

Joining the dots: the future of creativity



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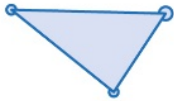
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When Google asked me to conduct research on the future of creativity as it relates to creative agencies and marketers I jumped at the chance. Talking to creative people is always stimulating and when those people leverage their skills to lead successful agencies, marketing teams or technology partnerships it's even better - an opportunity to distil frank conversations into something really useful for the wider industry.



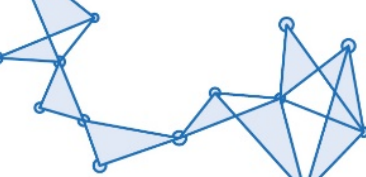
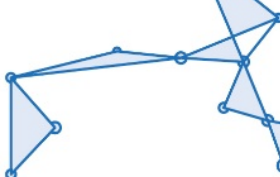
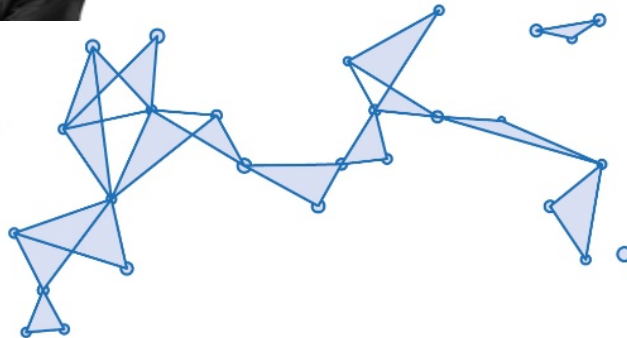
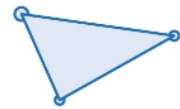
Having spent the last ten years forecasting and assessing trends for their future commercial impact on Australian brands and businesses, I put this experience alongside a wide-ranging literature review, to look at how to address challenges and opportunities confronting creative services in Australia today. Our goal here is to contribute helpfully to the debate on how agencies can future proof by providing increased value for marketing as it evolves.



Your feedback is welcome. I can be reached at megan.brownlow@pwc.com.



Megan Brownlow, Partner
National Industry Leader for Technology, Media and
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The five minute read

| The trend | The opportunity | Its benefits | It requires |
|---|---|--|---|
| Smart marketers are owning the whole customer experience | Assist marketers by applying creativity at every touchpoint; use creativity to design new direct digital services | Gives agencies access to new pools of money (e.g. R&D budgets); future-proofs agencies | Skills and pricing review; new operating models for holding companies; organic work structures |
| Newer channels are widening creative boundaries | Experiment with newer channels; allow the channels' attributes to contribute to differentiation | More creative tools; greater value proposition for younger employees | Develop methods for surfacing creativity from newer sources; seek more voices at the table, incl. technologists |
| Increasing ad avoidance puts focus on relevance in creative | Use more data to increase the meaning of creative to individuals; strong brand strategy is needed as glue | Reduces the incidence of 'annoying' ads; increases ROI for marketers | Reimagine and retool production cost structures; more focus by marketers on quality in digital creative |
| Marketers and creatives have more insights available than ever before | Use stitched together data (1 st party, 3 rd party) in creative ways to know audiences more deeply than ever before | Business growth for marketers and agencies | Combine data, technology and creativity via partnering and/or hiring hybrids |

Introduction

Challenges for the creative sector are not new but they are moving from the margins to the mainstream and therefore can't be avoided. Forward looking marketers and agencies are responding in ways that allow growth in revenue and sustainability in business models. Underpinning the most successful responses is a sophisticated use of data at all stages of marketing and all customer touchpoints.

