. Differences of opinion between advertisers and agency can also be found in research by Devinney et al. (2005), Michell (1984) and Murphy and Maynard (1996). We believe that this line would be interesting to explore in future research.

One decisive conclusion from the research presented here is that approval of an idea does not depend on a single component, as there is a full set of intangible aspects that decisively influence the advertiser's final decision. Factors such as the level of trust in the agency and/or the creative team, how long they have been working together, an interesting presentation or a charismatic presenter are, in the end, just as or more decisive than the objective features of the idea. The results obtained in relation to the importance of the personal relations are consistent with results found by Chu, Cao, Yang and Mundel (2019), Yen, Abosag, Huang and Nguyen (2017) and Yen and Barnes (2011).

The advertiser attempts to rationalise their resolution based on objective criteria, and so they need to see that the agency's proposal is not just a flash in the pan. The rationale and justification of the meaning behind the idea is important in their approval. Hogshead (2007) points to the need to seek rational arguments when attempting to sell a risky idea. However, we see that in many cases, the decision is based on intangible and predominantly subjective elements.

Our exploration demonstrates that the first impression caused by the idea weighs heavily on the final decision. The advertiser's gut reaction to the idea, that it fits, that it is in line with their expectations, that it harmonises with their taste...are hefty elements in a short space of time. The decision will be subsequently debated and justified but more than 50% of the sale is sealed at that moment. Consequently, the presentation is a crucial element within the creative process as, in just a few short minutes, the fate of the agency's pitch is decided with everything that this implies for material and human resources in the process that are also being evaluated and judged.

The person who is presenting and how they do it, in other words, their charisma, their authority, their prestige, and their degree of empathy and verbal intelligence, are also outlined as key components for client approval. Interviewee comments demonstrate that it is important to perceive that the agency 'takes them seriously', that it considers them to be important; and one way of reflecting this is the quantity and 'quality' of professionals that they allocate to this job. In many cases, we see that the advertisers want to 'bring out their heavy artillery' and get the agency's best-known creatives involved in their projects.

On the contrary, elements such as conservatism, fear and lack of communication culture demonstrated by the advertiser act as strong decision inhibitors. According to Koslow et al. (2006), the results point to the fact that an advertiser has a great impact on the creative quality of the work that they obtain, consequently we can conclude that they get the advertising that they decide to obtain. Creativity, differentiation and good ideas all require risk, and an advertiser's capability to assume risk is directly linked to how a company works and its business culture (West & Berthon, 1997). Good work is the result of a courageous advertiser (Wang, Dou, Li & Zhou, 2013).



The end result is the product of teamwork where the advertiser also plays a role. Personal chemistry, a good working atmosphere and trust are decisive in good advertiser-agency relations and they can be appreciated at the final level of the creative job in line with the findings of Chu et al. (2019).

In summary, this work concludes that the advertiser's approval of advertising ideas is a question of chemistry, trust, daring, passion, proximity, creativity, communication culture and criteria.

Regarding the research that has been carried out, we consider that it makes a valuable contribution to the lines of analysis for the advertiser subject. The advertiser's perspective as the target audience for the communication is practically non-existent. The creativity evaluation was basically studied from the point of view of the creatives or the actual advertising professionals (Roca, Tena, Lázaro & González, 2016; West, Christodoulides & Bonhomme, 2018) or the consumers (Chang, 2014; Lehnert, Till & Ospina, 2014; Reinartz & Saffert, 2013) and we found no references from the advertiser's point of view.

In the same way, another important contribution from the article refers to the knowledge that it provides from the qualitative interviews, particularly regarding findings on mechanisms that influence an advertiser's evaluation and decision-making regarding a creative idea.

This research opens the door to an extensive field to be explored as, obviously, it is not without its limitations. Firstly, regarding the sample, we believe that it would be interesting to widen the number of analysis subjects and analyse the results quantitatively. In any case, it is interesting to consider that we have found a high rate of consistency and coincidence in our results. It should be mentioned that the work presented in this article is part of wider research that, for reasons of space, we have decided to fragment. Another line being worked on is complementary to what is presented here as it has reproduced the research by interviewing subjects who oversee drafting the ideas: the creatives. We believe that the vision of the same phenomenon from the point of view of different subjects involved in the process can give us a complementary perspective to the experiment.

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Finally, many of the opinions expressed by the advertisers in relation to the factors that influence their evaluation and approval of the communication ideas are framed within the insights, strong beliefs, motivation and deeply-rooted desires, making them hard for the environment to modify. One of the doubts raised at the beginning of this research was to see if these criteria might vary over time. The exceptional situation caused by the SARS-CoV-2 worldwide pandemic has had dramatic consequences on the economic scenario the world over. The WHO has warned of the economic impact of the virus on society and the economy, and the World Bank predicts that the world economy will shrink by 5.2% this year (Banco Mundial, 2020), the worst recession since World War II. It therefore seems to be a plausible hypothesis to consider that more tangible and rational arguments might emerge in the current environment. The answers obtained in the second wave of interviews demonstrate that the findings from this research have the same capacity to remain intact, with few variations, despite the passing of time and changing context. In this respect, advertisers show that this “new normal” has not affected the process of evaluating ideas to a large extent but it has made an impact on the type of ideas they are looking for: up-to-date, adapted to the new social context, non-recycled, bound to new insights emerging from fresh priorities, increasing the social dimension of the brands and with more human and more ethical messages and positioning that look beyond direct, fast profit in the short term.

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## Notes

- [1] A campaign is only good so far as it is sold.
- [2] A culture that contains symbolic rules, a person that contributes novelty to the symbolic field and experts who recognise and validate the innovation.
- [3] The research subject is related to life, experience, ideas, values, representations or the symbolic structure of the interviewee.



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