

Media Planning in the Promotional Industries

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DECLARATION

I declare that the content within this thesis is my own work

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ABSTRACT

Media planning agencies occupy an interesting space within the promotional industries, at once part of and separate to advertising and media production. The ostensible role of media planning is to select the best media opportunities for conveying promotional messaging to a client brand's desired target. The work of media planning, however, is characterized by fluxing media industrial conditions and shifting agency remits. This project therefore focuses on media planning as a distinct area of research, answering the question, 'what is the role and the work of media planning as a sector?'

This thesis begins by tracing media planning's development from a component of advertising practice to a major promotional industry sub-field unto itself. Here, the PhD make its first key proposition, arguing that the emergence of standalone media agencies in the 1990s can be directly linked to the fragmentation of media choices during this same time period. In Chapter two, this thesis outlines the existing literature and theoretical approaches for understanding media planning, situating the work of media planning as belonging to the field of the promotional industries. These two contextual chapters give way to the PhD's three empirically-based chapters. In order to provide an understanding of what media planning is, how it works and where it fits within the broader promotional industries, these empirical chapters draw on research frameworks from media industry studies and production studies. Chapter three uses informant interviews with media planning practitioners to provide an understanding of the daily work life of contemporary media planning, as described by media industry professionals. The similarities present across these interviews help to relieve patterns in how media planning professionals understand and manage their work lives. Meanwhile Chapter three investigates how conceptions of media planning expertise are circulated, using textual analysis of publicly available research reports to highlight the ways in which media agencies circulate claims of expertise. This chapter argues that these research reports serve a dual purpose, showcasing media planning expertise not just to potential clients but also to agency employees. Chapters three and four therefore argue that, on an individual and organizational level, media planners and media agencies adhere to set strategies for coping with the uncertainties of a changeable industry environment. Finally, Chapter five synthesizes the findings of participant observation at the Cannes Lions festival in order to highlight how media planning is represented within the broader promotional industries. Chapter five asserts first that media planning was presented as linked to data, while data was positioned at the festival as a creative tool. The thesis concludes with a forward-facing argument: the promotional industries, of which media planning is part, are undergoing a period of reconfiguration. During this moment of reconfiguration media planning has the potential for increased preeminence within the promotional industries, aided by further audience fragmentation and the continued framing of data as a creative tool.

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INTRODUCTION: PUTTING MEDIA PLANNING ON THE AGENDA

In late 2013, British Airways executed a feat of ‘magic.’ For six weeks starting in November, visitors to Piccadilly Circus watched as the usual static messaging on the huge outdoor billboard was interrupted by video of a larger-than-life child walking across the screen, an outstretched finger pointing directly at a British Airways plane high in the sky overhead. Accompanying text appearing behind the child listed the BA flight number, along with the plane’s city of origination.



Figure 0-1 Digital billboard in Piccadilly Circus

The Piccadilly Circus billboard stunt was part of British Airways’ ‘Magic of Flying’ campaign, which ran for six weeks from November 2013. The focal points of the campaign were two digital outdoor sites, one the large billboard in central London’s Piccadilly Circus and the other two smaller ‘towers’ on either side of the M4 in Chiswick, straddling the route taken by vehicles traveling to and from Heathrow airport.



Figure 0-2 Digital billboard along the M4 route from London Heathrow airport

When a British Airways airplane passed overhead in view of one of these sites, the regular content of the billboard was interrupted by a custom message, in which a young child would be seen walking across the screen while pointing at the passing plane. Text on the digital billboard detailed the flight number and city of origination, before providing a link to the airline's booking site. What seemed like magic was the result of clever technology involving satellite surveillance, call sign cross-referencing and monitoring of cloud-cover and visibility conditions. It was also the result of smart media planning. In what respect was the work of media planners essential to the 'Magic of Flying' campaign? At its core, the 'Magic of Flying' was an advertising campaign. With all of the attendant technology tested and in place and the promotional video content ready to roll, these 'magical' ads would never have been seen without the work of media planners.

The details behind the British Airways ‘Magic of Flying’ campaign reveal the significance of media planning to the campaign’s success. In a piece published in *Fast Company* online, Jon Andrews, Creative Technology Director for Customer Engagement agency OgilvyOne London, explained:

Working with [outdoor media owner] Clear Channel, we pioneered a completely new ‘interrupt’ capability, allowing our campaign to disrupt traditional static ads that were currently being displayed. In the process, we invented an entirely new outdoor media buy, only paying for each time the ad was served. The significance of this was that we could run our ads for six weeks, rather than the two days our budget would have normally allowed.
(Andrews 2014)

Despite his role as Creative Technology Director, Andrews emphasized the importance of the media buy to the success of the ‘Magic of Flying’ campaign. Though the campaign stood out for its use of advanced technology to convey a touching message, the specifics of the media planning and buying are what made the campaign feasible, notably the fact that the billboard space only needed to be paid for during the 30 second periods during which the British Airways (BA) messaging appeared. The D&AD awards database notes, ‘A media deal was negotiated so BA only paid for each activation of the ad rather than a full-time booking - the typical model’ (D&AD 2018).¹ This power of negotiation represents one of the key reasons brands like British Airways outsource media planning and buying to agencies. By leveraging their existing relationship with out of home supplier Clear Channel, the media planners at OgilvyOne London were able to stretch the campaign budget to its maximum.

¹The complete D&AD case study for the British Airways’ “Magic of Flying” campaign can be accessed online at <http://www.dandad.org/en/case-study-magic-flying/>.

The timing of the campaign was a further shrewd move on the part of the planners behind the campaign; in late November, foot-traffic in central London was at a pre-Christmas high, meaning more people would pass by the Piccadilly Circus billboard than during other months. Further to this, according to Charlie Wilson, OgilvyOne Chief Creative Officer, ‘only paying for each activation of the ad meant that by running the campaign in winter - the cloudiest time of year - the campaign's media budget would not be blown too soon’ (Wilson, cited at D&AD 2018).

These elements of the ‘Magic of Flying’ exemplify the importance of media planning to the success of the British Airways campaign. The primary ostensible role of media planning is to secure media space for brands’ promotional campaigns, though as the ‘Magic of Flying’ campaign shows this definition belies the complexity of media planning work. In this instance, the media planning for the campaign was handled jointly by OgilvyOne London and Storm Digital, a specialist digital outdoor agency that is part of the Clear Channel outdoor umbrella. Media planning work is commonly outsourced to media planning agencies, typically referred to simply as media agencies. In seeking to illuminate the work of media planning, this PhD therefore focuses on media agencies as loci of media planning work.

It is useful here to provide a definition of what a media agency does from the perspective of an agency employee. In an interview with a Senior International Account Director at media agency Initiative Media, I asked the interviewee how he would describe what the company does to someone who has no idea. His response was, ‘Whenever you see advertisements in TV or radio or out of home or anywhere, there’s a person like me, and a team that put that there and a whole strategy behind it. That’s the response I normally give people through the years. It’s not the company line’ (Kanter

2016). Despite his insistence on this not being ‘the company line,’ this practitioner definition mirrors the description given in the ‘about us’ section of the website for the large multinational media agency MediaCom, which reads, ‘Media Planning is the art and science of ensuring that the adverts that our clients want to place appear in the right place and at the right time to ensure they reach the correct target group’ (MediaCom 2015). Most media planning agencies have some version of this definition somewhere on their website. As the table below shows, as of March 2017, MediaCom UK was ranked as the top UK media agency in terms of 2016 billings.²

² In addition to MediaCom, the names of several of the agencies in the table (figure 0-3) will recur throughout this PhD; Carat is notable for its status as the first standalone media agency. MediaCom, Initiative, UM, Zenith and Mindshare, meanwhile, are among the agencies whose employees were interviewed for this thesis.

Rank 2016	Rank 2015	Agency	Billings 2016 (£m)	Billings 2015 (£m)	Year-on-year % change	Top-spending clients in 2016
1	1	MediaCom UK	1308.43	1267.96	3.2	Sky, DFS, GlaxoSmithKline, Tesco, Moneysupermarket.com
2	2	OMD	988.78	1032.18	4.2	McDonald's, Virgin Media, Boots, Apple, Amazon
3	3	Carat UK	876.17	934.86	6.3	Microsoft, Asda, British Gas, government, Vauxhall
4	4	MEC UK	667.60	737.13	9.4	Vodafone, Morrisons, BGL Group, Beiersdorf, B&Q
5	6	Zenith	587.81	561.27	4.7	RB, Nestlé, Mars, Mercedes-Benz
6	5	Mindshare UK	566.20	619.95	8.7	Unilever, Marks & Spencer, Ford, Argos, Three
7	8	Maxus	434.58	384.97	12.9	BT, L'Oréal, Barclays, Garnier, Fiat
8	–	Starcom	383.50	–		Procter & Gamble, Lidl, Samsung, Dreams, Coty
9	10	Vizeum UK	357.13	300.05	19.0	Shop Direct, Camelot, BMW, Ikea, William Hill
10	9	PHD UK	340.24	333.93	1.9	Sainsbury's, Warner Bros, Seat, Confused.com, Experian
11	14	Blue 449	221.38	178.72	23.9	Dixons Carphone, KFC, Asda, Ladbrokes
12	13	UM UK	209.41	192.70	8.7	Aldi, Gtech, Johnson & Johnson, McNeil Healthcare, Evans Halshaw
13	12	The7stars	208.08	201.86	3.1	Iceland, Gala Coral Group, P&O Cruises, Suzuki, Ancestry
14	11	Havas Media	194.72	242.97	19.9	O2, Nationwide, Hyundai, Kia, Puig
15	16	All Response Media	141.65	139.88	1.3	Giffgaff, Phoenix Group, Ocean Finance, QuickQuid, JML
16	15	Initiative	119.93	152.64	21.4	Amazon, Storck, Marlow Foods, Travelodge, Audible
17	19	Arena Media	88.05	80.16	9.8	Domino's, Character, Emirates, Universal Music, LG
18	23	Goodstuff Communications	87.88	50.76	73.1	Zoopla, House of Fraser, uSwitch, Bettys & Taylors Group, Hiscox
19	17	Rocket	85.08	87.14	2.4	Co-op Food, Ferrero, UKTV, The Co-operative Bank, Ornua Foods
20	20	MNC	75.56	65.87	14.7	Oak Furniture Land, Wayfair, Shpock, Hungryhouse, Wowcher

Figure 0-3 Top 20 UK Media Agencies based on 2016 billings in £m

The table above was published in industry publication *Campaign* and displays the total billings of the top 20 UK media agencies, as of the close of 2016 (Campaign 2017). This table offers important context for approaching a study of media planning. First, it provides a sense of the money that is involved in the work of media planning, which, though often overlooked or classed as one aspect of advertising practice, represents a sizable industry sector unto itself. The figures listed in the above table are representative only of UK billings, and most if not all of these agencies operate across

multiple regions. In addition, this table illustrates the fact that, with the exception of the now-defunct Starcom, all of the top 20 UK media agencies reported year on year growth in terms of billings from 2016 to 2017. Media planning as a sector continues to expand, bucking trends toward economic downturn.

Beyond the financial heft of media planning as a sector, the work of media planning represents an important field of study due to the position of media planning within both the promotional industries and media industries. At their core, media agencies are responsible for getting advertisements seen. In this function, media planning work sits at the nexus of a set of interlinked promotional industry sectors, where it plays a crucial intermediary role, connecting brands to media owners, and bringing brands' messaging to consumers.³ Media planning is also vitally linked to the economic success of media industries, insofar as advertising-funded revenue models remain prevalent. It is surprising, then, that media planning is not more closely investigated.

There are several reasons why media planning has been largely overlooked as an area of research. To begin with, and as has been pointed out by Paul Grainge and Catherine Johnson (Grainge and Johnson 2015), there is often a dual bias that militates against research into the production cultures of promotional content. A further reason for the relative absence of research into the work of media planning relates to the nature of media planning work itself. Media agencies are intermediaries, and as such they trade

³ It is important to note here that not all media planning work happens at media agencies; some brands have in-house teams to do this work, and full-service ad agencies still include media planning and buying in their remits. But it is most common for this work to be outsourced to media agencies because of their specialist skillsets and the consolidated negotiating power they can offer when it comes to buying media space on behalf of clients.

in expertise. In many ways media agency work is not visible work. This is evident to an extent in the way media planning practitioners talk about their work. In an interview, Richard Wright, EMEA Strategy Director at a mid-size agency, told me:

I always found that when I worked in research you were always behind the curtain, it was never as if you saw something on TV and said, “Oh as a researcher, I was the one who did the run that said that TV was right.” And that’s still the same with media planning and buying, you’re never looking at something and saying, “hey I did that, I put that there.” Whereas if you work in creative I think there’s more of an attachment to the “hey I drew that picture” or “hey I filmed that.” So it’s always going to be the sexier end of the scale but actually there is a lot of fun to be had in media and in where the money is.

(Wright 2016)

This PhD aims to look ‘behind the curtain,’ to illuminate the work of media planning in the 21st century.

One tendency in advertising research has been to forgo investigation of the day-to-day working practices of advertising and promotion in favor of analysis of the end products, advertisements themselves. An early, albeit influential, tendency in scholarly work on advertising concerned itself with analysis of advertisements as texts and the impact of these texts on society (Goffman 1979, Williamson 1978, Jhally 2010). Another dominant tendency focuses on advertising as an industry and set of bounded practices (Davis 2008, Cronin 2010, Hackley 2010). Media planning has received attention to an extent within this second body of work, but the study of media planning as a practice and media agencies as organizations has so far been largely overlooked. Instead of focusing on advertisements as texts or advertising as a field of practice, this project by contrast is concerned specifically with the structures and practices of media planning, and, by focusing on media agencies, with allowing the work of media planning to be articulated as a delineated sector. As mentioned above, media planning sits sometimes

within ad agencies and is sometimes conducted in-house by brands. In most cases, media planning and buying is outsourced to specialist media agencies. While advertising and media planning are inextricably linked, it is important to give credence to media planning as a distinct area of study, in order to highlight the role and work of media planning and its significance to both the promotional and media industries. In so doing, this thesis therefore deviates from existing scholarship in its insistence on focusing specifically on media agencies as distinct entities. In the thesis that follows, I will answer the question, what is the role and the work of media planning as a sector?

In order to put media planning on the agenda as a distinct area of study, this thesis draws from across disciplines, including advertising studies, cultural studies and production studies. While interdisciplinary in nature, the theoretical and methodological grounding for this project draws most closely from media industry studies. The methods employed in service of this PhD intend to illuminate the work of media planning from the perspective of its practitioners. In this way, this project takes up the call of critical media industry studies to investigate ‘how knowledge about texts, audiences, and the industry form, circulate, and change; and how they influence textual and industrial practices’ (Havens, Lotz, and Tinic 2009: 273). The mixed-method approach favoured across much of the work in media industry studies makes it possible to place media planning at the centre of the investigatory lens, while still acknowledging the complexities of the media industry landscape within which media agencies exist and operate.

This project takes as its starting point the understanding that media planners and media agencies are promotional intermediaries. In this regard, this thesis follows Grainge and Johnson’s suggestion that, ‘the products, practices and socio-professional

world of promotional intermediaries should be taken seriously if we are to understand contemporary developments in screen culture and the media industries. This means stepping beyond critical dualisms that set creativity against marketing as the default of promotional analysis' (2015: 4). Studies of advertising commonly position its practitioners as cultural intermediaries; this project builds on such work by putting media planning on the agenda in a way that has thus far not occurred. In so doing, this PhD draws together three strands of relevant academic debate – the discussion of advertising, promotional culture and promotional intermediaries. Each of the above strands offers a partial grounding for studying the work of media planning. The lack of discreet focus on the work of media agencies, however, reveals the difficulty of isolating media planning from advertising or other elements of promotional. Accordingly, this thesis understands media planning as being a sector of the promotional industries, as well as being something that is both part of and separate to advertising.

As outlined above, this thesis will shed light on the work of media agencies and their role within the promotional industries. This PhD project is synchronic in nature and concerns itself with media planning in the 21st century. This moment for media planning aligns with the period following what Hackley calls 'advertising's second creative revolution' (Hackley 2010: 4). In his *Advertising and Promotion*, Hackley pinpoints what he considers to be two mythologized points in advertising history, the 1960s and early 2000s (present day at the time his text was written). According to Hackley, 'The first, somewhat mythologized creative advertising revolution of the 1960s occurred in the context of a classic media-funding model' (ibid.). Of the second moment in advertising history, Hackley writes, 'As this book is being written, advertising is undergoing a second creative revolution as the industry tries to respond to new media

funding models created by Web 2.0, mobile communications technology and changing patterns of media consumption’ (ibid.). In the early 2000s, Hackley noted a multitude of changes that seemed poised to alter the landscape of advertising, leading to changes to “advertising” as a genre of communication’ (ibid.: 5). These changes were and continue to be similarly impactful to the work of media planning. From the early 2000s onward, media planning work has been extensively impacted by the changes outlined by Hackley as being part of the ‘funding models created by Web 2.0’ (ibid.: 4). As of 2017, the amount of global spending on digital advertising has overtaken television ad spending. According to research done by Magna, the research arm of the media agency network IPG Mediabrands, digital ad spending in 2017 amounted to \$209 billion worldwide (41% of total global spend), while television ad spending came to \$178 billion (35% of total spend) (Kafka and Molla 2017). ‘By 2020,’ the article notes, ‘Magna expects digital ads to make up 50 percent of all ad spending’ (ibid.).⁴ This thesis focuses on media planning in the mid-2010s, a period in which the ‘second creative revolution’ (Hackley 2010: 4) marked by the advent of online and other digital media technologies, has fostered media and promotional industry adaptation on a vast scale. In the midst of these changes, media choices have become immeasurably varied and audience attention accordingly more fragmented, making the work of media planning – to deliver ads to audiences - more vital.

While this thesis does not set out to weigh in on the ethics of media planning work, I would be remiss if I did not at this early stage address the critical ramifications

⁴ Despite this notable growth in money spent on advertising in the digital space, spending on TV advertising has remained steady and is forecast to remain flat or display small growth (Kafka and Molla 2017).

of media agencies' activity.⁵ A core facet of media planning involves uniting brand messaging with consumer attention. In this way the work of media planning and media agencies is implicated not only in the creation and maintenance of consumer culture, but also in the use (or misuse) of consumer data. Recent legislation regarding the use of digitally collected consumer data aims to allow greater control on the part of consumers; May 2018 saw the implementation in the European Union of the Global Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)⁶, a regulation that intends to give Internet users more control over how their data is utilized. The implementation of the GDPR in Europe has had global effects, as it also governs the 'export' of user data to locations outside of Europe (European Commission 2018). Nevertheless, the ways in which consumer data is generated, stores and utilized remain contentious. In addition to ethical issues pertaining to the use of data and consumer targeting, the nature of media work also carries with it certain ethical ramifications, including issues of overwork and 'burn-out.' There are also issues to consider relating to the media and promotional industries' lack of representational diversity, coupled with concerns over troubling behaviour on the part of senior media industry figures. In April 2018, for example, Sir Martin Sorrell, founder and CEO of WPP, resigned from his position at the helm the enormous global communications conglomerate amidst allegations of 'possible misuse of assets and allegations of improper personal behaviour' (Vranica and Kostov 2018). These represent only some of the ethical stakes to take into consideration in relation to media planning.

⁵ Thanks are due here to Dr Mark Gallagher and Professor Chris Hackley for pointing out the importance of addressing the critical stakes of media agency work.

⁶ For further details on the specifics of the Global Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), see https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/justice-and-fundamental-rights/data-protection/2018-reform-eu-data-protection-rules_en.

While the aim of this PhD has not been to uncover and investigate the ethical issues surrounding media planning, it is important to acknowledge the existence of these and other issues, and to advocate for their study and consideration. The recent passage of the GDPR, for example, signals an industry landscape in flux, as well as an attendant need for ongoing research.

As outlined above, this PhD sets out to put media planning on the agenda, demonstrating what media planning is and how we can think about the work of media planning. This thesis will therefore begin with two conceptual chapters, each of which provides important context for understanding media planning. Chapter 1 highlights the conditions that led to media planning's emergence as a separate industry sector. While the PhD is synchronic in nature, Chapter 1 will provide some historical context in order to help situate media planning practice in the contemporary period. This chapter will therefore first outline the historical conditions that led to the emergence of media agencies as standalone entities in the 1990s, before providing a brief overview of the media planning sector as it exists in the mid-2010s. In so doing, Chapter 1 will argue that the existence of media planning as an industry sector is inextricably linked to audience data and to change in the media landscape, especially in the form of media fragmentation. The argument that media planning is tied to the management of change and the proper use of data will recur throughout the thesis.

Following the brief historical overview of Chapter 1, Chapter 2 goes on to survey existing scholarship in several related fields. Chapter 2 discusses the relevance of work from across the areas of advertising studies, promotional culture, and promotional intermediaries, each of which provides a lens for investigating media agencies and media planning work. Here, the thesis will argue for investigating media planning and

media agencies via a promotional intermediaries lens, while also recognizing the overlap of these linked fields and the difficulty of separating any one entirely from the others. In terms of methodology, Chapter 2 will explain the appropriateness of a methodological framework rooted in critical media industry studies for investigating media planning.

In the second half of the thesis, these earlier foundational chapters make way for three empirically driven case studies, each of which provides a perspective for understanding media planning. These chapters utilize evidence gleaned from three methods – interviews, textual analysis and participant-observation – in order to answer questions about the work of media planning as it is understood and presented on an individual, organizational and industry-sector level. Chapter 3 outlines the work of media planning from the perspective of media planning practitioners, using data gleaned from practitioner interviews. In this chapter, interviews with media agency employees answer the question, ‘how do media planners describe their work?’. Chapter 3 is organized according to four key thematic findings: agency remits and structures, networks, industry lore and media planning’s data imperative. This chapter will make the argument that these thematic tendencies reflect a tendency for media planning professionals to accept fluxing work conditions as a characteristic of media agency work life, adopting strategies for managing ongoing change.

Chapter 4 moves from an individual to organizational perspective for understanding media planning. Using research reports circulated by two media agencies, this chapter asks, ‘how do media agencies position their work?’. Using textual analysis of two research reports, Chapter 4 will provide an understanding of how media agencies circulate conceptions of expertise, particularly in relation to the notion of the consumer. Key to understanding the significance of these reports is an understanding of

agency-produced research reports as being ‘semi-embedded industry deep texts,’ per John Caldwell (2008). Circulated widely both to current and potential clients as well as to internal agency employees, the research reports that media agencies produce and distribute serve as declarations of agency expertise. As Chapter 4 will argue, a key component of this expertise – and a skillset actively showcased across multiple agencies – is the ability to be agile and adaptable in response to changing conditions.

Chapters 3 and 4 provide a view into media planning from an individual and an organizational perspective, respectively. Chapter 5 provides a third perspective, investigating media planning as an industry sector. Using participant-observation at Cannes Lions 2016, Chapter 5 interrogates how media planning is represented and understood within the broader sphere of the promotional industries. This chapter asks, ‘how does media planning figure at Cannes Lions, and what does this reveal about the status of media planning within the promotional industries?’. Here, Chapter 5 reveals that media planning at Cannes Lions 2016 was depicted as a data-centric industry sector. At the same time, data at Cannes Lions 2016 was heralded as an important creative tool. Rather than signaling media planning’s limitations, therefore, this linkage of media planning to data at Cannes Lions cues media planning and media agencies’ potential for increased preeminence. The findings presented in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 come together in this PhD’s conclusions, which will argue for the importance of continuing to study media agencies, as well as continuing to work for increased understanding of media planning’s role as a promotional industry sector.

The primary research for this thesis was conducted from 2014 to 2017. In the course of conducting this primary research, the two core thematic threads – alluded to in brief earlier in this introduction – surfaced time and again. The first of these is the

assumption of change as an accepted fact of media planning work and media agency work life. Change and uncertainty are widely described as defining features of work across the cultural industries (Hesmondhalgh 2013, Deuze 2007), often couched in terms of precarious working conditions. Instead of experiencing change in terms of precarity, media planning, this thesis will argue, experiences change as an in-built feature. This notion of change being built into the DNA of media planning work will recur thematically throughout this thesis.

The work of media planning is typified by a state of near-constant adaptation. Technological advancements and ongoing evolutions to the global media sphere continue to raise the stakes for media planning professionals. Meanwhile, increasingly complex and varied media outlets present further challenges for media agencies, whose once apparently simple task – to plan and buy media space - now requires more and more specialized knowledge sets. Insofar as their foremost task is to act on behalf of client brands as navigators in a complex and fast-changing media landscape, media planning agencies occupy an uneasy space. Yet, it is also their privileged position as experts within this complex and unruly mediascape that gives media agencies their *raison d'être*. Media agencies in particular must ensure they are well versed in the latest media technology,

The reality of ongoing change in working conditions on an industrial, organizational and individual level is characteristic of media agency work, and indeed of work in other creative or promotional industry sectors. The positioning of media agency work in relation to this changing media landscape is significant; as this thesis will demonstrate, media planning as a sector tends not to shy away from this sense of change, but rather to take as a given the constancy of changing conditions, and to

positioning media agencies as masters at navigating change. In Chapter 3, interviews with media planning practitioners display the ways in which individual employees address the realities of change, while Chapters 4 and 5 reveal the agency-level and broader sector-level approach to coping with change as a constant.

The second thematic thread that emerged during the course of this project is the persistence of the historical and contemporary link between the work of media agencies and the use of data. An important implication from the success of the ‘Magic of Flying’ campaign is the importance granted to data in estimations of industry best practice, both in terms of the use of data to plan campaigns as well as the significance of collecting consumer data.⁷ Many of the accolades granted to the campaign mentioned its intelligent use of data, as well as the measurability of its sales-related results. An article in industry publication *AdAge* stated that James McGrath - Jury President for the 2014 Cannes Lions Jury that awarded the campaign the Direct Grand Prix - ‘praised the “salesmanship of the moment” -- essentially, the way British Airways connected the billboard creative to its key objectives and its call to action: getting people to go to its “Look Up”-branded site’ (Klassen 2014). In this regard, the ‘Magic of Flying’ campaign is

⁷ ‘Magic of Flying’ was heralded as a boon for British Airways in terms of engaging consumers using measurable success metrics. The outdoor campaign drove passers-by to British Airways’ ‘Look Up’-branded microsite, and also saw many people engaging with the ‘#lookup’ Twitter handle featured on the billboard. The broader communications goal of the campaign, according to lead agency OgilvyOne, was to raise awareness of the range of British Airways destinations and fares and to drive sales (Contagious 2014). Users who visited the ‘Look Up’ British Airways microsite were directed to the full list of the airline’s travel destinations and simple one-click booking options. Use of the ‘#lookup’ hash tag and microsite allowed British Airways to track the travel bookings driven directly by the billboard-based campaign. In the era of third party booking sites and incognito browser windows, this kind of measurability is highly prized.

a prime exemplar of the ways in which data-driven campaigns are celebrated in contemporary promotional industry awards ceremonies.

This ties to the second pervasive thread found throughout this project, which is the pervasiveness of data in conceptions of media agency work. From its inception, media planning has been linked to sorting and using data. As Chapter 1 of this thesis will demonstrate, the use of audience data to plan and buy media space for promotional campaigns has long been one of the principal roles of media planning. It is no coincidence that media agencies came into their own as standalone entities at the same time that new methods of measurement and new forms of audience data became available. The potential of data in all of its various forms continues to be central to the work of contemporary media planning agencies. An October 2015 article published in *AdAge* magazine addressed the fact that savvy use of data is de rigeur for media agencies. The article asks, ‘How important is data to the future of agencies?’ before answering, ‘The great number of media account reviews announced in 2015, including Coca-Cola, P&G, Unilever, General Mills, L’Oréal, Visa and more, has been widely attributed to the search for better applications of data and analytics’ (Giel 2015). In Chapter 3, interviews with media agency employees in a variety of roles reveal the omnipresence of data in media agency work life. Chapter 5 of this thesis, meanwhile, explains the ways in which data was heralded at Cannes Lions 2016. Of particular significance to the status of media planning is media planning’s long-standing association with data, and the emergent framing of data as a creative tool.

Before moving on to an in-depth investigation of the work of media planning, I will use this introductory space to clarify the industrial, temporal and geographic parameters of this project. This thesis understands media planning as a sector of both

the promotional industries as well as the media industries. Media planning is an important part of the media industries as, for ad-funded media businesses, the activity of media buying can determine the amount of revenue that media companies generate. At the same time, the work of media planning is undeniably promotional industry work. Aeron Davis' (2013) summary of the qualities of promotional industry occupations is useful for situating the work of media planning. Davis characterizes promotional industry occupations as being, 'concerned to identify a saleable product (a commodity, message, idea, or individual), a potential audience (citizen, consumer, social group, elite decision maker), a communications medium (formal, informal, mass, digital), and a message' (Davis 2013: 2). In addition to straddling the promotional and media industries, media planning has ties to further industrial categorizations, including but not limited to: the creative, cultural, and communications industries. Each of these industry demarcations has links to the others and each, in turn, could be said to apply to the work of media planning.

While this thesis addresses media planning from the perspective of the promotional and media industries, the above additional industrial categorizations (creative, cultural, communications) do appear at points throughout the thesis, most commonly in the context of their use by other parties to encapsulate industries or industrial sectors. For example, as a blanket category, the advertising industry is typically positioned by governments as a core part of the creative industries (Hesmondhalgh 2008, Flew 2012). Such is also the case in Chapter 5's discussion of the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity, whose declared audience is 'members of the creative communications industry' (Cannes Lions 2017). Thus, while this thesis addresses media planning as a promotional and media industry sector, it does so while

acknowledging the multiple additional semantic categories that could be said to encapsulate media planning.

This semantic overlap leads to a separate but related point, regarding media planning's relationship to and position within the media industries. Media planning sits within a complex industrial web, in which it is difficult if not impossible to draw clear divisions between linked industries. Grainge and Johnson note the 'fluidity' of media industry sectors, stating, 'this fluidity complicates any sense of there being contained, or cleanly bounded, production cultures in the media industries; as the likes of Deuze and Caldwell (2013) both suggest, media work is liquid, industry structures a mess' (Grainge and Johnson 2015: 8). In keeping with Grainge and Johnson's assertion of industry 'mess,' it is equally difficult to isolate media planning from other, interrelated sectors of the promotional industries, as well as from other sectors of the media industries, in which media planning plays an important revenue-generating role. Rather than attempt to force a false sense of separation, this thesis acknowledges a degree of overlap between sectors of the media and promotional industries. It is in part due to this inherent messiness that studying the work of media planning and media agencies is so important. As a sector, media planning straddles boundaries, sitting between media industries and promotional industries. Media agencies are increasingly expanding their offerings to include services like content creation, further obscuring the already blurred boundaries of promotional industry sectors, and further bridging the gap between media production and promotion. This expansion of media agencies into content is in keeping with the ongoing evolution of the media agency remit, a feature that will be discussed in a historical sense in Chapter 1, and in a contemporary sense in Chapter 3. At the time of writing in 2018, the media agency remit continues to expand, and restructures in

communications conglomerates find media agencies merging, being absorbed, or at times absorbing other agencies.

The British Airways ‘Magic of Flying’ campaign is an exemplar of this messiness. The ‘Magic of Flying’ campaign won the 2014 Cannes Lions Direct Grand Prix, as well as a Gold Lion in the Promo & Activation category. The campaign did well at other awards ceremonies, winning Best Use of Data Driven Media at the 2015 Webby Awards, a 2014 Clio Award for Innovative Media, a D&AD Yellow Pencil Award for Interactive and Earned Media and four Creative Circle Gold awards, for Outdoor, Interactive, Digital and New Technology (*Little Black Book* 2015). The campaign was praised for its ability to convey a simple and touching message, while making use of advanced technology to identify and track the passing planes. It is common for campaigns to win awards at multiple events and often in different categories. The range of categories for which ‘Magic of Flying’ was nominated and awarded is indicative of a tendency for notions of best practice to coalesce around prominent campaigns that are deemed worthy of recognition in multiple areas of promotion. The Cannes Lions Direct Grand Prix, for example, is awarded for direct-response marketing campaigns, while the Clio Award for Innovative Media recognizes the innovative use of media in marketing communication. This category-overlap is indicative of the difficulty of separating media planning out from advertising and speaks to the interrelatedness of different sectors of the promotional industries.

Emma de la Fosse, joint-CCO of OgilvyOne EMEA, explained the symbiotic benefits the campaign afforded to each of its agency and client partners:

Like any successful business deal, every party needed to get something out of it. Matthew Dearden at Clear Channel was looking for a highly creative idea to showcase the capabilities of their new digital poster sites, Darren

McKay at Storm was seeking to innovate within media serving platforms, and LG, the main advertiser at Piccadilly, was keen to attract extra eyeballs to a site they had bought for the year. What BA got out of it were 2 highly visible, iconic locations (Piccadilly and the elevated section of the M4) for a fraction of the normal cost.

(de la Fosse cited in *Little Black Book* 2015)

As de la Fosse indicates, British Airways' outdoor media agency partners, Storm, were essential in making the campaign financially viable for British Airways. The complexity of these inter-agency relationships underlines the messiness of the promotional industries, whose complicated nature militates against clear demarcations between different types of agencies. It is in part due to the inherent messiness of media industries that media planning is sometimes overlooked as a distinct sector. This messiness must be acknowledged in order to effectively understand the nature and role of media planning work, and to approach media planning as a sector. By studying the practices and processes of media planning as distinct, it is possible to gain a new focal point into these linked industry sectors.

The next point I wish to address is the issue of geography. This project represents a first, focused look at the role and work of media planning, and therefore does not contain a comparative geographic element. Instead, this PhD looks at 'global' media agencies. Rather than making claims about the nature of media planning across the globe, global is used in this instance as a descriptor granted by media agencies unto themselves. In terms of structuration, media agencies typically have global, regional and national teams.⁸ Client brands with operations in different regions will select a global headquarters for their media business, typically the New York or London offices of a

⁸ Chapter 2 addresses agency structuration in greater detail, including the different specialist and regional teams found within a typical Global media agency.

multinational media agency. London is therefore a major hub for media agencies with so-called global operations, making it an ideal site for studying the workings of media planning at scale. Therefore, interviews for this project were conducted in London, with media agency employees who work on either global or regional accounts. Similarly, the research reports utilized in Chapter 4 each have a purported global focus, though to differing degrees. The findings in UMWW's *Wave 7* report were culled from a proprietary survey that included 65 countries as of 2013, while Havas Worldwide's Prosumer survey, the results of which were used to compile Havas' *Hashtagnation* report, included 29 countries as of 2014. Both reports are circulated amongst the two agencies' various worldwide offices. Finally, the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity takes place in Cannes, France but has a geographically varied attendance base. The 2016 festival was attended by some 15,000 people from across the globe, and there are no geographic or language requirements for awards entrants. Some events at Cannes Lions featured a regional focus, such as special talks about emerging markets in Africa and Asia. On the whole, Cannes Lions bills itself as a global festival.

One final point that is important to address at this introductory juncture regards the realities of the pace of change within the media industries as well as the pace of developments in media industry research. The 'Magic of Flying' campaign typifies the ongoing evolution of the contemporary media landscape in which media ; digital billboards are now commonplace, and the affordances of digital out-of-home continue to challenge long-held understandings of outdoor advertising, which for centuries was understood to mean large-scale static images. According to Hackley, 'Over nearly 400 years, since the development of mass consumption print publications, advertising agencies have proved to be the most flexible and astute of organizational forms in

adding skills and techniques to retain their central place in an evolving media environment’ (Hackley 2013: 5). In both areas, the pace of change is rapid and consistent, with implications for this project. This thesis looks at media agencies until 2018 but does so with an awareness of the persistence of flux and change at all times. The media landscape and attendant media industries – of which media planning is part – are prone to change at an extraordinary pace. The ‘Magic of Flying’ campaign typifies the ongoing evolution of the contemporary media landscape; digital billboards are now commonplace, and the affordances of digital out-of-home continue to challenge long-held understandings of outdoor advertising, which for centuries was understood to mean large-scale static images. According to Hackley, ‘Over nearly 400 years, since the development of mass consumption print publications, advertising agencies have proved to be the most flexible and astute of organizational forms in adding skills and techniques to retain their central place in an evolving media environment’ (Hackley 2013: 5). This pace of change is what makes researching media industries so fascinating, while also presenting particular challenges. For media planning, this can mean change from several perspectives. There are constant changes to the media environment, in terms of new technologies, new systems of measurement and new channels, as well as structural and organizational changes, such as conglomeration, development of specialist teams and emergence of new types of agencies, and business-changes, primarily in terms of losing and gaining client business.