For this study we spoke to industry leaders across the value chain and asked first about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of and for the creative agency industry in Australia¹. This is what we heard:

Figure 1 - SWOT analysis for Australia's creative services industry

| | | |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Internal | <p>Strengths:</p> <p>Mobility of talent: creatives travel frequently – overseas and between sectors - and bring good ideas back</p> <p>Creatively 'punch above their weight', as judged by international awards</p> | <p>Weaknesses:</p> <p>Still beholden to the 'dynamic duo' model of art director and copywriter as the owners of and starting point for all creativity</p> <p>Lack of access to or investment in technology tools to help inform creativity right along the customer journey, not just at the beginning</p> |
| External | <p>Opportunities:</p> <p>To apply creative capabilities to designing and building new, consumer-direct products and services that help mature clients find growth</p> <p>To harness new sources of data to enhance creativity and services offered</p> | <p>Threats:</p> <p>To be disintermediated by marketers taking services in-house, consultancies and agile newcomers through adhering to rigid distinctions between 'brand' and 'experience' marketing</p> <p>To not recognize growth in newer channels and their impact on create options</p> |

¹ When conducting a SWOT analysis for an industry rather than an individual organisation, the internal factors 'strengths' and 'weaknesses', tend to highlight the strengths of the strongest players and the weaknesses of the weakest players. The external factors, 'opportunities' and 'threats', can be applied to the whole industry

Here's how we summarise the four top trends and the ways creative agencies and marketers can address and benefit from these trends:

1. Smart marketers own the whole customer experience

Experienced marketers sometimes call this a 'back to the future' trend, referring to how first principles marketing includes 'place' or distribution as one of the four Ps. In our post-digital economy - more services based than products based - smart marketers are not only charged with defining and communicating the brand promise but ensuring that promise is kept as the service is experienced. This is why Chief Marketing Officers sometimes rebadge as Chief Customer Officers or Chief Experience Officers.

The opportunity seized by smart creative agencies is to assist marketers design and deliver the proof. This means designing experiences at every touchpoint, not just prior to a sale, but also while the customer is with the brand and even after they've churned. Measures of success are not just sales and customer acquisition but levels of satisfaction that lead to retention. As a result Net Promoter Scores and lifetime customer value are being added to awareness, preference and selection on marketers' dashboards.

We all know it is more efficient economically to keep an existing customer than secure a new one. In a mature economy like Australia's, this imperative is even more acute; top line growth is hard to achieve so growth in share of wallet of existing customers makes good strategic sense. One way to do that is to create new products and services in adjacencies where the brand is the natural owner.

Often these new products and services are designed with personalisation as a compelling feature for the customer. The serendipitous by-product of this value exchange is that granular behavioural data also accrues to the brand. Creative agencies are playing a significant role here. In 2012 sports apparel company Nike made history with its agency R/GA when they created a data currency, 'fuel' and a biometrics fitness tracker, the Fuel Band. It was an early pioneer in the 'quantified self' market and led the way for Apple's Watch. Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba offers real-time personalised credit scores with its new service ANT Financial. Agencies applying their core capability of identifying and articulating a customer need fits logically with this trend.

To capture this opportunity, agencies must be seen as logical partners in early stage digital product development, not just communications partners post product existence. For that to happen agencies need to undertake a frank structure and skills assessment as a first step.

Agencies then need to reconfigure their businesses so they have the capabilities to imagine, design and sometimes even build new, mostly digital services for their clients. The traditional creative agency model is challenged in this environment due to its often top-weighted high labour component, scaling only with further human resource. Its second challenge is weighting margin on production more highly than ideation, despite production services commoditising. Such characteristics do not

lend themselves to this new opportunity. New pricing models being trialed by agencies include licensing, fees for platform management and even revenue sharing and joint venturing with brands. The benefit of operating in this pre-marcomms sphere is new pools of money, such as research and development budgets, are unlocked. Another benefit is reduced exposure to the often cyclical nature of communications expenditure. There are many reasons to put in the considerable effort it takes to evolve a business model under pressure.



