Springer Proceedings in Business and Economics

Francisco J. Martínez-López
David López López *Editors*

Advances in Digital Marketing and eCommerce

Second International Conference, 2021

Springer

Francisco J. Martínez-López ·
David López López
Editors

Advances in Digital Marketing and eCommerce

Second International Conference, 2021

Springer

Editors
Francisco J. Martínez-López
Department of Business Administration 1
University of Granada
Granada, Spain

David López López
ESADE Business & Law School
Barcelona, Spain

ISSN 2198-7246 ISSN 2198-7254 (electronic)
Springer Proceedings in Business and Economics
ISBN 978-3-030-76519-4 ISBN 978-3-030-76520-0 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76520-0

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Contents

Who Is a Digital Agency? Delving into the Value Proposition

Federica Ceccotti(✉) and Maria Vernuccio

Sapienza University of Rome, Rome, Italy
{federica.ceccotti,maria.vernuccio}@uniroma1.it

Abstract. The marketing communication services market has been transformed by digitisation, which has led to the evolution of traditional agencies, the emergence of new digital agencies, and the entry of consulting firms into the market. The literature on agencies has investigated the differences between traditional and digital agencies in terms of structures, processes, and culture. However, little is known about new players' value propositions. Given the phenomenological variety of digital agencies found in the management literature, the research aims to investigate the characteristics of these players' value proposition. Through a qualitative exploratory approach based on 22 in-depth interviews with communication professionals and the subsequent thematic content analysis, the authors identified three different digital agencies' typologies: *strategic digital consultants*, *integrated digital communication agencies*, and *specialised digital communication agencies*. Given the absence of studies on the topic, the paper contributes to the literature on agencies by outlining the key characteristics of the value proposition of the three typologies of digital agencies identified in terms of the offering, target and strategy. From a managerial perspective, this study may reduce client disorientation, better define the competitive landscape, and, finally, improve the communication network's performance.

Keywords: Marketing communication · Digital agency · Value proposition · In-depth interviews · Content analysis

1 Introduction

The digital revolution has profoundly transformed the marketing communication services market (Kassaye 1997) and has led to increased communication network complexity (Grant and McLeod 2007; Ceccotti and Vernuccio 2013). Due to digitalisation, the following has occurred: (1) the evolution of traditional agencies (i.e., creative and media agencies born before the digital revolution) (Wagler 2013; Lynch 2019; Stuhlfaut and Windels 2019); (2) the emergence of new agencies specialising in consulting on digital media (Windels and Stuhlfaut 2018; Hughes and Vafeas 2019); and (3) the market entry of large consulting firms (e.g., *Accenture Interactive* and *Deloitte Digital*) that, while supporting clients in their digital transformation process, also provide digital communication services (Lynch 2019; Ceccotti et al. 2019).

F. J. Martínez-López and D. López López (Eds.): DMEC 2021, SPBE, pp. 225–235, 2021.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76520-0_23

Studies on communication agencies have focused almost exclusively on traditional agencies' digital transformation (Ceccotti et al. 2020; Lynch and West 2017; Windels and Stuhlfaut 2018; Turnbull and Wheeler 2017). Although Rodgers and Chen stressed the importance of investigating "new agencies" as early as 2002, the literature on this topic is scant and restricted to the analysis of specific issues, such as the differences between these new agencies and traditional agencies in terms of structures, processes and corporate culture (Mallia and Windels 2011; Patwardhan et al. 2019; Rodgers and Chen 2002). These new players are defined generically as agencies specialising in interactive digital media, such as internet advertising (Rodger and Chen 2002), mobile advertising, social media marketing, etc. (Mallia and Windels 2011; Vernuccio and Ceccotti 2015). The literature seems to lack an in-depth examination of their value proposition. Instead, the latter could be relevant to investigate for different reasons.