Simultaneous to these media industrial changes, the relatively nascent field of media industries research is also expanding at a remarkable pace. This is an exciting and overdue development, but also a development that threatens to trouble the claims of this project as being the first of its kind.

In order to provide an understanding of the role of media planning as a sector of the promotional industries this PhD will address a set of linked research questions. Chapter 1 asks, When and under what conditions did media planning first emerge as a separate industry sector? How does media planning work? Where does the work of media planning fit within the promotional industries? In Chapter 2, this thesis answers the question, how does existing scholarship help foreground a study of media planning and where does this project sit in relation to existing scholarship? In addition Chapter 2 asks, what methodology is best suited for an investigation of media planning, and how does this methodology draw on existing methodological frameworks? Chapter 3 focuses on the work lives of media agency professionals, asking, how do media agency employees describe their work? As well as, how do media planners understand and manage change? In Chapter 4, this thesis will answer two linked questions: How do media agencies use research reports to position themselves and to sell their expertise? And, how does media planning practice position its role in relation to ‘the consumer’? Finally, in Chapter 5, this PhD will ask, how does media planning figure at Cannes Lions, and what does this tell us about the way media agencies are positioned within the promotional industries? In placing media planning squarely in the centre of the investigative lens, the research that follows provides a detailed look into an often-overlooked yet vital sector of promotional work.

CHAPTER 1. CONTEXTUALIZING MEDIA PLANNING

This chapter aims to contextualize media planning by providing, in overview form, both a historical account of media planning's emergence and a sense of the contemporary landscape within which media agencies operate. This chapter is therefore divided into two sections. The first section will trace media planning's development from a mostly hidden component of advertising practice to a major promotional industry sub-field unto itself. In the second section, this chapter will provide an overview of the contemporary industrial landscape within which the work of media planning takes place. As discussed in this thesis' introduction, 'contemporary' as it is used throughout refers to the time period directly following what Chris Hackley terms the 'second creative revolution' of advertising, marked by the advent of online and other digital media technologies (Hackley 2010). This contemporary period can be understood, roughly, as extending from the late 1990s or early 2000s through the present moment at the time of writing, the late 2010s. In the chapter below, this thesis will argue that, although the core function of media planning has remained the same insofar as it pertains to the planning and buying of media space, the nature of the industrial landscape in which media planning operates has changed dramatically, thus making way for the increased centrality of media planning to the promotional industries.

Contemporary media planning agencies are tasked with sorting through a complex constellation of media choices to select the best outlets for conveying brands' promotional messaging to their desired targets. Some brands have in-house media planning and buying teams, but more often than not the work of media planning is outsourced to one of many dedicated media planning agencies, commonly referred to

simply as media agencies. On the most basic level, these agencies are responsible for selecting the optimum media channels for a client brand's marketing communications. In other words, the primary responsibility of a media agency is ensuring advertisements reach their intended audience for the greatest possible impact.⁹ While contemporary media planning represents a sizeable promotional industry sector unto itself, early media planning work amounted to only a small component of advertising practice. Standalone media agencies are a relatively new phenomenon, which can be seen as emerging primarily in the 1990s.¹⁰ During this time period, media planning and buying teams within full-service advertising agencies gave way to standalone media agencies.¹¹ This chapter will answer the questions of how and why this transformation took place. In addition, it will outline the nature and structure of contemporary media planning in order to help situate the work of media agencies and their employees.

In the section to follow, this chapter will first offer an introduction to the history and context of media planning as a profession and burgeoning industry sector. This section will argue that media planning flourished as a sector in tandem with the fragmentation of media channels and therefore consumer attention that occurred in the second half of the twentieth century.

⁹ Increasingly, media agencies are taking on tasks formerly considered the domain of creative or full-service agencies, including content production. This blurring of boundaries will be discussed in greater detail later in Chapter 1, in Chapter 3, and elsewhere throughout this PhD.

¹⁰ There are some outlier examples to this timeline, such as Carat Espace, which launched in 1968 before shuttering and re-launching in 1989. Overall, however the 1990s are notable as a time period in which a number of media agencies emerged in quick succession and for the first time.

¹¹ The full-service agency model is still in operation, though it is relatively uncommon for a client brand to use a single agency for all aspects of their advertising.

The emergence of media planning

In its early form, media planning was a function of advertising practice. The trajectory of the advertising industry therefore offers a productive heuristic for understanding the development of media planning, first as one component of advertising and later as a distinct promotional industry sector. This section will focus primarily on the development of advertising (and therefore media planning) in the United States, as it was in the US that advertising first became professionalized and regulated. Aeron Davis' (2013) summary of the rise of promotional culture offers a useful account of the evolution of the advertising industry that also serves as a guide for the development of early media planning. Speaking about the professionalization of promotion, Davis notes that, 'In the main, historical narratives concentrate on the twentieth-century transformation of ad hoc practices into established professional occupations' (Davis 2013: 16). Developments in advertising as well as in media planning are coincident with Davis' model of evolution across the promotional sectors, in which promotion moves from 'dubious and ad hoc' to 'respectable,' as 'public accountability, educational standards and ethical practices emerged out of a process of professionalization' (ibid.: 19).

In his account, Davis explains that advertising agents have existed since the mid-nineteenth century, during which time these agents played the role of broker between print publications and potential advertisers. Davis pinpoints 1913 as a key year in agency development, as it was the year in which advertising was made tax-free in the United States (ibid.: 22). This legislative change led to the establishment of agencies offering creative services, as well as the media buying services previously offered by individual

agents. According to Leiss, Kline and Botterill (2005), as early as 1917 nearly all national advertising in the US was handled by intermediaries, rather than by brands directly. The UK and US Advertising Associations were both founded in 1926, signaling a response to the perceived need for industry oversight (ibid.). US radio networks NBC and CBS were founded in 1926 and 1927, respectively, and immediately began courting advertising business by emphasizing mass reach on an unprecedented, national scale (Meyers 2009: 70). Media planners during this time period would have been tasked with determining which radio stations, print publications and out of home locations (such as billboards) were best suited for reaching a specific consumer target. Media buyers would then proceed to buy ‘space’ for advertising based on these recommendations.

The inter-war period of the 1920s and 1930s was a time of early experimentation in advertising creativity and market research, as advertising agencies sought to cement the position of ‘brand names into the idiom of daily expression’ (Ewen 2001: 203). Industry expansion slowed somewhat during the reallocation of resources and economic shifts characteristic of World War II,¹² but the industry revived in earnest and for the *longue durée* in the post-war period. Of this period, Helen Powell writes, ‘it was in attempting to steer consumer demand in the post-War rebuilding of the economies on both sides of the Atlantic that advertising really grew as a significant promotional industry’ (Powell 2013: 30). Increases in disposable income paired with the relative economic prosperity of the post-war period enabled advertising to secure its position as a growing industry.

¹² Characteristic of this kind of wartime reallocation was the rationing of newsprint, which led to decreases in newspaper circulation figures during the Second World War (Ramsburg 2011: 110).

Post-war recovery allowed for similar advancements in television. For the most part, US television in the 1950s followed an early model of single-sponsorship advertising (Meyers 2009). The role of a media planner in the 1950s would have further expanded to take into account television advertising. In the single-sponsorship era this entailed selecting a single programme to serve as an appropriate platform for a sponsoring brand. Television's reach expanded over the 1950s and early 1960s with an increase in the number of people owning television sets and watching TV. Figures from The Library of Congress show that ownership of television sets by American households rose from 9 percent in 1950 to 90 percent in 1960 (Library of Congress 2017). Television's rapid ascension to a mass medium gave advertisers increased opportunities for reaching consumers via audiovisual advertising. Further to this, the availability of measurement systems significantly impacted the nature of advertising and heralded the early stages of media planning's prominence in the form of reading ratings and making sense of market research. 'By the 1950s,' Davis writes, 'agencies were making use of Nielson [sic] and Hooper audience ratings¹³, as well as 'motivational research,' 'consumer panels' and 'attitude measurement' (Davis 2013: 17). These advancements in audience measurement systems created more responsibility for media planners and an attendant expansion in expertise, as media planners were expected to use audience data to make informed decisions about where to place ads. Further, as the single-sponsorship

¹³ Hooper ratings, named for Claude Hooper, emerged in the 1930s as a means of measuring the popularity of radio programmes via telephone surveys. The company later ventured into the field of television ratings but was eventually bought by the Nielsen Company in 1950 (Blanchard 2013:50). Nielsen radio ratings were first reported in the 1930s using audimeters, devices which connected to radios in homes and reported figures directly to Nielsen. In 1950 Nielsen began to measure television ratings using similar in-home devices (Nielsen 2018). Nielsen remains a prominent research body for measuring ratings in the US, UK and elsewhere.

model of 1950s television gave way to spot advertising in the 1960s, opportunities for brands to advertise on television increased significantly. Citing Sterling and Kittross (1978), Cynthia Meyers writes, ‘the shift to the network television business model was beneficial to advertisers and broadcasters alike, as evidenced by the increase in television advertising spending from \$454 million in 1952 to \$1.6 billion in 1960’ (2013: 221). By the 1960s, then, advertising could be hosted across a combination of multiple media: TV, radio, print and outdoor. This diversification of options for placing ads contributed to the continued growth of the advertising industry. This same diversification of media choices, combined with advancements in audience measurement, underscored the need for specialized media planning and buying teams within advertising agencies, and led media planning to develop as an industry practice.

By 1965 universities including Northwestern University in the United States and the London School of Economics in the United Kingdom began offering degrees in Advertising (Davis 2013), signaling the recognition of advertising as being comprised of a set of industrial practices that could be studied and implemented. One such set of practices was that of media planning and buying. An early attempt to bring media planning to the forefront occurred in 1968, when Carat Espace was founded in Paris as the first independent media planning agency, responsible solely for the planning and buying of advertising media space on behalf of client brands. Carat Espace was billed as the ‘centre for buying of radio and television,’ a straightforward slogan referring to Carat Espace’s dealings with the primary media channels of the time (Carat 2015). Shortly after its initial founding Carat Espace was reabsorbed into the purview of a larger full-service advertising agency, where it operated as a department, rather than a separate entity. Carat would eventually re-launch in 1989, at the beginning of a time period in

which standalone media agencies emerged in earnest. The example of Carat Espace as a media-only agency foreshadows the professionalization of media planning. The agency's creation in 1968 represents early attempts to recognize the significance of media planning expertise. The advent of standalone media agencies was the outcome of further advances in media technology, increased recognition of media planning's professional capability and large-scale corporate conglomeration.

Historiographical accounts of television's development commonly point to the 1980s and 1990s as a time of accelerated growth, in terms of industrial maturity and burgeoning media choice (Davis 2013, Meyers 2009, Powell 2013). Cynthia Meyers notes that the relationship between broadcasting and advertising is reciprocal and the histories of both therefore intertwined. She states 'broadcasting...cannot be understood separately from the advertising industry which, throughout most of its history, has provided all its revenue' (2013: 207). In that respect, the factors contributing to television's maturation can be seen as impacting similarly on the advertising industry. These factors include the advent of cable and satellite technologies, along with attendant advancements in audience measurement systems, all of which occurred in tandem with changes to market regulations that contributed to the rise of media conglomerates (Johnson 2011). In the US a three-network television oligopoly formed in the mid-1950s and remained fairly stable until the disruption of cable in the 1980s. With the advent of cable, viewership options for television expanded exponentially and audience attention fragmented. Accordingly, viewership data became more intricate, therefore requiring more time and skill in planning television-advertising campaigns. These developments made the work of media planning more involved, necessitating larger teams with increased expertise. With these factors bringing the work of media planning into

sharper relief, the trend toward industrial conglomeration in the latter part of the 20th century allowed media planning agencies to emerge as standalone entities.

An early example of conglomeration in the advertising industry occurred when, in 1961, McCann-Erickson restructured its various advertising agencies under a single banner, Interpublic Group of Companies, thus making IPG the first marketing conglomerate (*The Wall Street Journal* 2017). At the time of the Interpublic Group restructure, media planning had not yet emerged as a distinct sub-industry. Instead, throughout the 1960s, media planning teams operated within the confines of full-service advertising agencies. It was not until the late 1980s and 1990s that media planning agencies began to emerge as separate from full service advertising agencies.

The 1960 structuration of Interpublic Group was an early harbinger of the large-scale conglomeration that would occur across the cultural industries in the 1980s (Hesmondhalgh 2013). Conglomeration in the advertising sector, specifically, was a vital step for raising the profile of media planning. The comingling of multiple planning teams under one conglomerate umbrella highlighted the scale of media planning and buying activity within existing full-service agencies. At the same time, with multiple full-service advertising agencies joined within single conglomerates, media planning stood out as a bounded professional practice that was simultaneously vital to advertising yet at the same time distinct. This led, eventually, to media planning teams being separated out and regrouped as standalone media agencies. As Larry Allen, SVP of Real Media Group, explains in a *Business Insider* article, ‘these agencies were formed to aggregate buying power, derive value from planning and buying, create efficiency by reducing costs and expedite the overall process’ (Allen 2012). By bringing together the media planning arms of a range of agencies, media conglomerates could consolidate expertise.

Further, they could increase negotiating power by housing all media buying under a single business heading. A footnote on the Adbrands.net¹⁴ homepage summarizes these developments as follows:

In recent years, most advertising agencies have tended to move towards a common structure. Whereas in the past, each individual ad agency offered a variety of different marketing services under a single roof, the rapid expansion of the media industry (for example the proliferation of cable and digital channels), as well as the refusal of clients to pay for services they didn't require, encouraged most large advertising agencies to spin out their more specialised in-house departments as separate agencies in their own right.

(Adbrands.net 2017)

A good example of this trend of media planning agencies emerging as the collective aggregate of multiple in-house specialist planning departments is the establishment of the Omnicom Group. In 1986, the full-service advertising agencies BBDO¹⁵ and Doyle, Dane, and Bernbach (DDB) merged, resulting in the creation of Omnicom Group (Omnicom Group 2015). For ten years following the Omnicom Group merger, these two agencies (BBDO and DDB) continued to operate according to the traditional, full-service model. Then, in 1996, the Omnicom Group acquired a third full-service agency, TBWA. A restructure of the three agencies saw the planning components of each extracted and reconstituted as the standalone media-planning agency, Optimum Media Direction (OMD) (ibid.). This restructuring allowed expertise to be freely shared amongst formerly competing media planning teams, expanding the business opportunities for OMD as a media agency. During this same time period, Sir Martin

¹⁴ Adbrands.net is an online resource that provides business updates and company profiles for different sectors of the advertising industry.

¹⁵ BBDO itself was established via the 1928 merger of BDO (Barton, Durstine & Osborn) and Batten Co. (BBDO 2017).

Sorrell began to maneuver WPP into position as the world's largest communications conglomerate, a title it still holds, as of 2017 (WPP 2017). WPP's industrial predominance began to take shape with the 1987 takeover, rather than merger, of JWT into WPP by Sorrell.¹⁶ In 1989, WPP acquired the Ogilvy Group, which at the time, consisted of Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide, Ogilvy Direct and Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide (ibid.). In 1997, a corporate restructure saw the media arms of JWT and Ogilvy & Mather joined together under one company name, Mindshare (Mindshare 2017). A timeline on WPP's website notes the significance of this development, referencing the fact that in 1997 WPP 'launche[d] new generation media planning, buying and research company Mindshare, in Europe and Asia' (WPP 2017a). These two examples, of OMD and Mindshare, are representative of the way in which conglomeration resulted in the recognition of media planning's scope and significance, and eventually the establishment of standalone media agencies.

The 1980s also saw increased focus within advertising on issues of measurement and effectiveness, areas that have typically been the purview of media planning. The American Marketing Association (AMA) first launched its Effie Awards for effectiveness in the United States in 1968, but expanded the awards to Europe in 1984, and Latin American in 1988 (Effie Worldwide 2017).¹⁷ Similarly, in 1980, the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) launched the Advertising Effectiveness awards in the United Kingdom. These awards eventually expanded to a multinational level and

¹⁶ In April 2018 Sorrell left WPP under circumstances that remain unclear as of May 2018. An article published on April 4, 2018 in the Wall Street Journal stated that WPP was investigating Sorrell for 'possible misuse of assets and allegations of improper personal behavior' (Vranica and Kostov 2018).

¹⁷ In 2008, the AMA transferred its rights in the Effie awards to Effie Worldwide (Effie 2017)

continue to be granted today to the advertising campaigns deemed most effective, per measured impact (IPA 2017). If the 1980s were a period of industrial conglomeration and emphasis on measurement, the 1990s can be seen, in turn, as the key era for media planning's demarcation. It was during this decade that each of the top 10 global media planning agencies as of 2017 was first established.¹⁸

The above section has traced the industrial conditions that led to media planning's emergence as a significant industry sector in its own right. To summarize, in the early 20th century, the media planning component of advertising was confined to print and radio buying on a local, direct-sales basis. The role of a planner in the 1950s would have further expanded to include television, but in the single-sponsorship era this entailed little more than selecting a single programme to serve as an appropriate platform for a sponsoring brand. By the 1960s, media planning expanded further to include the task of reading ratings and navigating the more complex television advertising landscape ushered in by spot buying. The role of media planning in the second half of the twentieth century expanded to include increased responsibilities for media planners and accordingly an increase in professional practice and required skills. Conglomeration in the 1980s highlighted the scope of media planning within advertising. At the same time, the proliferation of television channels and programming choices, along with additional measurement tools, created demand for larger media planning teams with specialist knowledge and consolidated negotiating power. Thus, by the 1990s, standalone media planning agencies came into their own. In the next section,

¹⁸ Based on the list of Top 50 Media Agencies 2017, published by *Campaign* on 17 March 2017 and culled from Nielsen data. Full list available online: <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/top-50-media-agencies/1427535>.

this chapter will outline three distinct models by which standalone media agencies developed.

Models of media agency development

This chapter has thus far argued that media planning gained significance over time in tandem with the emergence of additional media channels and measurement tools. As outlined above, most of the major media agencies in operation in the late 2010s in the were initially established in the 1980s and 1990s. The establishment of a large number of media agencies during this time period is indicative of the increased recognition of media planning's importance as a result of conglomeration, as well as a need for further expertise in response to the rise of Internet advertising. The mid and late 1990s saw the dissolution in the US and UK of restrictions limiting commercial Internet traffic (NSF 2003).¹⁹ This development meant that advertising space could be bought and sold on websites online, greatly expanding the possibilities for placing advertising, and therefore further expanding the need for media planning (Couldry 2012).

There are three distinct models for the formation of standalone media agencies. The first such model entails the establishment of media agencies from the media planning arms of existing full-service agencies. This model can be seen in the origin of media agencies OMD and Mindshare, as described above. The formation of OMD and Mindshare from the former planning teams of 'traditional' agencies is typical of the conditions that yielded the establishment of self-standing media planning agencies of scale. In many cases, these standalone agencies were formed from restructuring the

¹⁹ Prior to this time period, Internet networks were reserved for scientific and research use. The NSFNET dissolved in 1995, and with it the last restrictions on commercial Internet (NSF 2003).

media arms of two or more full-service agencies, as in the example of OMD above. BBDO, DDB, and TBWA are all examples of historic full-service advertising agencies. Each would have had media planning and buying departments that began as small teams and expanded their expertise and manpower in tandem with the growing media landscape. By the mid to late 1990s, these teams had grown large enough to warrant the establishment of a dedicated media agency, responsible for handling clients' media strategy, planning and buying. The establishment of OMD in 1996 and Mindshare in 1997 can be seen as a result of conglomeration, and as a pragmatic move to capitalize on the potential for increased media planning business generated by shifting conditions in the media landscape.

A second model for the development of major media planning agencies in the 1990s was the partnering of early, small-scale media planning shops. These companies' business began to suffer as full-service agencies moved their clients' media planning business to freshly established, planning-only arms, such as OMD and Mindshare. In response, some early media-only agencies joined forces in order to compete. Havas Media, for example, was established in 1998 as the result of a merger between two smaller media planning agencies. In accordance with its emergence from small beginnings, Havas Media continues to position itself as a maverick agency, self-described on the company's website as 'agile, nimble and fast' (Havas Media 2015). This maverick persona persists in spite of Havas Media's position, as of 2017, as the ninth largest global media network, with total global billings of \$18.4billion in 2016 according to global agency rankings (Adbrands.net 2017). The example of Havas displays a move among media agencies to differentiate their offerings based on company personality or ideology, often linked to a kind of 'origin story,' based upon historical beginnings.

The third genesis for media agencies at the end of the twentieth century saw media planning and buying divisions splintering off from large, existing full-service agencies. In 1989, after over twenty years operating within the full-service agency WCRS, the erstwhile Carat Espace was reestablished as simply Carat. Accelerating changes in the advertising landscape led to Carat's reemergence as a standalone media agency. In 1991, WCRS rebranded as the advertising conglomerate Aegis. By 1992, Aegis 'sold its remaining interest in full service advertising,' focusing instead on media (*Campaign* 2012). This intentional move away from the full-service model and toward a media-only conglomerate continues to shape the ethos of Aegis group companies today. In 2012, Aegis group chief executive Jerry Buhlmann was quoted by *Campaign* magazine, saying, 'Aegis has been very pioneering in the way it's developed, including in digital. Aegis was one of the first agency groups to move into digital. Moving into media specialists was pioneering and our move into digital was pioneering' (*Campaign* 2012).

Indeed, Carat was the first UK agency to launch a digital media planning team, doing so in 1996 (McCabe 2012). This is interesting to note in light of Carat's historical development as an early media agency and as part of Aegis, an early media-only conglomerate. The launch of Carat's digital planning team in 1996 was followed soon after by the other agencies in the Aegis network, before spreading to rival media corporations (Dentsu Aegis 2015). Over time these digital teams grew in size and significance, to the extent that the contemporary media-planning ecosystem now features planning agencies dedicated solely to digital media, as well as to search and social media.

The establishment of Mediavest in 1999 followed a similar model of a specialist planning team becoming a standalone agency. In 1993, the media buying arm of full-

service agency D'Arcy Masius Benton & Bowles (DMB&B) separated to become TeleVest. Six years later, in 1999, DMB&B's media planning arm seceded from the full-service agency, combining with TeleVest to become Mediavest (*AdWeek* 2017). According to a description on the now defunct company's website, this consolidation enabled Mediavest to become 'one of the original unbundled, full-service media service companies' (Starcom Mediavest 2015). In 2000, the global conglomerate Publicis of which Mediavest was part merged Mediavest with another media-only agency, Starcom, creating Starcom Mediavest. Publicis has initiated several restructures, leading in 2016, to Starcom and Mediavest being separated out into two distinct agencies once more. Mediavest subsequently merged with another Publicis holding to become Mediavest Spark, which, in 2017, was renamed Spark Foundry. This kind of ongoing restructuring is typical of media agencies within larger conglomerates and is indicative of an ongoing industry move to maintain or increase profitability by refreshing the media agency offerings within a single conglomerate. It is also symptomatic of the changeable nature of the media planning industry and its surrounding milieu. In the next section, this chapter will focus in more detail on the continuous shifts that characterise the contemporary media agency landscape.

Media Planning in the first decades of the 21st Century: Contemporary industrial context

Media planning sits within a broader promotional industries web that is complex and constantly in motion. While mapping the full extent of this web would be all but impossible, an understanding of the industrial context in which media agencies operate is central to understanding the work of media planning itself. In addition to offering an

overview of the historical conditions leading to media planning's emergence, this chapter also therefore aims to offer an introduction to the contemporary context surrounding media planning as industry professionals practice it. The next sub-section will explore how contemporary media planning works in practice. This will be followed by a discussion of the intra-agency and inter-agency relationships that characterize the work of media planning. The following and final sub-section of this chapter will then tackle the complex question of where media agencies fit in the contemporary promotional industries ecosystem.

The contemporary media planning process

This section will address the question of what media planning is, how it works and what media agencies do. It is useful to approach these questions through the lens of a classic advertising text. In his 1984 book, *Advertising, the Uneasy Persuasion*, Michael Schudson offers a condensed outline of the basic steps behind any advertising campaign, excerpted as follows:

The advertiser and the agency must answer four questions to launch an advertising campaign:

1. What is the product (and what, if anything, makes it distinctive)?
2. Who is the audience or group of consumers most likely to be interested in the product?
3. Through which media can the target population be most efficiently reached?
4. Strategy – what kind of advertising appeal will be most effective? And execution - what art and copy will best do the job?

(Schudson 1984: 46)

From this four-step outline, it is possible to begin to see where the work of media planning agencies fits in a broader advertising campaign. Step one of Schudson's outline would be completed by the in-house brand or product team. Step four, meanwhile,

would be the purview of a creative agency (though media strategy, specifically, is a component of media planning). Steps two and three of Schudson's outline all fall under the mantle of media planning agency work.

The industry-held definition of media planning echoes Schudson's academic perspective. According to MediaCom's website, 'Media Planning is the art and science of ensuring that the adverts that our clients want to place appear in the right place and at the right time to ensure they reach the correct target group' (MediaCom 2015). This broad definition is true across all media planning agencies, who, as the MediaCom definition suggests, are tasked with connecting brand messaging to a brand's desired target audience. The duties of media agencies almost always include: translating clients' marketing and communications goals into media-viable targets, applying media industry knowledge to client brands, interpreting audience data in order to select media channels and negotiating and buying media space. MediaCom's definition of media planning is helpful as a first look but belies the complexity of the media planning process. The specifics of this process vary from agency to agency, and from account to account, but usually include the same four or five crucial steps. The components outlined below represent a typical amalgam of the media planning process.²⁰

Client Relationships and Briefing

A large component of media agency work consists of maintaining client relationships. This is usually done by the account team, who are chiefly responsible for

²⁰ These steps are culled largely from personal experience, as well as consensus points among interviewees regarding the process of planning a media campaign. Primers for approaching media planning abound online, including The Bridge Corp's useful 'Beginner's Guide to Media Planning' (Hong 2016). Available online: <http://www.thebridgecorp.com/media-planning/>.

client service. The ‘client’ will typically be a representative or representatives from a brand’s marketing department. Account managers are the main point of contact for clients and will be the first parties blamed should a client relationship sour. They are the go-betweens who mediate the relationship between a client and the various media agency personnel working on that client’s business. They are also the people who handle new project briefs. When a brief arrives from a client, the accounts team will scour the document, return to the client with questions, and eventually parse out appropriate tasks to the relevant teams within the agency. The information laid out by the client in the initial briefing will play a role in every aspect of the campaign to follow. Here, the client conveys to the media agency what they hope to accomplish in their new advertising campaign. The client will explain what product or brand they are advertising, provide relevant background, and outline the purpose of the specific campaign. Media strategy can vary significantly depending on the type of campaign. For example, a new product launch will require much heavier media weight than continuing support for an existing product.

The most important piece of information communicated in this stage of the planning process is the campaign budget. The client is also expected to provide a set of quantifiable success metrics that the media agency will help accomplish. These metrics are called Key Performance Indicators, or KPIs. Key Performance Indicators can include sales goals for a product, increased traffic to a store or website, share of voice²¹ or share of market, increased brand or product awareness, improved brand perception, or any other quantifiable goals laid out by the client. The requirement that KPIs be statistically

²¹ Share of voice refers to the percentage of advertising inventory claimed by a single brand or advertiser in a given advertising location, such as a single website or magazine.

and quantitatively measurable is important in understanding how advertising seeks to ‘prove’ its efficacy.²² Therefore, the media agency account team must be careful not to overpromise, as failure to meet agreed KPIs could deal a serious blow to a media agency’s proven expertise.

Situation Assessment

When a new advertising campaign is being planned, the existing marketplace will have significant impact on the eventual direction of the campaign. Thus, a brand or product’s overarching media strategy needs to be informed by the current business environment. The agency will do research to understand the industry climate, looking at factors like financial performance of companies similar to their client, research & development investments, industry consolidation, and industry sales trends. This information can come from a variety of different places, including subscription-based financial analysis services like Standard & Poor’s or Hoovers, or from free and public sources, like company financial reports, press releases, or CEO statements.

A critical part of the planning process is target definition. Here, the media planners, along with an analytics team, will develop a target or series of strategic targets to ensure that the client’s creative message reaches the right people. The target can be defined in different ways, depending on the campaign’s objectives. Targeting can be done demographically, behaviourally, psychographically, or based on life stage or

²² Despite the use of KPIs in media planning it is often difficult to definitively prove causation. The precise motivations behind consumer behaviour are difficult to pinpoint. Indeed, consumers may not be able to isolate the internal or external factors that drive particular purchases (Dwyer 2009, Jenkins 2011). Thus, when it comes to making sense of their work world, media planning professionals adopt strategies and mechanisms for conceptualizing their roles. These mechanisms will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, which focuses on media agency work life.

relationship to the brand. Successful media targeting means that the target will deliver on the campaign's KPIs. The target needs to be big enough to achieve the client's business goals, but strategic enough that it can be reached with specific media choices and within the available budget.

Another important step in the situation analysis is competitive research. Media agencies subscribe to competitive media tracking services, which allow planners to find out the media activity of their clients' competitors. Planners can use these tracking services to discover the following about a competitor's campaign: media weight, spend levels, campaign timing, media selection, unit mix (length of TV spots, size of print ads, and so on), and television daypart mix (for example: morning news, daytime talk, prime). By analyzing these factors in context, media planners can discover key insights about a competitor's media, like the campaign budget, intended target, seasonality, and so on. The planners then determine how competitor behaviour should impact their client's campaign. The client may wish to mimic competitor behaviour or avoid sharing airspace with a competitor. In some cases, media planners may recommend an aggressive strategy of overwhelming the competitor's messaging by implementing a heavy advertising presence in the same media.

Setting Objectives and Strategies

Objectives and strategies are the basic blueprint of a media campaign, from which all of the tactical decisions will stem. The objectives and strategies cascade from the client or brand's overall business objectives (e.g. 'maintain leadership position' or 'enter new business segment'). Client objectives are then siphoned down to marketing objectives, which specify how advertising and marketing will be used to achieve the broader business objectives (e.g. 'grow brand awareness' or 'target new consumer

segment’). The media objectives and strategies feed into the overall marketing objectives. The media objectives specify what the overall media plan is trying to achieve, while the media strategies pinpoint the ways in which the agency will select, plan and implement media to accomplish these objectives.

At this stage in the process, the media team will also determine their deliverables, goals that are based on the client’s KPIs, but translated into media terms. Like Key Performance Indicators, deliverables must also be measurable in quantitative terms. Common deliverables include percentage of target reached, click through rates online, print impressions, and gross rating points.

Tactical Plan Development

Steps one through three illustrate that most of the work of media planning happens before the planners even decide what kind of media to use. In the tactical development stages, the media planners will finally lay out the specific plan, including budget allocation, media selection, communication goals, and seasonality and scheduling. First, the team must determine how best to allocate the budget given by the client. Some types of media are more expensive than others (television versus online, for example), but each medium plays a particular role. Media planners have to balance reaching the target, achieving KPIs, staying within the budget, and adhering to the client brief. Media selection must always reflect the campaign’s objectives and strategies, and can be based on a variety of factors, including competitive data, client preferences, activation ideas, cross-media synergy, cost efficiency, target media usage, and so on.

Once the planners have determined which media to use and what budget level to allocate to each, they must determine what the communications goals will be for each medium. Usually, communications goals are based on reach and frequency; that is, what

percentage of the target sees or hears the message, and how many times. Some media like outdoor billboards deliver high reach but low frequency; others, like local television channels, deliver low reach but high frequency. Reach and frequency are measured and calculated differently for each medium. The tactical plan development is quite complicated, as it involves not only media selection, but also channel selection within that medium, timing, messaging weight, positioning, unit size/length, daypart²³ and program selection (for TV), and many more details.

Buying and Implementation

Once all of the campaign parameters have been determined, the planning team will look to the media agency's relevant buying teams. These specialised buying teams most closely resemble what would once have been the buying department of traditional, full-service agencies. The planning team will provide a series of specific guidelines to their television, print, radio, outdoor, and online buyers. Each medium is purchased in a different way and by a different team. Media buyers are trusted to negotiate the best possible deal with sales representatives from television networks, print publications, radio stations, out-of-home vendors, and online ad network groups. The planning team and the buying teams communicate throughout the negotiations to make sure goals are being met. The final media buys are then summarized and presented to the client for approval and for the client signatures needed to move forward with the campaign.

Monitoring and Optimization

Measurability has long been a buzzword of media planning practice, but in the

²³ Daypart refers, literally, to the part of the day in which a radio or television advertisement airs (e.g. Prime for TV or morning drive for radio).

contemporary media landscape it has become an essential campaign component. In 1940 John Caples pioneered the field of effectiveness research and subsequently published a field guide, *Tested Advertising Methods* (Caples 1940). Caples' studies focused on testing the effectiveness of print advertisements, the dominant ad media at the time. Since then, the advent of each new medium has yielded an additional fold in audience research. Philip Napoli notes, 'much has been made in recent years of the many ways in which the media environment is undergoing dramatic change' (Napoli 2010: 1). Specifically, Napoli points to 'the explosion of Web sites, the proliferation of television channels, and the emergence of new content-delivery platforms' as factors 'contributing to exponential increases in the fragmentation of the media environment' (ibid.). Certainly, as Napoli points out, recent changes in the media environment have proceeded at an accelerated pace, particularly when compared to the early days of media planning history. The advent of digital advertising is often represented as a key point of departure, where mass communication gives way to personalization and measurability on an unprecedented scale. Measuring advertising effectiveness in the digital media sphere has evolved since the late twentieth century from a labour intensive, tedious aspect of media campaigns to a largely automated, de facto element of virtually all campaigns. Where reporting and optimization once required huge commitments of time and manual oversight, these tasks are now typically accomplished via automatically generated reports and algorithms. More recently, social media developments and audience expectations have led to increased relationship-management responsibilities among specialist teams. Even the work required to manage this ostensibly one-to-one communication can now be partially alleviated by social media 'listening' tools.

The emphasis on measuring campaign effectiveness and efficiency remains a central and often intimidating task for media planning agencies. While programmatic advertising and other forms of automation have made some areas of media planning less labour intensive, attendant developments in measurement and reporting tools have increased the demands on media agencies to deliver more effective campaigns for less client investment.²⁴ Failure to use all available forms of measurement sufficiently or to meet a client's desired targets can and frequently does result in media agency clients moving their media business to another agency.

New Business and Pitching

In addition to the work that goes into planning campaigns for existing clients, media agencies are also always under pressure from the notoriously high levels of industry churn or client account turnover from one company to another. According to OMD International's Global CEO, Mainardo de Nardis, 'New business is fundamental to every marketing service organization. But for us, it's even more important to retain the clients we have, and to constantly expand the remit we have, the scope of work, and perhaps the number of markets in which we work together' (*AdWeek* 2014). As de Nardis notes, much of the work that takes place within the walls of an agency like OMD will not be directly related to a specific campaign. Rather, media agencies work to retain and grow existing client accounts and win new business by proving their expertise, especially as compared to other agencies. Contracts between agencies and clients run the gamut in tenure from ad hoc work, to five years or more. In some cases, a brand may

²⁴ The advantages and challenges presented by the rise of programmatic advertising arose frequently during interviews conducted with digital planners and are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

choose to stay with one partner agency for years or even decades, if the brand is happy with the level of work and would prefer not to disrupt the existing relationship and accordingly, the agency's familiarity with the particular brand.