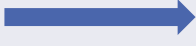








New operating models for holding companies that own creative agencies will also be necessary. Some holding companies have strong technology assets and skill sets that could be leveraged across their agency portfolios if they shifted to interdisciplinary business units. Currently, centralisation within holding companies is focused mostly on the low-hanging fruit of back office functions such as IT, finance and human resources. In middle office functions such as data management, analytics and production there are only nascent attempts to centralise and for front office and go-to-market functions it's very rare. This is due to the way conflicts of interest (multiple clients in the same category) have been managed previously, i.e. by setting up or buying separate but largely duplicated agencies. Modern approaches are more about process and procedure, for example having confidentiality frameworks and insulation procedures in place². This allows agencies to meet marketers' desire for access to advanced technology tools and data to aid decision-making without wearing significant technology costs at the individual agency level.

Integrated business units are by their nature more 'organic' than 'mechanistic'³. Organic work structures are better suited to businesses with a high need to differentiate, operating in dynamic markets with fast changing technology. Mechanistic structures work better when the external environment in which a business operates is stable and its sector is largely commoditized. Agencies clearly belong in the first category. The following diagram demonstrates the structural characteristics of mechanistic versus organic agencies. This diagram can be used as a simple checklist tool to determine the orientation of your agency or marketing department.

² Kristina Bennin, Namin Kapoor, 'Agency of the future: Next generation operating models for marketing', Strategy&, September 2017

³ Terms first coined by sociologist Tom Burns and psychologist George Stalker in 1961 in Burns, T. & Stalker, G. M, 'The Management of Innovation', Tavistock, London

Figure 2 - Mechanistic versus organic work structures in agencies

| Agency characteristic | Mechanistic |  | Organic |
|---|--|--|--|
| Role | Specialised |  | Broad |
| Who defines your job role? | Others determine what you do and how you do it |  | What you do and how you do it is determined by yourself or peers |
| Understanding the purpose of tasks | Your supervisor knows why you do what you do |  | You and your peers know why you do what you do |
| What are employees most committed to? | To the exact performance of their duties |  | To the agency as a whole |
| How does communication occur? | Vertical – only to and from the supervisor |  | Horizontal – anyone can talk to anyone |
| Where does knowledge sit? | Concentrated at the top |  | Diffused through the agency |
| Where does information sit? | Concentrated at the top |  | Diffused through the agency |
| Main style of interactions? | One way broadcast, instructions mostly |  | Consultation and inclusive discussion |
| Dominant ethos of employees? | Loyalty to the agency, no public criticism or discussion |  | Loyalty to the task, technology and/or profession |
| External orientation of employees and the agency? | Focus is local |  | Focus is global |

Aimee Buchanan, CEO, OMD

‘What’s exciting is when marketers and brands get utility right – when they go beyond a message and their marketing creates useful products and services...’

Mark Reinke, Chair, Ingrity Data & Analytics

‘Agencies are good at understanding humans so they shouldn’t just communicate but develop new services on brands’ platforms. Their value is in curation and orchestration against what they know those customer sets need...’

Melissa Waters, VP of Marketing, Lyft⁴

‘World class creative is table stakes. I need a strategic partner who is embedded in our business every day, helping us with product decisions and helping us with the way we design our service experience – not just making ads.’

⁴ Colleen DeCourcy, Chief Creative Officer, Wieden+Kennedy, references W+K’s work with Lyft and quotes Waters in ‘Welcome to (New Economy) Optimism’, 14 February 2018

2. Newer channels are widening creative boundaries

Often painted in a negative way as the ‘fragmentation of media’, the growth in avenues to express a brand’s personality can and should be recast more positively. Many marketers and agencies relish their access to a more diverse tool kit, seeing the chance to experiment in newer, less cluttered environments as a gift. Examples such as streamed audio - including podcasting, voice-activated smart speakers, internet-connected headphones (hearables) and music services - open new ways for brands to make a mark. Augmented reality enables brand-enhancing utility (see Choice’s *CluckAR* app, a free-range egg detector) and the mobile internet still represents a large gap between consumer time spent and marketing attention. This leaves room for innovative marketers and agencies to do everything from tapping into location-aware mobile searching to highly-engaging proximity marketing.