First, by analysing the managerial literature (e.g., Guttmann 2020) and the websites of specialised digital category associations (e.g., Interactive Advertising Bureau – Iab - Europe and Iab Italy), one can find a tremendous phenomenological variety of digital agencies. This variety could be at the basis of advertisers' disorientation in the face of players that do not have a distinctive value proposition (Ceccotti and Vernuccio 2013) and the resulting difficulty in assessing the work of the communication partner (Ceccotti et al. 2019). Second, some authors underline clients' opportunity to internalise digital communication activities, especially for low budgets (Hughes and Vafeas 2019). The managerial literature also stresses this trend for advertisers with high digital communication budgets (Vizard 2020; Whiteside 2019). Therefore, the need emerges for digital agencies to market themselves with a value proposition that is distinctive and relevant for clients.

In the absence of previous research on the subject, this paper aims to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in marketing communication agency studies by outlining the key characteristics of digital agencies' value proposition. From a managerial perspective, this study will better define the competitive landscape (on the supply side) and reduce client disorientation (on the demand side of communication services), thus improving the communication network's overall performance.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: after a description of the digital agency studies, the research question (Sect. 2) and the method (Sect. 3) will be introduced, and then the results (Sect. 4) and conclusions of the work (Sect. 5) will be presented.

2 Theoretical Background and Research Questions

As early as 1997, Kassaye stressed the profound transformation of the competitive landscape in the advertising industry with the introduction of new players that the author calls *"computer graphic studios and boutiques for web-related accounts"* (p. 85). In the academic literature on communication agencies, there is a remarkable variety of terms to represent players specialising in digital media: *"new-media firms"*, *"internet boutiques"* and *"new-media agencies"* (Rodgers and Chen 2002); *"interactive agencies"* (Mallia and Windels 2011); *"digital agencies"* (Vernuccio and Ceccotti 2015); *"pure-play digital agencies"* (Stuhlfault and Windels 2019); *"new agencies"* (Hughes and Vafeas 2019); and *"digitally focused agencies"* (Patwardhan et al. 2019).

In this paper, we will use *"digital agencies"* to refer to born-digital players (Sebastian et al. 2017) that offer services for marketing communication on interactive media (Mallia and Windels 2011; Vernuccio and Ceccotti 2015).

In the literature on marketing communication agencies, the analysis of these new players has not been in-depth, despite the growing relevance of digital communication (Iab Europe 2020). Previous studies have only investigated digital agencies in a comparative way to identify their differences from traditional agencies. The main differences that have emerged are related to structures and competencies, processes and corporate culture (Rodger and Chen 2002; Mallia and Windels 2011; Patwardhan et al. 2019).

Digital agencies are very lean organisations with high functional diversity in terms of resources, knowledge and specialisations, which allows them to generate innovation through the continuous contamination of experiences between teams (Kwantes et al. 2005). The traditional creative couple -consisting of an art director and a copywriter- is replaced by mixed teams, mainly coordinated by a project manager who often takes the account manager's place (Mallia and Windels 2011). Technical and marketing analysis skills are at the heart of the organisational structure of these agencies (Ceccotti 2018; Patwardhan et al. 2019). Moreover, thanks to continuous updating and internal growth paths, these players can attract and retain the best talent in the job market (Patwardhan et al. 2019).

As opposed to traditional agencies, where some routines were consolidated over time, digital agencies do not follow rigidly codified processes and present high flexibility and speed in responding to client needs (Patwardhan et al. 2019).

Concerning the culture in digital agencies, there is a more collaborative approach than in traditional agencies: the project proposed to the client is often the result of the collaboration between different professionals working in teams and not of a single professional (e.g., the creative director) who takes pride in idea authorship (Mallia and Windels 2011). Another cultural trait that characterises digital agencies is the orientation towards performance and data-driven results (Patwardhan et al. 2019). This latter aspect characterises the value proposition of such agencies, which offer advertising services with measurable returns (e.g., conversion rates), enabling clients to develop campaigns that are more effective and efficient than those of traditional agencies and optimisable in the short term (Guercini 2008; Patwardhan et al. 2019).

By analysing the management studies (Advertising Age 2020; Guttmann 2020) and the websites of the leading trade associations specialising in digital marketing and communication (e.g., Iab Europe), we can find a tremendous phenomenological variety of digital agencies. This variety also seems to be at the basis of the client disorientation that some studies on agency-client relationships highlighted (Ceccotti et al. 2019). Moreover, the "vagueness" of the value proposition may generate difficulties for the client to correctly judge the value of the service offered by the communication partner (Ceccotti 2018).