It is common to find client accounts changing hands every few years, in search of a fresh perspective or more competitive rates. Client loyalty is an ongoing issue for media agencies, who can expect business reviews of client accounts at the end of a given contract cycle. In December 2017, Microsoft announced a review of the company's global media business (*AdAge* 2017).²⁵ This is an example of a prominent brand reviewing their choice of media agency partner. As part of the review process, Microsoft will ask their current partner agencies to re-pitch their media services and will invite pitches from selected external agencies. The company may then potentially enter into a new relationship with one or more different media agencies. When Timothy Malefyt and others write of the turbulent nature of the media planning industry, they often describe an atmosphere of fierce competition, apprehension, and a constant feeling of uncertainty. In this atmosphere, Malefyt explains, media and advertising should be viewed as a two-step process of selling. First, the agency must sell their expertise to the client. Second, the agency will work to sell to the consumer. In the same vein, William Mazzarella has argued that the client is in fact the primary consumer of the work done by advertising agencies. He further asserts that contemporary advertising agencies position themselves as 'culture-brokers,' experts with the rare ability to mobilize knowledge-claims about the particularities of consumer culture in tandem with proven success in the advertising industry (Mazzarella 2003).

²⁵ According to *AdAge*, Microsoft's total media spend for 2016 was estimated at \$1billion USD (*AdAge* 2017).

For better or worse, agencies are always engaged in a process of proving their expertise, in order to win and retain client business. In his article ‘Models, Metaphors and Client Relations,’ Malefyt recounts a client-agency strategy brainstorm process step by step, outlining the reiterative process of establishing affinity between the brand clients and their agency team, emphasizing the ‘performed nature’ of the relationship between client and agency (Malefyt 2003: 156). Agencies may also opt to assert their competitive standing by investing considerable resources in research. Research teams are scoped to work on client accounts, but also work to develop the agency’s reservoir of proprietary tools and findings and publish market-leading reports that are intended to pique the interest of current and potential clients alike.²⁶

In response to the perception of large-scale change in the media environment, Philip Napoli suggests that academic research ought also to focus on ‘the question of what these changes in the media environment mean for how media organizations think about their audiences’ (2010: 1). This project takes Napoli’s call to action in earnest. Thus, in the chapters that follow, this PhD will attempt to illustrate how media planning organizations understand their roles in response and relation to the changing media environment.

²⁶ These research and strategy teams, and the reports they produce, are prime sources for investigating the industry logic at work in media planning. This PhD will return to look more closely at agency-produced research reports in Chapter 4.

Mapping the Contemporary Media Agency Landscape

Media agency rankings, organization and agency personae

According to *AdAge*, as of 2017 the top ten media planning and buying agencies, based on 2016 worldwide revenue, were: OMD, Mindshare, Mediacom, Carat, Starcom, MEC, Zenith Optimedia, UM, Havas Media, Spark (formerly MediaVest), Initiative and PHD (*AdAge* 2017). The table below shows the 2016 estimated worldwide revenue for each, reported via *AdAge*'s 2016 'Agency Family Tree' (*AdAge* 2017).

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>2016 Revenue</u>
OMD	\$1.29B
Mindshare	\$1.30B
Mediacom	\$1.29B
Carat	\$1.26B
Starcom	\$928M
MEC	\$1.01B
Zenith Optimedia	\$874M
PHD	\$572M
UM	\$520M
Havas Media	Unavailable
Spark (MediaVest)	\$410M
Initiative	\$343M

Figure 1-1 Worldwide media agency revenue, 2016

Each of the above media agencies has a complex internal team structure unto itself. A description on ZenithOptimedia's website offers a useful starting point for

understanding the internal organization of media agencies. The description reads as follows:

ZenithOptimedia provides a full range of services in communications planning, media execution, strategic resources, evaluation and consulting, finance and accounting. These services cover all media areas – broadcast, print, outdoor and cinema, as well as a wide range of new media and diversified services areas including digital (including search and social), direct response and sponsorship. We have a number of specialist units which handle these newer and more diversified media services.

(ZenithOptimedia 2017)

This structure – of specialist units sitting under the umbrella of a larger media agency brand - is becoming increasingly common as media agencies seek to keep pace with their competition and the progressively more complex and diverse media sphere. In contemporary media planning practice, it is standard within a single agency to have account management, strategy, digital, search, social, research and content teams, as well as the media buying teams. There may be additional costs for clients should they wish to use the resources of teams beyond the basic account management, planning and buying teams that typically make up the baseline of a client-media agency relationship. Although these teams operate with some degree of autonomy, they are all part of a larger agency structure that is united under a particular agency ethos.

Most if not all of the top agencies operating on a global scale today have taglines and trademarked philosophies, intended to differentiate them from the competition. Universal McCann (UM) calls its special breed of planning, ‘Curiosity Works,’ while the teams at MediaCom use ‘Method Planning,’ and Havas Media uses a method dubbed ‘Meaningful Connections.’ Zenith Optimedia calls itself ‘the ROI agency,’ and Carat espouses a mission statement to ‘Redefine Media.’ Some of these agency personae can be linked to the agency’s origin story. Carat, for example, continues to trade on the fact

that it was the first standalone media agency, as well as the first agency to have an in-house digital planning department. ‘Redefine Media’ reminds clients of Carat’s early outlier status. Each of these agencies operates on a broad international scale, with thousands of employees in offices across the key regions of EMEA,²⁷ North America, Latin America, Asia Pacific, and other markets. Typically, the global headquarters for an agency of this scale will be in New York or London.²⁸ While several of the agencies listed above, including Carat and Havas, were first established in France, as with most contemporary transnational industries the international operating language for media is English.

Inter-agency organization: Conglomeration and the shifting nature of the inter-agency web

In many cases, media planning agencies are part of larger advertising or communications conglomerates. An explanatory note on the homepage of industry rankings site Adbrands.net states:

Massive consolidation within the industry has led to a huge number of mergers and acquisitions, and the creation at the top end of the market of a small group of major holding companies, each of whom owns or controls a large number of separate agencies. There are still independent owner-operated agencies out there, but in far fewer numbers than ever before, and most are small by comparison with the group-owned brands.

(Adbrands.net 2015)

Media agencies exist to a large extent as part of larger groups, operating within a complex. *AdAge*’s ‘Agency Family Trees 2017’ referenced above attempts to map the ‘key networks, agencies and holdings for the world’s five biggest agency companies’ on a single centrefold (*AdAge* 2017). According to *AdAge*, the largest worldwide marketing

²⁷ EMEA is a commonly used abbreviation that refers to Europe, Middle East and Africa.

²⁸ As discussed in the Introduction, the industrial locus of London will be the focus of the interview-based fieldwork that informs some of the chapters to follow.

conglomerates based on 2016 revenues were: WPP, Omnicom Group, Publicis Groupe, Interpublic Group of Companies, and Dentsu Inc. For three of these top five marketing conglomerates, the highest contribution of revenue share comes from media agency groups. For WPP, this is GroupM, the media agency group that includes Mindshare, Mediacom and MEC. For Omnicom Group, this is the Omnicom Media Group, which includes the media agencies OMD and PHD. Finally, for Dentsu Inc., it is the media agency network Dentsu Aegis Network, of which Carat is part. The image on the following page is the central part of the *AdAge* triptych. It features a bar chart displaying the total revenue of these top five conglomerates as well as, in small print underneath, the revenue contributions of the different agency groups or individual agencies that comprise each conglomerate.

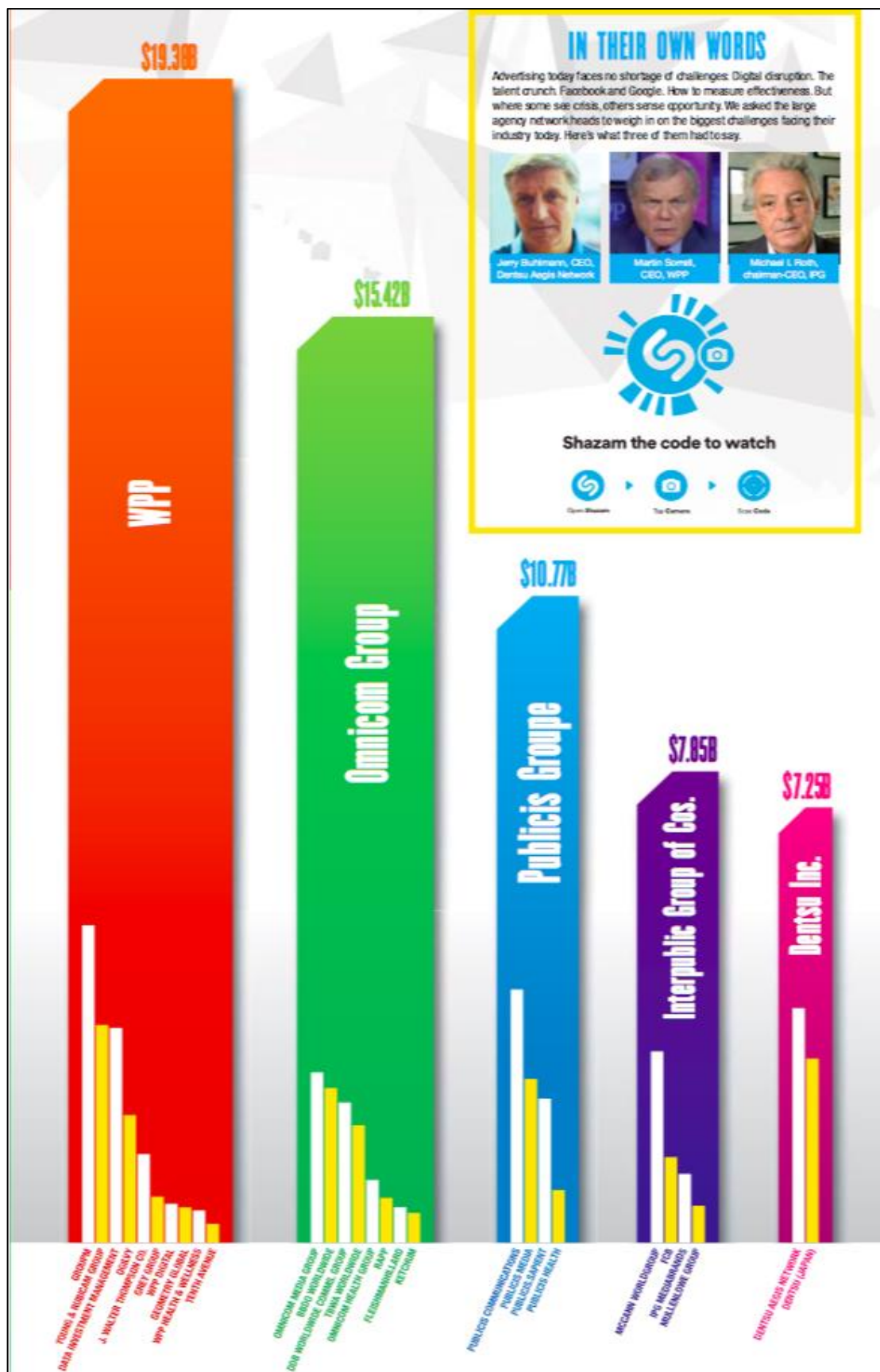


Figure 1-2 Total estimated 2016 revenue for the global top five communications conglomerates

This chart reveals that many of the conglomerates involved in the early stages of media planning agencies' emergence are still in existence. Interpublic Group discussed earlier as the first example, in 1960, of advertising companies conglomerating under a single heading, persists today and boasts the combined forces of media agencies UM Worldwide (UMWW), Initiative and Reprise Media, as well as several smaller specialist groups like Cadreon, which specializes in search engine marketing, and Spring Creek, a social media planning agency (IPG Mediabrands 2017). By housing multiple agencies under a single roof, IPG is able to increase profit margins and pitch potential without breaking the terms of any non-compete or conflict of interest agreements. It is uncommon today to find a standalone agency that is not part of or linked to a larger media conglomerate. More specialized, 'boutique' agencies, like Spring Creek, for example, often start out small, trading on their independent status. More often than not these smaller agencies find themselves absorbed, eventually, into a media conglomerate as a result of highly profitable mergers.

Similarly, many of the original full-service advertising agencies mentioned above are still in existence today as creative agencies. For example, BBDO, DDB, and TBWA continue to persist, but are all now exclusively creative agencies, without media planning departments. These are all still part of the Omnicom Group conglomerate. Meanwhile, OMD – the media agency formed from the unification of the media planning arms of the three – was voted 2014 Global Media Agency of the year by industry publication *AdWeek* (*AdWeek* 2015). Though OMD clients frequently contract their creative business to one of the affiliated creative agencies within the Omnicom Group umbrella, they are under no obligation to do so.

Media agency Carat was mentioned above as being subsumed within the Aegis group, the first conglomerate group to divest itself entirely of the full-service advertising agency model. As of 2012, the Aegis group merged with Dentsu to become the Dentsu Aegis Group. In addition to Carat, Dentsu Aegis also includes the media agencies Dentsu Media and Vizeum, as well as specialized agencies, including digital agency iProspect and specialist outdoor agency Posterscope (Dentsu Aegis 2017). Clients who use one Dentsu Aegis agency to manage part of their media business are, as before, under no obligation to use only Dentsu Aegis agencies. Indeed, a single client brand may even have multiple media agency partners to handle different parts of its media planning operations, or different media agencies in different markets. A good example of this is Adidas. As of 2017, according to an article published by *Campaign* magazine online, ‘Dentsu Aegis Network’s Carat holds the account in many markets, including the United States and UK. Publicis Media’s Starcom handles Adidas’ media-buying in the Middle East’ (Spanier 2017).²⁹ In certain smaller markets, the remainder of the Adidas’ media business is handled separately by other media agencies.

In November 2017, Adidas announced a review of its Global media buying business (Spanier 2017), signaling the potential loss for Carat of Adidas as a client. Business reviews of this kind are typical of the landscape in which media agencies operate. From a methodological standpoint, undertaking contemporary media industries research necessitates a level of awareness of the fact that the media landscape is apt to rapidly shift. For media agencies, change is a constant. In a July 2017 editorial

²⁹ Adidas contracts its creative advertising to several smaller creative agencies, including Iris and 72andSunny, and its social media is handled by a social media only agency called We are Social (*Campaign* 2017).

published in *Campaign* magazine online, Carat global president Will Swayne was quoted saying, ‘The agency model has been in a constant state of evolution but now needs to be evolving faster than ever before’ (Swayne 2017).

It is significant to this thesis to note the transformations that have occurred in the organizational structure of media planning and media agencies, even from the start of this PhD. Agency relationships that inhabited a certain operational model in 2014, when this PhD project commenced, have undergone transformations to completely new and in some cases emergent models. One example of this kind of transformation is Havas Group. Havas began its life as a French news agency, but by 1968 had moved into the advertising arena (Havas 2015). As an advertising agency, Havas initially followed the traditional, full-service agency model and was responsible for the creation of advertisements as well as the planning and buying of media space within which to place these ads. As the need for specialization expanded, Havas split into different branches that were separately responsible for creative and media. Within these distinct branches were other, increasingly specialized sub-agencies, such as for example Havas Sports and Entertainment, specializing in sponsorships. In 2017, the Havas Group sought to reintroduce a sense of integration across these branches and has established Havas Villages. These are, as the name would suggest, marketing micro-ecosystems that house all of Havas’ separate yet connected agencies. The Havas Group website explains the rationale behind this restructure as follows:

This model is based on the ‘Together’ strategy, which transcends the traditional separation between ‘creative’ and ‘media’ in order to guarantee an agile, fluid and fully integrated service to our clients. The main aim of this strategy is simple: to best serve our clients’ needs, Havas Group brought together all communication disciplines – creative, media, digital, activation, events, public relations – under one roof to create a Havas Village.

(Havas Group 2017)

Havas Group is an example of the ongoing negotiations of relationships within the promotional industries ecosystem, engendered by a shifting industry landscape. In the case of Havas Group, increased specialization and fragmentation reached a critical mass that necessitated restructure. Despite being ‘fully integrated,’ the Havas Villages are nevertheless divided into three units: creative, media, and healthcare and wellness. This is indicative, once again, of the difficulties inherent both in separating and uniting various agency types. The Havas Group Website’s ‘about us’ section includes the following statement: ‘the Havas Group is the most integrated company in its sector. We operate with three business units (creative, media, and healthcare and wellness) within our Havas Villages all over the world where teams share the same premises ensuring agility and a seamless experience for clients’ (Havas Group 2017). Close reading of this statement reveals the paradox of Havas Group being ‘the most integrated company in its sector’ while operating three separate business units. This kind of prevaricating language is repeated elsewhere and relays Havas Group’s attempts to convey being at once seamlessly integrated and highly specialized. The creation of Havas Villages represents an attempt to negotiate the complex and often blurred boundaries between different types of agencies within the sphere of the promotional industries. The Havas Group restructure, meanwhile, illustrates the shifting models of conglomeration in which media planning operates. This PhD will return to discuss Havas Group in more detail in Chapter 4, in which research reports published by Havas Group and utilized by Havas Media will be employed to illustrate the circulation and mobilization of expertise by media agencies.

Conclusions

Providing a succinct introduction to the complex contemporary industrial landscape in which media planning exists and operates is a challenging task. As described throughout this chapter, media planning is inextricably intertwined with advertising. It is increasingly true that the dividing lines between advertising agencies and media agencies are becoming blurred. Understanding the precise position occupied by media agencies in the contemporary moment is a difficult feat. It is important to foreground a study of media planning with this understanding of the difficulty of separating media agencies out as an entirely distinct field of study. This chapter has therefore aimed to provide sufficient context for beginning a study that takes media planning and media agencies as its focus.

In the contemporary time period, the rapid multiplication of media choices that fostered the development of media planning agencies is once again forcing the industry to adapt, and to reconsider its own categorizations. Of the evolving relationship between media and promotion, Christina Spurgeon asserts that recent years have seen a rapid reorganization of the relationships that previously characterized media production and commercial communication (Spurgeon 2008). The shifting landscape of the culture industries in the face of rapid media developments has yielded uncertainty in promotional practice, and increased demand for media planning agencies to map the complex landscape.

Academic work on media industrial shifts is echoed by industry perspectives. Writing in 2012, Larry Allen noted the changes taking place in media planning at that time, writing, ‘we are now in the midst of another evolution in media planning and

buying' (Allen 2012). Allen's op ed piece refers specifically to the increased 'complication and fragmentation' being introduced into the service model by advancements in media planning technology (ibid.). Allen further notes that media agency employees are now required 'to have new skills focused on data analysis, technology and optimization' (ibid.). An August 2017 editorial written by Russell Place, Managing Director of UM London suggests that the Allen's observed shifts in the media planning ecosystem continued apace. 'While the fundamentals of what we do haven't really changed,' Place writes, 'what makes the "how" more important is the pace of change and complexity that now exists' (Place 2017). These two elements, the pace of change and the complexity of the media landscape, are key features of contemporary media planning.

As the above excerpts show, academic and industry perspectives are in alignment regarding the evolving nature of the contemporary media landscape. The persistence of change in the media ecosystem challenges established categories within the promotional and media industries and necessitates new types of expertise. The significance for media planning of this continuing complexity in the media environment is the coincident need for media planning professionals to be able to thrive in uncertain conditions. The chapters that follow will focus on the work of media planning and the work lives of media planners, attempting to understand how media planning manages its role in relation to a media landscape continually in flux. This project takes up Chris Hackley's suggestion that periods of change in media industries are often 'mythologized' (2010: 4); media planning as an industry sector has been characterized since its inception by its association to media industrial change. Thus, rather than focusing on specific changes in industry conditions, this project instead seeks to understand the ways in which media agencies and media planning professionals understand and manage the perception of

change. This PhD focuses on contemporary media agencies in order to understand how media planners cope with the perpetual environmental shifts that seem to categorize the conditions of their labour. It seeks to understand how the work of media planning is understood by the people who do this work, and how media planning is represented in the broader sphere of the promotional industries. The next chapter will therefore outline the theoretical framework and methodological underpinnings of this project, augmenting the industrial context above with academic perspectives useful for approaching the study of media planning.

CHAPTER 2. FRAMEWORKS FOR UNDERSTANDING MEDIA PLANNING PRACTICE

Chapter 1 traced the emergence of media planning as a professional sector, from its basis as an ancillary component of advertising practice, to its place within the contemporary promotional industries at the nexus of brands, consumers and media owners. The movement of media planning from being a component part of advertising practice into something much bigger and considerably more complex is echoed by the trajectory of the literature most relevant to the study of media planning and media agencies. In surveying the wide body of relevant literature, a track emerges in which established debates about advertising and advertising practice have given rise to studies of promotional culture and, with it, the function of promotional intermediaries. The study of promotional culture and, emergently, promotional intermediaries offers a foundation for a more nuanced investigation of the role of media planning as something both part of and separate to advertising. Studying the role and work of media planning, in turn, has much to offer in terms of better understanding advertising, the promotional industries and promotional intermediaries.

From advertising to promotion

In considering theoretical approaches for understanding media planning as a discipline and a field of practice it makes sense to begin with studies of advertising, as media planning's genesis was as a component part of advertising practice. Media planning has since evolved into an expansive entity, with connections to different sectors of the promotional industries. This section will therefore trace a path in the movement of

scholarship from advertising to promotion. The significance of the shifting language used to delimit these fields of study echoes media planning's move from a component part of advertising into a distinctive sector within the promotional industries.

Within this trajectory of scholarship, the existing body of work on advertising is profuse and represents work produced over a sizable period. The abundance of work in and on advertising as an area of study makes it impossible to address the entire history of advertising studies research herein. Rather than attempt to tackle the full breadth of this extensive body of work, this chapter will instead locate three approaches within which work on advertising studies tends to fall, providing key examples of each. The first of these approaches is textual, referring to studies of advertising that look at advertisements themselves. The second approach is cultural in nature, referring to research that takes advertising or advertising agencies as its subject but is grounded in cultural studies and often utilizes ethnographic methods. The third approach taken by researchers studying advertising is industrial, referring to work that focuses on industrial practice, often written by or incorporating perspectives from industry professionals. While there are any number of categories that could be used to help catalogue the vast body of work on advertising, these three approaches are helpful as a way of navigating the field of advertising studies.

The industrial approach mentioned above applies to some of the earliest work in the field of advertising studies. Much of this early work derived from practitioners of advertising, such as Claude Hopkins' *My Life in Advertising* and *Scientific Advertising* (1966), Eugene Schwartz' *Breakthrough Advertising* (1966), or David Ogilvy's *Ogilvy on Advertising* (1983). These authors were part of a class of early pioneers of advertising who turned their success in the industry into authorial success, writing about how to

understand and practice advertising. Other canonic works in the field of advertising studies offered a more critical view on advertising as a practice and asked readers to consider the role of advertising in constructing or otherwise impacting consumer society. Published in 1984, Michael Schudson's *Advertising, The Uneasy Persuasion* looks at the processes at work within advertising agencies, while also questioning advertising's societal impact in the United States. Although published thirty years before the commencement of this research project, Schudson's work remains relevant in its approach; early work on advertising practice tended to come from authors like Hopkins and Ogilvy, individuals whose primary viewpoint was personal experience in the industry. Early scholarly work on advertising, meanwhile, adopted a textual approach, focusing primarily on analysis of the physical products of the industry, that is, the advertisements themselves (Goffman 1979, Williamson 1978, Leiss, Kline and Botterill 2005, Jhally 2009). These analyses of advertisements as texts fall under the textual approach to the study of advertising. Work that takes this kind of textual approach to advertising tends to focus on the products of advertising rather than the work of advertising practice. The work of scholars like Goffman and Williamson, mentioned above, fits into the textual approach of advertising studies. This type of work on advertising seeks to understand the interactions of advertising and society by looking primarily at the ads themselves. While a textual approach to advertising has its role, this work fails to account for the means by which advertisements are produced and distributed. Thus, per Chris Hackley, 'the analysis they offer is not really about the cultural, economic and managerial phenomenon of advertising, but is in fact about the particular advertisements they analyse' (Hackley 2018). Writing in 2004, Ann Cronin noted two strands in scholarly work that takes advertising as its central focus,

characterized by two key research questions. According to Cronin, the first of these research questions asks, ‘how does advertising work?’ while the second asks, ‘what is the work of advertising?’ (Cronin 2004: 113). These delimited research questions are helpful for noting the distinction between research about *advertising* versus research about *advertising practice*. This chapter concerns itself primarily with the latter of these two, that is, work on advertising practice. This body of work is notable in its focus on the industrial and organizational workings of advertising. This is the work that asks, per Cronin, ‘what is the work of advertising?’ and seeks to understand the mechanisms of advertising as a field of practice. This work pushes against early trends to study advertisements as products, looking instead at the individuals and institutions responsible for producing ads. Falling into this second strand is work by writers like Schudson, whose industrial approach highlighted the working practices of advertising as an institution.

Later work built on Schudson’s inclination to study practices rather than products, using social science methods to investigate the work of advertising. Much of this work can be seen as falling into the cultural approach to advertising studies. Research that takes a cultural approach to the study of advertising stands apart from earlier work in its use of ethnographic methods, including participant-observation and interviews, and its drive to understand the processes and practices that characterize the work of advertising in different cultural contexts. Brian Moeran's *A Japanese Advertising Agency: An Anthropology of Media and Markets* (1996) explores the structure and ideology of advertising in Japan. After spending a year working in and studying an advertising agency in Tokyo, Moeran was able to recount the intricacy of the social processes within the agency, as well as the complex relations that exist between

agencies and clients. This work gives a thorough yet nuanced account of one agency's complex structuring and atomized hierarchy, and the conflicts these can yield. He describes, 'the external relations between an agency and its client, and between an agency and the media organizations which have an interest in its clients' advertising on the one hand, and the internal relations between different divisions within an agency (account services, marketing, creative, media buying, and so on),' all of which, he writes, 'are crucial to an understanding of the meaning of advertising' (1998: 27). Moeran's work shows the saliency of studying advertising from an anthropological point of view and employing ethnography as a method for understanding the levels of relationship and potential conflicts that characterize advertising agency work. This kind of ethnographically based cultural approach to studying advertising is highly relevant to this PhD; while this thesis focuses specifically on media planning and media agencies, it employs a similar methodological approach to that undertaken by Moeran.

Across Moeran's and other ethnographic work on the lives of advertising agencies, a dominant theme has emerged about the complicated nature of the client-agency relationship. Some authors have suggested that the work of advertising agencies is directed toward clients, rather than consumers. A key exemplar of this is the work of anthropologist and former BBDO Worldwide employee Timothy Malefyt, who notes that employees in advertising agencies spend much of their time engaged in a process of courting clients, in order to win and retain client business. 'Competition among agencies over client accounts is fierce,' he writes, 'precisely at a time when client loyalty is at an all time low' (Malefyt 2003: 140). In the same vein, William Mazzarella (2003), draws on participant-observation in a Bombay advertising agency to argue that clients are in fact the primary consumers of the work done by advertising agencies. Mazzarella

explains how his informants, executives in the Bombay ad world, positioned themselves as key mediators in the newly consumer-driven globalized setting of India in the 1990s. According to Mazzarella, Indian advertising executives legitimized their industry and their roles within by presenting themselves to their international clients as culture brokers – the only people able to mobilize knowledge-claims about the particularities of Indian culture in tandem with proven success in the advertising industry (2003). These perspectives on advertising are amongst a set of work that derives from social science disciplines and treats the physical space of advertising agencies as a site of ethnographic investigation.

Other work in advertising studies looks at advertising as an institution, situating the study thereof within political, cultural or economic contexts. Approaching advertising from a ‘cultural economy’ perspective, Liz McFall echoes suggestions that the study of advertising is separate from the study of advertisements. McFall calls for this ‘preoccupation with texts’ to be tempered with work into the historical and cultural context that has seen the rise of advertising as an institution (2003: 3). Andrew McStay also speaks of ‘dissatisfaction with the semiotic, representational and ideological enterprise to account for advertising,’ further stating that ‘representational or textual approaches are over-concerned with images and do not pay enough attention to place, time and the ‘liveness,’ ‘nowness’ or ‘vitality’ that accompanies mediation’ (2003: 4). These authors set out to study advertising as an institution, rather than advertisements as products. This kind of institutional-level analysis of advertising is helpful in contextualizing advertising within a broader landscape, and also offers some insight into how the work of advertising takes place, although notably not via ethnographic methods.

Liz McFall advocates for study into the institutional, organizational and technical arrangements of advertising. Her *Advertising: A Cultural Economy* offers an outline of advertising as a bounded industry, looking at the milieu surrounding the advertising industry and taking account of the history and forces that have shaped the ways in which advertising works (2004). In this way, McFall pays close attention to the macro-level institutional and environmental factors at work from within the advertising industry, as well as without. As one component of this approach, Ann Cronin has investigated the way advertising consumer research is conducted and utilized. In an article published in the *Journal of Consumer Culture* titled 'Currencies of Commercial Exchange,' Cronin questions the way in which expertise around consumer insights is sold by advertising agencies to their clients. She writes 'this circulation of knowledge-claims between advertising practitioners, their clients, and academics operates in a complex and ambiguous manner; ultimately, it troubles those accounts which identify advertising research's principal role as that of a disciplinary force governing consumers through surveillance and codification' (2004: 345). Cronin isolates the commodification of insight and expertise on the part of advertising agencies and touches on the significance of research to the success of advertising agencies. This operationalizing of insight is equally if not more prevalent in media planning and media agencies. Chapter 4 will use research reports produced by media planning agencies to show how such agencies choose to present their work in a semi-public way and, in so doing, seek to showcase their expertise to potential clients.

Another branch of recent work in advertising studies adopts a specific focus on digital advertising and the way new media has impacted the advertising industry.

Christina Spurgeon's *Advertising and New Media* (2008) and Andrew McStay's *Digital*

Advertising (2010) concentrate on the specificities of online advertising. Both authors address recent developments like user-generated content and increased measurability as being two important aspects of online advertising. McStay writes that digital advertising has heralded 'deeper than hitherto seen practices of data mining, personalization and a variety of platforms for users to express themselves on' (2010, 218). In addition to these and other works on advertising and digital media (Barry 2008, Arens 2002, Hill and Dhanda 2002, Hackley and Tiwaskul 2010), the second edition of Hackley's *Advertising and Promotion* includes a substantial additional section intended to account for the changes to advertising practice wrought by developments in the digital sphere. As discussed in Chapter 1, the addition in the 1990s of the Internet as a further platform for hosting advertising represented a step-change for the industry, with one of the outcomes being the increased importance and centrality of media planning. Advertising in digital spaces is an equally significant addition to advertising studies, as the field has expanded accordingly to accommodate this new set of work practices.

There are two common notable absences in much of the work of authors like McFall, McStay, and others who research and write about advertising. The first of these exclusions is an account of how the work of advertising is done. Work by authors like Chris Hackley helps to bridge this gap. Centreing on advertising practice as a field of study, Hackley's work offers a practical sense of how advertising works. With an orienting goal to offer academics and practitioners alike a thorough understanding of how the process of doing advertising works, Hackley's *Advertising and Promotion: An Integrated Marketing Communications Approach* is equal parts practical reference and theoretical guide. Advertising agencies are often perceived to be 'slightly mysterious places,' Hackley writes, places whose products are highly evident, but whose working

practices and internal politics are not well understood (2010: 105). To combat this lack of understanding, Hackley provides a thorough depiction of the different teams in a typical advertising agency, outlining the interests and responsibilities of each. He also notes that different teams within a single agency occupy a particular ‘subcultural space’ (2010: 119) and gives insight into the types of conflicts that can occur between the teams, when, for example, a business-focused account director comes up against a ‘creative’³⁰.

The second common absence in much work on advertising is specific focus on media planning, and an overlooking of media agencies as being separate entities with their own set of practices. This exclusion is understandable; work in the field of advertising studies necessarily treats advertising as a standalone discipline and adopts a wholistic approach to thinking about and investigating advertising, therefore understanding media planning as a component of advertising, rather than as a separate industry sector. Accordingly, across much of the body of work in advertising studies, there is only nominal mention of media planning as a distinct entity, or of media agencies as places of work. In the updated edition of Hackley’s *Advertising and Promotion*, a chapter entitled ‘Promotional Media in the Digital Age’ contains a section on media planning and media strategy, in which he describes the ‘media independents, agencies that specialize in media planning, scheduling, and buying’ (2010: 140). Although brief, this section hints at the need for a deeper look into media planning and media agencies, concluding with the statement ‘in some cases, the media tail is even

³⁰ The word ‘creative’ is employed as a noun to refer to certain types of roles. The use of creative in this sense will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 5, which focuses on contested and changing notions of creativity.

beginning to wag the advertising dog' (2010: 141). McFall, meanwhile, recognizes media planning as a step in the process of advertising, describing it as follows: 'media planning involves intricate decisions about reading practices and patterns of mental association between the nature of 'matter', competing advertisements and the advertisement place' (2004: 145). This description begs more questions than it answers, about how precisely media planners make these decisions, choosing amongst 'competing advertisements and the advertisement place.' This glimpse into media planning from McFall, along with Hackley's proclamation about 'the media tale . . . beginning to wag the advertising dog', recommends the need for research that places media planning squarely at the centre of investigation.

Hackley's work, in particular, alludes to the move in scholarship from studies of advertising to studies of promotion, bridging the gap between the two. Indeed, even in the choice of title for his *Advertising and Promotion* there is the suggestion that advertising studies finds a companion in the more expansive field of scholarship surrounding promotional culture and promotional industries. Following on from the emergence of promotional culture as an orienting concept (Wernick 1991), various authors have contributed to a body of work that goes beyond the study of advertising, looking instead at the broader category of the promotional industries (Cronin 2010, Hackley and Hackley 2013, Powell 2013, Davis 2013).

Aeron Davis' *Promotional Cultures* asks, 'What is the significance of the rise of promotional culture in contemporary society?' (2006: 149). In answering this question, Davis looks to the constituent components of promotional culture, which, he suggests, are comprised of promotional intermediaries and organizations. According to Davis, 'the promotional professions have become involved, to a greater or lesser extent, in the

creation of products, values, ideas, political and market trends, and even markets and democratic processes themselves' (2006: 150). Davis' investigation of the promotional professions adds industrial parameters to Wernick's more semiotic notion of promotional culture; Davis lists the promotional industries as public relations, advertising, marketing and branding. Summarizing the qualities that define promotional industry occupations, Davis writes: 'each is concerned to identify a saleable product (a commodity, message, idea, or individual), a potential audience (citizen, consumer, social group, elite decision maker), a communications medium (formal, informal, mass, digital), and a message (Davis 2013: 2). In offering this set of defined yet expansive parameters, Davis makes room for the study of media planning in a way that is not possible from an advertising studies perspective.

Davis' work is part of the move in scholarship away from advertising and toward the language of promotion. Helen Powell and Ann Cronin continue this shift in language, with their respective discussions of promotional culture and the promotional imperative. Cronin's discussion of the circulation of consumer research as knowledge claims, outlined above, is part of what she dubs the promotional imperative of advertising. This sense of ad agencies being doubly bound by the promotional imperative echoes Davis' sentiment that 'we have found ourselves living in a time of "promotional excess"' (Davis 2013a). Helen Powell, meanwhile, seeks to uncover how the promotional industries are impacted by and respond to the realities of media convergence. In each of the collected chapters of Powell's *Promotional Culture and Convergence*, different types of mass media are discussed in relation to their use within promotion, and their relevance and impact upon promotional culture. The case studies in this collection come together to highlight the interconnectedness of media and

promotion, within the overarching sphere of convergence culture. The promotional industries, delimited as advertising, marketing, branding and PR, are shown to be indissoluble from the media industries. This is a helpful insight in approaching the study of media planning, which straddles the line between the promotional and media industries. In the interviews I conducted with media planners, my informants repeatedly referred to their work in ‘media,’ rather than their work in ‘advertising.’ Media planning sits within advertising, but also simultaneously alongside it, with a broader focus on the use of media for the means of promotion.