Fascinating research is being conducted demonstrating the implications for creative design of some of these newer channels. IAB Australia’s work with agency *Eardrum* and insurance comparison brand *Choosi* showed how a sonic identity and properly managed suite of audio assets is compelling⁵. Additionally, the unique attributes of different audio sub-sets – radio, streaming music, podcasting and smart-speakers – informed how the spots were tailored. Traditional formats such as ‘live reads’ were executed in podcasts and entirely new formats were built for voice activation, in *Choosi*’s case a ‘guestimate skill’, which gave smart speaker owners an instant verbal quote.

Aden Hepburn, MD and ECD, VMLY&R

There’s a real shift in modern creativity going on where it’s not just new technology and channels in play – but new ways to tell stories as well. This generation of consumer (and creatives themselves) won’t necessarily wait for a crescendo, as they’ve always had the ability to hit skip, scroll past an ad or piece of content or even simply look at another screen. So the best modern creatives know there isn’t just a traditional narrative arc to explore. They can tell stories the way their friends do – often starting with the best bits first and in different ways for every channel...’

Mini-games are being designed for trial via mobile windows and virtual reality is allowing immersive experiences of high-involvement products and services. Google’s research into video viewed on mobile screens surfaced numerous tips to guide more engaging creative – from the need to adjust camera angles to make the subject closer, to altering traditional story arcs, bringing forward the climactic scene⁶. Global media brand BBC experimented by releasing online a 17 minute preview of their political thriller *Bodyguard* in a vertical format with subtitles. They understood most viewers would be watching on their mobile and often with the sound off. In September 2018 *Bodyguard* became the most watched drama since the final of *Dr Who* in 2008, with an average of 10.8 million Britons tuning in to the broadcast.

⁵ IAB Australia, ‘Digital Audio Fit-for-Purpose Creative: Choosi and IAB Audio Council’, November 2018

⁶ Ben Jones, Creative Director, Google, YouTube Unboxed 2017 event

Yan Chen, CEO and founder, Lens Immersive

'The middle space is being redefined. Disney branded stickers or memes can be sent via instant messaging or live chat windows. Big studio films are being promoted via VR experiences and pizza brands are building mini games to keep you entertained while you wait for delivery. In the future marketers will not think about social or apps as channels but as data points allowing them to change course quickly...'

Designing creative for the channel in which it is intended is not a new concept and indeed seems so logical it should be taken as a given. In the past however, too often it has been paid lip service but then executed as an afterthought, where campaigns purpose built for one media were shoe-horned into another.

Russel Howcroft, Chief Creative Officer, PwC Australia

The best have always tailored their advertising to the medium they are using. The worst outdoor ad is the end frame of a television ad, the worst radio ad is the TV ad voiceover. Every medium has its own strengths. That principle holds in online...

Why would such a thing happen? A common reason offered is that sometimes brand agencies are isolated – and sometimes choose to isolate themselves - from media strategy and the rich data on which media strategy is often based. This is meant to result in a media-agnostic approach, but instead gives rise to a bias for 'beautiful films', i.e. thirty or sixty second television commercials. The high cost of television commercial production means creative has to be repurposed for other channels without due consideration of the unique contribution other channels offer. Newer channels, where technology enables an even greater range of creative elements and more data, throw this missed opportunity into even sharper relief.

The solution here is better collaboration between the marketer and their creative, media, data and other specialist partners such as technologists or media owners. This 'village' can test ideas in their early incarnations and offer suggestions for the sort of tailoring that leverages the best attributes of all the chosen channels. Such collaboration can be driven by the marketer or even suggested by the lead agency. Again, interdisciplinary business units within media holding companies will create environments where such collaborations are easier to achieve.