Digital agencies must present themselves with a clear and relevant offer to position themselves distinctively in the communication services market and to reduce the risk of clients internalising digital communication activities (Hughes and Vafeas 2019). Some recent studies have investigated the appropriateness of internalising online advertising activities according to their return in terms of sales/ROI/ROS, highlighting the convenience of using digital agencies only in cases of high budgets dedicated to these activities (Porto and de Abreu 2019). However, the management literature also states that several large clients with significant budgets for digital communication have started to conduct these activities internally, both on the creative side and in terms of media planning and buying (Vizard 2020; Whiteside 2019).

In marketing communication agency studies, there are no specific contributions to the topic of digital agencies' value proposition in contrast to traditional agencies (Childers et al. 2018; Linch and West 2017; Wagler 2013).

The value proposition is one of the three components of a company's business model (Richardson 2008) and describes *"what the firm will deliver to its customers, why they will be willing to pay for it, and the firm's basic approach to competitive advantage"* (p. 138). In particular, value proposition comprehends the following three aspects: 1) the activities conducted, and the services provided (offering), 2) the target, and 3) the business strategy to win customers and gain a competitive advantage. Following this conceptualisation, this study aims to outline the key characteristics of the value proposition of digital agencies from the perspective of communication professionals, answering the following RQ:

RQ – What is the value proposition of a digital agency in terms of the offering, the target customer and the competitive strategy?

By representing the different aspects of the digital agencies' value proposition, it will be possible to define the competitive landscape more clearly and, at the same time, to better guide the client in choosing the most appropriate agency to meet his digital communication needs.

3 Methodology

Due to the lack of previous studies on digital agencies' value proposition, qualitative exploratory research was conducted based on 22 in-depth personal interviews (Creswell 1998) with marketing communication professionals belonging to Italian organisations with a strong international presence. In particular, three categories of respondents were involved:

1) Trade associations specialising in digital communication (n = 2) to have a broad vision of the offering of digital agencies;
2) Advertisers (n = 8), top spenders in digital communication, to investigate their perception of the digital agencies' value proposition as users of the services they deliver; and
3) Digital agencies (n = 12), to deepen the characteristics of their offering, the target customer, and the competitive strategy adopted.

Moreover, an in-depth collection and analysis of secondary data (i.e., industry reports, websites of trade association members, websites of agencies belonging to large advertising networks) were conducted with the dual aim of identifying digital agencies to be involved in the research and gathering information to better interpret the results (Muninger et al. 2019).

Given the subject of the study, the key informant approach was adopted in the selection of the respondents (Robson and Foster 1989): only professionals with a long experience in digital communication and a leading role in their organisations were involved in the theoretical sample (Dexter 1970) (e.g., chief marketing officers, communication directors, head of digital for trade associations and advertisers; founders, partners, CEOs, general managers, and vice presidents of sales and marketing for digital agencies). To define the dataset size, the criterion of theoretical saturation was adopted: the data collection was only closed when the contribution of new interviews did not bring new knowledge useful for achieving the study goal (Francis et al. 2010; Corbin and Strauss 2014). The interview guide, based on open-ended questions, was the same for the different categories of respondents: after the definition of digital agency, the different aspects of the value proposition (i.e., offering, target customer, and strategy) were explored in depth.

The interviews were conducted by telephone or Skype and lasted between 45 and 70 min. Each interview was recorded and transcribed in full. The interviews were analysed using thematic content analysis (King and Horrocks 2010), which allowed highlighting the key characteristics of the value proposition (in terms of offering, target and strategy) for three categories of digital agencies.