A vital point in the field of promotional industries research is the exploration of the blurred boundaries amongst different industry sectors, and the overlap and interdependence of media and promotion. This is explored to some extent in early advertising studies work, such as in Moeran’s discussion of the complexity of client-agency-media owner relationships (1998). Authors like Davis and Powell, however, make the case for a broader field of study, with promotion at its core. Despite the expansion of the field of practice in the scholastic move from advertising to promotion, work on promotional culture and the promotional industries continues to group media planning in with discussions of advertising.³¹ This leads, at times, to the elision of media agencies as separate entities and to a collapsing of the practices of media planning. For example, Hackley and Hackley discuss the impact of media fragmentation as follows:

Media audiences worldwide have fragmented, while the number of media vehicles has multiplied. It has become essential for brand marketing communication campaigns to use several media channels simply to reach an aggregate number of target consumers that makes the business model viable because a single above-the-line medium can no longer guarantee the necessary number of ‘eyeballs’.

³¹ It can be argued that media planning is doubly marginalized in the scholarship – as a side note in advertising studies, yet grouped with advertising by promotional studies.

(Hackley and Hackley 2013: 78)

The authors go on to provide several examples of the challenges of media fragmentation to effective promotional communication and the development of “media-neutral” planning’ as amongst the potential solutions (2013: 79). Media planning, as a field of practice, goes almost entirely unmentioned, despite the fact that addressing the issue of reaching audiences in a fragmented media landscape is the primary task of media agencies.

Within Davis’ model of the promotional industries, advertising is collapsed into a single fixed entity, alongside PR, branding and marketing. This allows little room to isolate and investigate the lesser-known aspects of advertising, including media planning. It is perhaps the case that the breadth of the promotional industries category makes it difficult, if not impossible, to give adequate attention to any one particular industry sector. Fitting media planning into the promotional industries model is further complicated by media planning’s resistance to easy categorization; as a field of practice, it has simultaneous ties to advertising, branding, and marketing. Therefore, while collections such as Powell’s help to situate media planning within the broader context of promotion, they simultaneously forgo the opportunity to isolate media planning as a bounded sector, whose impact is felt across the media and promotional industries. In talking about media planning as it sits within the field of promotion culture, Powell, Cronin, and others largely come from the perspective of starting with advertising and opening the field out to include other forms of promotion. To understand the work of media planning, it is helpful to have an understanding of the promotional industries milieu, before placing media planning, rather than advertising, at the centre of study.

While work like Davis' encompasses an array of industry sectors under the umbrella of promotion, recent work uses a promotional industries lens to investigate particular aspects of the promotional industries. In their *Promotional Screen Industries* (2015), Paul Grainge and Catherine Johnson look at the complex intersections of agencies and sectors involved in the production of promotional screen work. They class this promotional screen work as a 'hybrid sector,' part media production, part promotion. This hybrid sector 'can be seen to encompass the work and output of film and television marketing departments, broadcast promotion specialists, movie trailer houses, 'content' divisions within advertising and media agencies, and digital media firms selling expertise in visual effects and user-experience design' (2015: 3). Grainge and Johnson highlight the overlap amongst ostensibly separate sectors of media and promotion, revealing a field of practice unto itself. Within the field of promotional screen work, Grainge and Johnson are interested to highlight the hidden forms of promotional labour that go into producing and distributing promotional material for film and television content.

As part of their investigation into hidden forms of labour, Grainge and Johnson note the importance of the work of promotional intermediaries to the promotional screen industries. The concept of promotional intermediaries builds upon the idea of cultural intermediaries first posited by Bourdieu, in which he notes a class of occupations whose products are tastes and ideas, rather than goods and services. Bourdieu's discussion of cultural intermediaries encompasses 'occupations involving presentation and representation (sales, marketing, advertising, public relations, fashion, decoration and so forth) and in all the institutions providing symbolic goods and services (1984: 359). Jennifer Smith Maguire and Julian Matthew's *Cultural*

Intermediaries Reader (2014) brings together work that addresses cultural intermediaries from different disciplinary approaches. The collection features case studies drawn from across areas of the promotional and creative industries, and extending even to fitness, retail, and food and drink. Mapping the expansive notion of cultural intermediaries onto different sectors in the cultural economy, the case studies in Maguire and Matthew's collection highlight the ways in which intermediaries sell expertise.

In this collection, Sean Nixon builds on Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1984) to suggest how Bourdieu's updated work on 'new cultural intermediaries' helps shed light on advertising practice. By 'drawing attention to the bridging role that [advertisers] play in linking production with consumption,' Nixon explains, Bourdieu's conception of cultural intermediaries helps to unveil the role of advertising as a forger of connections, between brands and consumers, and between consumers and goods (2014: 36). Advertising practitioners have been widely theorised as cultural intermediaries (Cronin 2004, Kobayashi 2012, Soar 2002, Negus 2002). Nixon, however, suggests that the conception of advertising as cultural intermediary offers only a partial insight and is best paired with an understanding of advertising as, per Michael Callon (1998), a 'market force' (Nixon 2014). This insight is part of a strand of scholarship that suggests the category of cultural intermediary is too broad, rendering it insufficient as a theoretical starting point for studying specific industry sectors. For his part, David Hesmondhalgh argues that much of the work that employs the idea of cultural intermediaries as a lens is in fact based on a misreading of Bourdieu. Hesmondhalgh suggests a simplified definition, in which 'cultural intermediaries, we must assume, are thus named because they 'mediate' between producers and consumers' (2006: 226). Using this definition, the notion of

intermediaries can thus be variously applied to different sectors of the cultural industries.

Returning to the idea of promotional intermediaries, these can best be understood as the sectors of work typically involved in management, distribution, and the other ‘in-between’, often unseen processes by which promotional material is produced. In popular accounts of the creative industry power struggle between creativity and commerce, intermediaries are sometimes depicted as tempering forces whose role is to mediate the vast gulf separating creative and commercial interests (Hesmondhalgh 2007, Davis 2013). David Hesmondhalgh, for example, states that ‘symbol creators are usually overseen from a certain distance by ‘creative managers’ (Ryan 1992), such as editors or television producers, who act as intermediaries between the creators and the commercial imperatives of the company’ (2013: 32). This kind of description dismisses the work of intermediaries, treating them instead as a necessary evil. Grainge and Johnson address the oversimplification of the creativity versus commerce divide, and the flawed depiction of intermediaries as compromise brokers between the two. They advocate ‘stepping beyond critical dualisms that set creativity against marketing as the default of promotional analysis’ (2015: 4). Instead, they ‘suggest that the products, practices and socio-professional world of promotional intermediaries should be taken seriously if we are to understand contemporary developments in screen culture and the media industries’ (2015: 4). Understanding how intermediaries operate in terms of expertise and work practices is an important element of understanding the workings of the promotional screen industries. Indeed, what stands out in the literature on promotional intermediaries and cultural intermediaries is a concern with workers and working practice. As Smith Maguire and Matthews note:

Cultural intermediaries perform creative work; thinking about their actual practices, experience and impacts can assist in a critical assessment of the claims made about creative work in contemporary economies. The concept usefully foregrounds the material – and often mundane – work of market actors, casting light on the routinized aspects of creative work, the subjective dynamics of occupational conventions, and the contested nature of constructing value and legitimacy for cultural goods (2014: 4).

Across the chapters in Smith Maguire and Matthew's collection, researchers favor ethnographic methods intended to uncover the material practice of intermediaries in different industry sectors. This focus on revealing forms of labour and expertise that are typically hidden is important for foregrounding research on media planning. As an intermediary sector, media planning comprises a particular expertise, though this work is very often hidden. By placing media planning at the centre of research, the roles and working practices are revealed.

As discussed in Chapter 1, media planning has moved in and out of advertising practice, becoming, in the contemporary moment, something simultaneously part of advertising, but largely separate at the same time. Media agency employees are unlikely to describe their work as advertising, stating instead that they work in media. While existing advertising and marketing literature acknowledges media planning, there is a need for focused research that takes media planning as its object. Promotional industry studies is a useful lens for thinking about media planning's fluid position as related to advertising, but also more than simply one part of advertising practice, as it is often portrayed in advertising studies. Recent work on cultural and promotional intermediaries, meanwhile, highlights the importance of understanding the day-to-day working practices and work life of different creative industry sectors. As a promotional industries sector, media planning plays an intermediary role, sitting at the nexus of media, advertising, and branding. By layering the notion of blurred boundaries

borrowed from promotional industries work on to an understanding of the role of promotional intermediaries, it becomes possible to think about media planning in a concrete sense, as a sector, as a discipline, and as a form of work.

Methodological considerations for investigating media planning

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, this project utilizes a three-pronged, mixed methodological approach in investigating media planning. Each of these methods will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters. Because there are limited existing studies focusing specifically on media planning and media agencies, a mixed methodology is particularly useful in its ability to provide a fleshed-out account of what media planning is and how it works. Adopting a mixed method research approach provides a means for understanding media planning work in terms of its discourses, disclosures and trade performances. Each of the three methods employed in this project – interviews, participant-observation and textual analysis – provides a perspective from which to understand the work of media agencies. There will be some discussion of method here, particularly in regard to the existing methodological frameworks within which this project is situated. A more detailed discussion of methodology, meanwhile, will be found in each of the three chapters that follow. The methods utilized in conducting research for this PhD were selected because of their suitability in illuminating different areas of media planning: interviews with media agency employees address the daily work-life experience of media planning; textual analysis of semi-public, agency-produced documents provides insight into the ways in which media agencies choose to depict their work and expertise; participant-observation at Cannes

Lions, finally, highlights the presence and performance of media agencies at a major promotional industries event. Combined, these methods yield a considered, multipartite account of the work of media planning. The three methods outlined above map generally on to the three empirical chapters that follow, with some cross-pollination throughout. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 of this thesis therefore each begin with a discussion of methodology as it pertains to the primary method used to answer the research question addressed in each respective chapter. This thesis will conclude with a closing chapter that links together the results of these methods and answers the overarching research question of media planning's place within the promotional industries.

While there is limited existing research focusing specifically on media planning, there is significant precedent for the kind of mixed methodology research utilized by this PhD. Much of this work can be found in the fields of media industry studies and production studies (Caldwell 2008, Havens, Lotz and Tinic 2009, Holt and Perren 2011, Havens and Lotz 2011, Banks, Conor and Mayer 2016). While production studies and media industry studies are both concerned with studying 'microlevel industrial practices' (Havens, Lotz and Tinic 2009: 235), the two can differ in their areas of focus. Work in production studies tends to focus on traditional craft roles and practices of production as related to media texts, particularly in film and television. Media industry studies, on the other hand, tends to be more broadly constituted. Although it can be thought of as encompassing production studies and owes much to production studies, media industry studies encompasses a wider set of concerns and sites of analysis from across various media industry sectors. Acknowledging their different inflections, both share a commitment to researching the work practices – and workers – of the global media industries.

In their *Production Studies, The Sequel!*, editors Miranda Banks, Bridget Conor and Vicki Mayer note the prevalence of attention granted to ‘individual media makers,’ both within popular media coverage and academic research (2016: ix). In the preface to their collection the authors state, ‘In this book, we complicate personal stories by locating them within larger cultural studies of discrete production communities, their material cultures, and their historical contexts’ (ibid.). This aim is echoed in other work in production studies, in which researchers seek to account for the different individuals and components that contribute to the production of media content. Much of this work focuses attention on workers whose roles are often overlooked. ‘We want to look up and down the food chains of production hierarchies, to understand how people work through professional organizations and informal networks to form communities of shared practices, languages, and cultural understandings of the world,’ write editors Mayer, Banks and Caldwell in the introduction to the 2009 edition of *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* (2009: 6). This drive to study ‘up and down the food chains’ of production is further echoed in *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy*, in which Mayer gives accounts of varied aspects of production work, from videographers to casting agents, and even citizen regulators, local civilians who volunteer as liaisons for production crews (2011).

Media industry studies overlaps and, in many cases, encompasses work in production studies. Production studies has helped to inform the emergence of media industry studies, providing a framework and rationale for studying the practices that drive work within and across an expansive range of media industries using a multi-modal approach. In outlining their approach to critical media industry studies research, Havens, Lotz and Tinic advocate for ‘Generating momentum for a diverse range of

multisite research endeavors within a critical media industry studies approach,' noting that doing so 'is vital to furthering our understanding of the current moment of uncertainty that defines today's media environment.' (Havens, Lotz and Tinic 2009). Due to the diverse range of subject matter that could be classed as belonging to media industry studies, some scholars have argued that the category delimits a methodological approach, rather than a discipline (McDonald 2013, Freeman 2016). *Media Industries*, the peer reviewed journal dedicated to media industry studies, 'invite(s) contributions that examine the full spectrum of media industries, including but not limited to film, television, internet, radio, music, publishing, gaming, advertising, animation, merchandising, and mobile communications' (2014: 1). Volume 1, Issue 1 of the journal included pieces on the television and music industries, media distribution and automation, discussions of methodology, policy and media industry interns, among others. The diverse range of pieces that introduced the launch of *Media Industries Journal* in 2014 gives an indication of the breadth of media industry studies. Significant to the study of media planning is the journal's stated aim that contributions may 'explore these industries individually or examine intermedial relations between industrial sectors through a diverse array of theoretical and methodological approaches' (2014: 1). The suggestion to 'explore intermedial relations between industrial sectors' using a 'diverse array' of methods is particularly appropriate as a methodological approach for investigating media planning. This project is therefore situated within the methodological framework of media industry studies, pulling also from methods favored in production studies.

As discussed above, media planners and media agencies can be classed as promotional intermediaries. Their primary ostensible role is to connect clients'

messaging with consumers, but, like other cultural intermediaries, media agencies trade in expertise. This kind of expertise can in itself be seen as a form of production. In addition to production in the form of expertise, media agencies produce physical artefacts, like research reports, strategy documents, and media plans. In addition, media agencies produce their own promotional content in the form of pitch material and awards submissions. Media agencies are increasingly expanding their purviews further, with the addition of content divisions.

In looking at the ecology of the media and promotional industries, media planning is centrally involved in both. Thus, throughout the chapters to follow, this thesis will highlight the work of media planning and the importance of media agencies as components of both the media and promotional industries. Media planning's importance to both the media and promotional industries is in large part due to its intermediary role, in which it serves as a kind of connective tissue between the two. It is also due to media planning's intermediary role that a multi-modal, multi-sited research approach is particularly salient for investigating the work of media planning. One of the defining features of work in production studies is the selection of a single research site, often a film or television set. 'As a scholarly approach,' write Banks, Conor and Mayer, 'production studies examines specific sites and fabrics of media production as distinct interpretative communities, each with its own organizational structures, professional practices, and power dynamics' (2015: x). Participant-observation is employed effectively on such bounded sites, where active work through interrelations can be observed in practice. This selection of a single site echoes ethnographic work by anthropologists like Moeran and Mazzearella, who spent time working in advertising agencies in Japan and India, respectively, as participant-observers. Media planning

work sits at the nexus of a set of interlinked promotional industry sectors, where it plays an important intermediary role. Much of the work of media agency employees is done behind the screen of a computer, in closed conference rooms, off-site in client meetings, or at media owner events. The production of knowledge and expertise is difficult to observe³², and requires a different approach in which multiple methods help to triangulate media planning's role in the promotional industries.

Production studies and media industry studies offer much in the way of methodological grounding for the study of media planning, particularly in their consideration of utilizing a range of methods in order to uncover the layered working practices of media production. Methodologically speaking, work from both fields has employed what Havens, Lotz and Tinic term a 'critical media industry studies approach' (2006). Typical of work in a critical media industry studies framework is an emphasis on 'midlevel fieldwork in industry analyses,' which, per Havens et al, 'accounts for the complex interactions among cultural and economic forces' (2006: 237). In their collection, Banks, Conor and Mayer describe the research framework of production studies as follows:

Production studies provides grounded analyses of media makers; experiences, observations, conversations, and interactions, and in the process, investigates what Skeggs and Wood call these distinct 'relations of personhood.' This observational, on-the-ground research allows scholars better access to determining the nuances of language, behavior, ritual, and subjectivities.

(2016: x)

³² The performance of this knowledge is at times possible to observe, particularly at major industry events. Cannes Lions was selected as such a site, wherein media planning expertise is performed. Chapter 5 discusses Cannes Lions in detail and explains why it was an appropriate site in which participant-observation was possible and productive.

In many cases, this ‘on-the-ground’ research is conducted by researchers with prior experience working in media production. Such is the case for John Caldwell, who used his experience in film production communities as a basis for field research. Caldwell employs a rich methodological mix in seeking to understand Hollywood production culture, including interviews, observational data, industry documents, economic data, and studio promotional materials. His analysis of industry documents offers a vital framework for unpacking the research reports produced and circulated by media agencies, which Chapter 4 of this thesis will do. These industry documents are what Caldwell categorizes as ‘semi-embedded industry deep texts,’ and are an example of ‘embedded industrial sense making and trade theorizing’ (Caldwell 2011: 553).

Throughout his work, Caldwell relies on such texts to provide equalizing information for other methods, warning that interviews often yield rehearsed accounts of industry practice rather than original insights (Caldwell 2008). Other work in production studies echoes the need to bolster interview data with other methods, as film and television production is a notoriously difficult sector in which to gain access, regardless of whether one is ‘studying up’ or ‘studying sideways’³³ (Mayer 2008, Ortner 2009). Work in production studies therefore sometimes warns of the difficulties of obtaining useful information via practitioner interviews.³⁴ In contrast, the practitioner interviews conducted in service of this PhD project yielded a breadth of useful

³³ The term “studying up” has been used to refer to ethnographic research that focuses attention on elite sectors of society, such as, in this case, prominent figures in Hollywood. “Studying sideways” is a twist on studying up, and refers to work whose subjects are considered to be equals of the researcher. This was the case for Ortner (2009) who worked alongside the individuals she studied.

³⁴ The benefits and limitations of practitioner interviews will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

information. My experience of conducting practitioner interviews was similar to that described by Grainge and Johnson, whose practitioner interviews with promotional intermediaries, ‘were vital in offering a viewpoint, and form of discourse beyond that available in corporate materials and the trade press,’ and ‘afforded rich insight into the practices, vocabularies and self-theorizations of promotional work’ (2015: 10). The interviews conducted for this PhD were equally useful. I will return to discuss the specifics of these interviews later in this chapter, while insights gleaned from these interviews will feature strongly in Chapter 3, as well as elsewhere throughout the thesis.

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, I was motivated to conduct a study of media planning after spending time working in media agencies and finding that the work of media planning was underrepresented and therefore not well understood. Similarly, in setting out to begin this research into the work of media planning, my methodological approach was influenced in part by my own experiences working in media agencies. It is important here to address the particular subject position from which I have approached this project throughout. It is certainly true that my professional experience in media planning has shaped this project. My experience of media planning in practice formed the premise for this research project, which is to take seriously media planning. From 2009 to 2011 I worked as a media planner in the New York office of MEC, and from 2012 to 2014 as an account manager at the London office of UM.³⁵ My subject position as a former media agency employee is not altogether unusual in media industry studies. Caldwell, Mayer, and others have experience working

³⁵ In both cases, I worked as part of these respective agencies’ global teams, meaning that the agency office in question was the headquarters for their clients’ media, across the markets in which they were active.

in the sectors they investigate and discuss this to varying degrees in their research (Caldwell 2009, Mayer 2009, Negus 2002). Similarly, in beginning my investigation of media planning, I was aware of my position in a distinctive mid-point between having worked in the industry and reflecting critically on it and its discourses. Noting the complexities of media planning practice and the centrality of media agencies to nearly every facet of advertising and beyond, led me to challenge what I found to be an underrepresentation of critical thought regarding media planning's significance as an industry sector. The types of research questions I hoped to answer were influenced by personal experience, as was my understanding of the most suitable methods for answering these questions. For example, I was aware that the everyday, office-based work of media planning would be difficult to observe utilizing a solely participant-observation approach. This is due to the fact that media agency employees spend much of their day behind the screens of computers, on conference calls, or out of the office in meetings. For this reason, a purely ethnographic approach, such as that employed by anthropologists like Mazzarella and Moeran, would have yielded limited insight. I knew that participant-observation would be an effective method if employed at an industry event, in which media planning professionals enact discussions about their own work. My decision to pursue Cannes Lions as a site for the participant-observation stage of my fieldwork was based on my own experience working in media planning, through which I became aware of the prominence of Cannes Lions for media agencies and the broader promotional industries. Cannes Lions plays an important role in confirming industry practice. It is also a site where media planners are expected to externally express their work in a way that does not often occur within the walls of a media agency. Cannes Lions was therefore an ideal site for participant-observation research regarding the

place of media planning. This decision was further confirmed by the variety of my experience; during my time working at media agencies in both New York and London, Cannes Lions was discussed as being the most important annual event for media planning.

As discussed in this thesis' Introduction, I selected London as the geographic focus for practitioner interviews. London is an important location for media agencies, commonly serving as UK headquarters as well as EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa) regional hub, and therefore a focal point of activity. Basing myself in London for the interview stage of my research enabled me to gather a representative range of interviews from across a number of agencies in a city that is a hub for media planning, all within a pre-determined interview timeframe of three months. I was also therefore able to conduct all interviews in-person rather than via Skype or telephone, giving a sense of consistency in terms of the style and degree of formality of each interview. In her chapter on ethnographic research on cultural intermediaries, Giseline Kuipers notes, 'getting access is the most dreaded part of fieldwork' (2014: 57). My existing connections to the London media planning sphere meant that lining up participants for the interview stage of my research was significantly less daunting. My aim was to interview media planning professionals across a range of roles and seniority levels, and from across a mix of different media agencies in order to develop a well-rounded picture of media agency life. Additionally, I wanted to ensure some interviews came from individuals with whom I had no prior relationship. These initial aims were made possible in large part due to existing contacts within the industry. I began by contacting existing connections at UM London, most of whom were happy to participate. Many of these early interviewees also offered to connect me to other potential interviewees,

including individuals across a range of roles and levels, and at other agencies. In total, I conducted eleven extended interviews, with media planning professionals employed by seven different media agencies and one agency group (IPG Mediabrands).³⁶ The table below details the name, agency affiliation and job title of each interview discussed herein.³⁷

Name	Title	Agency/Agency Group
Jacqueline Franco	Group Account Director	UM
Nik Gill	Global Account Director	Mindshare
Scott Holmes	Creative Director, Europe	UM
Caroline Jambren	Account Director, International	Havas Media
Adam Kanter	Senior International Account Director	Initiative Media
Lisa Ly	Planner/Buyer, Paid Social	Mediacom
Bich-Van Nguyen	Group Director, New Business	IPG Mediabrands
Rebecca Rogers	International Account Manager	UM
Natasha Sipesteijn	Branded Content and Social Strategy Executive	Zenith
Max Williams	International Account Manager	Total Media
Richard Wright	EMEA Strategy Director	Redacted by request of interviewee

Figure 2-1 Name, agency affiliation and job title of interviewees

While I was aware of some of the difficulties that informant interviews may present, these interviews yielded considerable data, aligning, as discussed above, with Grainge and Johnson's (2015) experience of conducting interviews with promotional intermediaries. On the whole, the interviewees with whom I met were happy to participate and willing to speak about their work in a candid fashion. My own pre-existing experience in the world of media planning proved helpful in judging the extent to which interviewees were delivering canned responses, as well as in addressing the issue of access that can be an obstacle in conducting interview-based fieldwork.

³⁶ A further five interviews were conducted, however consent to publish or otherwise utilize the content of the remaining interviews was retracted after the fact due to confidentiality concerns on the part of the agency in question.

³⁷ All of the interviewees mentioned herein granted permission for their names to be used. One interviewee requested that the name of his employer be redacted, as reflected in the table of interviewees above.

Along with the benefits of approaching media planning from a place of personal experience comes an equally significant set of drawbacks. My prior understanding of media planning was based on my own accumulated experience, which is by no means representative of the industry as a whole. Nor does my prior knowledge of media planning guarantee the ability to unlock the transparent workings of the media planning industry. Thus, in going into each stage of research for this project, it was important to try to create relative distance between myself and the object or objects of study, to ‘make media planning strange’ in order to better understand it.³⁸ I sought to achieve this critical distance whenever possible, while maintaining an awareness of how my subject position might influence my research. This was particularly important during the interview stage of my fieldwork, in which I had prior connections to some of my informants. With this in mind, I chose to adopt a semi-structured style, and asked each of my informants the same basic questions. At the start of my interview-based fieldwork, I met with a former colleague from UM to conduct a dry-run interview. This prior connection allowed me to trial the questions I had prepared, and pare the questions down to an appropriate list in order to ensure future interviews would yield productive responses while lasting no more than one to one and a half hours.³⁹ As a result of this meeting, I cut my list of questions from an initial twelve to only nine questions, and altered the phrasing of several in order to avoid potential confidentiality issues and to permit for more openness from my respondents. I will address the informant interviews

³⁸ ‘Making the familiar strange’ is a common edict of anthropologists. The first usage in anthropology is difficult to trace, but Robert Myers traces the phrase to ‘a variation on how T. S. Eliot viewed good poetry’ For more on the origins and usage of the phrase, see (Myers 2011: 7).

³⁹ See Appendix 4 for a sample interview transcript.

I conducted in greater detail in the next chapter, which uses the results of these interviews to provide a depiction of the work-life of media planning professionals.

Conclusions

Existing research from across advertising studies, promotional culture and promotional intermediaries all provides a lens for investigating media planning. Navigating through and across these three fields, this chapter has aimed to isolate key theoretical strands that offer a way in to the study of media planning. Equally, noting the lack of specific focus on media planning across these areas reveals the need for research regarding media planning. By focusing on media planning as a distinct object of study, this project will contribute to existing debates, and bring them forward by showing media planning's crucial role in giving a more complete picture of advertising, promotional industries and promotional intermediaries.

Methodologically speaking, this PhD project is situated within the methodological framework of media industry studies, while also drawing on methods favoured by production studies. The three methods utilized in gathering data for this PhD are particularly suited to studying media planning because of media planning's status as a key promotional intermediary and its mediating role within the promotional industries. Each of these three methods – interviews, textual analysis, and participant-observation – provide a vantage point from which to gain a more thorough understanding of the work of media planning, and media planning's position as a promotional industries sector. Media industry studies' emphasis on examining intermedial relations is relevant in understanding the positionality of media planning as simultaneously part of and separate from advertising, and as operating at the nexus of

marketing, branding and communication.

While the remaining chapters of this thesis are empirically driven, each builds on the theoretical and methodological foundation outlined herein. Chapter 3 uses data gleaned from practitioner interviews to provide an account of work-life in media agencies. This interview data provides important contextual grounding for understanding not only work-life in media planning, but also the feelings of media agency employees about the promotional industries web within which media planning sits.

CHAPTER 3. MEDIA AGENCY WORK LIFE

As we've seen, the media and promotional industries are characterized by a sense of messiness and overlap, and the work of media agencies is at once part of and separate to other linked industry sectors. Chapter 3 will now turn attention to what it means to work in a media agency, investigating the nature of work life for media agency employees. To do so, this chapter will utilize information gleaned from a series of practitioner interviews to answer two key questions about labour in media agencies: how do media agency employees describe their work, and how do media planners understand and manage change? The content of these interviews is organized thematically according to four key elements that recurred across interviews: agency remits and structures, the data imperative, networks and industry lore.

Data collected from informant interviews illustrates that the uncertainty so predominant in discussions of media or promotional industries work is widely acknowledged in media agencies, but rarely felt to be a problem. That this uncertainty is not felt to be a problem is the key point of departure for understanding media planning work life, as opposed to other creative industry professions: change is built into a media agency's DNA, and continued change has the potential to further elevate the status of media planning within the creative industries constellation. Thus, this chapter argues that, for media agencies employees, it is crucial that change and uncertainty be presented in positive terms.

Change as a Structuring Factor in Media Industry Scholarship

A key feature of debates around media work is the uncertain or fluid nature of working life in the media industries. The changeable nature of the media ecosystem in the age of digital media has been a key focal point of scholarly work on media industries in the 21st century. Philip Napoli's *Audience Evolution*, for example, highlights the impact of changes in the media environment to audience research in media organizations, particularly as it pertains to the production and distribution of screen media (Napoli 2010). Following on from Henry Jenkins' 2006 work on media convergence, Napoli's research is part of a broader trend investigating the impact of changing media conditions on the production and distribution of film, television and promotional content (Caldwell 2009, Lotz 2009, Gill 2013). A different branch of media industry research has focused on change and uncertainty as conditions of labour for those employed in the cultural and creative industries. Multiple writers have noted that an inherent sense of uncertainty permeates working life and organizational structures in the contemporary cultural industries (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011, Deuze 2007, Curtin and Sanson 2016). This type of scholarship typically focuses on conditions contemporaneous to the time of writing, with much of this work dealing therefore with media and other forms of creative labour from the 1990s onward. These two branches consist of both macro and micro approaches to studying the culture industries.

Throughout both bodies of work outlined above, there emerges a consensus that media and cultural industry labour is characterized by a sense of change and flux. Despite this consensus regarding the pervasiveness of change, research regarding the

idea of flux in media labour approaches the issue from divergent perspectives. Existing critical work on the pervasive uncertainty present in media industries tends to operate on two levels, with different scope and focus. Some scholarly work has focused on conditions of change in the macro sense, looking at shifting industry landscapes, subject to ubiquitous factors like globalization, conglomeration and shifts in the political economy of media industries and beyond (Deuze 2007, Davis 2010, Hardy 2013). Other media industries scholars, on the other hand, have focused on the micro level uncertainty that characterizes media industry employees' work lives and individual experiences (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011, Caldwell 2006, Johnson 2014). This work tends to focus on working conditions in specific media industry sectors, particularly film and television production, and how these conditions impact upon media workers.

In addition, existing critical work is split in its perspective on whether the uncertain conditions in which media industries operate constitute a positive or negative for media workers. In *Media Work*, Mark Deuze asserts that studying media work is important because the media industries '[serve] as the most important guilty party of reflecting as well as directing the remix, convergence, instantaneous integration, and overall liquefaction of life, work, and play' (Deuze 2007: 44). Deuze uses work in the media industries as an exemplar of the fluxing nature of contemporary life, in which change and uncertainty are ubiquitous conditions ushered by globalization. He writes, 'linking the trends of concurrent individualization with the convergent trends in life, work and play, a pattern emerges where the conditions of work at the beginning of the twenty-first century are in a constant state of flux' (ibid.: 9). These simultaneous yet contradictory features of work life in the twenty-first century mean that uncertainty, as it is experienced in media work, will vary depending on the sector of media in question.

As Deuze writes, ‘an emphasis on the individualistic and idiosyncratic nature of media workers suggests that contemporary trends such as workforce casualization, technological and cultural convergence, and flexible productivity not only mean different things to different people, but are also differently articulated in the context of specific media products, genres, and organizations’ (ibid.: 92). Therefore, Deuze analyses work across a range of media industries, including film, television, gaming, journalism and advertising to map this ‘constant state of flux’ onto questions of labour in specific industry sectors (ibid.: 9).

In his chapter on advertising and marketing, Deuze shows an acute awareness of the contradictions of media work in the digital age, in which communications conglomerates have expanded to include local, regional, and global markets, yet permit specialization that silos individual workers. Deuze mentions major networks including Publicis and Omnicom to illustrate the simultaneous fragmentation of advertising work and concentration of formerly disparate sub-sectors of advertising practice. Ongoing institutional and organizational fluctuations in advertising, coupled with evolving media technologies, mean that individuals employed in marketing and advertising experience a constant fluxing in their work lives. These shifting conditions of labour offer certain advantages and opportunities to media workers in terms of career mobility, lateral movement, and acquisition of new skills. Deuze acknowledges arguments that malign the instability of project-based work and portfolio careers in advertising but concludes with the assertion that uncertainty as a working condition is, in some cases, a boon for workers, particularly those in higher skilled, knowledge-based fields. Freedom and security are, according to Deuze, sometimes perceived to be mutually exclusive by skilled media workers, who stand to benefit from and find meaning in changeable

working conditions. Deuze refrains from offering a personal view on whether these conditions of work are inherently ‘good’ or ‘bad’ for advertising professionals; uncertainty, for Deuze is simply a condition of work in the media industries.⁴⁰ He writes:

It is through the daily interaction of creativity, commerce, content, and connectivity that media practitioners give active meaning to their work and professional identity, which in turn shapes the meaning and significance of the various influences on content as it is produced by journalists, advertising creative, public relations officer and marketing communicators, game developers, and professionals in the radio, television, and film industries.

(2007: 83)

Deuze’s assertion that media practitioners ‘give active meaning to their work and professional identity’ is particularly important for the approach this chapter takes to understanding the ways in which media agency employees manage change. I will return to this point later in order to illustrate the strategies used by media planners to navigate the uncertain milieu of their professional lives.

Other work on the contemporary media industries offers a different and more negative perspective on the nature of creative industry work life, locating uncertainty as a basis for exploitation (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011, Curtin and Sanson 2016). According to this group of scholars, these uncertain conditions create a scenario in which media and other creative industry work is characterized by precarity. The concept of precarity in media industry work is different to the broader notions of change or uncertainty. Enabled by market conditions like globalization, convergence, and technological shifts, precarity in media and other types of creative industry work refers

⁴⁰ Deuze’s agnostic perspective on change is an important point and is useful for thinking about how media agency employees understand change. This point will resurface later in this chapter.

to instability in individual working conditions, for instance, people working on contracts or freelance bases or with little security. These people may be in fear of their jobs and find that their careers lack a particular trajectory. These conditions are highlighted in Michael Curtin and Kevin Sanson's 2016 anthology, *Precarious Creativity*, which focuses on the negative working conditions in film and television production brought about by increased globalization and conglomeration (Curtin and Sanson 2016).

Precarious Creativity is an indictment of the exploitation of media workers, which the authors dub a 'race to the bottom' (ibid.: 8). Curtin and Sanson argue that the labour of ground-level media workers enables production to proceed, while these workers in turn face low pay, long hours, and, at times, unsafe conditions. Curtin and Sanson's collection emphasizes precarity as a harmful condition of media work, precipitated by shifting conditions within the global economy of the screen industries, including outsourcing, unraveling of unions, and devaluing of labour (ibid.).

In their *Media Work in Three Cultural Industries*, David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker (2011) are similarly critical of the conditions of work in media industries. The 'three cultural industries' in question are television production, music recording, and magazine publishing, which the authors unpack using a combination of secondary source data and interviews with industry professionals. For Hesmondhalgh and Baker, precarity is very much a problem, enabling exploitation and diminishing quality of life for workers in the cultural industries. This position is bolstered with analysis of data gleaned from secondary sources, including statistics about employment status and contract type, to highlight the precarious nature of media work life. Via interviews with employees across television, journalism and music production, as well as analysis of these sectors' employment statistics, the two authors isolate and enumerate 'good' as

well as ‘bad’ aspects of work in these industries. Positive aspects that emerged from their data include: creative autonomy, sociable working environments, and the opportunity to produce meaningful products. In contrast, ‘bad’ aspects of work experienced by some of their interviewees include: long hours paired with relatively low pay, job insecurity, and, crucially, fragile or unstable career paths. Hesmondhalgh and Baker’s empirical research suggests that the positive aspects of working in creative industries, such as producing meaningful products and feeling creatively fulfilled, can and in fact often do correlate with negative aspects, such as low pay, long hours, and high stress working scenarios. The authors locate a prevailing sense of precarity in cultural industry work that, they posit, outweighs the potential positive attributes of labour in such an uncertain labour environment (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011).

Though issues of change in the media industries have received attention from researchers, these debates have so far been applied only sparingly to media planning. Along with other media industry researchers (Hardy 2013, Davis 2013, Napoli 2010), the authors mentioned above have investigated change, uncertainty, and precarity primarily as it pertains to media production in film, television, advertising, gaming, music and publishing. These debates can and should be extended to include less visible and intermediary sectors of media industries, and in particular media planning, which has become a key professional field within the world of advertising and marketing. In *Marketing in Context*, Chris Hackley maps out some of the divisional roles within advertising, touching on media planning as a distinct subsector (Hackley 2013). In Hackley’s work it is evident that debates around uncertainty can be mapped onto the advertising industry specifically. Hackley’s discussion of uncertainty in advertising is implicit, as he lays out the commonality of ‘portfolio careers’ and frequent changeover,

for both clients and employees (ibid.). While recognizing the inherent fluidity of the industry, Hackley abstains from judgement on what this condition may mean for media workers. This is in contrast to Deuze, whose work recognizes potential drawbacks as well as potential opportunities in the steady fluxing of media work (Deuze 2007), and to Curtin and Sanson and Hesmondhalgh and Baker who argue that the precarious workstyles of different creative and cultural industries carry the potential for exploitation (Curtin and Sanson 2016, Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011).