Mark Wheeler, Head of YouTube and Large Customer Ads Marketing, Google ANZ

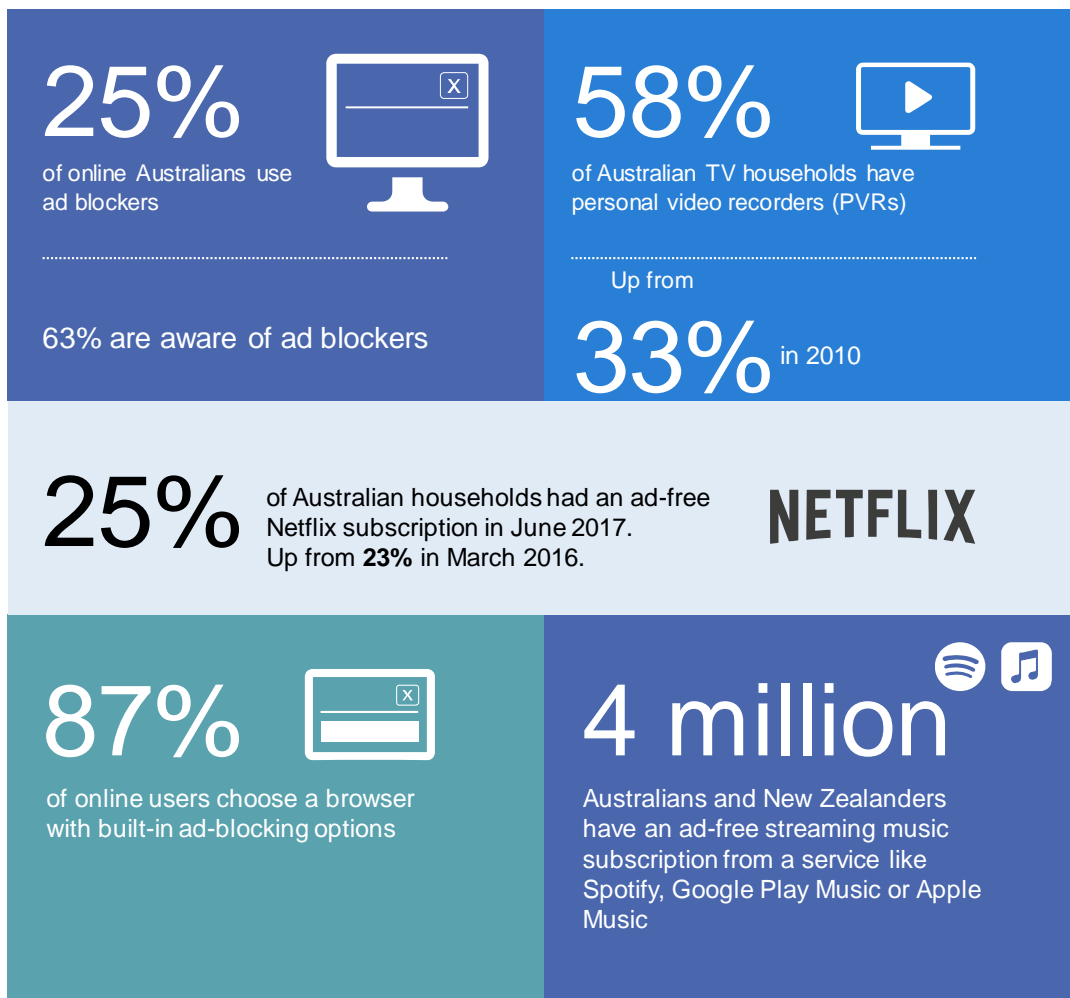
'As a marketer I push for integrated media upfront, where creative understands the media strategy and it's not just 'TV and matching luggage'. There's an opportunity for agencies to focus more on how the channels are evolving and make creative bespoke for that platform...'

3. Ad avoidance puts focus on relevance in creative

The signals are undeniable, consumers everywhere are avoiding advertising in larger numbers than ever before across video, text and audio. Approaches to ad avoidance include using technology, such as installing or using native ad blockers online and personal video recorders (PVRs) to fast forward through television advertising. A desire to avoid ads is also helping drive the uptake of ad-free subscription services e.g. subscription video on demand (SVOD) such as Netflix and Stan, streaming music such as Spotify, Google Play Music and Apple Music, games such as *Sonic the Hedgehog* and even many utility apps, such as Trip View.