The so-called "code-confirming" procedure was used to ensure the reliability of the results, and the procedure involved two independent coders who were experts on the topic under investigation. The agreement level among the coders was 89%, above the minimum required for the exploratory approach (Powell 2007). Finally, the results were reviewed by four respondents who substantially agreed and validated them (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

4 Findings

First, the respondents highlighted the indeterminacy of the adjective «digital» , which does not adequately qualify the agency as it does not identify the specificities of the value proposition of these players. *"Digital is the era in which we live. Everyone interprets the digital being in their own way. In a competitive arena, everyone can be called a 'digital agency', and for this reason, the term is too vague"* (CEO, Digital agency). Simultaneously, the necessary conditions have emerged for an agency to be called digital: the strong technological connotation, the strategic data-driven and customer-centric approach, the culture of experimentation and collaboration.

However, there is a certain variety in the value proposition of these players. Three typologies of digital agencies emerged from the interviews, which present an increasing level of specialisation: (1) *strategic digital consultants*, (2) *integrated digital communication agencies*, and (3) *specialised digital communication agencies.*

In the next pages, we will briefly present the key characteristics of the value proposition (in terms of offering, target customer, and competitive strategy) for each type of agency identified.

1) *Strategic digital consultants*

Strategic digital consultants are real partners in the customer's digital transformation process (e.g., *Reply, AKQA,* and *Alkemy*). They have strong technological expertise and support companies in redefining business models enabled by big data, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of Things. The consultancy offered is at several levels: (a) technology (e.g., platform and solution), (b) processes (e.g., service design), and (c) strategy and communication (e.g., creativity and media planning).

"We support our customers in extracting value from technology. We assist them in designing processes, applications and digital communication. Clients look to us for business innovation, for solutions that can also significantly impact their organisation and, above all, their results" (VP Sales and Marketing, Digital agency).

According to some interviewees, these players are not "digital agencies" in a strict sense: they are strategic business consultants, not merely digital communication consultants. They state that they are digital technology 'generalists' in this market, and for this very reason they are chosen: *"A company that only needs a digital communication campaign is unlikely to turn to us, whereas a company that we are supporting in the broader digital transformation process is very likely to turn to us for its digital campaigns"* (VP Sales and Marketing, Digital agency).

To complete their communication offerings, they often acquire communication agencies specialising in various digital areas (e.g., social media, influencer marketing, etc.).

Due to their breadth of consultancy services, these players mainly target large companies, establishing stable medium- to long-term relationships with them.

On a competitive level, *strategic digital consultants* compete with large management consulting firms (e.g., *Accenture Interactive* and *Deloitte Digital*), which are acquiring specialised skills to complete their offering with communication services. Instead, they do not feel particularly threatened by other types of digital agencies.

2) *Integrated digital communication agencies*

Integrated digital communication agencies are communication partners that support clients in defining and implementing their digital communication strategy (e.g., *Doing* and *Caffeina*). In most cases, they result from processes of extension of activities conducted by agencies that have progressively integrated different communication services to provide clients with a complete offer. They are characterised by a *"horizontal vision and vertical professionalism"* (Communication Director, Advertiser).

They combine brand consultancy (which used to be the exclusive domain of traditional advertising agencies) with a data-driven approach and measurability of communication results. By proposing an integrated offer, they reduce the coordination efforts of the network of specialised agencies that would have to be conducted by the client.

"The company that turns to us can find all digital specialisations under one roof, and this brings significant advantages in terms of coordination, speed and consistency of campaigns. We start with the customer's needs and build a strategy around them using various digital tools and channels" (Founder, Digital agency).

Concerning the customers, *integrated digital communication agencies* target medium to large companies with an evolved approach to digital communication with whom they manage to build stable relationships and increasingly smaller customers who want to build an online presence.

On the strategy side, *integrated digital communication agencies* are generalists in digital communication, and their main competitors are the traditional agencies that also offer digital services. However, compared to the latter, they are more credible in consultancy as they have a digital mindset from their start:

"Even if the proposition to the client looks similar 'on paper' (a digital communication campaign), ours is the result of a digital mindset that traditional agencies do not have. We are digital in our approaches, methodologies, and processes; therefore, our value proposition is certainly more credible for the client than that of traditional agencies" (General Manager, Digital agency).

Finally, *integrated digital communication agencies* also compete with agencies specialised in specific digital communication areas (i.e., *"specialised digital communication agencies"*) when the client requires consultancy for just one of these areas.

