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'Contradictory and meaningless' the industry split on creativity metrics

By Ruby Derrick | 1 November 2023

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The WPP Creative Capital Index, a tool for brands to assess the value of creativity to deliver growth, launched recently and has sparked an industry debate on what the best approach really is.



Credit: Timothy Dachraoui via Unsplash.

One that's industry-wide or from an individual agency?

The announcement set industry insiders ablaze, with some claiming it's a pick up from DDB's Creative Index revealed last year, and others wanting to see an industry body take it on independently.

Applying a metric to the value of creativity that's taken seriously is difficult, Adam Ferrier, founder and consumer psychologist of Thinkerbell, told AdNews.

"If a creative agency says 'hey creativity is really important to business and here is a metric we've created to value it' it's just not going to be taken seriously," he said.

"It's a start and I applaud the efforts genuinely, however it's like a media owner commissioning research to justify their form of media is better than others - it just lacks objectivity / credibility."

Darren Woolley, founder and global CEO of marketing consultancy TrinityP3, said in the increasingly competitive advertising category, major networks need to provide substantiation for the services they provide, primarily the value of the creative ideas they generate.

"This has been their major differentiator from the large consulting firms and tech companies. So, yes, it is likely that other agency networks will invest in developing their own creative index to promote themselves and substantiate their value."

What Ferrier would like to see the Creative Index do is provoke the industry or an industry body into spending more time putting some value metrics around creativity and how it contributes to business outcomes.

The path is five-fold, Ferrier believed.

"One, someone who sits on a board of an industry body reads this and thinks it's a good idea. Two, they admit they have no idea how to do it so they ring a reputable research agency, an academic at a university, an economist, and neutral consultant like Darren or Mark Ritson.

"Three, they see what they can learn from WPP and DDB's efforts, as well as other companies and organisations who have created similar index's. Four, they sit around and work out how to measure the financial impact creativity has to business outcomes.

"Five, they measure it, test learn and optimise and circulate the findings."

On whether there are any issues and challenges around methodology, Ferrier says "the fact that both companies have suggested this and given it a go is fantastic, and great news".

For Woolley, his solution relies on the industry developing an agreed methodology and uniform standard to allow like-for-like comparison as much as possible.

"The danger is with every agency marketing their own creative index it can quickly become contradictory and meaningless," he said.

"Whether this one of the many industry bodies (unlikely), an academic institution (likely with funding) or some third party, only time will tell."

Woolley said the IPA Effectiveness Awards and Effie Awards had developed a strong measure of creative value.

"But these are quite different to the Creative Index concept we have seen from both DDB and WPP," he said.

In announcing the launch of the WPP Creative Index, ANZ president Rose Hecceg welcomed the development of further indexes and said putting an economic value on creativity is critical.

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“The last thing that should be cut is the marketing budget - in fact, it should quadruple in an economic downturn,” she said.

“Our Creative Capital Index and the products that we all produce is one of the same in driving value - here’s to three or four more.

“Les Timar, Mark Green, Mike Rebelo and Kirsty Muddle all talk about it.

“What we do drives economic value, social change and changes legislation - I can think of no other industry that does all that so I think we should all have a product.”

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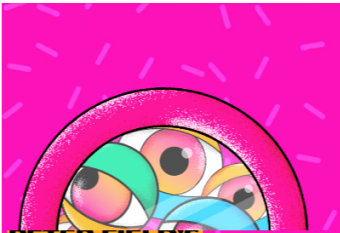
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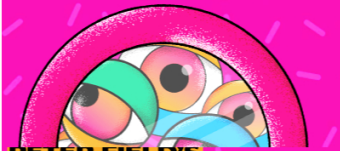
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