Here are some data points pointing to the trend:

Figure 3 - Consumers avoid ads using technology and subscription services



Sources: IAB Australia, OzTAM/Nielsen, Roy Morgan, APRA/AMCOs, statista.com

The impact of increasing ad avoidance has been a positive one in many ways. Focus on improving the quality and relevance of ads, particularly in the online environment, has sharpened. Developing creative bespoke for the channel also helps to hold viewers' attention rather than annoy them. Improving quality, especially from the customer's point of view, is being tackled by active campaigns such as *The Coalition for Better Ads* which promotes global standards for advertising that meet consumers' expectations⁷.

Rhys Williams, Director, Google Marketing Platform, ANZ

'We give users the option to skip an ad on YouTube, or specify when an ad is particularly annoying with a choice to mute it. We're also part of the Coalition for Better Ads which identifies which ads users find most annoying and ranks them. Hopefully by putting users first good things will come and the [ad-blocking] trend may start reversing...'

Improved relevance arises from knowing more about the target audience – not just traditional demographic information but, importantly, where they are in the customer journey. Location awareness is another prize for marketers and creatives, delivered via the power of GPS in mobile phones and cars. Indeed 'location' is now the second most common criteria marketers' use when targeting and personalising communications, while one in four employs 'user's stage in the customer journey'⁸. The term 'precision marketing' has emerged to convey the imperative for increased relevance and 97% of marketers report they intend to maintain or increase their personalisation budgets in the future⁹.

Chris Howatson, CEO, CHE Proximity

'We can apply creativity more than ever before to solving business problems. Now we know – and can control – who sees what when, we can create value where it didn't exist before and measure it. We can design our activity to serve 'moments' where customer behaviour exists, not a marketing calendar that suits the organisation.'

Designing and producing creative with all these factors in mind does indeed lead to more pieces of creative, which, given production budgets are not necessarily increasing, requires new approaches and a greater use of technology. Agencies are working with partners such as Google, Adobe and others to automate part of the creative process across text/stills, video and audio. Dynamic ad creative technologies found in Google Marketing Platform, Celtra or Bonzai for display, YouTube Director Mix (formerly Vogon) for video and A Million Ads' Dynamic Audio assist by streamlining the complexities arising from producing multiple assets for different screen sizes, formats and platforms. Advanced data analytics is also helping media agencies predict which creative elements give the best results. For example, IPG's MediaBrands in The Netherlands used Google's Vision API to build a click through rate predictor based on variables such as colour and logo placement.

⁷ The Coalition for Better Ads, www.betterads.org

⁸ Evergage, '2018 Trends in Personalization', survey of 300 marketers in five countries across 19 industries, March 2018

⁹ Ibid

The shift to multiple, more relevant creative assets highlights the need for a strong brand strategy to glue all the components together and make a brand's narrative hold. This means a creative professional's input is critical across *more* areas but must be applied in ways that scale their skills, a problem technology can help solve.

Nick Garrett, CEO, Clemenger BBDO

'Some left brain marketers use digital as an excuse not to have a brand strategy but that's not true. We've banned the word 'digital' – we use 'interactive' – it's a behaviour, not a channel. And data leads to a better strategy, it allows us to put forward more compelling ideas because we've moved from 'I think' to 'I know'....'

The other solution is for agencies to make the case for more budget for online creative, although many report this response to ad avoidance is lagging. Nielsen research shows greater ROI comes from creative than media placement¹⁰ and yet online creative is regarded as less important than traditional creative (e.g. television and print) by marketers and sometimes by the creative industry itself. Such bias may stem from the legacy concept of 'above the line' versus 'below the line', viewed as mutually exclusive categories where producing brilliant creative is essential for 'above the line' but optional elsewhere. While the internet has made this demarcation redundant it lingers in awards categories. Persisting with an artificial distinction de-emphasizes the imperative for good creative wherever a consumer sees it. As a result creative agencies are disadvantaged when handed sub-par budgets for online, despite consumer touchpoints rapidly accumulating there.