As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, scholarly work on the media industries displays a tendency to address media planning and media agencies only sparingly; Hackley and Hackley (2013), for example, acknowledge media planning as a segment of advertising practice, but devote the bulk of their analysis to ‘advertising agencies’ broadly, focusing on creative work and accounts management (ibid.). Meanwhile, Mark Deuze points in places to media planning, though not necessarily in the context of media agencies. He touches on media planning as it pertains to industry consolidation and, in a chapter dedicated to advertising, highlights the ‘power shift from creative to planning’ (Deuze 2007: 119). Deuze calls on Hackley’s work in order to trace an abridged history of the power struggle between ‘creatives’ and the remainder of a typical advertising agency’s teams, noting that the elusiveness of the modern media consumer has helped advance the formerly lowly media planner toward the top of the advertising hierarchy (ibid.: 119-120). Deuze’s mapping of advertising industry power dynamics onto Hackley’s work on marketing and advertising advances the move toward an investigation of uncertainty as a driving force in media planning. However, Deuze stops short of investigating the particular nuances of change and uncertainty in relation to media planning agencies. Instead, the bulk of Deuze’s chapter on advertising focuses on

so-called ‘creatives’, looking at advertising agencies like Leo Burnett, JWT, and Saatchi and Saatchi. Thus, while there has been some application of the debates about uncertainty and change to the conditions of work in advertising, broadly, these debates around uncertainty have not been substantially applied to media planning agencies, nor have they extensively dealt with what these issues mean for media agency employees. In the chapter that follows, I will extend these debates surrounding change and uncertainty in media industries to the industry subsector of media planning, focusing on media agencies as distinct entities.

As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, media planning rose in importance as a result of the rapid changes felt in the media environment of the 1980s, with media agencies coming into their own as standalone entities in the 1990s. Given that media agencies emerged in response to perceived industry changes, it stands to reason that, in media agency work, change and uncertainty would be understood as basic operating conditions to be managed. While in some sectors of the media industries uncertainty may indeed be tied to negative condition for workers, in media agency work the fluxing nature of working conditions does not necessarily equate to precarity. This chapter will examine the hypothesis that the persistence of uncertain working conditions is not experienced as a negative feature of media agency work by media agency employees. Of particular concern in examining this hypothesis is the question of how the persistence of change is understood on an individual level, from the perspective of media agency employees, and how these conditions impact upon the work-lives of media planning practitioners. Due to the nature of media planning as a sector, media agency employees are confronted with high rates of change on multiple levels. The first of these change-prone elements of media agency work stems from media planning’s position as part of

the broader media industrial landscape, characterized as it is by constantly evolving technologies along with ever-expanding media channels. The second source of changeability relates more to the nature of media agency work on an organizational level; client turnover is commonplace, as are attendant shifts in assignments and responsibilities, as well as institutional re-structuring and movement within and without individual agencies. All of the above conditions mean that work-life for media agency employees is prone to change, often from various simultaneous forces. As this chapter will illustrate, an awareness of these levels of uncertainty was universally implicit in interviews with media agency employees. The management of change is therefore a crucial factor in understanding the work-lives of media agencies. Media planning stands apart from other media industry sectors in its approach to dealing with flux; the ability to navigate change is often presented as a matter of media planning expertise.⁴¹ For media agency employees the ability to thrive amidst change is a necessary and highly valued skillset. Thus, as this chapter will argue, the ways in which media agency employees manage change and uncertainty are directly linked to media planning's ethos of being navigators of a shifting media landscape. Drawing from primary interviews with media planning practitioners, the sections that follow will answer the questions, what does uncertainty *mean* for media agency employees? How does their understanding of change and uncertainty manifest in their working practices?

⁴¹ While this chapter addresses individual approaches to managing change, Chapter 4 will go into greater detail about the positioning of different media agencies on an organizational level in relation to uncertainty.

Talking to Media Planners

As outlined in the methodology section found in Chapter 2, I conducted eleven practitioner interviews over the course of approximately three months, from February to April 2016.^{42 43} Of these interviews, several were with employees of UM London, the UK headquarters of mid-sized agency UM. UM London is part of the global agency network UM Worldwide (UMWW)⁴⁴, itself one of three agencies that make up the IPG Mediabrands conglomerate. This kind of structure is typical of media agencies, which are commonly part of large communications conglomerates and often have local, national and regional hub offices. In an early interview, UM Group Account Director Jacqueline Franco explained her role in relation to her clients and to other UM offices:

Primarily my job is to lead international accounts, which is really taking responsibility for the client relationship and just making sure that anything and everything that they need happens. And at the same time I am managing the client I am also managing our local markets. So depending on where the client is active we have relationships with our local UM teams.
(Franco 2016).

In addition to interviews with employees of UM London, this chapter will also draw on a series of interviews with employees of the London offices of six other global agencies:

⁴² I was aware going into the period of interview fieldwork of the challenge posed by finding contacts who would be open to giving interviews to a PhD researcher and an individual with whom they had no previous acquaintance. I therefore began by contacting existing connections, former colleagues and friends I had met while working in media planning in London. I was simultaneously aware of the potential downsides of an overabundance of interviews with people who were familiar with me; instead of relying on preexisting connections, therefore, I asked those people who were willing to connect me to people in their network who they felt would be open to meeting.

⁴³ The average length of time for each interview was about one hour. In terms of interview style, I adopted a semi-structured approach, asking each interviewee the same ten questions, while allowing space to adapt these questions or follow-up, depending on the types of responses and level of engagement and openness of the interviewee.

⁴⁴ Employees of UM use UM and UMWW interchangeably; thus both are used in the chapters to follow.

MediaCom, MindShare, Havas Media, Total Media, Initiative and Zenith Optimedia.⁴⁵

The table below (repeated here as in Chapter 2) displays the name, title and agency affiliation of each interviewee.

Name	Title	Agency/Agency Group
Jacqueline Franco	Group Account Director	UM
Nik Gill	Global Account Director	Mindshare
Scott Holmes	Creative Director, Europe	UM
Caroline Jambren	Account Director, International	Havas Media
Adam Kanter	Senior International Account Director	Initiative Media
Lisa Ly	Planner/Buyer, Paid Social	Mediacom
Bich-Van Nguyen	Group Director, New Business	IPG Mediabrands
Rebecca Rogers	International Account Manager	UM
Natasha Sipesteijn	Branded Content and Social Strategy Executive	Zenith
Max Williams	International Account Manager	Total Media
Richard Wright	EMEA Strategy Director	Redacted by request of interviewee

Figure 3-1 Summary table of interview subjects

Four key thematic chords ran through the practitioner interviews I conducted: agency remits and structures, media planning's data imperative, the importance of networks to media planning work, and finally, the significance of industry lore. The recurrence of these four chords throughout the practitioner interviews is illustrative of media agency employees' management of their work lives. These interviews are synthesized below in four subsections, each focusing on one of four key themes. First, I will address organizational responses to change and uncertainty in media planning by highlighting agency structuring, and the evolution of the media agency remit. Next, I will detail the micro-level management of industry change, in terms of employees'

⁴⁵ Another six interviews were conducted while I was stationed within the offices of another mid-size London-based agency. After encountering issues with confidentiality after the fact, I was asked to exclude the content of these interviews. The circumstances leading to my access being retroactively retracted were reflective of the pressures of media agency survival; the agency in question were in the middle of pitching for an important new client account, and my presence inside the walls of the agency had garnered concern from senior management.

renegotiation of roles and expertise in the face of increased automation. Here, I will show that agency employees are protective of their position; they are aware of the paradoxes that characterize media agency work life but are happy to address these as a display of adaptability and agility. The following subsection will focus on the networks that underlie work in media agencies, and the centrality of media planning therein, illustrating the manner in which these networks enable the work of media planning to persist and even to thrive under conditions of continual flux. The final subsection will highlight industry lore as a way of uncovering the internalized management of uncertainty among agency employees, or, as Rosalind Gill describes, the ‘practices of managing the self in conditions of radical uncertainty’ (Gill 2011: 262).

Specialization, Structuration and Media Agency Remits

As the organization of media industries continues to change, the place and status of media planning agencies within this constellation changes in tandem. Trends toward conglomeration have yielded unexpected results for media planning; rather than finding media agencies subsumed within larger industry structures, the vertical and horizontal integration of media conglomerates has extended the remit of media planning, while encouraging specialization among media agency teams and employees. Structural responses to industry change reveal a predisposition toward adaptability on the part of media agencies and agency employees. This readiness to adapt is a key feature of media planning agencies, and was discussed in positive terms by my interviewees, who expressed appreciation for the opportunities afforded by being part of an evolving sector of the media industries.

This phenomenon echoes Mark Deuze's (2007) suggestion that media industry concentration and conglomeration coexist with and perhaps even encourage industry diversity in the form of outsourcing or specialization. Deuze points out that even as the expansion of media conglomerates adds layers of bureaucracy, the need for flexibility in transnational organizations has stripped out hierarchical aspects of media work, with more tasks being completed by freelance or contract workers, outsourced specialists, and project teams. Deuze finds that even as media workers complain of the precariousness of their working lifestyles, many experience excitement and freedom in the opportunity to work for multiple employers over time, on different projects, utilizing different skills. Deuze writes, 'It must be clear that the media worker operates in a complex environment, somewhere between the splendid isolation of one's individual creative endeavors and a constantly changing transnational context of ties, relationships, demands, and pressure of colleagues, consumer, employers and clients' (Deuze 2007: 91).

Outsourcing and specialization were topics that arose across several of my informant interviews. It was common in my interviews to hear of the acquisition of specialist agencies, as well as new, specialist teams being assembled as the need arose from within an agency's employee existing employee pool. Describing UM's acquisition of mobile specialist agency Mubaloo, Franco explained that senior management at UM saw an opportunity for increased client business with the addition of specialist mobile planning services. However, the agency did not have sufficient in-house expertise to create a team internally. Thus, according to Franco, 'that's why mobile agencies and content agencies and social agencies have all sprung up, because media agencies weren't quick enough to develop those services in house. But lo and behold, most of them are

being acquired by media agencies' (Franco 2016). As Franco's comment suggests, in seeking to keep up with demand for new services, media agencies must either build teams in-house, or acquire the skills elsewhere. This point was echoed in an interview with Natasha Sipesteijn, who works on a specialist content team at Zenith Optimedia. 'Clients are looking for agencies that can do it all,' said Sipesteijn, supporting the notion that agencies are expected to expand their remit in keeping with marketplace shifts. 'Or,' Sipesteijn continued, 'they have the wide array of agencies and then clearly pigeonhole the agency as a media agency. There's two extremes at the moment' (Sipesteijn 2016). The implication of Sipesteijn's remarks is that media agencies are at a crossroads; they can either seek to update their remit of services in order to serve a broader range of client needs or choose to maintain their historic position as straightforward planners and buyers of media.

As noted above, Sipesteijn is part of a specialist content division at media agency Zenith Optimedia. Since the mid-2010s such content divisions have become commonplace. Sipesteijn advocated strongly for the work she and the rest of the Zenith Optimedia content team do, explaining:

It's so important for them [clients] to at least consider content as a relevant component of their media plans. I think they [clients] also need to understand what content is at its foundation and then subsequently how to activate it and actually again what kind of content to produce, how to produce it, where to publish that content, how to publish that content.
(Sipesteijn 2016)

The expansion of most media agencies' structure to include a content or custom media team troubles previous distinctions between media and creative agencies. In *Promotional Screen Industries*, Grainge and Johnson (2015) presciently highlight content as the next frontier for promotion, and as a site of contestation for media industry boundaries. My

interview with Scott Holmes, EMEA Creative Director at UM, further supported this suggestion. According to Holmes, content challenges the divide between creative and media. When I asked him about the biggest changes he had seen in his fourteen years working in media, Holmes responded, ‘The blurring of the lines between the two [creative and media], that’s probably the biggest change. Just the very fact that I would make content and come up with these things, that wouldn’t have happened six or seven years ago, that was the preserve of the creative agency’ (Holmes 2016). Holmes went on to suggest that media agencies like UM are positioned to take preeminence in the promotional landscape because of their emphasis on measurability. According to Holmes, agencies’ access to tools and their preexisting imperative to measure engagement are all attractive to clients.

The possibility for media agencies to move into a more central position over creative agencies was echoed by Richard Wright, EMEA Strategy Director at a mid-sized agency. ‘When I work a lot with creative agencies,’ he told me, ‘they seem very nervous about their position because they used to be the owners of advertising, they used to be the owners of the brand position and of how we talk to consumers, but as media and communication have evolved and the number of ways you can communicate have evolved, it becomes more about the media is the message. So their reliance is dwindling’ (Wright 2016). Wright’s statement suggests that not only is there a great deal of change within the promotional industries but that media agencies are the sector benefitting most from this change.

If Wright and Holmes’ interpretations are true, media agencies stand poised to overtake creative agencies as the dominant force in advertising. The rapid expansion of media channels and ongoing advancements in media technology have enabled media

agencies to stake a firm claim, as the rise of increasingly advanced methods of data collection and measurability gives further credence to media's effectiveness as both medium and message.

The Data Imperative, or 'How to Make Sure You're Not Replaced by an Algorithm'

Data and measurability have long been media agency lynchpins; as we saw in Chapter 1, standalone media agencies emerged in tandem with the availability of advanced systems of audience measurement. Media agencies continue to be closely associated with expertise in measurement and targeting; per Grainge and Johnson (2015): 'media agencies sell expertise in data analysis and consumer insight' (61). While the centrality of data has been a key characteristic of media planning agencies since their inception, the nature and availability of this data has evolved and grown over time. For contemporary media agencies, the ability to use data effectively has become an imperative. Content executive Sipesteijn commented on the expectation of data and measurability in media agency work, even in content divisions: 'In a creative agency when they create content it's not as much of an expectation. But I think because of the fact that we're a content agency within a media agency, I think that means that measurement is a key focus' (Sipesteijn 2016). As Sipesteijn's remark suggests, media agencies are under pressure to support their activity with data-driven assertions, over and above creative agencies.

While the existence of measurable results is an important feature of media agencies' success, this data imperative was experienced by many of interviewees as hindrance. Several of my interviews touched on the many levels of bureaucracy that

precede any sort of decisions about the allocation of client budget. Media agencies are increasingly expected to justify each step of campaign work with data-driven assurances, to the extent that the notion of ‘proof’ impedes swift decision-making or implementation of novel approaches. Social Planner Lisa Ly explained that, although clients express a desire for the latest media, when it comes to obtaining sign-off for emergent social media activity, ‘a lot of the difficulty we have is sort of justifying it, and the ROI (return on investment), and what it can actually prove and do for a brand’ (Ly 2016). Ly expressed a frustration with these roadblocks but conceded that the best way to bring clients around to a new piece of technology or new media opportunity is to ‘trial, test, and show results in terms of ROI’ (ibid.).

Richard Wright went so far as to call this emphasis on ROI the ‘media agency curse’ (Wright 2016). The expectation of proof of ROI is a particular challenge for Wright in his role as Strategy Director, as it is difficult to monetize ‘insight,’ and, as he explained, clients are often more interested in short term ROI than broad strokes intended to increase profitability over the *longue durée*.

Because everything has become so short term and responsive, it’s hard to get people to slow down a bit and see the value of picking somewhere in the medium or long term that’s going to be more successful than just chasing the short term. And that’s hard to do. Because it doesn’t have ‘I put a dollar in, get a dollar fifty back,’ it has, ‘I put a dollar in and I *think* I get a dollar fifty back.’

(Wright 2016)

Thus, as Wright expressed, the emphasis of data-driven proof of short-term ROI prevents long-term investments in strategy.

In addition to forcing an emphasis on measurability, data-driven advancements in media planning have also, in many cases, forced a renegotiation of roles. The issue of programmatic buying and what it means for the preeminence of media agencies arose

across several interviews, particularly with interviewees employed in digital roles.

Programmatic buying is the use of smart algorithms to plan, buy, and implement digital advertising campaigns. This technology is new within the last ten years and has only become commonplace in media agencies since about 2010. Prior to the development of programmatic buying mechanisms, digital media planning was done manually, and required more labour and therefore more manpower hours for each campaign. Much of this work is now automated. The development of in-house programmatic teams at most agencies and even sometimes internally within client marketing teams has stretched profitability margins for media agencies. Philip Napoli has stressed the importance of scholarly research into the connections between automation and media production. According to Napoli, automation is now implicated in media production as demand predictor and content creator. Napoli writes:

In this big-data era, media organizations have an ever expanding supply of data on audiences' media consumption patterns and preferences to draw upon, and algorithms play a central role in extracting actionable insights and producing decision outcomes from these data stores. These are the fundamental elements of the most recent—and perhaps most dramatic—step forward in this long-running process of rationalization.

(Napoli 2014: 34)

Napoli presents examples from the motion picture industry to illustrate this point about algorithmic demand prediction and content creation. These advances have equally impacted advertising, as digital media planning moves increasingly toward a wholly automated system via programmatic buying. Caroline Jambren is a Digital Director at Havas Media. She spoke of the challenges of programmatic buying, which has at once raised the expectations of measurability, at the same time as it has reduced profitability for digital planning. 'Programmatic has changed everything,' Jambren told me, 'the job itself has become much more of an analytic than a planning role' (Jambren 2016). With

algorithms capable of completing most of the labour required for digital campaign planning, digital specialists like Jambren are renegotiating their roles within the media agency spectrum. Jambren and others expressed an implicit understanding of the need to be agile in their work and expertise; this personal management of one's role is an individual response to structural changes across media planning, borne about by technological advancements.

Anxieties around automation are also evident on a broader industry level. A key topic at Cannes Lions 2016⁴⁶, which took place from June 17 to 23, was the persistence of automation. Talks and workshops with titles like 'The Rise of the Robots' and 'How To Make Sure You're Not Replaced by an Algorithm' at Cannes Lions 2016 revealed unease over how the creative industries are set to be affected by machines, automation and artificial intelligence. These topics were presented in a playful fashion, but with an edge of real concern for members of the media industries. Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity is the largest annual awards and networking event for the global media and advertising industry. The events at each year's Cannes Lions festival have enormous discursive significance for the media industries, and act as bellwethers for industry change. It is significant, then, that talks at Cannes Lions 2016 engaged directly with industry anxieties to address how the world of media planning will manage its relationship with automation.

For their part, my interviewees were keenly aware of these shifts, and equally ready to express their preparedness to adapt to these new conditions. Adaptability and agility are key terms that surfaced repeatedly throughout practitioner interviews. When

⁴⁶ Chapter 5 will discuss the events of the 2016 Cannes Lions festival in detail.

I asked Jambren what skills are privileged most in her team, she responded, ‘adapting and making changes gives you the best results’ (Jambren 2016). Media planners are aware of the necessity to adapt as part of their jobs but express a sense of pride and opportunity in their ability to do so. As Max Williams told me, ‘One of the main strengths of having a media agency is having an expert to stay on top of everything, and to make sure we know the right things. We are the experts’ (Williams 2016). It is perhaps this sense of taking pride in their adaptability that allows media agency employees to persist and even flourish in sometimes challenging working conditions. While change and uncertainty in working conditions might be considered negative attributes in other industries, in media planning these conditions foster a sense of empowerment and opportunity. Though the media agency employees I spoke to displayed a reflexive awareness of the challenges of work in their chosen field, none of my interviewees complained or otherwise gave a strong sense of dissatisfaction. Rather, there arose some common phrases that suggested a pattern in the ways in which media planners cope with difficult aspects of their work. The next section will explore the rhetorical strategies adopted by media agency employees to manage the negative elements of their work lives.

The Networked Work Life of Media Agency Employees

In their introduction to issue one of *Media Industries Journal*, the journal’s Editorial Collective offer an abridged summary of the vast transformations in media industries and media technology in recent years, and the pursuant changes to media industry structure: ‘These developments extended the reach of dominant players while simultaneously ushering in a period of unruly innovation that has fostered niche

production, DIY creativity, and novel networks of cultural flows' (Editorial Collective 2014: 1). This emphasis on novel networks is crucial to understanding the working practices of contemporary media agencies. In every interview I conducted, my interviewees stressed the importance of networks and other forms of connectivity. Almost across the board, media agencies are now part of multi or transnational networks, while also commonly being part of large communications holding groups or parent companies. In addition, media agency employees are positioned at the centre of the broader advertising industry; it is via media planners that advertising content is disseminated, and media agencies are the official go-betweens for client brands and media suppliers. This centrality is what makes mapping the specific roles and status of media agencies so difficult, as evidenced in Chapter 1.

Liz McFall addresses the blend of culture and economy that seems to underlie advertising work, drawing from Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) to build on these parts and affording equal analytical weight to the 'shifting networks of organizational and institutional relations through which practitioners negotiate their work' (2011: 195). By advocating for ANT as an analytical approach to studying advertising work, McFall makes space for the many factors that are part of the mechanism of work in media industries. McFall explains her approach to thinking through various spokes of advertising: 'Negotiating through these networks and technologies involves understanding, for instance, product and competitor markets, institutional and professional associations, agency organization and staffing structures, industry standards, and conventions and how these impact advertising work in a rapidly changing environment' (McFall 2011: 195). In her work McFall refers to advertising agencies, yet each of these aspects of advertising practice runs through the central hub

of media agencies. Thus, taking up McFall's use of Actor-Network-Theory to theorise advertising work broadly, the significance of networks as agents is a helpful entry point for understanding media agencies specifically. Interviews with media agency employees engaged in various roles and at different levels underlined the highly networked life of media planning professionals, and indeed of media planning as an industry.

First, several of my interviewees mentioned coordination as a key facet of their jobs. This was true of Account Managers Rebecca Rogers (Zenith Optimedia) and Max Williams (Total Media), as well as IPG Mediabrands' New Business Lead Bich-Van Nguyen. Coordinating the moving parts of multiple local markets as well as multiple specialist teams was presented as nearly a full time job. This was indeed the case for Nguyen, who described her role as New Business Lead is much more about wrangling other members of the agency than actually producing the new business pitch. According to Hackley and Hackley (2013), media organizations are forced to constantly acquire new skills in line with the development of new technologies. While on the one hand recent years have seen broad scale industry convergence, there has at the same time been fragmentation in terms of specific skillsets (ibid.). As a result of this trend toward increased fragmentation of skillsets, media agencies rely heavily on the strength of their networks in order to maintain their central positions in the face of extensive industrial transformation. Jacqueline Franco, Group Account Director at UM, told me, 'I just think it's very very difficult to be on top of everything, so I think the challenge is keeping on top of enough, and having people in your organization to feed in to you because one person can't know everything' (Franco 2016). The extensiveness of the broader agency network is often used as a selling point in attracting client business. Beyond

transparency, this could account for the tendency of my interviewees to emphasize the extensiveness of the broader agency network in their interviews with me.

In an interview with MindShare Account Director Nik Gil, he stressed the importance of the MindShare network, perhaps even above the specific skills of media agencies. Gil exemplified the importance of the MindShare network with an example, ‘Often we get asked a random question and it needs to be answered within 30 minutes, and you’re like, “where can I get that information from?” So to leverage our network is huge.’ (Gil 2016). Our meeting took place in the MindShare canteen, and Gil was able to illustrate the significance of his internal professional network by gesturing to other employees as well as media owners scattered around the room. He also referenced something called the ‘Adaptive Community,’ a knowledge-sharing resource into which all of MindShare’s global offices contribute. This virtual community is afforded physical space in the London office in the ‘Adaptive Loop Room,’ a smaller conference room populated with multiple screens and interactive features that, according to Gil, allows the London headquarters to bring together the remainder of MindShare’s network. This naming of tools and spaces for connecting the moving pieces of the MindShare network shows an eagerness on the part of MindShare as an agency to emphasize its reach as an extensive global network. Though ostensibly a space for MindShare employees to share and connect, the Adaptive Loop Room is also a physical representation of the agency’s network and capabilities, and a signifier to current and potential clients of MindShare’s stable position at the centre of these information flows.

Relationships are important not just in maintaining smooth flows and knowledge sharing within the media agency’s internal networks, but also in helping media planners maintain their expertise. Lisa Ly is a Paid Social Planner at MediaCom, who works on a

specialist team with responsibilities across several different client accounts. She is able to service these different clients in large part because of media owner relationships. ‘What really helps,’ Ly told me, ‘is having a good relationship with the suppliers, and they keep us informed with what’s coming up’ (Ly 2016). In order to retain and win new client business, it is important for an agency like MediaCom to assert their market knowledge and media savvy. Therefore, her reliance on her network of media suppliers allows Ly and her team to be ‘first to know,’ and to maintain the all-important perception of expertise. This was echoed by Gil, who told me, ‘I think it’s really easy to keep in touch in terms of products due to relationships we have with media publishers. So we’re preferred partners with say Google, etc., so we know we’re going to get the latest updates and Beta tests before most people’ (Gil 2016). Sipesteijn further echoed the need to maintain close relationships with media suppliers, explaining, ‘we make sure that we meet with suppliers on a regular basis, for them to come and refresh their creds and tell us what’s happening. So we have a weekly meeting with at least one media supplier’ (Sipesteijn 2016). Later in our interview, Ly expressed a sense of certainty that media agencies will continue to expand, and will not find their expert status challenged. This again was attributed to the strength and power of media agency networks: ‘What we have as an agency is better rates, better relationships with suppliers. And because we work across all different brands and industries and markets, we have the learnings that they [brands] wouldn’t have exposure to’ (Ly 2016). Ly, Gil and Sipesteijn all attributed their teams’ abilities to stay on top of industry developments to their strong relationships with media suppliers. These relationships mean, for example, that Ly’s team will be among the first to know about developments in the social media space,

allowing MediaCom's social team to keep pace with the changing media environment. The ability to keep up with rapid change is a vital part of media agency success.

In addition to networks between media agency employees and media owner partners, media planning professionals also form networks within one another. High rates of employee turnover in media planning contribute to the expansion of networks. My interviews revealed that the industry is fluid, but insular; therefore, as alluded to in Chapter 2, churn amongst agency employees is not necessarily viewed as a negative. Several of my interviewees have worked at more than one media agency during their careers, and described this breadth of experience within the industry positively. Jambren mentioned the issue of turnover, noting, on the one hand, 'I don't think clients are as loyal anymore. Where you could easily once have a client for five to ten years, a client of three years is a long time now and after that it is probably not going to end very well most of the time' (Jambren 2016). She also pointed to the other side of the issue of turnover, as it applies to agency employees. 'People are not as loyal in general to their companies anymore – people are moving about more, more relationships are being created, meaning that the companies benefit in the end from optimized performance' (ibid.). Jambren and others are forced to recognize the reality of turnover within the industry but are able to locate in this reality both negative and positive effects. The importance of building and maintaining networks within media planning means that longevity at a single company is not idealized in the same way it might be in other media industries. Media agency employees move from company to company not because they have to, but because it will advance their personal work networks, and therefore, in an industry where networks are highly valuable, their careers.

‘It’s a Challenge, but it’s an Opportunity as Well’: Industry Lore in Media Planning

In interviews, the media planning professionals I spoke with expressed outward satisfaction in their jobs. It was evident from the way they spoke and the content of the interviews that most did not want to be presented as being personally unhappy or exploited. Yet long hours, tight deadlines, and occasionally arduous working conditions are a reality of life for media agency employees. This raises the question of how media planning professionals justify such conditions and what makes them tolerable. One possible answer was the widespread use of industry lore in media planning. Timothy Havens’ notion of media industry lore suggests that individuals employed in media management capacities adopt rationalizing practices as a means of negotiating their positions in relation to external structural forces (Havens 2014). This can be seen in media agency employees’ tendency toward the use of certain euphemisms to describe or explain away apparent structural problems.

In my interviews, the recurrent use of the word ‘resource’ was one such framing device. Rather than complaining directly about long hours and hectic working conditions, several of my interviewees instead talked about issues of ‘resource,’ using the word as shorthand for being stretched too thin. Account Manager Max Williams told me, ‘Having to work on multiple clients can be time consuming and can be quite stressful in terms of juggling resource. But it can be very rewarding as well.’ (Williams 2016). The rhetorical decision to frame potentially negative aspects of working life in euphemistic terms was common across the interviews I conducted. Williams described a stressful situation as also being ‘very rewarding,’ suggesting that the benefits of a

dynamic job outweigh the stressors. Later in the same interview, Williams explained his position further:

I do feel that working on multiple clients gets you the most knowledge in a wider arena. So for example, one of our clients is offline only, and one of our clients is online only. If you were to only work on one you wouldn't have the knowledge that the other one would bring. So it's a challenge but it is also an opportunity as well.

(Williams 2016)

Richard Wright also spoke of 'a resource issue,' saying, 'There's always going to be a resource issue. Clients want you to deliver something in as little time as possible, with the least money possible to achieve what you need to achieve' (Wright 2016). Rebecca Rogers, meanwhile, was more direct in her critique of some of the drawbacks of working in media planning, and the issue of 'resource,' in particular. She told me, 'Big clients exploit agencies because they know their brand name holds equity for the media agency. So agencies run big clients at a loss and have to thinly resource clients that drive actual revenue; it puts a huge burden on employees' (Rogers 2016). Despite her frank admission of sometimes-problematic working conditions, Rogers nevertheless adopted the standard byword for expressing a sense of being overworked. Adam Kanter also spoke of resource and its financial implications; 'On certain pieces of business,' Kanter told me, 'you're not going to be able to put much resource toward it, and you're not going to put as much into the relationship, not because it's not important to you, but you're just not getting paid enough' (Kanter 2016). That each of these people chose to express the setbacks of media agency account financing and working hours via the same byword suggests a broader opting in on the part of media agency employees to a kind of industry lore that allows potential downsides to be explained away as simply part of the makeup of media agency work.

Similarly, by adopting the rhetoric of challenges-as-opportunities, media agency employees are able to frame their work in positive terms, even when faced with demanding conditions. Though Wright maligned the emphasis on ROI as being an impediment to creative work, he recognized that this focus on measurability in new media technologies has enabled media planning agencies to gain increased preeminence over their erstwhile rivals, creative agencies. ‘Because increasingly the ways you communicate are all paid, it all falls under a media agency’s budget,’ he explained. ‘So it’s not so much a challenge as an opportunity for media planning, for media agencies to take control of that’ (Wright 2016). Wright’s echoing of Williams’ (2016) ‘challenge and opportunity’ verbiage reflects a tendency among media agency employees to adopt framing devices that emphasize their ability to adapt and succeed in a changing environment.

It is commonplace for a media agency to have a motto or epithet that the agency is intended to fulfill. This is another device, operationalized on a company level to provide a point of differentiation, as well as a company ethos for employees to follow. In most cases, the employees I interviewed mentioned the company ethos and spoke positively of how this impacts their work. Scott Holmes, for example, mentioned his agency’s ‘Curiosity Works’ positioning, saying, ‘our position is curiosity, and to be honest that’s a good point of view for any job, but in a media agency where things are changing every day, it’s fundamental’ (Holmes 2016). Holmes has worked at UM for over ten years and mentioned several rebrandings of the agency philosophy during that time. His appraisal of the agency’s latest position shows his willingness to represent the agency brand in his personal rhetoric, as well as his personal application of the ethos to his own working life. When asked how he copes with the pace of change, Holmes’

response was, ‘it helps to be naturally curious’ (ibid.). Initiative’s Adam Kanter similarly made sure to comment on what makes Initiative different from other agencies, saying:

I’ve been at Initiative for the last year and a half I think it’s a culture that the agency has and that’s down to our size. We can work with anyone and we’re happy to work with anyone, but we’re best for the challenger brands, because we see ourselves as a bit of a challenger as well. And I think that’s certainly where we thrive and we get it. We’re nimble, we’re hungry and we roll up our sleeves.

(Kanter 2016)

Natasha Sipesteijn showed a similar adherence to her agency’s ethos, describing her work as part of Zenith Optimedia’s content team within the context of the company’s official ethos; ‘We’re the ROI Agency,’ she told me, ‘and any recommendation that we make should be really qualitatively sound, but with a strong quantitative basis.’ (Sipesteijn 2016). Sipesteijn’s remarks reflect her internalization of the company positioning. Measurability is a key feature of all media agency work, but for Sipesteijn it is linked specifically to Zenith’s company ethos. Holmes, Kanter and Sipesteijn’s internalization of their respective agency’s positioning reflects the willingness of media agency employees to opt in to industry lore in order to bolster their agencies’ status and account for aspects of their work lives.

Conclusions

Early in the interview stage of my research, my access to a mid-sized, London media agency was rescinded due to pitch confidentiality. Although this setback was certainly a blow, I was not entirely surprised. The fiercely competitive and secretive nature of media companies is a key area of focus across existing work on the creative industries. Indeed, from my own time working in media planning, I was already well aware of the secrecy surrounding the all-important pitch. Most of my interview subjects mentioned

the significance of pitching, although only one was directly employed in a new business role. This emphasis on pitching exemplifies the ‘churn’ typical of media agency relationships; clients, as well as employees, very rarely form multi-decade relationships with one particular agency. The escalation of digital media in the years immediately following served only to increase this sense of competition. And yet, as I have explored throughout this chapter, the media planners I interviewed appeared largely untroubled by the uncertainty of working life in the media planning sector. Far from being a drawback, flexibility in roles is commonly presented as a positive aspect of media agency work. My interviewees were acutely aware of the demands of their jobs but did not on the whole express dissatisfaction with the nature of their work lives. Instead, issues of uncertainty and flux are embraced and even welcomed. As Grainge and Johnson have suggested, contemporary promotional labour has to be ‘flexible, adaptable, and multiskilled’ (2015: 58), but for media agency employees, these challenges are presented positively, as an opportunity afforded by the specificities of media planning work life. This is because the ability to adapt is what allows media agencies as a whole to maintain their power positions.

David Hesmondhalgh locates the source of risk in cultural industry professions in its dependency on audiences. He calls work in the cultural industries ‘risky business,’ and goes on to attribute this riskiness to the fact that audiences ‘use cultural commodities in highly volatile and unpredictable ways’ (2007: 19). For Hesmondhalgh, this level of risk leaves media workers vulnerable to exploitation. It is certainly true that media agencies’ central selling propositions is their ability to connect consumers to brands. My informant interviews revealed that media planning professionals are acutely aware of the volume of change that characterizes their jobs, including volatile audience

behaviour, and high levels of churn in media agency relationships. Despite this, these conditions of uncertainty were not necessarily considered a threat to the stability of their jobs or to the practices of media planning. Instead, my interviewees' discursive approach to uncertainty was to map this notion of flux on to a feeling of opportunity and enfranchisement, more in line with a Deuzian approach to liquidity. When I asked Lisa Ly to reflect on her time in the industry, she immediately responded, 'it's amazing to see the speed that media's grown. It's been just a really incredible journey, to be part of that. And to see where it's going.' (Ly 2016). Deuze suggests that the constant shifting nature of media work can be empowering for media workers (Deuze 2007). Indeed, in talking to Ly and other media agency employees, it was evident that there was often a feeling of optimism and enfranchisement when facing the prospect of change in terms of a shifting media and technology landscape, and how this environment funnels down to individual working experiences. This stems from the fact that media planning, as an industry, has the challenge of mapping audience behaviour built in to its foundation. Media planning agencies, while ostensibly entrusted with the planning and buying of media airtime, are also responsible for work relating to consumer targeting and deciphering human behaviour. As we will see in Chapter 5, media agencies are careful to make a public display of navigating consumer behaviour on behalf of and for the benefit of their clients. This was also evident in the way my interviewees described their roles and responsibilities, and the status of media agencies more broadly. There is a confidence among media agency employees that media agencies are uniquely positioned to withstand the challenges of a changing media ecosystem. In the interviews I conducted this sense of confidence, as well as an overall expression of job satisfaction, permeated

throughout. This confidence is crucial, as the livelihood of media agencies depends in their ability to sell their expertise in navigating change.