3) *Specialised digital communication agencies*

Specialised digital communication agencies are communication agencies that base their value proposition on a certain degree of specialisation or hyper-specialisation (e.g., *We Are Social* and *Webranking*) and can offer more significant expertise in this area than *integrated digital communication agencies*. The consultancy focuses on a single communication project (e.g., social media strategy) or the implementation of a particular activity (e.g., chatbot development) or a specific channel (e.g., mobile advertising).

The respondents agree on the significant fragmentation of the offer and the wide variety of players due to the numerous specialisations of digital communication: *"There has been a huge fragmentation of digital activities that makes is impossible to map agencies and produce a taxonomy*" (Marketing Director, Trade Association).

The target customer of these agencies is "liquid" and includes the following: (a) large enterprises seeking a hyper-specialised service, (b) small-/medium-sized enterprises that do not have an evolved approach to digital communication and are seeking a single digital consultancy service, and (c) traditional agencies that have not yet developed digital skills in-house and complete their offer by resorting to external suppliers. In the latter case, the supplier's identity very often remains hidden from the client and is only revealed when the reputation of the specialised agency can qualify the overall value proposition of the traditional agency.

Several respondents stressed different strategic alternatives for specialised digital communication agencies. In particular, they can accomplish the following:

(a) Progressively broaden their expertise to other consultancy areas to offer the client a more comprehensive service in the digital field and become an *integrated digital communication agency*: *"Often agencies that are born specialising in a certain service broaden their offer to increase business opportunities in neighbouring areas in which they can quickly build up expertise and be credible"* (Marketing Director, Trade association),

(b) Covering market niches in order to be the best in a specific field. These are medium-sized to large agencies that support even large companies in a specific activity: *"When we redesigned all the company websites in all the countries where we operate, we turned to a specialised agency to get the maximum expertise in this field"* (Communication Director, Advertiser),
(c) Grow to become appealing to, and be acquired by, the large communication networks and consultancy firms: *"When there is a disruption, the medium/small vertical agencies that drive that change start to grow and become attractive to the large structures that need those specialised skills, and then the process of acquisition by the latter begins in order to remain competitive in the market"* (CEO, Digital agency).

Depending on the strategy adopted, the competitive arena varies and may include *integrated digital communication agencies* offering consultancy on a specific service and other agencies specialising in the same digital field.

5 Conclusion

The present work is part of the literature on communication agencies, particularly by exploring the key characteristics of the value proposition of digital agencies, i.e., born-digital players specialised in the offering of services on interactive media. By adopting a broad perspective involving communication professionals from different categories (namely, Trade associations, Advertisers and Digital agencies), it was possible to outline the variety of the value propositions of these new players from the professionals' perspective and to identify three types of digital agencies: (1) *strategic digital consultants*, (2) *integrated digital communication agencies*, and (3) *specialised digital communication agencies*. For each typology, the offering, the target customer, and the competitive strategy were presented; the competitors perceived as most relevant were also outlined.

There are three contributions of this study to the literature on communication agencies.

First, this research focuses on a category of agency, i.e., digital agencies, which have received scant attention in previous studies. Previous literature deepened the traditional players and delved into the "new" ones only to outline the differences between the two types of agencies in terms of processes, structures and culture (Rodger and Chen 2002; Mallia and Windels 2011; Patwardhan et al. 2019).

Second, focusing on digital agencies, the research investigated one of the dimensions of the business model, namely, the value proposition, for the first time by adopting Richardson's (2008) model and deepening its three components: the offering, the target and the strategy.

Third, this study made it possible to overcome the vagueness of the value proposition found in previous contributions (Guercini 2008; Patwardhan et al. 2019). The expression "digital agency", which refers to any agency specialised in digital media (Mallia and Windels 2011; Vernuccio and Ceccotti 2015), is not adequate to indicate these new players' specificities and needs to be further qualified to better explicate the positioning of agencies in the communication services market. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by proposing three different types of digital agencies (identifiable with three different "labels") according to the specificity of their value proposition.