Dan Robins, Head of Programmatic, Spotify ANZ

'Many marketers and creatives I've seen have a bias towards the beautiful and the completed. The cost of multiple creative is seen as too expensive even if it has a higher ROI...'

Encouraging signs are emerging that marketers' views are evolving. New research by marketing technology firm, Sizmek shows that while marketers recognise dynamic creative optimisation (DCO) is more effective than standard display ads and intend to do more of it, they also plan to spend 2019 focusing more on creative and particularly making their digital creative more engaging to achieve brand goals¹¹.

4. Marketers and creatives have more insights available for building competitive advantage

Research shows that marketers who are more active in using consumer data reap higher financial returns. A recent US study by McKinsey demonstrated how CMOs who integrate data across all their marketing functions – from brand strategy and creative development to consumer experience, product and pricing – manage to

¹⁰ 5% - 35% of ROI is from targeting vs 50% - 80% of ROI is from creative, Nielsen Catalina Research via the Advertising Research Foundation, May 2017

¹¹ Sizmek, Marketers' Survey Results 2018, An Insider's Look at Creative Quality, Personalisation and DCO, November 2018

grow their revenues at twice the rate of S & P 500 companies, on average ten percent per annum compared to the S & P 500 average of five percent¹².

Nicole Taylor, CEO, McCann

'A brilliant idea is culturally relevant and has meaning. This relevance and meaning is found through the data. If we haven't done that [research] process thoroughly, we'll be off – the idea will not be as powerful as we think.'

Planets are aligning to enable progressive marketers and agencies to build competitive advantage by integrating data and creativity. These trends include:

- More media data is becoming available. This is due to increased time spent online and also because mass media companies are moving more content online. Free-to-air broadcasters for example are offering on-demand 'catch-up' services with a single sign-in, thus capturing better audience data and making television audiences 'addressable'. Radio broadcasters are doing the same with their simulcast streaming and podcast services. The continued growth in digital outdoor media (DOOH) has paved the way for programmatic outdoor and when we consider that 63% of streamed video content is viewed via a mobile phone¹³, valuable location data too can be added to the mix.
- Brands are building new products and services which glean useful data due to their direct-to-consumer nature. The US Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) highlighted this trend in its study 'The Rise of the 21 Century Brand Economy'¹⁴. In it, CEO Randall Rothenberg describes a shift from the 140 year old indirect brand economy, where consumer businesses enjoyed high barriers to entry due to their capital intensity and were successful if they could dominate (i.e. own and operate) their supply chain. This has changed to a direct brand economy where the most valuable businesses, enabled by cloud computing, provide products directly to consumers via e-commerce. They can outsource many parts of their supply chain (including marcomms) and their streamlined customer service is as much valued as their products. Due to the low barriers to entry of an economy where you can 'stack your own supply chain', these newer direct businesses rely more heavily on differentiating through their brand story, a clear opportunity for creatives who understand what are now called 'digitally-native vertical brands' or DNVBs¹⁵. This is not only the domain of disruptive start-ups. Financial services, telecommunications and airlines – mature sectors seeking growth – are offering new services that gather first party data which they put to work to continually improve every other function in their customer-centric businesses. Citing that two-thirds of consumers now expect direct connectivity with brands, Rothenberg asserts that *data* is to 21 Century businesses what capital was to 20th Century businesses, that is, a great enabler of growth.
- It's getting easier to match up disparate data sets to deliver better and more insights. The growth in data management platforms (DMPs) means that stitching together brands' own data, for example via their CRM and billing

¹² 'The most perfect union: Unlocking the next wave of growth by unifying creativity and analytics', June 2018, mckinsey.com