As this chapter has shown, media agency employees are largely protective of their roles. Whether based in industry lore or not, this apparent protectiveness is exemplified by media planning professionals' eagerness to discuss the links between media agency work and the success of client brands. At least in interviews, the uncertainty of media agency work-life was not expressed as being a problem for agency employees. This is a major departure from the precarity of work as outlined in existing research regarding other sectors the media and promotional industries. Contrary to other fields in the broader landscape of media, promotion and the cultural industries, the ability to cope with and even thrive in uncertain conditions is intrinsic to work life in media agencies.

CHAPTER 4. THE CIRCULATION OF EXPERTISE BY MEDIA AGENCIES

As noted in the previous chapter, the notion of consumers as in some way driving the work of media planning was notably absent in the practitioner interviews conducted as part of this PhD. Indeed, questions about consumers or consumer behaviour yielded minimal responses from interviewees. Despite this lack of reflexive discussion about the role of the consumer, media planning is, at its core, about driving connections to consumers. The lack of discussion around consumer behaviour in the informant interviews conducted for this thesis suggests that the notion of the consumer acts a structuring absence in media agency work; the consumer is ever present, and as such an unspoken, quotidian factor in the work lives of media agency employees. In informant interviews, the idea of the consumer proved to be absent in a reflexive capacity, illustrating that internal discussions around media agency work tend not to highlight the consumer as a concept. Contrastingly, when looking at the way media agencies present their work to external parties, consumer behaviour returns as a core feature. This chapter will draw on two research reports regarding consumer behaviour, investigating the ways media agencies use these reports to position themselves and to sell their expertise. The two reports utilized herein feature highlights from proprietary research conducted by in one case, a global media agency, in the other the research arm of a larger network. Both can be understood as examples of what John Caldwell dubs ‘semi-embedded industry deep texts,’ documents that circulate ostensibly within the industry, but also have an external-facing capacity (Caldwell 2008). This chapter, therefore, will address the particular industry logic at work in approaching the idea of

the consumer in contemporary media planning. In addition, it will illustrate the manner in which media agencies produce and distribute proprietary research reports in order to display their particular insight into consumer behaviour. Media agencies can be seen to circulate and mobilize reports as a way of selling expertise.

Research Meets Pageantry: Launch and Distribution of Agency Reports

In December 2013 media agency Universal McCann Worldwide (as in Chapter 3, commonly referred to as UM or UMWW) issued a report summarizing the key findings of the seventh installment of its proprietary social media survey, Wave. The introduction to the report explains that the Wave survey was first conceived in 2006, ‘because we wanted to know if social media lived up to the hype’ (UMWW 2013). Universal McCann Worldwide is a mid-size media planning agency operating in a highly competitive landscape. As of 2013, it was ranked eighth in global media agency standings based on a 2013 billings estimate of \$19.2billion, according to adbrands.net.⁴⁷ UM is the largest of three ‘Full Service Global Media Agencies’ in the IPG Mediabrands network, the others being Initiative and BPN. The IPG Mediabrands umbrella also includes a number of specialist agencies linked in some way to media planning, including Ansible, a mobile marketing agency, Healix, a healthcare specific media agency, and Reprise, specializing in search (IPG Mediabrands 2017). IPG Mediabrands, meanwhile, is the media arm of

⁴⁷ Adbrands.net is an online resource that provides company profiles and business updated for different sectors of the advertising industry.

Interpublic Group, a larger marketing conglomerate that also includes creative and PR agencies.⁴⁸

Like other media agencies, UM is primarily responsible for overseeing the delivery of advertising material by deciding where client brands' advertisements will appear, negotiating rates, and buying space from media owners. Nevertheless, as discussed in Chapter 1, in recent years the purview of media planning agencies has expanded in response to an increasingly varied and evolving mediascape, and UMWW is no exception. The rapid development of the social media sphere, starting around 2005 and continuing unabated, has yielded specialized social teams in most of the larger media agencies, as well as independent social-only agencies. IPG Mediabrands, for example, includes a specialist social media agency called Mediabrands Society. In addition to the development of social planning teams or specialized social media agencies, almost all media planning agencies also have partnerships with companies that conduct surveys on topics like social media usage (such as GfK's Social Media Intelligence Center). Some agencies have sought to bolster their portfolios further by expanding their in-house research teams and conducting social media specific research of their own.

The launch of UMWW's Wave survey in 2006 is reflective of these changes. As the first study of its kind, Wave is a major selling point for UMWW's global network, and so the launch of each new survey is highly publicized. The on-going project is led by the London-based EMEA⁴⁹ research team but involves the participation of UM offices in

⁴⁸ See <https://www.interpublic.com/our-agencies> for a full list of marketing disciplines and agencies within the Interpublic Group conglomerate.

⁴⁹ EMEA is an acronym commonly used to abbreviate the business region of Europe, Middle East, and Asia. UM London is the regional headquarters for UMWW in EMEA.

65 countries, which, for the 2013 report, together surveyed 48,945 Internet users (UMWW 2013). Thus, in addition to staking a claim as ‘the world’s largest and longest running social media study,’ UMWW’s Wave includes the added commendation of being conducted in-house, as a consolidated global effort by the agency’s research team (ibid.). The Wave survey, and its propriety, in-house nature, therefore helps to distinguish UM in a situation of parity. Accordingly, it is highly publicized as a resource available to clients of UMWW.

To announce the arrival of the results of the seventh Wave survey, UMWW hosted launch events in certain key markets within the agency’s network. The first two events were held in New York and London, both on the 24th of September 2013. Due to the time difference, the UK event was the first official launch, fitting also because the Wave survey originated in and continues to be run out of UMWW’s London offices.⁵⁰ After contacting an existing contact at UM London, I was able to secure an invitation to attend the UK launch, which took place in the screening room of the Film and Television Museum just off London’s Strand. Walking into the screening room, posters and artifacts from the history of UK television seemed to remind attendees of the evolutionary nature of popular media. Present at the event were agency employees, senior representatives from client brands, and media owner partners. Attendees arrived and helped themselves to tea, coffee, and pastries, making small talk and mingling before being asked to take their seats. The moderator made introductory remarks before introducing his ‘close personal friend and colleague, the founder of Wave, ‘Professor’ Glen Parker.’ Parker, the Head of Research for UM’s London-headquartered EMEA

⁵⁰ Glen Parker, the originator of Wave, is, at the time of writing, still presently based out of the UM London office.

team, is known throughout the UMWW network for his role in creating the Wave survey. Parker's 30-minute presentation was an overview of the findings of Wave 7. This report, titled *Wave 7: Cracking the Social Code*, was later circulated to all attendees, and then made available publicly online. The event itself was filmed, and later uploaded to UMWW's dedicated Wave microsite and the UMWW YouTube channel.⁵¹ The launch event and release of the *Wave 7: Cracking the Social Code* report were deliberately conducted in such a way as to reinforce the importance of the survey, and to broadcast the availability of a new set of data, and therefore a fresh batch of insights for UM's current and potential future clients. The guest list for the London launch included not just clients, but representatives from media owner partners as well, who could be expected to spread the word about Wave 7 amongst other clients and even other, rival agencies. This is a further example of the importance in media planning of maintaining and utilizing networks of people, as outlined in Chapter 3.

While UM can claim Parker's Wave survey as the first in-house study of its kind, agency produced research reports like *Wave 7: Cracking the Social Code* are not unique to UMWW. In recent years it has become commonplace if not in fact de rigeur for media planning agencies to produce their own research reports, based either on proprietary surveys or data culled from external sources and probed in-house for insights. In addition to UM Worldwide's Wave, some other examples include: MediaCom's biennial *Blink* magazine, Havas Worldwide's Prosumer Reports, also issued twice yearly, and Mindshare North America's annual *Culture Vulture* trend report. In January 2017, a

⁵¹ Video footage from the Wave 7 launch, as well as previous and subsequent launches is available via. The Wave microsite can be accessed at <http://wave.umww.com/>; UMWW's YouTube channel is https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCriwTk1J_EMdWCGwKvmFx4g

press release hosted on Mineshareworld.com announced the release of the latest instantiation of the annual *Culture Vulture* trend report, along with an overview of the methods and intended purpose of the report:

Mindshare North America's annual Culture Vulture Trends report is here, unveiling the latest consumer shifts and cultural trends forecast to grow over the next year. Mindshare NA, the global media agency network that is part of WPP, uses a proprietary research approach for Culture Vulture in addition to third party resources (such as government data and behavioural research). The proprietary research includes a survey of 2,000 North American consumers. Now in its sixth year, the annual report does a deep dive into behavioural trends and insights—spanning demographic shifts, media consumption, sociological insights, and much more – including the role for brands. Culture Vulture is led by Mindshare NA's Insights group, dedicated to uncovering and leveraging consumer insights for clients and teams across North America.

(Mindshare 2017)

This description and methodology is typical of the research reports produced and used by media agencies. Somewhat atypical of the Mindshare example is the decision to make *Culture Vulture* North America-specific. This stands in contrast to UM's Wave study and Havas Worldwide's Prosumer study, both of which include research across a range of global markets (the Wave survey included 65 countries as of 2013, and the Havas Prosumer study included 29 countries as of 2014). *Blink*, the insights magazine produced by MediaCom, originated in the agency's Scandinavian offices, before expanding to include input from the agency's global network in 2010. These four examples represent only a selection of the reports or magazines produced and distributed by media agencies or their affiliated research groups. Almost all media agencies will utilize proprietary or semi-proprietary published reports of this kind, produced on a semi-regular basis.

These materials tend to follow similar distribution patterns to that outlined above for the Wave 7 study: after an initial internal launch aimed at agency employees, clients,

and media owner partners, a version of the report or magazine will be made public on the agency website or dedicated microsite. What often follows is a kind of broader discursive industrial uptake. Agency produced reports are discussed by industry journalists in the print and online editions of publications like *AdWeek*, *Brand Republic*, and *Ad Age*.⁵² From there the reports spread throughout the industry and beyond. Through this process, these research reports, purportedly intended as internal or partner-facing documents, consistently move beyond their ostensible audiences via a kind of predetermined halo effect. With this broader dissemination of agency findings now commonplace, these research reports implicitly operate under a dual purpose. They can be understood first and foremost as intended for intra-industry distribution, i.e. amongst agency employees and partners. However, they also serve to provide an orchestrated ‘behind the scenes’ vantage point into the industry from without. This chapter will unpack two such dually steeped media agency research reports, selected as exemplars of the manner in which media agencies theorise their roles in semi-public contexts. In order to understand the particular nature of these reports, this chapter will use John Caldwell’s notion of industrial sense-making (Caldwell 2008). The rhetoric and iconography used in these reports is illustrative of media agencies’ attempts to display a view on and specialist knowledge of consumer behaviour.

Semi-embedded Industry Deep Texts

When it comes to studying the production culture of screen industries, John Caldwell notes that it is important to pay, ‘particular attention to any available evidence of . . .

⁵² A good example of this is an article published in October 2017 on AdWorld online, titled “The Future is Female According to Havas Prosumer Study” (AdWorld 2017).

entrenched interpretive frameworks and self-analysis' (Caldwell 2008: 2). He suggests that locating examples of such frameworks and self-analysis is useful as a way of supplementing information about the industry gleaned through other methods, like analysis of corporate materials or in-person interviews, both of which Caldwell warns can be 'highly coded, managed, and inflected' (ibid.). The same premise can and should be applied to the advertising and media planning industry. Not unlike the Hollywood screen industries, advertising is sometimes viewed with a kind of suspicious watchfulness, with the assumption that what happens behind closed doors is a secretive process, whose inner workings are available to and understood by only a select clique. This notion of any industry as a set, monolithic entity has been frequently challenged by media industries and production studies researchers (Havens, Lotz and Tinic 2009, Holt and Perren 2011, Mayer, Banks and Caldwell 2009, Caldwell 2008). Caldwell points out the folly of subscribing to the 'overdetermined cultural 'mystique' that continues to invoke the industry's decades-old quasi-medieval authority about how the industry works, what it means, and what 'really' goes on 'behind the scenes'" (2008: 10). Mark Deuze, meanwhile, would ask us to remember that those working in the media industries are particularly vulnerable to the same circumstances of 'liquid modernity' that make the contemporary world an uncertain place for all its inhabitants. Indeed, for media agency professionals, 'the blurring of real or perceived boundaries between makers and users in an increasingly participatory media culture challenges consensual notions of what it means to work in the media industries,' forcing a reassessment of the role of agencies and their employees (Deuze 2011: 145). Helen Powell goes so far as to suggest that advertising professionals sometimes 'muddle in their own mystique,' suffering from reflexive inertia in the face of these uncertain conditions (Powell 2013:

31). Contrary to Powell's statement, the proliferation of agency-produced industrial theorising suggests sincere attempts to think critically about the turbulent media landscape, and the role and status of media planning within it. In response to the fluid conditions of media work, as underscored by Deuze, many media agencies have allocated significant resource to self-theorising in an attempt to manage and adapt to the state of flux in which they operate (Deuze 2011). For media agencies engaged in this kind of self-theorising, it is advantageous to publicize these projects in adaptability; the ability to evolve in time with shifting conditions is essential. Media agency research reports therefore serve both an internal and external-facing purpose.

Returning to John Caldwell, it is helpful to begin to understand publications like UMWW's *Wave 7: Cracking the Social Code* report as an example of what Caldwell refers to as 'embedded industrial sense making and trade theorizing' (Caldwell 2011: 553). Every iteration of the Wave survey comes with a report highlighting key findings, and these reports are publicly available for those who search for it. Despite this, the fact remains that UMWW's Wave reports are unlikely to be viewed by anyone not in some way connected to the advertising industry. Furthermore, the complete Wave data set can only be accessed by UM employees. In his opening remarks at the Wave 7 launch, Glen Parker declared to the audience that UMWW employees in the agency's various offices are well-versed in the latest Wave findings, and all attend training sessions on using the database software. Meanwhile, current and prospective clients are informed about Wave from pitch stages onward, as the proprietary survey is one of UM's main points of differentiation. Parker further confirmed to the launch audience that UM clients correctly expect an annual data refresh, and often inquire about the next data set's availability. Thus, while the highlights report is accessible to anyone who wishes to seek

it out, it is likely to be used for the most part by those involved in some way in the media planning industry. Turning to Caldwell's definition of Hollywood's semi-embedded deep texts, it is apparent that the same nomenclature can be applied to the *Wave 7* report, and the other media planning industry publications described above. Caldwell states that these texts 'function as forms of symbolic communication between media professionals. Yet these texts and rituals are simultaneously designed to spur and stimulate ancillary discussion and eventual awareness in the public sphere' (ibid.: 346). The 'symbolic communication' of media agency research reports offers a unique opportunity to unpack the means by which media planning professionals make sense of their own work (ibid.). At the same time, the semi-public nature of these reports means that they can also be utilized to understand how the industry chooses to represent itself in an external facing capacity.

Caldwell references Paul Willis' 1981 'call to find and articulate examples of critical theory embedded within the everyday of workers' experiences, that is, through the pursuit of a kind of indigenous cultural theory that operates outside of academia' (Caldwell 2011: 551). Though he is referring, as before, to workers in the Hollywood entertainment industry, the media planning and advertising industries are rife with examples of this kind of 'indigenous cultural theory' (ibid.). Caldwell notes that semi-embedded deep texts are often designed to act as jumping-off points for 'ancillary discussion,' whether these discussions are inter or intra-group in nature (ibid.: 346). Certainly, the *Wave 7* report asks its audience to consider its implications and implement them on a broader scale, as a kind of new media planning paradigm. The statistics and examples featured in the report are included in service of a specific notion regarding brands and consumer behaviour. The crux of the report, summarized on the

very first line of the first page, is simply stated as follows: ‘Social behaviour is driven by the same deep seated consumer needs that people have in the offline world’ (UMWW 2013: 2). This statement, taken on its own, would seem at first to undermine the primacy of media planning agencies as conduits into the complex realm of consumer behaviour. Why, then, would the head of research for a major global media agency wish to propose this kind of ontological shift? In the next section, I will unpack the contents of the *Wave 7* report, along with a contemporaneous release from Havas Worldwide (referred to henceforth as Havas), in order to understand how these two agency produced publications utilize research findings to reinforce their positions as central figures in the promotional industries ecosystem.

Wave 7, Hashtagnation and Changing Representations of the Consumer

The Wave 7 launch event and subsequent report is one instance of a semi-public, critical industrial practice. The key takeaway from the *Wave 7* report, emphasized repeatedly throughout, is that online social behaviour is driven by basic human needs, and a familiarity with these needs is much more valuable than the latest media and marketing trends. This may seem like a disadvantageous point for the agency to highlight to current and potential clients; media agencies like UMWW often position themselves as trend experts. Yet, this counterintuitive turn in the Wave 7 report shows a willingness on the part of the agency and the industry to question their effectiveness, and to evolve in response to constantly changing conditions. After using Wave survey data to make the core point that social behaviour can be distilled down to five basic human needs, the report eventually circles back to the importance of the agency role.

While the significance of these basic social needs may outweigh the passing importance of trends, implicit in the report is the notion that UM is eminently equipped to recognize how best to utilize media to fulfill these needs.

The fact that *Wave 7: Cracking the Social Code* and other examples of the media planning industry's self-theorising documents are publicly available is not an accident. In its suggestion that new technology and the most up-to-the-minute trends are secondary in significance to basic human behaviour, *Wave 7* turns weakness into strength; for potential and current clients, this counterintuitive turn actually serves to illustrate that the agency possesses the reflexive self-awareness to question its own practices and adapt. The external-facing purpose of the *Wave 7* report is to prove the agency's agility, and its aptitude for navigating consumer behaviour, which can appear inconsistent and unruly. The other audience of the *Wave 7* report is agency employees. UMWW employees face the challenge of making sense of their work in the face of a constantly shifting industry landscape. The conclusions of the *Wave 7* report are emboldening for agency employees, who must work to retain a foothold in the uncertain landscape of contemporary media planning. As mentioned above, UMWW employees are encouraged to become experts in using the Wave database, and to familiarize themselves with the core constructs of the *Wave 7* report. In this way, they are able to arm themselves with a sort of insider knowledge, bolstered by the conclusions outlined by Parker in the *Wave 7* launch report.

The cover of the *Wave 7* report, and the first slide to appear onscreen during the launch event, depicts a cipher-style codebreaking wheel. On the outer edges of the wheel are letters, numbers, and standard punctuation, as well as the immediately recognizable thumbs up Facebook 'Like' icon, and several other common emoji that signify the social

media sphere. The innermost part of the wheel is split into five equal sections, each with a simple pictogram. We will learn later in the report that these represent the 5 basic social needs, each of which, according to *Wave 7*, drives a certain type of online consumer behaviour.

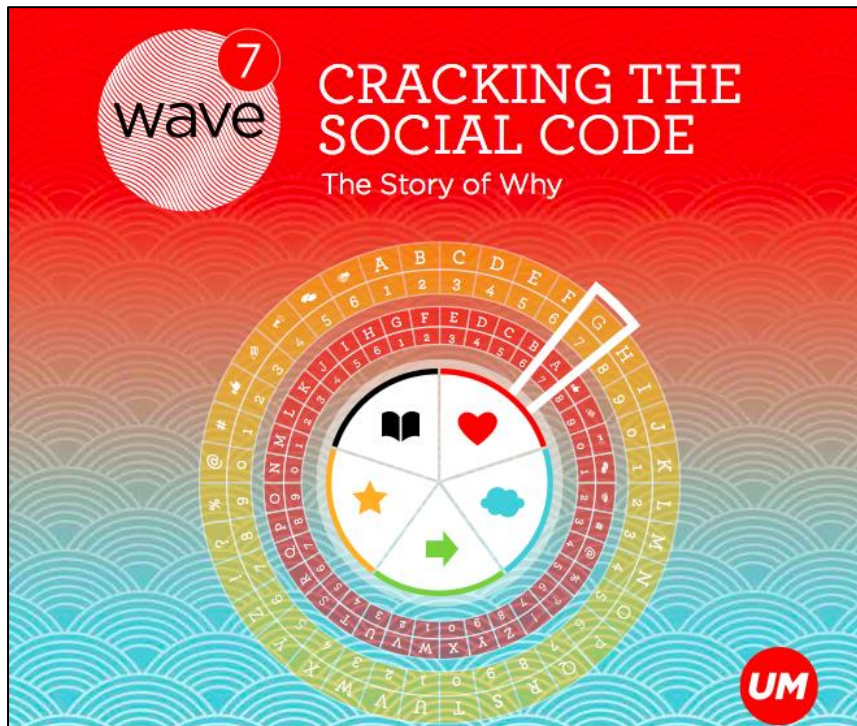


Figure 4-1 Cover slide, UMWW's *Wave 7* report

The image of the codebreaking wheel comes up repeatedly throughout the presentation. The implication of this symbolism is that the results of the Wave 7 survey are a sort of statistics-driven code, which, once deciphered become a straightforward guide, linking brand objectives to online consumer behaviour. Meanwhile, the research team at UMWW possesses the knowhow to decipher the code and put the results to work. For UMWW employees, these conclusions are optimistic. The parameters of the realm of consumer behaviour have expanded hugely in recent years, encompassing the vast digital realm. Media planning professionals are now faced with choosing between

seemingly infinite outlets and permutations for reaching consumers. All of this could easily become overwhelming or chaotic, or fall into the muddled, black box type space explained away with algorithms. In its insistence that all social media behaviour is driven by one of five inherent human needs, the *Wave 7* report asks UMWW employees, clients, and media owner partners first to recognize and then to reconsider the nature of this unruly social mediascape.

Early in the presentation, two slides display a timeline of the seven Wave studies completed thus far; the report summarizes the implications of its findings as follows:

Wave 7 (2013): has told us that the insights we get from an understanding of social behaviour aren't just relevant in the social space but are, in fact, inherent human truths that underpin consumers' relationships with products and brands. Therefore, we need to understand how to leverage these insights using all brand assets, both above and below the line and in the digital space, to create a coherent and compelling whole.

(UMWW 2013)

In other words, consumers have inherent, consistent needs, and every online activity can be mapped onto one of these needs. According to the *Wave 7* report, all that is needed is the proper cipher to help match brand objectives to the relevant need, and the rest falls into place. The conclusion that all of the consumer behaviour taking place in the chaotic and capricious online space can in fact be linked to five stable human needs is an empowering conceptual tool for agency workers.

The perception of the consumer is a key tenet in media agency practice. Every action that takes place within the walls of a media agency is in some way driven by the notion of the consumer, and the ability to impact or predict consumer decision making. Reports like *Wave 7* show us that the idea of the consumer is a site of unease, an area that is constantly evolving and in motion. Surveys, reports, presentations, discussions, archetype workshops, brainstorming sessions – all of these are examples of allocated

internal self-theorising spaces, where media industry professionals attempt to navigate the intermediary space where media and advertising are linked to consumer behaviour. Contemporary industry representations of ‘the consumer’ suggest an understanding on the part of industry researchers that consumers are active, media-savvy participants. They are more empowered to make decisions based on the aforementioned value exchange. Accordingly, the *Wave 7* report emphasizes reaching consumers by ‘build(ing) strategies that foster a mutually beneficial value exchange between brands and consumers’ (UMWW 2013: 59). *Wave 7*’s representation of the contemporary consumer suggests that UMWW clients should forego previous strategies of interruption and persuasion, in favour of a balanced relationship between brands and consumers. This notion of a value exchange between brands and consumers arises again, but in a different way, in *Hashtagnation*, a research report produced by Havas.

Havas Media is one of UMWW’s primary competitors. Formerly known as MPG, Havas Media ranked ninth as of 2014 in Adbrands.net’s list of global media agencies, one spot below UMWW (Adbrands.net 2015). The adbrands.net company profile for Havas Media notes that Havas Media’s global net billings in 2013 totaled \$17.7 billion (ibid.).⁵³ Like UMWW, Havas Media circulates regular research reports based on proprietary survey data conducted by the research arm of Havas Media’s parent company, Havas Group, which is often referred to simply as Havas. Where UMWW has its annual *Wave* survey, Havas runs a proprietary study on an annual basis entitled the *Havas Prosumer Report*. The *Wave* survey and the *Prosumer Report* vary slightly in that

⁵³ Adbrands.net’s media agency rankings are based in part on figures reported by RECMA. RECMA – which stands for Research Company Evaluating the Media Agency Industry – is an independent company that provides benchmarking information for media agencies and other advertising agencies.

Wave is run strictly by global media agency UMWW, while the Prosumer Report is run by the consumer research arm of the Havas network of advertising and marketing companies, of which Havas Media is a component part. The Prosumer Report is utilized and publicized across the companies within the Havas Group umbrella, including Havas Media. This relationship of Havas Media to the Havas Group is a good example of the ways in which media agencies exist both as their own separate entities, and at the same time often as part of larger communications companies. Chapter 1 touched on the structuring and re-structure of Havas Group as an example of the continuing mutability of the space within which media planning exists and operates. Havas began as a full-service agency before separating out into two business units, Havas Creative Group and Havas Media Group. In 2017 Havas announced it would dissolve these divisions, uniting the two branches under one business entity, known as the Havas Group. In tandem with this restructuring, Havas Group introduced its ‘Havas Villages,’ corporate spaces in key cities that host all Havas agencies in one physical space. In London, the Havas Village, completed in 2017, houses 24 separate yet interconnected Havas Group agencies, including Havas Media (*Campaign* 2017). The relationship of Havas Media to the Havas Group is reflective of the difficulty of separating part from whole, and the overlapping interests of different types of agencies with the sphere of advertising and promotion. All of the agencies within the Havas Group umbrella have access to and utilize Havas’ Prosumer survey. The Prosumer Report therefore takes on a third level of significance as a discursive intra-industrial artifact, reflective of the complexities of the contemporary promotional industries landscape.

In the same way that UMWW publicizes the Wave survey, Havas Media ensures that the Prosumer Report is widely known and circulated amongst its agency employees,

clients and partners. The Prosumer Reports live online on Havas' research blog, *The Mag*.⁵⁴ *The Mag* operates as a showcase for news and updates from across the Havas agencies, including a 'research' section dedicated to Prosumer Reports. The first Prosumer Report was issued by Havas in 2010, but, according to Havas' *The Mag*, the Prosumer category has been an area of study for Havas since 2004. According to Havas, 'Prosumers are important because they influence the brand choices and consumption behaviours of others. What Prosumers are doing today, mainstream consumers are likely to be doing six to 18 months from now' (Havas 2014). As a media agency dealing with media planning and therefore consumer targeting, it follows that Havas Media in particular would wish to utilize and publicize the results of the Prosumer Report. The Prosumer Reports are featured on Havas Media's website, with updates on new reports broadcast via Havas Media's twitter. Print copies are distributed throughout Havas Media's offices and displayed prominently in reception areas and meeting rooms where they are likely to be seen by clients and other visitors to Havas Media's offices in the Havas Village. The 2014 Prosumer study was conducted in partnership with Market Probe International, who surveyed 10,574 people aged sixteen and above, in 29 markets globally (Havas 2014). From this annual cache of data, the Havas research team selects key topics, and releases a new Prosumer report every six months.

Havas' Prosumer Reports and UMWW's Wave reports are both examples of semi-embedded promotional industry deep texts. As such, they share a number of key characteristics. To begin, both are dually articulated, with a simultaneous internal and external positioning. Like UMWW's Wave survey, the contents of Havas' semi-regular

⁵⁴ Havas Group's *The Mag* can be accessed at <http://mag.havas.com/>.

Prosumer Reports circulate internally within the Havas Media agency teams, as well as externally, to the agency's surrounding milieu of clients and related partners. As with the Wave 7 report, the biannual Prosumer Reports are also publicly available online to anyone who might wish to find them but are intended primarily for agency employees and clients. A further similarity lies in the fact that, as with the Wave dataset, the complete cache of annually refreshed Prosumer data is only available to Havas Group employees via the Group's research arm. Access to this valuable data is a core selling point for both agencies.

In September 2014, Havas released a Prosumer Report titled *Hashtagnation: Marketing to the Selfie Generation*. Drawing on the findings of Havas' 2014 Prosumer survey, Hashtagnation addresses the challenge of marketing to a young, 'Millennial' audience. The title page of the report, seen below, gives an indication of the report's objectives:



Figure 4-2 Cover slide, Havas Worldwide's *Hashtagnation* Prosumer report

Hashtagnation takes the so-called ‘Selfie Generation’ as its subject and sets out to provide a map by which brands can reach them. Beginning with the title slide, the report has already begun to combat the unruly nature of consumer behaviour in the social sphere, placing parameters around a specific generation and giving this sub-group of consumers a name. After an introductory page outlining the methodology and ideology of the Prosumer Report, *Hashtagnation* outlines the key question it will answer for readers, namely, ‘what should brands be doing to establish themselves as trusted, dynamic partners in the lives of young people in this markedly different era?’ (Havas 2014: 5). The report goes on to clarify that the Selfie Generation refers to respondents aged 16 to 34, nearly half of whom ‘characterize brands as ‘essential’ (Havas 2014: 10). Thus, in its opening pages, *Hashtagnation* signposts to its readers that the Selfie Generation is an important segment for brands, but a difficult audience to reach. Reaching this audience, the report suggests, requires a different approach. In this way, *Hashtagnation* echoes *Wave 7*’s call for a paradigm shift in approaching consumer behaviour. Both reports state that established methods for targeting contemporary consumers are flawed. Implicit in the opening pages of the *Wave 7* and *Hashtagnation* reports is the suggestion that UMWW and Havas Media, respectively, are the agencies best suited to guide clients in the evolution of their media strategy.

Returning to *Hashtagnation*, the rhetorical style of the Prosumer Report is intricate, and suggests to its readers a nuanced approach to ‘marketing to the Selfie generation’ (ibid.). Despite the deliberate catchphrasing present at intervals throughout the report (‘Selfie generation’ is a prime example, ‘Digidentity’ is another), the report tends to favour considerate and insightful language. Where *Wave 7* utilizes a repeating set of coded icons, and simple charts to make its points, *Hashtagnation* contains dense

passages of text with spare accompanying figures. The illustrated representations of ‘consumers’ in each report also differ notably. *Wave 7*’s consumers are cartoonishly drawn, with oversized gadgets, bowlegs, and simple expressions on mouthless faces that look out at the reader, open and asking to be read. The approachable cartoon figures in *Wave 7* serve to reinforce that reports core message by illustrating the primacy of basic human traits over trends, and to reinforce the essential simplicity of consumer behaviour, when armed with the right cipher.

The pages of *Hashtagnation* are also dotted periodically with illustrations, though to a lesser extent. When they appear, faces of the illustrated Prosumers have neither eyes nor mouths, and never look directly out at the reader. Instead they take selfies, peer past the reader through binoculars, or appear simply blank. These expressionless faces are intended to illustrate the inscrutable nature of the ‘Selfie Generation’. While both reports advocate for a shift in the consumer behaviour paradigm, they do so in vastly different ways. *Wave 7: Cracking the Social Code* seeks to reinforce the feeling of close connection between consumers and brands, reinforcing the essentiality of human needs. *Hashtagnation*, on the other hand, focuses on the canniness and authority of the modern consumer in the face of brand behaviour. In one such passage, *Hashtagnation* traces the development of youth culture, stating, ‘We know a great deal has changed since modern youth culture first took hold during the post-WWII era. As we explored in our earlier studies of millennials, the way youth think and behave has undergone dramatic change since that most famous generation of youth, the baby boomers, came of age in the 1960s’ (Havas 2014: 5). The discerning disposition of the contemporary Prosumer is emphasized by the inward looking depictions of consumers in the Havas report. In the *Hashtagnation* universe, young consumers are

well aware of their value to brands, and do not feel the need to compromise. According to the report, ‘Like earlier generations, today’s youth want more bang for their bucks. The difference is that their preferred ‘bang’ isn’t about getting more; it’s about getting a product or service that specifically fits their needs’ (Havas 2014: 42).

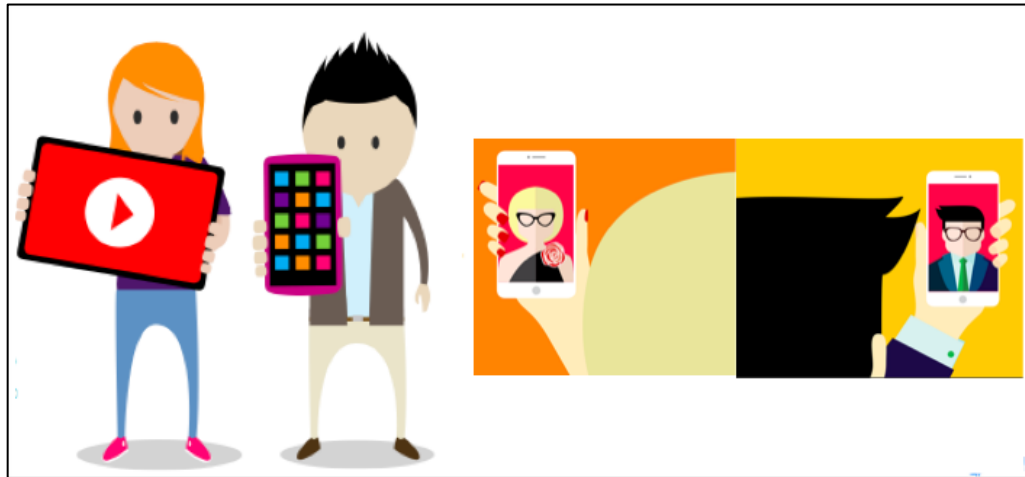


Figure 4-3 *Wave 7* representations of ‘consumers’ (left) versus *Hashtagnation* representations (right)

At certain points, the Havas prosumer report seems almost to be in direct dialogue with the Wave 7 conclusions. For example, page six of *Hashtagnation* is simply a full-page image of a set of balanced scales, evoking the value-exchange emphasized throughout UMWW’s *Wave 7*. The title of the section, however, is ‘A New Balance of Power,’ and page eight of the Havas report contains the following warning: ‘The good news for marketers is that today’s youth are significantly more apt than their elders to recognize — and value — the role brands play in their lives.’ This should not be taken to mean, however, that brand communicators have cracked the youth-marketing code. The balance of power, according to *Hashtagnation*, is tipped heavily in the direction of consumers. Indeed, the Selfie Generation is repeatedly referred to as inscrutable, difficult to reach, and highly selective.

Whether this echoing and subsequent rebuttal of the code-breaking lingo from Wave 7 is intentional is unclear. Havas Worldwide's *Hashtagnation* was released approximately six months after UMWW's Wave 7. Given the manner in which these research reports circulate, it is likely that both agency groups would have been well aware of the rival agency's contemporaneous report. Whether intentionally in dialog or not, *Hashtagnation* is involved in the same breed of self-theorising and consumer sense-making evident in *Wave 7*. Both reports display reflexivity on the part of their respective media agency publishers, particularly in their readiness to question accepted paradigms for making sense of consumer behaviour.

Storytelling and Solutions In Media Agency Reports

It is interesting to note the move displayed in both *Wave 7* and *Hashtagnation* to trouble the narrative of advertising's control over consumer behaviour. In many ways, this would appear to be antithetical to the success of media agencies like UMWW and Havas Media. Relevant in this regard is *Hashtagnation*'s central premise that contemporary consumers are savvier than previous generations, and rightly expect more of brands in exchange for their custom (Havas 2014). Agencies like UMWW and Havas Media have opted to display their reflexivity by admitting that they are not in control of consumer decision-making. Rather, as displayed in *Wave 7* and *Hashtagnation*, the two agencies position themselves as adaptable and resourceful, primed to help clients navigate the unruly landscape of consumer behaviour.

The narrative structure of both agencies' reports follows a similar arc. First, each of the respective reports presents an aspect of the contemporary mediascape that poses a challenge to brands. For *Wave 7* the challenge is unlocking and utilizing the vast social

media arena to help consumers fulfill essential needs. For *Hashtagnation*, it is overcoming obsolete modes of youth marketing and finding a new way to reach the so-called ‘Selfie Generation.’ Both reports go on to detail the factors that make these particular challenges so difficult for brands. *Wave 7* emphasizes that the social media sphere is vast and overwhelming. *Hashtagnation* points out that today’s young people are tech and media savvy, with a firm grasp on their own value as consumers. Visual representations of each challenge help to illuminate the necessity for an expert guide, as illustrated below.