The results also provide managerial implications for both advertisers and each type of digital agency. For the former, understanding the value proposition variety of the digital agencies is useful to orient themselves in a very complex communication scenario and to be able to better evaluate the projects and the results proposed by their consultants. Additionally, depending on the level of consultancy (business, strategic brand, and on specific communication projects), they will enter into medium-term partnerships or short-term supply relationships.

On the agencies' side, *strategic digital consultants* should present themselves as real business partners for clients, and they should also play a relevant training role in their digital transformation process. They should aim for stable and high-quality relationships with clients, including high-level corporate counterparts (i.e., C-level executives).

Integrated digital communication agencies are strategic communication partners for clients. They must differentiate themselves from traditional agencies by providing strategic brand consulting with a native digital mindset and, at the same time, delivering measurable and optimisable results in the short term. Compared to *specialised digital communication agencies*, they must present themselves as one-stop consultants who can support their clients in all areas of digital communication.

Specialised digital communication agencies are suppliers of specific communication projects. They should find their growth path either by maintaining a high level of focus in their offerings or, on the contrary, by aiming for integration and, thus, transformation into *integrated digital communication agencies.*

Moreover, this study can help marketing communication and digital marketing students orientate themselves according to the value propositions of various digital agencies.

The research has some limitations related to the methodological approach and the geographical focus of the set of respondents. The adoption of the qualitative method does not allow the generalisation of the results obtained. Moreover, the involvement of respondents belonging to Italian realities, albeit with an international perspective, could lead to results that cannot be observed in other countries. These limitations give rise to some future lines of research. First, it might be interesting to widen the geographical context of the investigation. Second, a case study analysis could be conducted to deepen the specificities of each type of digital agency proposed in this paper. On a thematic level, it seems interesting to study another component of the business model proposed by Richardson (2008) and not investigated so far in the literature: value capture, i.e., the cost structure and revenue models of the three different types of digital agencies that emerged in this study.

References

Advertising Age: Agency report (2020). https://acn-marketing-blog.accenture.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Ad-Age-Agency-Report-2020-FINAL.pdf. Accessed from 11 May 2020

Ceccotti, F.: Le agenzie di comunicazione nel nuovo scenario della comunicazione integrata di marketing. Innovazione, competizione, relazioni. McGraw-Hill education, Milano (2018)

Ceccotti, F., Vernuccio, M.: The communication network evolution: a qualitative study on emerging relational issues and future architectures. In: 42nd European Marketing Academy Annual Conference, Istanbul, 4–7 June 2013

Ceccotti, F., Vernuccio, M., Mattiacci, A.: The evolution of agency-client relationships within the communication network in Italy: the perspective of communication partners. Sinergie **37**(3), 63–85 (2019)

Ceccotti, F., Vernuccio, M., Mattiacci, A., Pastore, A.: Trasformazione digitale ed evoluzione dei business model delle agenzie tradizionali in Italia: un'analisi esplorativa sui professionisti della comunicazione. In: Proceedings XVII SIM Conference "Il marketing per una società migliore", LIUC – University of Castellanza, Varese, 28–30 October 2020

Childers, C.C., Haley, E., McMillan, S.: Achieving strategic digital integration: views from experienced New York City advertising agency professionals. J. Current Issues Res. Advert. **39**(3), 244–265 (2018)

Corbin, J., Strauss, A.: Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory. Sage Publications (2014)

Creswell, J.W.: Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA (1998)

Dexter, A.: Elite and Specialized Interviewing. North-Western Press, Evanston (1970)

Francis, J.J., Johnston, M., Robertson, C., Glidewell, L., Entwistle, V., Eccles, M.P., Grimshaw, J.M.: What is an adequate sample size? Operationalising data saturation for theory-based interview studies. Psychol. Health **25**(10), 1229–1245 (2010)

Grant, I., McLeod, C.: Advertising agency planning–conceptualising network relationships. J. Market. Manage. **23**(5–6), 425–442 (2007)

Guercini, S.: Le nuove agenzie di comunicazione nell'on line media market. Economia e Diritto del Terziario **2**, 315–343 (2008)