¹³ Nielsen, Digital Landscape and Video Viewing Report, September 2018

¹⁴ Randall Rothenberg, 'The Rise of the 21st Century Brand Economy', IAB US, February 2018

¹⁵ The term 'digitally native vertical brands' was coined by Andy Dunn, founder of Bonobos in a 2016 medium post <https://medium.com/@dunn/digitally-native-vertical-brands-b26a26f2cf83>

systems, with media and other rich third party data will become more common. This, combined with the muscular computing power marketers have now – either in-house (if they are large) or through partnerships (if they are not), means more is known about the customer, not just who they are but where they are on their customer journey with the brand.

Figure 4 - Where insights for marketers and agencies come from

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| First party data | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Billings/sales CRM systems Inventory Loyalty programs Customer care Website/apps |
| Third party data | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audience data Demographics, interests, purchase intent, social groups Contextual data Location, devices, weather, traffic Behavioural data Media consumption including browsing and app activity, search queries, others' loyalty programs, purchases from others |

The upshot for agencies is to embrace the opportunity to design creative which has more and deeper human ‘truths’ informing it than ever before. This is sometimes drily referred to as ‘data-driven creative’ but can be reframed more positively as former Droga5 ECD, now co-Creative Chief at Google Zoo Matty Burton posits.

Matty Burton, Co-Creative Chief, Google Zoo

‘You can reframe data as a form of empathy. Through a creative lens data is more than who an audience is. You can see what works and what doesn’t so you can constantly evolve and iterate....’

Consumer-responsive creative is not without its challenges and legacy approval processes have a case to answer here. In the online environment creative can be adjusted speedily as consumers reveal their intentions and actions in real time. Governance structures however for approving multiple creative iterations have often

not kept up. Horror stories of in-house lawyers requiring a marketer's signature on printed off copies of thousands of variants are not unusual.

The solution to this, obvious to anyone experienced in dealing with this challenge, is front-loaded scenario planning. Detailed decision trees and marketing playbooks – pre-approved – are becoming more common, allowing brands to practice the agility they know delivers competitive advantage.

Jocelin Abbey, Head of Marketing, ABC

'For a big campaign we front-end the process, developing and approving at times 120 pieces of creative for different media so we can optimise accordingly. In my view data-driven creative is where we leverage data from our own platform or partner platforms to understand contextual moments to deliver a better ROI...'

Dave Bowman, Co-Creative Chief, Google Zoo

'When we first started out in creative agency land there was a tendency to do topical ads...and be in the newspaper the day after a big event. We wanted to be on the pulse of everything that was happening. The ability to do that has increased drastically. You can be in market a few minutes after something has happened and hit that cultural chord...'

Underpinning success across all for agencies and marketers is, it goes without saying, the right people. Many senior professionals interviewed for this study described the difficulty of securing hybrid talent who are creative *and* understand data and technology. The answer in the short term is leaning on partners to share learnings and talent, whether they are in sister agencies or partners outside the business. Another solution is shifting to 'agile' working groups – interdisciplinary and diverse – who are tasked with working together on a specific purpose for a short period of time and freed from other obligations for that time. Lean, cross-functional teams are starting to emerge in marketing departments also, drawing on skill sets and people from across the organization, including IT and data scientists.

Nick Garrett, CEO, Clemenger BBDO

'To call creative agencies 'creative' implies everyone else is not creative and that's insulting. Creativity sits across engineering, design, science, art. We need multi-disciplinary people...'

Conclusion

The partnership between marketers and their creative agencies is strengthened in instances where confidence and mutual respect exist and where trust underpins every interaction, at all levels. Australia's marketers need to use every tool and human resource at their disposal to find growth and embrace the global economy's data-driven future. In this environment leveraging more deeply the skills of their creative partners has never made more sense. At the same time the strongest creative agencies are seizing the opportunities of more data, new channels and reorganising so they can meet the challenge. For those with energy and an openness to new ways to build value for Australian businesses, the future looks bright.