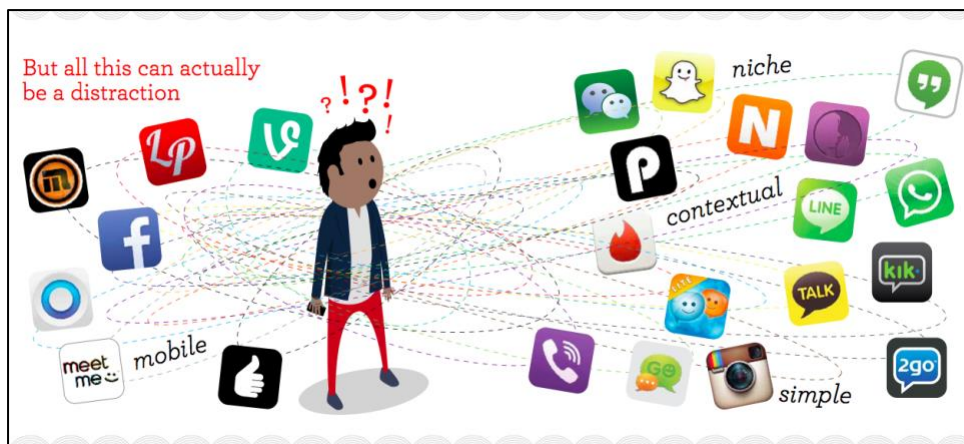


Figure 4-4 *Wave 7*, Page 23



Figure 4-5 *Hashtagnation*, Page 12

After first outlining the marketing challenge each will solve, *Wave 7* and *Hashtagnation* proceed to offer good news: these seemingly daunting marketing challenges can be surmounted by distilling the problem down to a solution, rooted in a fixed set of principles. For *Wave 7*, this numbered set is the ‘5 real, human and fundamental needs’ that ‘underpin all social behaviour’ (UMWW 2013: 36). The *Wave 7* report goes on to list these needs as follows: ‘Learning, Relationships, Diversion, Progression and Recognition’ (ibid.). Each of these needs is represented by a simple icon that will be repeated throughout the remainder of the report: a book stands in for Learning, a heart for Relationships, cloud for Diversion, arrow for Progression, and star for Recognition. These are the five pictograms that make up the centremost ring of the cover page cryptograph, alluded to above.

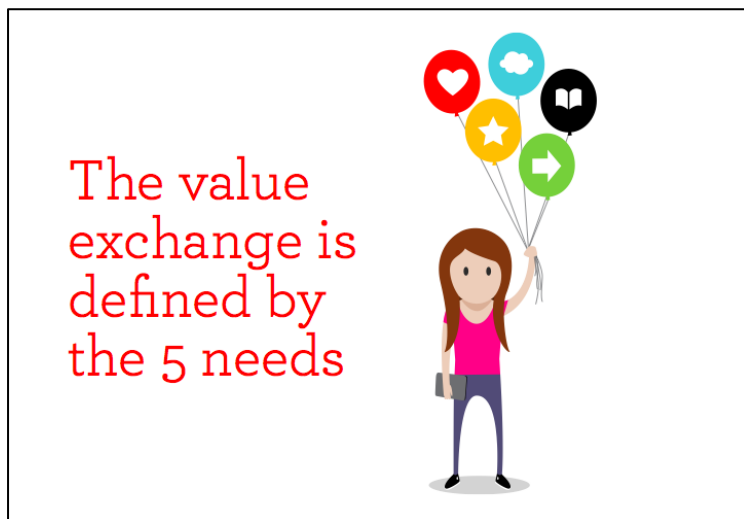


Figure 4-6 *Wave 7*, Page 38

Meanwhile, *Hashtagnation* takes the abstract problem of ‘marketing to the Selfie Generation’ and distils it down to a three-part solution. Per the report, marketers hoping to reach the discerning Selfie Generation should seek to connect via ‘the three

areas most critical to young people's sense of identity: The Social Sphere, Pop Culture, and Technology' (Havas 2014: 19).



Figure 4-7 *Hashtagnation*, Page 19

In proffering numbered mechanisms, what both agency reports seek to provide their readers is a quantified, ordered approach to navigating the disorderly arena of consumer behaviour in the contemporary media landscape. Though neither report offers a specific set of next steps, both provide their audiences with a roadmap to help navigate a complex challenge. These respective five-part and three-part guides are heuristics, offered up to help make sense of the overwhelming challenges presented earlier.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, *Wave 7* and *Hashtagnation* are presented as thought leadership pieces to be consumed and utilized by both agency employees and clients. Each of these reports concludes with a similar call to action, delivered in the form of a question. As a footnote to the *Wave 7* launch report, following even the executive summary and acknowledgments, the second to last page asks, 'What does this mean for your business?' (UMWW 2013: 62). This concluding page explains that the report is only a summary, and that the full depth of the *Wave 7* study has much to offer clients. The concluding message of the entire report states, 'If you want to know how to operate in the new social media landscape and what this means for your business please contact...' and gives contact information for senior agency figures in each of UMWW's

global regions (Asia Pacific, Latin America, EMEA/G14, and North America) who will handle client inquiries. It is only in the report's conclusion that Wave 7 reveals its position as promotional material, intended at least in part to attract new client business.

For its part, *Hashtagnation* closes each of the report's three numbered sections with a 'What does this mean for brands?' slide. On each of these sub-section summary slides, the report offers brief descriptions of brands that embody each of the three components in its list of successful ways to reach the Selfie Generation. Interestingly, these case studies do not necessarily come from Havas client campaigns. By highlighting key brand examples from within and without the Havas repertoire, the architects of the Havas Prosumer report are choosing to display a particular skillset, in this case ability to hone in on positive brand examples and provide insights that can benefit their clients. Once more, we see an example of a media agency choosing to broadcast nimbleness and agility, rather than claiming absolute expertise. Havas' *Hashtagnation* closes with a slide that offers further information on the Havas Group, including recent award wins. Instead of listing specific regional contacts, it provides links to *The Mag* and to Havas Group's homepage, and the email contact for the Group's Chief Marketing Officer. Both reports conclude with the option for readers to find out more about how brands can benefit from the full data set from which the reports were collated. *Hashtagnation* and Wave 7 can be seen as demonstrations of the types of insights to be gained by working with a particular media agency or agency group. At the same time, both reports circulate internally within the media agency space, offering a certain rhetoric and sense of grounding for agency employees facing an otherwise unruly media landscape. It is only in the reports' final pages that their additional status as externally-facing promotional materials is overtly revealed.

Conclusions

Agency-produced research reports, like those circulated by UMWW and Havas discussed, suggest that media agencies are engaged in critical practices that seek out means to chart the constantly changing media and advertising landscape in which they operate. For both UMWW and Havas, perception of masterful understanding of consumer behaviour is essential, with work being done to navigate and distil the complex relationships between consumers and brands. In *Wave 7* and *Hashtagnation*, the research teams at UMWW and Havas have made the deliberate choice to challenge previously held perceptions of the consumer, asking that agency workers reconsider their roles in impacting consumer behaviour. In service of the reports' outward-facing stances, each illustrates the agency's expertise by first outlining the new challenges facing brands, and then nimbly highlighting their ability to respond to these challenges. If, per Caldwell, 'reflexivity operates as a creative process involving human agency and critical competence at the local cultural level as much as a discursive process establishing power at the broader social level,' then we can see how these reflexive documents help to empower agency employees, while also asserting the agencies' potential for innovation (2008: 34). These documents are discursive sites in which the unruliness of the profession is simultaneously exhibited and contained. Publications like *Wave 7* and *Hashtagnation* are utilized by media agencies to make a case for media planning. Doing so reinforces the importance of media planning not only to clients, but also to agency employees. The profusion and public availability of these and other agency-produced reports indicates a broader industry move toward openness and adaptability. By paying close attention to the reports being produced and circulated by

media agencies, we can understand how contemporary media planning hopes to position its role in relation to the consumer, as well as how adaptability is operationalized as a form of expertise.

CHAPTER 5. CREATIVITY IN PRACTICE: MEDIA PLANNING AT CANNES LIONS

From June 18 to 25, 2016 I attended the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity as a participant-observer. I was joined by nearly 15,000 individuals from different sectors of the promotional industries, who descend every year on the south of France for a week of awards ceremonies, networking, talks, workshops, and parties. In operation since 1954, the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity is the largest annual meeting of



Figure 5-1 A sign directs visitors to the Palais des Festivals et des Congrès for the Cannes Lions Festival

the promotional industries. It draws attendees from across the interlinked sectors of advertising and promotion and is a major event in professional calendars. According to John O’Keeffe, Creative Director of WPP: ‘Cannes is the only global, cross discipline show, covering advertising, design, digital, media, promo, effectiveness, and everything else besides. If you are number one at Cannes, you’ve done it the hard way, the proper way, the only way’ (cited in Ajayi 2017). O’Keeffe’s quote reflects both the expansive scope of Cannes Lions, as well as the significance of the event and of the Lions awards for members of the global promotional industries. Cannes Lions’ status as the central meeting point for prominent figures across the breadth of the creative and promotional industries makes it an ideal site for ethnographic research on the place and presence of

media planning within a major trade event. Using the festival as a laboratory site, this chapter will extrapolate media planning's place in the promotional industries by addressing two linked questions: how were media agencies and media planning represented at Cannes Lions 2016, and what does this reveal of media planning's status and position within the promotional industries?

This chapter will also contribute to existing debates about what is meant by creativity within the promotional industries. As discussed in Chapter 2, creativity is a weighted term; it carries different connotations within various sectors of the media industries and is subject to debate over its meaning and value. The very title of the Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity points to the status granted to creativity as a central concern, both for Cannes Lions and for the industries represented there. The festival therefore presents a useful site to investigate what creativity means for Cannes Lions and how media planning figures within this understanding of creativity. Using the events of the 2016 Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity, this chapter will investigate what the term creativity means in the context of the promotional industries, as evidenced at the festival. To conclude, this chapter will look at how the notion of creativity as espoused at the 2016 Cannes Lions festival relates to the portrayal and position of media planning agencies within the promotional industries.

Ethnography at Media Industry Events

In her chapter on 'Ethnographic Research and Cultural Intermediaries,' Giseline Kuipers (2014) advocates for participant observation to complement and give context to other qualitative methods. Kuipers writes:

Formal interviews are ideally complemented with ethnographical methods: observation of and participation in the interactions and events in which

cultural intermediaries take part. Thus, researchers can see informants in their natural habitat, in interactions with others rather than in the somewhat forced interview setting. Ethnographers can also observe the unsaid and the everyday: the things that are so self-evident that interviewees neglect to tell researchers, as well as things interviewees prefer not to divulge. Finally, ethnography allows the researcher to triangulate, to test conclusions based on one type of data (interviews, quantitative data) with ethnographic data.

(Kuipers 2014: 55)

In keeping with Kuipers' suggestion, this project has, from the start, enlisted a three-pronged, mixed methodological approach. Each of the three methods illuminates media planning from a different vantage point. In Chapter 3, informant interviews provided insight on how media planning practitioners think and talk about their work, as presented to those outside the immediate purview of their work-lives. In Chapter 4, textual analysis of industry deep-texts was used to highlight the manner in which media agencies discuss and approach their work in a semi-public, primarily client-facing space. Finally, to round out this three-part approach, I enlisted a participant-observation approach. The particular benefits of observation, that is of observing habitual behaviour, the unsaid and the everyday, provides a further perspective from which to understand the role and work of media planning. Attending Cannes Lions as a participant-observer made it possible to investigate the ways in which media planning was understood in a promotional industries trade setting, in which media planning and media agencies are given context as part of the milieu of the promotional industries

Kuipers' chapter stresses the importance of 'finding the field' - or locating an appropriate site - for participant-observation research. Cannes Lion is a symbolic setting where expertise and industry relations and networks are performed. The Cannes Lions Festival was therefore the ideal site for the participant observation stage of my research.

In the years since its inception in 1954, when it was known initially as the International

Advertising Film Festival, Cannes Lions has become a cornerstone event of the promotional industries. This is evidenced by the significance granted within the promotional industries to award wins. Creative, media, PR, and other agencies that win awards at Cannes Lions are keen to highlight these successes. It is commonplace for companies to issue press releases to ensure widespread knowledge of wins at Cannes and to display these credentials on corporate websites. Of the media agency employees I interviewed for Chapter 3, almost all mentioned attending Cannes Lions as either a career highlight or future goal. The festival was therefore an ideal space to conduct ethnographic research about how media planning figures within the broader promotional industries. Like any major conference, trade show or awards event, Cannes Lions is performative. Attendees are there not just to network and learn, but also to reinforce or elevate their position by presenting themselves, and the companies they represent, in the right way. This is why the aptly named ‘How to Cannes’ tours are so popular for first timers and returners; everyone who attends the festival wants to do Cannes the right way, to get the most out of the festival in the way that best suits their individual aims and the aims of their company or industry sector. In this way, attendees of the Cannes Lions festival take part in a layered performance, driven by personal, corporate and industry-level goals. It is in part due to this performative element that industry events like Cannes Lions are revealing sites for understanding industry practice on its own terms. ‘Trade gatherings,’ write Grainge and Johnson, ‘enable professional communities to express their own values to themselves’ (2014: 126). In other words, a major industry gathering like Cannes Lions offers an opportunity to observe the ways in which members of particular industries and industry sub-sectors choose to express perspectives on their own work to themselves and to their peers, rather than how they

express these perspectives through other methods, such as interviews. In the case of Cannes Lions, the event also provides a platform for companies and organizations from different sub-sectors of the promotional industries to come together in one place. At Cannes Lions, it was common for members of different promotional fields to speak on behalf of the company or industry sub-sector in which they are employed. This provides an opportunity to understand the degree to which members of the promotional industries subscribe to industry lore,⁵⁵ on a general and specific level.

The work of other media industries scholars who have conducted participant-observation at industry events helped to provide a theoretical and practical grounding for my own research trip. In a talk at the 2014 Annual SCMS conference in Seattle, Avi Santo called on ethnographic field research he conducted at multiple US trade events focused on licensing and merchandizing. In his talk, titled ‘License to License: Cultivating Professional Identity in the Contemporary Character Licensing Industry,’ Santo revealed that these events, hosted by the Licensing Industry Merchandisers’ Association (LIMA), serve a purpose beyond simply transmitting knowledge and skills; LIMA trade events also reinforce industry lore particular to the US Licensing community. This industry lore binds the community together within a certain set of beliefs and practices. Paul Grainge and Catherine Johnson found similarly during their participant observation at Promax UK, an awards and networking event for television promotion, that the event ‘keeps media marketing professionals informed about current trends, but also acts as a vehicle for peer recognition and for transmitting television market lore’ (2015a: 127). Of Promax, Grainge and Johnson argue that the event

⁵⁵ A more detailed discussion of the notion of industry lore as posited by Lotz, Haven and Tinic (2009) can be found in Chapter 3.

‘inscribed a sense of ‘how to do’ the job of television marketing, as well as ‘how to be’ in the professional world’ (ibid.: 136). By attending the conference, television marketers are able to feel more a part of the world of television and of creative production. Much of this effect is due to the organization of the event itself, which ‘provide(s) a site where professional values are forged, specialist skills are put on show and the status of television marketing is legitimated in discursive terms’ (ibid.: 136). In this vein, Grainge and Johnson highlight the ways in which the Promax UK conference and awards serves to reinforce the socio-professional work world of television marketers. Similarly, the physical location, layout, attendees, invited speakers, and program of events at Cannes Lions all serve delineating purposes. In order to address the significance of the layout and events of the festival, I first need to provide context for understanding how Cannes Lions works. In the next section, I will provide a brief historical perspective on the festival, leading up to an overview of the spaces and events at Cannes Lions 2016. As I will show, the festival operations offer a representative view of the promotional industries web, including commentary on the place of media planning within this web.

Cannes Lions 2016: Mapping the Festival

Since 1954, the festival has grown to become a major annual event. The operation of the festival is a permanent job for the core team of organizers, who operate from the Lions Festivals headquarters in London, with satellite offices in each region represented at the festival. The program of events is designed by a team in the London offices, who spend the year leading up to the festival securing partnerships and creating a program of events that is at once salient and enticing to attendees. In the lead up to the mid-June

start date, the organizers begin to assemble teams to assist with the operation of the festival; for example, in January of 2017, recruitment agency Handle put out a recruitment call for temporary roles assisting with the Lions entries and awards. According to the Cannes Lions site, there were 43,701 awards submissions for the 2016 festival, making these ‘Awards Processors’ and ‘Assistant Awards Managers’ a necessary, temporary addition. The recruitment notice issued by Handle states that these roles would be based in the Lions Festivals offices in London and would extend from March 2017 through the end of June 2017. These people would be tasked with helping to sort entries in advance of the festival and would be part of the operations of the jury rooms and award ceremonies at the festival itself (Handle 2017). The juries themselves are assembled from prominent promotional industry figures, all of who have previously won Lions at Cannes. Jury-members must be invited to sit by the Cannes Festival.

The extensive operations of the Cannes Lions festival in its contemporary form are rooted in the festival’s first incarnation. In 1954, members of the Screen Advertising World Association (SAWA) established a festival to judge and award the creativity of advertising films, in keeping with the way in which feature films had been recognized since 1946 at the Cannes International Film Festival. This move was part of the large-scale professionalization of advertising that took place in the 1950s. In 1954, the inaugural International Advertising Film Festival took place in Venice. There were 184 submissions from 14 countries and 130 attendees (Stuff NZ 2011). The early festival consisted solely of screenings and awards. The awards were dubbed the ‘Lions’ because of Venice’s Lion of Piazza San Marco, a signature that has stayed with the festival.

Awards were meted across a total of two categories, Television Advertising and Cinema Advertising, with subcategories for different lengths of advertisements and live action

versus animation. The Television and Film categories were segmented further in 1967, with category distinctions for product or service. In 1983, the split between Television and Film was dissolved, with the awards now being called 'Film Lions.' In its second year, the festival took place in Monte Carlo and in its third year in Cannes. From 1957 to 1983, the festival alternated between Venice and Cannes, before eventually finding a permanent home in Cannes in 1984 (SapientNitro 2017). French businessman Roger Hatchuel is credited with moving the festival permanently to Cannes. A former member of SAWA, Hatchuel began managing the festival in 1987. In 1990, under Hatchuel's leadership, the festival program expanded to include a series of educational seminars and talks, in addition to the awards (*Campaign* 2011). Two years later, in 1992, the festival had its first name change, from The International Advertising Film Festival to the International Advertising Festival. The change was instated to reflect the persistence of multiplatform advertising and a move within the advertising industry to recognize and award these other forms, such as radio, print, and outdoor advertising. In the same year, a registration category was introduced for younger attendees, at the time called the Young Creative Registration Package. This led to the addition of the Young Creatives Print Competition in 1995, the early iteration of what is now the Young Lions competition. 1998 saw the addition of the Cyber Lions awards category, followed, in 1999 by the Media Lions (Stuff NZ 2011).

The addition of the Media Lions category in 1999 is representative of the historical moment, addressed in Chapter 1, of media planning splitting off from advertising agencies to become its own industry sub-sector. It was precisely this time period of the late 1990s in which media planning agencies came into their own as distinct entities. The Media Lions awards category was established in order to award the

work of media planning and signifies an industrial avowal of the importance of media planning and the work of media planners. The festival continued to expand for the next five years, with the addition of further categories, such as the 2002 addition of the Direct Lions, awarded for direct marketing campaigns, and an expanding program of events, including the addition of the Roger Hatchuel Academy in 2003. In 2004, the UK-based business-to-business events and information services company EMAP acquired the festival, taking over from Hatchuel. EMAP later changed its name to Ascential and, as of 2017, continues to run the festival. New categories and further events have contributed to the festival's continued expansion since the EMAP acquisition in 2004. Notably for media planning, in 2006 a new awards category was established, recognizing the Media Agency of the Year. This category was established in addition to the existing category, Agency of the Year, which was first awarded in 1992, the same year of the festival's early name change away from the International Advertising Film Festival to the International Advertising Festival. It is interesting to note that, as of 2017, this nomenclature remains in place, with Agency of the Year pertaining to creative agencies, and Media Agency of the Year to media agencies. This shows an implicit recognition of creative agencies as being the more dominant or traditionally present parties at Cannes Lions, while media agencies, as the more recent and therefore less dominant group, are identified with an epithet.

Although the festival has had several name changes since its start in 1954, the most significant change took place in 2011, when the festival became known officially as the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity. Previous name changes reflected the broadening of the advertising industry in the second half of the 20th century. The 2011 name change, from the International Advertising Festival to the Cannes Lions

International Festival of Creativity, involved dropping the specific focus on advertising from the name entirely. In addition to the Cannes Lions festival proper, the festival also hosts a series of two-day, specialist festivals: Lions Health, Lions Innovation and Lions Entertainment. Introduced in 2011, each of these maintains an ostensible focus on advertising and promotion, but with vastly different angles. Lions Health is focused on pharmaceutical promotion, as well as non-profit ventures from brands and agencies intended to raise awareness in the field of public health. Lions Innovation concerns itself primarily with new technology that can be used in advertising and promotion. The Lions Innovation mini-festival offered a rare opportunity to observe how members of the different subfields of the promotional industries are positioning their work in response to advances in technology. The Innovation mini-festival included emphasis on data, algorithms, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) as each applies to promotion.

The final of the three specialist festivals, Lions Entertainment, dealt with the spaces in which entertainment and promotion are melded together, or what is commonly called branded content. Chapters one and two highlighted the blurring of boundaries between different industry sectors within the landscape of the promotional industries and in particular the complicated relationships between different sub-sectors of advertising. The change of title for the Cannes Lions festival explicitly signals this. The festival's intentional shift away from advertising specifically and toward the concept of 'creativity' signals the shifting nature of promotional work in the contemporary media landscape and indicates the festival organizers' desire to capitalize on the expanding and amorphous boundaries within the promotional industries. The festival's intended audience, according to the Cannes Lions website, is 'members of the creative communications industry' and the crowd the festival aims to attract is comprised of 'the

world's most inventive, talented and creative people' (Cannes Lions 2017). In this description, the terms advertising, promotion and marketing are notably absent, replaced instead with 'creative communications industry.' These descriptions intentionally obfuscate the festival's original objective, namely its dedicated focus on advertising. Although the stated audience for the event, per the Cannes Lions website, is 'the creative communications industry,' Cannes Lions remains primarily focused on advertising and promotion, rather than on other areas of the creative industries, such as filmmaking. This rebranding is an intentional move on the part of the festival, designed to tap into the expansive limits of the notion of creativity. Re-branding as a 'Festival of Creativity' attended by members of 'the creative communications industry' serves several purposes for the Cannes Lions festival. First, it responds to the evolving nature of the promotional and creative industries, in which, as discussed in Chapter 1, the lines between industry sectors are often blurred. Second, it expands the remit of the festival to include all aspects of the 'creative communications industry,' a category whose imprecise parameters allow for many more attendees, and, therefore, higher revenue for the festival. Third, and most significantly, it highlights creativity as being synonymous with the work of the promotional industries. In 2016, the theme of the festival was 'Thank You Creativity.' Creativity was celebrated at every turn, and much of the program included events dedicated to helping attendees boost their creativity. I will return to this point throughout this chapter, to show how the Cannes Lions festival operationalizes the ambiguous notion of creativity to specific effect.

Attendance at the 2016 Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity reached a record high of over 15,000 people (Ascential 2016). In an article published online for

industry journal *Creative Review*, Eliza Williams summed up the vast scale and intention of the Cannes Lions festival:

The Cannes Lions festival is now officially a beast. Stretching over eight days, it is unmissable for those in the advertising and tech industries, and each year brings new attempts to expand its audience ever wider. This can be seen in the range of speakers that grace the stages, which bring in ad and tech industry players, but also actors, musicians, directors, celebrities, marketers, figures from fashion and design and more. The core visitors still come from advertising and marketing and the worlds that directly oscillate these industries, but the ambition of the festival organisers is palpable: they clearly want it to be the central annual event for all those involved in creativity, whatever the form.

(Williams 2016)

The cost to attend the 2016 festival ranged from €1,745 for Young Lions, up to €8,245 plus taxes for the Platinum Complete pass. Attendees of the festival are issued official festival badges at registration, which indicate the level of pass and provide access to the relevant festival areas. The Platinum Complete pass was rarely seen at the festival. Instead, most festival attendees wore the Classic pass, which cost €3,050 plus taxes for 2016. This pass gave its bearers access to all of the talks, awards ceremonies, fringe and networking events, with the exception of those events that were part of the Lions Health specialist festival. For access to Lions Health, attendees could purchase a Complete pass, for €4,050 plus tax, or buy a pass for the Lions Health specialist festival only, for €1,495 plus tax. This option, to buy a specialist pass, was offered for each of the mini-festivals, Lions Health, Lions Innovation, and Lions Entertainment. Innovation and Entertainment were included with the Classic pass, which was the most common pass. Of the specialist festivals, Lions Health appeared to be viewed by many attendees as a standalone festival; those who are interested in attending arrive early for the two-day event, while others skip Lions Health entirely.

In addition to the more than 15,000 official festival attendees, thousands more individuals descend on Cannes every year in the form of opportunistic industry players seeking to be in the right place at the right time; during the weeklong festival the entirety of the Croisette - the curved stretch of beach along the Cote d'Azur - is unofficially transformed into a global meeting point for deals and networking. During the Cannes Lions festival, Cannes serves as a microcosm of the global promotional industries, with representatives from creative agencies, media agencies, digital and other specialist agencies, and PR. It has also become commonplace for members of brand marketing teams to attend the festival, as well as content creators, advertising technology (ad tech) specialists and market research companies. Beyond these prominent groups, Cannes Lions attracts attendees from a host of other, related industries.

The festival itself is a combination of a trade show, awards event, training program, social event and major networking opportunity. The main festival site is split between the two buildings of the Palais de Congress, Palais I and Palais II. In the basement of the Palais I building, posters and screening rooms showcase the shortlisted work of the awards entrants. Upstairs, the two main auditoriums play host to high profile talks during the day and the awards ceremonies at night. The Lumière and Debussy Theatres have seating capacities of 2,300 and 1,068, respectively (Palais Des Festivals, 2016). The panels and talks that take place in these auditoriums attracted large crowds and were front-loaded with celebrity names. At Cannes Lions 2016, These included a live taping of BBC's HARDtalk, in which host Stephen Sackur spoke to Gwyneth Paltrow about the importance of building a meaningful brand, Will Smith in conversation about the 'pursuit of impact,' Anna Wintour discussing 'the challenges

facing creative teams today,’ and Usher and Ryan Seacrest talking about ‘the power of great collaboration’ (Cannes Lions 2016). The appearance of celebrity names on the program was commonplace at Cannes and, in addition to the 2011 name change, is part of the festival’s expanding remit of creativity. Having celebrity names on the program attracts attendees to the festival and helps justify the price to attend. Furthermore, by presenting talks and panels with prominent figures, the festival constructs links between promotional creativity and creativity in other fields. These headline-grabbing talks are also a display of the significance and power of the so-called creative communications industry and ensure media coverage for Cannes Lions in mainstream press, as well as more niche industry publications.

The Forum is a smaller, more informal space, also located in Palais I. At the 2016 festival, this room hosted seminars on topics like diversity in the media industries, global thinking, and the relationship between advertising and human sexuality. Unlike the high-profile talks in the Lumière and Debussy theatres, the events in The Forum included question and answer sessions and interactivity with the audience. While the main-stage events in Palais I seemed designed to capture attention, promote the status of the festival, and to inspire headlines, smaller spaces like The Forum were reserved for industry-focused seminars or workshops with practical conclusions.

Rounding out the physical spaces comprising Palais I are the rooftop and outdoor patio, which, at Cannes Lions 2016, hosted networking receptions every evening throughout the weeklong festival. Networking at Cannes is given almost as much emphasis as the programme of talks and awards ceremonies, so much so that, for 2016, the festival organizers introduced a Lions-only networking app. In addition to the official Cannes Lions program app, attendees were encouraged to download the Cannes

Networking app, which featured a Tinder-like ‘swipe’ function to allow festival delegates to connect with one another while in Cannes.⁵⁶ Starting in 2016, the festival also added a ‘Networking Pass’ option for delegates. Costing €1995 plus taxes, this pass allows attendees access to all of the official festival networking and social events, without access to the talks, panels, awards ceremonies, or any of the other programme of events in Palais I and Palais II. The addition of this pass signifies the emphasis on networking at Cannes Lions, prioritized in some cases above the programme of events.

At the 2016 festival, Palais II, the second, smaller building on the main festival site, hosted each of the consecutive two-day specialist mini-festivals embedded within the weeklong event: Lions Health, Lions Innovation, and Lions Entertainment. The Palais II building features an open central exposition area, as well as smaller spaces for more informal and often interactive talks as part of the specialist mini-festivals. At the 2016 festival, these talks covered a range of categories, from practical presentations on how to be industry leaders in specific sub-fields of advertising and promotion, to demonstrations of new technology, including virtual reality headsets.

⁵⁶ Using the networking app, attendees who could create a profile which would appear on the screen of other users. Registered attendees could then ‘swipe right’ to express interest in meeting, or ‘swipe left’ to decline. If two attendees ‘matched’ by both swiping right, they would then be able to chat via the app to arrange an in-person meeting.

In addition to the main festival buildings and attendant outdoor and rooftop spaces at Cannes Lions 2016, there was a sprawling outdoor array of temporary structures called ‘cabana town.’ This consisted of a long row of container-like beach huts stretching along the sea front, rented out by media owners like Hulu, Live Nation, and NBCUniversal, tech companies like Samsung, data analytics and



Figure 5-2 The pier at the Facebook beach, Cannes Lions 2016

market research companies like Oracle, Neustar and Nielsen, and other relevant parties, like the IAA (International Advertising Association). The final feature of the festival site was branded beach areas, such as the YouTube, Twitter, or Facebook beaches (pictured above). These branded beaches, as well as cabana town, were all situated within the extensive, cordoned off space of the festival and required a Cannes badge or branded wristband to access. There were further talks, happy hours, and meetings held in these additional spaces, hosted by the company or brand, in partnership with Cannes Lions.

Beyond the official festival territory was the 2016 festival fringe. The hotels and event spaces along the Croisette were taken over during the weeklong festival by companies who would benefit by capitalizing on the sheer density of promotional industry people. Many people come to Cannes during the Cannes Lions festival, but do not purchase a festival pass or attend any events. Rather, they arrive in Cannes simply to

be part of the gathering of industry figures and, more importantly, to network. Certain landmark hotels, particularly the Carlton Intercontinental, are known for the substantial deals brokered there during Cannes Lions. At the 2016 festival, brands like music streaming service Spotify and interactive ad network Undertone rented event spaces to use as headquarters, dubbing them the Spotify House and Undertone Greenhouse.

Finally, the focal point of the festival is ostensibly the Lions themselves, the prizes granted at awards ceremonies each evening throughout the festival. These awards, determined by juries composed of prominent industry figures, are akin to the Academy Awards of the promotional industries. For the 2016 festival, awards were granted across 24 categories, including such categories as Media, Creative Effectiveness, Cyber, and PR. There is much that the awards and awards categories reveal about the nature of the promotional industries, and how and where media planning fits within this broader array. Therefore, I will return to the Lions awards later in this chapter.

The Cannes Lions festival is vast in scope and serves a multitude of reifying purposes as an industry event, giving advertising and promotion credence as a set of bounded, creatively driven industries, and recognizing best practice work within these fields. In addition to meting out awards, the festival provides a designated space for members of the various, interconnected sectors of the promotional industries to come together. The figuration of media planning at Cannes Lions can therefore be used as a heuristic for understanding media planning's place within the broader promotional industries. In the next section, I will investigate the ways in which media planners and media agencies were represented at Cannes Lions 2016 and the kind of presence these parties had at the festival.

Media Planning at Cannes Lions 2016

In the way it is structured, both physically and in terms of the program of talks and awards, Cannes Lions offers a way of understanding how the promotional industries implicitly and instinctively understand media planning. By noting the ways in which media planning is represented in the official festival program of events, as well as in the festival fringe, it is possible to extrapolate the status of media planning within the larger array of the promotional industries.

Media Planning in the Official Program

Unpacking the official festival program provides insight into how media planning is figured in an official, festival-sanctioned capacity, relative to other sectors of the promotional industries. The program for the 2016 festival was extensive, with the printed version running to 272 pages in length. Many of the events could be considered general interest events, like those celebrity-helmed talks described earlier in this chapter. Others were specific to the promotional industries, but still intended to draw a broad crowd. Events of this nature included a talk presented by Facebook, entitled ‘Connect the World. Create for the World,’ and a seminar hosted by Unilever, on ‘The Future of Brands.’ Finally, some events were geared toward specific industry sub-sectors. In these events, the festival’s historical emphasis on advertising agencies was evident. There was a recurring panel titled ‘Chief Creatives on the Beach,’ in which, on each day of the festival, three different Chief Creative Officers of major creative agencies gathered on a dais set up on the Cannes Lions beach to share their thoughts on the future of the advertising industry. Susan Credle, Global Chief Creative Officer of FCB, gave a master class on ‘How to Love Advertising Again.’ There was a seminar hosted in

the Lumiere Theatre by McCann Worldgroup called ‘Creativity is the Only Way to Survive,’ and BBDO hosted a seminar in the Debussy Theatre with the tongue-in-cheek title, ‘How to Do Terrible Work.’ These talks, and many more like them, focused specifically on the work of advertising agencies, reflecting Cannes Lions’ roots as an advertising festival.

Media agencies and media planning were also present in the official program at the 2016 festival. The talks and workshops at the 2016 festival that were media planning specific were commonly held in smaller rooms or informal alcove spaces in the Palais II building. These small-scale events typically had a practical focus and attendees could expect to go away with knowledge of a new tool or technology helpful in planning media campaigns. One such event was a masterclass with Havas Helia’s Tash Whitney, who was also the Jury President for the Creative Data⁵⁷ award category. The masterclass took place in Palais II, in an area called the ‘Experience Space,’ and was aptly titled, ‘My Love Affair with Data.’ In it, Whitney talked about using data to ‘know’ consumers, while respecting their wishes and needs, in order, ultimately to drive better media strategy.

Beyond these specialist events and masterclasses, senior figures from media-planning agencies sometimes featured as panelists for some of the more high-profile talks. In these instances, representatives from media agencies were invariably called upon to comment on issues of data, technology, and what they both mean for the future of marketing. For example, Mark Holden, the Worldwide Strategy and Planning Director of PHD, was featured in two talks. One was a high-profile talk held in the Lumière Theater, titled, ‘Predestination: Wired’s Kevin Kelley on Where We Are All

⁵⁷ The Creative Data award, along with other awards categories, will be discussed in detail later in this chapter, in the sub-section titled ‘Proclaiming Practice: The Awards’.

Heading.’ Not coincidentally, this talk was hosted by PHD Worldwide, and included a preview of PHD’s ‘Predestination,’ a proprietary model of ‘the 12 technological forces that will shape our future and the media landscape’ (PHD Worldwide 2016). PHD Worldwide was a major partner at Cannes Lions 2016 – the Cannes program app was ‘presented by PHD’, and featured teasers of PHD’s ‘Predestination’ model. This is evidence of a decision by PHD to allocate significant funds to an official partnership with the Cannes Lions festival, in order to ensure exposure for the media agency. At the same time, it is an admission on the part of the festival that media agencies, like PHD, are significant to the promotional industries.

Holden was once again featured as a panelist for a talk held during the Innovation mini-fest, titled, ‘Will a Robot Win a Lion?’ This talk was again hosted by PHD Worldwide, and also featured PHD’s Chief Brand Development Officer, Hugh Cameron, as well as Mike Yapp of Google, Conor Brady of Critical Mass and Kevin Kelly of Wired. The program description for this talk read, ‘With media being the first specialist marketing discipline to be significantly affected [by Automation and Artificial Intelligence], leading global media agency PHD brings together a multi-discipline agency panel to discuss the impact AI could have across the industry; how far its influence may be felt and how quickly things may change.’ In this explicit linking of media planning to use of data, the significance of media agencies within the bounds of the 2016 Cannes Lions festival begins to emerge. The value of media agencies was not attributed to their purported product, that is, media plans and media strategy, but was instead attributed to their mastery of the digital and data sphere.