Guttmann, A.: Leading digital agency networks worldwide 2019 (2020). https://www.statista.com/statistics/466411/digital-agency-networks/

Hughes, T., Vafeas, M.: Marketing agency/client service-for-service provision in an age of digital transformation. J. Bus. Bus. Market. **26**(3–4), 265–280 (2019)

Iab Europe: AdEx Benchmark 2019 (2020). https://iabeurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/IAB-Europe_AdEx-Benchmark_2019_2020_FINAL_03.06.20.pdf

Kassaye, W.W.: The effect of the world wide web on agency–advertiser relationships: towards a strategic framework. Int. J. Advert. **16**(2), 85–103 (1997)

King, N., Horrocks, C.: Interviews in Qualitative Research. Sage, London (2010)

Kwantes, C.T., Bergeron, S., Kaushal, R.: Applying Social Psychology to Diversity. In: Schneider, F.W., Gruman, J., Coutts, L.M. (eds.) Applied Social Psychology: Understanding and Addressing Social and Practical Problems. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA (2005)

Lincoln, Y., Guba, E.G.: Naturalistic Inquiry. Sage, Newbury Park, CA (1985)

Lynch, J.: Advertising industry evolution: agency creativity, fluid teams and diversity. An exploratory investigation. J. Market. Manage. **35**(9–10), 845–866 (2019)

Lynch, J., West, D.C.: Agency creativity: teams and performance: a conceptual model links agency teams' knowledge utilization, agency creativity, and performance. J. Advert. Res. **57**(1), 67–81 (2017)

Mallia, K.L., Windels, K.: Will changing media change the world? An exploratory investigation of the impact of digital advertising on opportunities for creative women. J. Interact. Advert. **11**(2), 30–44 (2011)

Muninger, M.I., Hammedi, W., Mahr, D.: The value of social media for innovation: a capability perspective. J. Bus. Res. **95**, 116–127 (2019)

Patwardhan, P., Habib, S., Patwardhan, H.: Managing change and finding identity: a grounded analysis of advertising agency leadership. J. Curr. Issues Res. Advert. **40**(3), 315–333 (2019)

Porto, R.B., de Abreu, F.A.: Investment in online advertising and return on sales: does it pay to outsource the services to an advertising agency? J. Market. Commun. **25**(8), 843–860 (2019)
Powell, S.: Organisational marketing, identity and the creative brand. J. Brand Manage. **15**(1), 41–56 (2007)
Richardson, J.E.: The business model: an integrative framework for strategy execution. Strateg. Change **17**, 133–144 (2008)
Robson, S., Foster, A.: Qualitative Research in Action. Hodder and Stoughton, London (1989)
Rodgers, S., Chen, Q.: Post-adoption attitudes to advertising on the internet. J. Advert. Res. **42**(5), 95–104 (2002)
Sebastian, I., Ross, J., Beath, C., Mocker, M., Moloney, K., Fonstad, N.: How big old companies navigate digital transformation. MIS Quart. Executive **16**(3), 197–213 (2017)
Stuhlfaut, M.W., Windels, K.: Altered states: the effects of media and technology on the creative process in advertising agencies. J. Market. Commun. **25**(1), 1–27 (2019)
Turnbull, S., Wheeler, C.: The advertising creative process: a study of UK agencies. J. Market. Commun. **23**(2), 176–194 (2017)
Vernuccio, M., Ceccotti, F.: Strategic and organisational challenges in the integrated marketing communication paradigm shift: a holistic vision. Eur. Manag. J. **33**(6), 438–449 (2015)
Vizard, S.: PepsiCo marketing becomes 'more selective' with focus on fewer, bigger activities. Marketing week, 14 July (2020)
Wagler, A.: Embracing change: Exploring how creative professionals use interactive media in advertising campaigns. J. Interact. Advert. **13**(2), 118–127 (2013)
Whiteside, S.: How P&G is responding to the in-housing trend, *Warc*, 1 May 2019
Windels, K., Stuhlfaut, M.: New advertising agency roles in the ever-expanding media landscape. J. Curr. Issues Res. Advert. **39**(3), 226–243 (2018)