Throughout the festival, data was presented as being crucial to industry best practice. As the historic gatekeepers of data for use in consumer targeting, media agency

people were presented in larger talks as experts on how to make the most of the next frontier in data. It is interesting to note that companies like Oracle, who specialize specifically in data collection and monitoring, were not engaged in this way. Rather, media agencies are depicted as the central spoke, connecting clients, media owners and other types of agencies, along with the data or market research firms circulating around them, like Oracle and Kantar. In this way media agencies play an intermediary role – bringing parties together, but also interpreting between different constituencies.

A good example of this presentation of media agencies as being connectors occurred in a panel discussion entitled ‘Context is King.’ In this panel, the chief strategy officer of media agency Carat sat down with musician MØ and the VP of Product for the popular music streaming service Spotify to talk about delivering experiences for music-



listeners (pictured at left).

Figure 5-3 Sanjay Nazerali of Carat, musician MØ and Shiva Rajaraman of Spotify

The description for this talk ended with an apparent call to

arms against automation, saying: ‘Context will take us beyond the data which threatens to stifle today’s creative industries, reintroducing human imagination, discovery, and serendipity into a world enslaved by algorithms’ (Cannes Lions, 2016). The stridency of the talk’s description belied the conclusions of the talk itself; as the talk unfolded, it was

revealed that Carat and Spotify have entered into a partnership in which Spotify's data pools have been integrated for use by Carat. Shiva Rajaraman of Spotify was careful to explain that this partnership will benefit Spotify users by using contextual data to help users discover new music they may like. Rather than actually using 'human imagination' in place of data, as per the program, data was presented as being used in more imaginative ways.

Another talk, which took place within the Innovation specialist festival, was called 'Rise of the Robots.' This talk was hosted by media agency Zenith, and featured a conversation between Zenith's Chief Digital Officer, Stefan Bardega, and Martin Ford, author of the book *The Rise of the Robots: Technology and the Threat of a Jobless Future*, which inspired the talk's title. While Ford's perspective saw a bleak future for jobs in the promotional industry, Zenith's Bardega had a different view. He discussed the affordances of data and automation that have allowed Zenith to expand its capabilities, creating additional departments and new jobs. The description for the talk asked a salient question: 'in this new world, who will be the real creative: the artist, the data analyst or the programmer?' This question echoes the changing definition of creativity in the context of the promotional industries. Bardega explained that everyone hoping to work in advertising ought to become conversant in data, as 'creativity itself is adapting.' This quotation from Bardega suggests that, given their familiarity and level of comfort with using data, media agencies like Zenith are well equipped to turn the threats of data and automation into creative advantage.

In addition to being viewed as the owners of data within the purview of the promotional industries, Cannes Lions reinforced the notion of media planning agencies as relationship managers. In the description for a workshop titled 'A Peace Treaty

Between Planners and Creative,’ the program read, ‘Creatives are annoyed. Planners have become besties with account people and chummy with clients. Our paths have diverged and the work is suffering’ (Cannes Lions 2016). The description for the talk suggests a sense of anxiety amongst creatives that they are losing position within the promotional industries. The workshop called for more collaboration amongst all agencies and departments involved in a campaign, suggesting that ‘creatives’ suffer as a result of not being part of these ‘chummy’ networks. This echoes the sentiment of my interviewees, who insisted that a significant part of their job responsibilities was maintaining relationships, and who attributed their respective agencies’ successes to the strength of the network. As the promotional industries network becomes increasingly saturated, intermediaries like media agency employees are relied upon to connect clients in the right way. In this respect, the description of the workshop, which criticized the overly-friendly relationships for which media planners are known, in fact highlighted one of the key points of differentiation and advantage for media planning agencies.

On day two of the festival, IPG Mediabrands hosted a talk in the large Debussy Theatre titled ‘Why Dynamism is the New Creativity.’ This talk featured Mark Thompson of the New York Times in conversation with Dr. Jonah Berger, a Professor at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School, and Eric Schmidt, the Executive Chairman of Alphabet Inc. This talk coincided with the release of IPG Mediabrands ‘D100,’ a ranking of the World’s 100 most dynamic brands. This list was created in partnership with The Wharton School, and, unsurprisingly, Alphabet tops the list. The results of the study were published online on June 20, 2016, concurrent with the Cannes Lions festival. According to IPG’s D100 website, ‘The score is calculated by assessing

brands against four critical and equally weighted dimensions – agility, responsiveness, innovation and sociability. Importantly, we have proven there is a direct relationship between a brand’s dynamic score and its future momentum and revenue growth’ (TheD100 2017). The results of the study were also used to create a proprietary tool available to IPG Mediabrands clients, to improve a brand’s ‘dynamism score.’ This talk, and the concurrent release of the D100 list, is an excellent example of the way in which media agencies are using their historic positioning as data specialists to increase their presence at the Cannes Lions festival, and within the promotional industries.

Media Planning at the Festival Fringe

In addition to the official festival program, it is interesting to note the geography of the festival fringe, and where different companies or brands elect to have a presence at Cannes Lions. After speaking to a five-year Cannes Lions ‘veteran,’ I discovered that the branded beaches are always booked in advance, with Facebook and Google as regulars. According to *AdAge*, Martin Sorrel (former head of WPP) was heard calling this part of the festival ‘Duopoly beach’ (*AdAge* 2016). With the festival continuing to grow, it has become increasingly important for relevant companies to maintain a presence at the festival fringe. Media agencies had a noticeable physical presence in the festival fringe. This is reflective of the spending power of media agencies, as this kind of presence requires significant financial investment, particularly for those companies who choose to host after-hours events with celebrity guests. This was the case for media agency MEC (a WPP company), which, at Cannes Lions 2016, took up residency in a large event space and hosted a private party with a musical performance by Wyclef Jean. One MEC employee, who is a Digital Manager based in London, told me that MEC hosted a

contest for employees from across its different offices to attend Cannes Lions; in order to win a trip to Cannes, employees needed to propose a social media strategy for the festival. The twelve winners would then be expected to implement this social coverage while at Cannes. Media agencies like MEC use the dominance of Cannes Lions as an industry event to boost their profiles and reputations; by hosting events like musical performances and parties, and by promoting a social media presence via their young employees, they can move away from the reputation of media planning as the tedious, number-crunching side of advertising.

Like MEC, most of the major global media agencies had a notable presence at Cannes Lions 2016. Within the space of the festival site, PHD and OMD both had cabanas along the seafront. As an official festival partner, it follows that PHD would choose to have a company presence within the festival site. This cabana space was used to host more intimate talks beyond those held in Palais I and II, as well as happy hours and meetings. Korean media agency Innocean was the official sponsor of the opening and closing night galas, which assured plenty of press coverage and name recognition for the relatively unknown company. Other agencies, meanwhile, made up a significant part of the festival fringe. Each of these agencies hosted events throughout the weeklong festival, with their own series of talks and workshops, as well as parties and performances. There was a Havas 'café,' a large outdoor area adjacent to the Intercontinental Hotel. Festivalgoers were given a link to register online for access to the Havas café, which hosted happy hours and live broadcasts of the World Cup football matches happening concurrently to the Cannes Lions festival. MediaCom took over the penthouse suite of the Hotel Ramirez, and hosted breakfasts, happy hours, and other events. While some of these events were open to anyone with a festival badge, others

were exclusive to agency employees and other, invited guests, which would include clients and other potential business partners. In addition to Wyclef Jean's performance for MEC, Chris Martin performed in a private concert at a party hosted by OMD, and Gwyneth Paltrow attended a breakfast meet-and-greet hosted by IPG Mediabrands at the Martinez Hotel. As with the deals brokered on the Carlton Hotel terrace, the media agency presence at Cannes Lions 2016 was a strategic business move. Media agencies were strongly represented in terms of relative number of attendees and the sheer volume of money spent by media agencies to maintain a strong presence in Cannes during the festival. In terms of the official festival program, however, media planning still seemed to be relegated to niche talks about data-related issues. As the next section will argue, however, this linking of media agencies to data, is, in some ways, a boon for media planning.

Creativity at Cannes Lions

Creativity was celebrated throughout the course of the 2016 festival and lauded as both the basic criteria and the defining feature of work in the promotional industries.

Interestingly, however, creativity was not at any point defined in certain terms. Instead, the notion of creativity was given a broad scope at Cannes Lions 2016, as the festival looked to capitalise on creativity as a concept and source of value in the promotional industries. This is in keeping with the changing nomenclature of the festival outlined earlier in this chapter, in which the International Advertising Film Festival gave way to the International Advertising Festival, before eventually being renamed the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity. As Cannes Lions increasingly seeks to harness the expansiveness of creativity as a value proposition, the festival has shifted away from

its historical focus on advertising. For some, this is an unwelcome change. Speaking to *AdAge* magazine about the 2016 festival, Rob Schwartz, the CEO of advertising agency TBWACHiatDay New York said, ‘I’ve been coming to Cannes for 15 years and this is the first year where no one, I mean no one, was talking about creative. VR? Yes. Ad blocking? Yes. Gwyneth Paltrow? Yes. Creative? Not so much’ (Schwartz, cited in *AdAge* 2016). Schwartz’ frustration is reflective of the changing focus of the Cannes Lions festival’s creativity remit. His remarks also point to the ways in which the notion of creativity is operationalized within the promotional industries. The word creative is often employed as a noun to refer to advertisements; such is the case in Schwartz’ remarks. Creative is also used as a byword to refer to individuals employed in certain media or promotional industry roles. Within promotional practice there remains a divide between these so-called ‘creatives’ and other types of practitioners. In his *Creativity and Advertising* Andrew McStay notes, ‘the notion of creativity is at the very centre of advertising practice’ (2013: 1) while ‘the self-identification of the advertising business as a creative one’ is ‘undeniable’ (ibid.). The use of the term creative to refer to advertising is a particular strategic move within the ad industry that specifically privileges the production of ads as being the ‘creative’ branch of promotion. At Cannes Lions 2016, however, focus shifted away from ‘creative’ in the form of ads and toward other types of creativity. This is reflected in Schwartz’ comments, in which he notes a lack of attention on creative in lieu of focus on new technologies (VR) and new methods of reaching audiences (ad blocking) (Schwartz, cited in *AdAge* 2016). At Cannes Lions 2016, advertisements as the main loci of creativity in the promotional industries showed signs of ceding their dominance and of being replaced, as Schwartz notes, by other areas of import to the promotional industries, including technology and audience research.

This redefining of the creative remit was evidenced in various talks throughout the festival. For instance, the program description for a talk titled: ‘Goodbye Fuzzy: Meet the Focused Front End,’ read:

Amateur creatives get their inspiration from YouTube. Heavy hitters understand the numbers. Join this session to find out why numbers can inspire breakthrough ideas and get creative taken more seriously at the same time. Brian Millar’s done David Ogilvy’s career backwards. He’s a copywriter who became a researcher. Why? Numbers are more inspiring than ad briefs. Because they allow you to think bigger. Join him for a diverse look into everything from the latent opportunities in data to why data science needs more lateral thinkers, plus why research destroys great advertising, and how to make it inspire instead.

(Cannes Lions 2016)

The talk was hosted by Sense Worldwide, a London based co-creation agency that specializes in helping brands work directly with audiences to develop content, and featured a talk from Brian Millar, the CEO of Cyclops Research, a behavioural intelligence company. During the talk, Millar’s enthusiasm for using data to improve the content delivered to audiences was palpable. Millar talked about ‘turning data into people, and back to data,’ insisting that all ad campaigns should start not with visual storyboards but with scouring audience data for creative inspiration. The existence of this kind of talk in the Cannes program shows the festival’s understanding of the expanding meaning of the term creativity within the scope of the promotional industries to include areas like consumer research.

These talks were grouped in the Cannes program app under the theme ‘Data-Driven Creativity.’ This choice of heading has considerable rhetorical significance, as it is representative of a broader strategic move on the part of the festival, and indeed the promotional industries as a whole. There was a common recurring formula for these talks, which was as follows. First, the panel chair or speaker would set up data and

automation as being potentially threatening to the industry and to jobs. Next, panelists would explain how an abundance of data and automated tools can in fact contribute positively to promotional industry work while simultaneously asserting the need for human intuition and intervention, before finally concluding that data and creativity actually work best together. The manner in which these talks and panels seemed to set up oppositional binaries, but then proceed to knock them down, was a smart and deliberate maneuver. The speakers at Cannes Lions were doing the work of academics and industry critics – refusing to be hostages to fortune by dismantling these sorts of easily knocked-down binaries. This contributes to the perception of the promotional industries as being nimble, while also safeguarding against both the privileging and dismissal of outright automation. The notion of ‘Data-Driven Creativity,’ meanwhile, serves to extend the remit of the promotional industries to include ‘creative use’ of data and tech.

McStay’s understanding of the ways in which creativity justifies and drives advertising work is useful for thinking about the portrayal of data-driven creativity as it was operationalized at Cannes Lions 2016. If, as McStay suggests, creativity in advertising involves the affective potential of ads (2013), the emphasis on data-driven creativity at Cannes Lions indicates a different take on creativity in the broader promotional industries. This was reflected in a closing talk held in the Lumière Theatre, entitled ‘Cracking the Code of Creativity.’ The program description for the talk read: ‘As increasing automation forces marketers into a zero-sum battle for efficiency, genuine human creativity could represent the last true competitive advantage’ (Cannes Lions 2016). In response to this perceived threat, data specialists from digital agency Razorfish analyzed entry and awards data from the previous 15 years of Cannes Lions to

provide insights into the ‘code of creativity.’ The talk offered some specific conclusions, such as the fact that multi-agency submissions are more likely to win awards than single-agency submissions. The crux of the talk, however, was that, while awards wins can be tracked and measured, creativity itself cannot be modeled or automated. The presenters closed the talk with a question, ‘Is there a formula for creativity?’ which was answered with a single word, printed on a slide: ‘No’ (SapientRazorfish 2016). As the closing talk of the festival, ‘Cracking the Code of Creativity’ seemed purpose-built to close the festival on a high note. With so much discussion at the 2016 festival about the advancements of AI and other technologies, and an apparent genuine concern for jobs, the closing presentation in the Lumiere Theatre ended with praise for ‘genuine human creativity’ as the ‘last true competitive advantage’ (SapientRazorfish 2016). The word creativity in the context of this talk was used as a stand in for words like intuition and instinct, to refer to those intangible contributions of the human brain that – so far - cannot be automated. Crucially, this includes creative use of tools, including data and automation, in service of ideas. Technological advances are positioned as being in service of human creativity. In this way, people employed in promotional industries professions are safe from the potential threats of automation.

As discussed in Chapter 3, data gathered via practitioner interviews indicated that media planners sometimes find the emphasis on measurability within media agency work to be a hindrance when it comes to conducting creative work. Interviewees stressed that the data imperative as it relates to measuring return on investment can block media agency teams from implementing experimental or new options on behalf of their clients. The emphasis on data in media planning was portrayed, in informant interviews, as inhibiting creative or agile working practices. At Cannes Lions, on the

other hand, data was presented as a privileged new tool in the creative toolkit. When viewed through this lens, the availability and use of data in media planning becomes a boon for media agencies. Media planning's historical linkage to consumer targeting means that media agencies have the advantage of experience when it comes to using data as a creative tool within the broader scheme of the promotional industries.

It was clear from the sheer volume of talks, workshops, and other events touching on topics linked to data and automation at Cannes Lions 2016 that these have become dominant features of the promotional industries landscape. The manner in which data was presented and discussed at Cannes Lions, specifically in relation to media planning, revealed a pragmatic optimism about the future of the industry. Amidst discussions of algorithms, AI, and other advances in automation, there was significant emphasis on the need for human intervention. The availability of unprecedented amounts of data, as well as ever-increasing tools designed to make use of it, was used as further proof of the need for knowledgeable and experienced guides. In talks involving representatives from media agencies, the festival explicitly defined media planning as a data specialism. This assigning of media planning to an analytic role maintains the peripheral status of media agencies. But, by simultaneously affirming the essential role of data, the events of the 2016 Cannes Lions festival served to move media agencies into a more dominant position. With data lauded at the festival as the next major development in creative practice for the promotional industries, the Cannes Lions community appears to be positioning the work of media agencies as becoming increasingly central.

Proclaiming Practice: The Awards

The Lions awards hark back to the Cannes Lions festival's original inception as a place to judge and award the best work in advertising. While the scale of the festival has expanded greatly since its start in 1954 the Lions awards themselves remain the focal point of the festival. Of the awards, the Cannes Lions site states, "The Lion is recognised globally as the touchstone for creative excellence in communications. It is the award to win. From Digital Craft to Promo & Activation, the Lions honour the best creative work of the year across the whole spectrum of branded communications" (Cannes Lions, 2016). In the interviews I conducted with media agency employees, almost all mentioned winning a Lion as one of the industry's primary markers of success. Agencies who win at Cannes Lions make sure to publicize this success, listing award-wins on the company homepage and issuing press releases after the fact. At the Cannes Lions festival itself, the significance of the awards was evident; attendees began to queue to enter the auditorium over an hour before the ceremonies' scheduled start times. Each of the five awards ceremonies filled the 2300 person capacity Lumière Theatre, with additional attendees viewing from overflow rooms with closed-circuit footage of the live event. The spectacle of the awards ceremonies serves not only to award but also to legitimate industry practice.

The 24 awards categories, plus the attendant young lions, agency of the year, and network of the year awards, were grouped into five awards ceremonies that took place almost every evening, from June 18 to 24, 2016, starting with the Lions Health awards. The schedule of the awards ceremonies corresponded with the specialist festivals happening concurrently, such that the Health, Innovation, and Entertainment awards

were given out at the ceremonies taking place during each respective specialist festival.

The table below shows the grouping of the awards into the different ceremonies, per the festival program:

Pharma and Health & Wellness Lions Awards Ceremony June 18, 2016 Lumière Theatre	• Pharma Lions • Health & Wellness Lions • Lions Health Grand Prix for Good • Healthcare Agency of the Year • Healthcare Network of the Year • Young Lions Health Awards
Promo & Activation, Print & Publishing, Radio, Direct, Glass Lions Awards Ceremony June 20, 2016 Lumière Theatre	• Promo & Activation Lions • Print & Publishing Lions • Radio Lions • Direct Lions • Glass Lions • Young Lions Print Award
Outdoor, Creative Effectiveness, PR, Design, Product Design and Digital Craft Lions Awards Ceremony June 21, 2016 Lumière Theatre	• Outdoor Lions • Creative Effectiveness Lions • PR Lions • Design Lions • Product Design Lions • Digital Craft Lions • Design Young Lions Awards • PR Young Lions Awards
Creative Data, Innovation, Mobile, Media, Cyber Lions Awards Ceremony June 22, 2016 Lumière Theatre	• Creative Data Lions • Innovation Lions • Mobile Lions • Media Lions • Cyber Lions • Media Young Lions Awards • Cyber Young Lions Awards • Media Person of the Year
Lions Entertainment Awards Show June 24, 2016 Lumière Theatre	• Entertainment Lions • Entertainment Lions for Music • Film Lions • Film Craft Lions • Integrated Lions • Titanium Lions

Part of the awards' legitimacy comes from the exclusivity of jury selection and the subsequent judging process. Individuals are contacted in advance with invitations to sit

on one of the juries, with jury deliberation taking place during the festival itself. The Cannes Lions website reads, 'If winning a Lion is the ultimate career goal, then an invitation to join the Cannes Lions jury – made up of previous Lion-winners - is career-defining. The rigor of the judging process is second-to-none in our industry' (Cannes Lions, 2016). The fact that all jury members have won Lions previously serves to reinforce the weight of the awards, giving recursive heft to each additional year's judging. While at the festival, I was able to arrange an interview with a former jury member. He is the CTO of a large US-based media agency, and in 2015 sat on the jury for the 'Creative Data' award. Although jury members' names are publicized, he asked not to be identified by name here. This past juror expressed the sense of gratification he felt when contacted by the Cannes Lions organizers to sit on the jury. The fact that people may not submit themselves to be jury members, but must be contacted by Cannes Lions, made it a source of pride. He went on to tell me that, although he was not sitting on a jury for 2016, he planned to continue to attend Cannes Lions each year for the networking opportunities. In particular, he likes to keep an eye on the Young Lions award winners; these people, he told me, are likely to be industry leaders in just a few years. This conversation reinforced the notion that within the promotional industries, winning an award at Cannes is a barometer for talent and success.

The taxonomy and presentation of the Lions awards reveals a great deal about the status of media planning and the promotional industries. For the 2016 festival, there were 43,701 total submissions across 24 categories, according to a press release issued by Ascential on June 15, 2016. In 2016, there were a total of 2,986 entries submitted to the Media Lions category. This is the awards category historically associated with media agency work, and the only one of the 24 total categories to refer to the working practices

of media planning. According to the submission guidelines, ‘The Media Lions celebrate the context of creativity. Entries will need to demonstrate an inspiring and innovative implementation of ideas. That is, work which is enhanced and amplified by a game-changing channel strategy’ (Cannes Lions, 2016). As for how work is judged and awarded, work entered into the Media Lions category is judged on weighted criteria, ‘30% insight and idea, 20% strategy and targeting; 20% execution; 30% impact and results.’ The winner of the 2016 Grand Prix in Media at Cannes Lions was a campaign created for client brand Burger King, entitled ‘McWhopper.’ This campaign was submitted by Y&R (Young and Rubicam) New Zealand, with credits to four different agencies from within the WPP group: creative agency Y&R New Zealand, media planning agency Y&R Media New Zealand digital specialist agency Y&R Digital New Zealand, and experiential agency David. This constellation of involved parties is typical of Cannes Lions awards entrants. The rules for entry state that any agency involved in a campaign may submit to one of the awards categories. In the case of McWhopper, each of the agencies involved was part of the WPP group, however it is not a requirement that all agencies on a single entry be owned by the same conglomerate, and it is often the case that agencies with no connection work together on a single campaign. Client brands have control over who is responsible for the different components of a campaign, and many will employ a wide array of different types of specialist agencies. Despite the fact that McWhopper was submitted to and won the Grand Prix in the Media Lions category, the trophy would have gone home with creative agency Y&R New Zealand, rather than Y&R Media, as it was the former who submitted the campaign. This was most likely a joint decision among the connected agencies, and each of the four can list the award-win as a credential. The difficulty of separating out media planning is evident in the way the

McWhopper campaign was submitted and awarded. It is also interesting to note the inclusion of Y&R Digital on the submission ticket, as this indicates that Y&R made the strategic decision to establish a separate, boutique digital agency in response to growing demand. This kind of specialist agency is a good example of the fragmentation of advertising practice, and the increased fragmentation of media planning within advertising.

This ongoing fragmentation and re-organization of advertising, and of media planning, specifically, is further echoed in the awards categories present at Cannes Lions 2016. The chart below shows the number of entries per award category for 2015 and 2016. It is interesting to note the decrease in number of awards entries in the Media Lions category. Historically, this is the category into which work by media planning agencies would be entered. With the emergence of new categories relevant to media planning, these awards entries are likely being redirected elsewhere. This helps to account for the 7% decrease overall in entrants into the Media Lions category. By contrast, according to a press release issued by the festival, there were particular increases in awards submissions related to data and technology: ‘Launched last year, entries into the Creative Data Lions have risen by 16% and there was a leap of 69% in the Innovation Lions, echoing the continuing explosion of data and tech-led creativity.’ (Ascential, 2016). The criteria for entries into the creative data category are as follows: ‘Entries in the Creative Data categories must clearly demonstrate how the execution/campaign was enhanced or driven by the creative use, interpretation, analysis or application of data. The creative use of data must sit at the core of the idea and the results/impact must be clear and robust.’ (Cannes Lions, 2016). The addition of the ‘creative data’ award category is part of a deliberate move by the Cannes festival, and by

the promotional industries, to make a case for data as a creative tool. This is also reflected in the careful rhetoric of the Ascential press release, quoted above, which positions tech in service of creativity, and not the other way around. It is likely that a significant portion of entries into the Creative Data Lions would have come from media agencies, which have traditionally been considered data specialists with regard to advertising campaigns. This accounts for the drop in number of entrants in the Media Lions category, from 3,179 entrants in 2015 to 2,986 entrants in 2016 (see figure below).

	2015	2016
Creative Data Lions	619	715
Creative Effectiveness Lions	160	109
Cyber Lions	3,738	2,886
Design Lions	2,409	2,857
Digital Craft Lions	-	1,150
Direct Lions	2,813	3,097
Entertainment Lions	1,394	1,843
Entertainment Lions for Music	-	637
Film Lions	3,070	2,801
Film Craft Lions	2,205	2,315
Glass: The Lion for Change	166	155
Health and Wellness Lions	1,430	2,024
Innovation Lions	226	381
Integrated Lions	-	279
Media Lions	3,179	2,986
Mobile Lions	1,246	1,259
Outdoor Lions	5,037	5,365
Pharma Lions	432	583
PR Lions	1,969	2,224
Print & Publishing Lions	4,470	3,775
Product Design Lions	280	538
Promo & Activation Lions	3,196	3,458
Radio Lions	1,720	1,410
Titanium Lions	374	254
TOTAL	40,133	43,101

Figure 5-4 Total Cannes Lions awards entrants by category, 2015 v. 2016

There were three new awards categories for 2016: Digital Craft Lions, Entertainment Lions for Music, and Integrated Lions, all of which are linked to the Entertainment

Lions specialist festival. Other categories have been adapted or transformed; the Branded Content Lion, for example, was discontinued after 2015 and entrants redirected to two separate categories, the Entertainment Lions and Entertainment Lions for Music. This, as well as the addition of the three previous Entertainment sub-categories, reflects the increasing prominence of branded content within the promotional industries, and the need for increased awards categories to accommodate the expanding remit of the Cannes Lions festival. The number of total Lions awards entrants has increased year over year for the last five consecutive years of the festival, and the awards categories are likely to continue to expand and change, in pace with trends across the promotional industries. The table above reflects that fact that awards categories that award media planning work specifically make up only a small proportion of the total categories. While this is indeed the case, media planning agencies were present as named parties on a number of award-winning campaigns across a range of non-media or data specific categories, illustrating the involvement of the work of media agencies in varied promotional work. For example, a campaign entitled ‘6 Pack Band,’ created for Unilever India by media agency Mindshare, won the Glass Lion Grand Prix.⁵⁸ UM London won a Gold Lions in the Creative Effectiveness category for their work on a campaign for *The Economist*, titled ‘Raising Eyebrows and Suspicions.’

The appearance of media agency names in categories not typically associated with media planning is indicative of the expanding remit of media agency work. Increasingly, the criteria for award winning campaigns at Cannes Lions has come to include

⁵⁸ The Glass Lion was first introduced in 2015, and aims ‘to commend ideas intended to change the world that address gender inequality or prejudice’ (Cannes Lions 2016). It is one of several awards that have a charitable remit, grouped together as the Lions Awards for Good. The entry fees for these campaigns are donated to charity.

measurability and use of technology, on top of imaginative ideas. Commenting on his agency's award win, Russell Place, Managing Director of UM London said, 'At UM, we use better science and better art to deliver better outcomes for our clients, and 'Raising Eyebrows' is the perfect example of that approach in action. We couldn't be happier.' (UM Worldwide 2016). Place's comments echo the sentiments of the UM employees I interviewed, who also mentioned the agency's 'better art, better science' mantra. UM's decision to re-brand under this new slogan was timely, capitalizing on a trend echoed throughout Cannes Lion and across the promotional industries to incorporate data within the purview of creativity.

Data as a creative tool

When it comes to the industry sanctioned view of media planning, as evidenced in the festival program, the specific working practices of media planning are a lesser area of focus than more traditionally dominant sub-sectors of promotion, such as creative agencies. Instead, media planning and media agencies figured in the official program as being linked to issues of data and automation. Nevertheless, in the program and indeed the entire Cannes Lions festival's emphasis on the promise of data, an implicit message emerged about the centrality of media planning to the promotional industries. With data understood as an essential aspect of promotional industry work, the Cannes Lions festival made deliberate steps to link data to creativity. The language of creativity, which, since 2011 has been a part of the official Cannes narrative, was operationalized to make issues of technology and data fit within the identity of the Cannes Lions festival.

Data presented as creative practice is a deliberate and pragmatic move. In linking the two, Cannes Lions posits the argument that data and creativity need to be linked for

the future survival of the promotional industries. The representation of media planning at Cannes Lions, meanwhile, is useful for examining how creativity figures within the industry. Representatives of the traditionally held 'creative' side of promotion, that is ad agencies, suggested a sense of unease about the shifting focus of the festival, away from ads and toward discussion of new technologies, novel uses of data and the incorporation of automation into promotional industry work.

Some talks at Cannes Lions 2016 suggested that new technologies might pose a threat to promotional industry jobs. This was the case in the talk titled 'Will a Robot Win a Lion,' mentioned earlier in this chapter. This was also the case in the showcasing, at Cannes Lions 2016 of a 'new'

Rembrandt. 'The Next Rembrandt,' pictured at right, 3-D printed, computer generated oil painting that closely mimics one of the Dutch master's own works.

'The Next Rembrandt' was created as part of an advertising campaign developed by advertising agency J. Walter Thompson for ING Bank, intended 'to highlight ING's dedication to innovation and its



was a

Figure 5-5 Photograph of 'The Next Rembrandt', created by J. Walter Thompson for ING Amsterdam

sponsorship of classic art' (*AdWeek* 2016). The campaign won the Grand Prix in the

Cyber and Creative Data categories. Of the award-winning campaign, Tash Whitmey, the head of the Creative Data jury and CEO of Havas Helia (a major global data and digital marketing agency), said:

We're tremendously proud of the Grand Prix. It was pretty much unanimous. We loved it for so many reasons. It's hard to put those reasons into words. It's a beacon for this particular category. It's a beacon for the data industry. It shows how to take many, many complex sources of data and fuse them into creativity in ways that we found inspiring, and a little scary. It raised some questions that made us feel uncomfortable around humanity versus machines, and data, and what is the art of the possible in future. And without exception, it provoked powerful feelings.

(AdWeek 2016)

Whitmey's remarks seem to ask, if a robot can use data to create work that mimics a great master, where does this leave human creativity? This type of talk would in some ways seem to be at odds with Cannes Lions' stated emphasis on creativity. Yet the vast majority of talks and events that spoke to the increasing prevalence of data, automation and artificial intelligence suggested that the industry is not solely data led. Increasingly, these talks also included a mention of how best to use these tools for creative ends. Creativity, after all, is still the privileged feature of the Cannes Lions festival. These seemingly opposed strands combine to lead to the newfound 'data as creative practice' trend, which emerged at Cannes Lions 2016. This throughline is a way of negotiating these two rival emphases, turning them from opponents to bedfellows in order to maintain existing business practices and industry structures.

This move to confirm the creative potential of data serves two functions. First, from the perspective of the Cannes Lions organizers, it further expands the purview of the festival's 'creativity' remit. For media agencies, the presentation of data as creative practice represents a potential shift in standing toward a more elevated position within the promotional industries. Yet at the same time, the portrayal of data as in service of a

kind of greater mythologized creativity persists in making media planning subservient in the hierarchy of promotion. While the Cannes Lions festival moves to subsume data within the remit of creativity, the idealized notion of creativity as something untouchable and, crucially, un-automatable remains intact. At Cannes Lions 2016, the prevalence of discussions around data and ad tech allowed media agencies space at the festival. Still, in the midst of this renegotiation and re-establishment of notions of creativity, the lore around the centrality of ad agencies and ‘creatives’ remained mostly intact. While media agencies were not positioned as taking over the concept of creativity, the events of the festival did suggest that, as the parties historically entrusted with interpreting and using data and acting as go-betweens for creativity and data science, media agencies are important players in the promotional industries ecosystem.

Conclusions

The deployment of the notion of creativity was highly evident at Cannes Lions 2016. This is clear in the branding of the festival, which, since 2011, has been known officially as the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity, as well as in the 2016 festival theme, ‘Thank You Creativity.’ Elsewhere at the 2016 festival, visuals reinforced the centrality and celebration of creativity. In the 2016 festival program, creativity had significant discursive value. Every morning, the day’s events at Cannes Lions 2016 began with the screening of a 45-minute presentation titled ‘Creativity Matters: Briefing and Toolkit.’ The description for the presentation reads: ‘this 45 minute presentation makes the case for creativity, establishing why it’s a force for business, for change, and for good’. The daily presentation was Cannes Lions’ own avowal of the importance of creativity, and therefore, the importance of the festival. Creativity is and will remain the

prized commodity in the promotional industries. But, with data understood as an essential aspect of promotional industry work, the Cannes Lions festival has shifted and expanded its definition of creativity, making deliberate steps to link the arenas of technology, digital and data to creativity. This linkage is essential for the promotional industries to survive while maintaining a creative remit. Data and automation were therefore presented as creative practice at Cannes Lions in a deliberate and pragmatic move. By positioning data as a powerful new affordance in their creative toolkit, the promotional industries can be seen to embrace change while reinforcing traditional industry roles.

Although this valuing of creativity in the festival name and program is to the detriment of media planning work practice, in that it obscures the specific work of media planning, it positions media planning and media agencies as part of the new guard of creativity. Media planning was prominent in the Cannes Lions program in relation to issues of digital and data. While some aspects of the professional discipline of media planning were marginalized at the festival, the arena of data in media planning was seen as a locus of creativity. The outcome, therefore, for media agencies, is the potential for increased centrality in the complex web of the promotional industries. This potential is reflected in the extensive presence maintained by media agencies at the Cannes Lions festival fringe. It is further echoed in the anxiety expressed on the part of creative agencies, for whom the apparent creative potential of data is a threat. Indeed, the renaming of the Cannes festival as the Festival of Creativity could be read as suggesting not that creativity became suddenly more important, but because it became more threatened.

Media planners have historically been considered the keepers of data for consumer targeting within advertising, first as members of planning and buying teams within full service agencies, and later within the walls of dedicated media planning agencies. In my interview with Scott Holmes of UM, he described media planners as being once thought of as ‘gorillas with calculators’ (see Chapter 3). Holmes expressed his disdain for the metaphor, asserting that much of the work done within contemporary media agencies is highly creative work, work that would once have been the purview of creative agencies. After observing the ways in which data was praised as a creative tool at Cannes Lions 2016, however, it seems that media agencies need not worry about distancing themselves from their historical association with data. What may once have been damaging to the public image of media agencies, an intrinsic reliance on data in working practices, was depicted at Cannes Lions as an important point of distinction for the promotional industries. Media agencies may therefore find that their association with data affords them a more central and dominant position within the promotional industries, insofar as Cannes Lions continues to reinforce the notion of data as a creative tool.

CONCLUSION: DRAWING BACK THE CURTAIN

The work of media planning occupies a contradictory space within the promotional and media industries, at once an integral component of both and yet a sector whose work is largely unseen. Media planning is an essential facet of promotional campaigns, comprising the elements of campaign execution that enable ads and other forms of promotional messaging to reach audiences. For the media industries, media planning is centrally involved in revenue generation and therefore content creation, as ad-funded revenue models continue to drive the creation of media content. And yet, media planning receives relatively little attention as an industry sector, both in popular accounts as well as scholarly research. Instead, the work of media planning remains, to an extent, ‘behind the curtain’ (Wright 2016). This PhD has sought to pull back this obscuring curtain in a dual sense. It has done so in the first sense by deliberately and purposefully placing media planning within the figurative spotlight, investigating media planning as a sector and media agencies as loci of media planning work. The second sense refers to the methodology employed in conducting this research; drawing on a critical media industry studies framework, this PhD has employed a three-part, mixed method approach in order to gain a thorough understanding of media planning, grounded in the perspective of its practitioners and industry peers. The various case studies that make up this thesis highlight the role and work of media planning as a sector; through interviews with media agency employees, this thesis explored how media planning is understood by its practitioners; close analysis of semi-embedded industry texts shed light on the circulation and portrayal of media planning expertise; finally, using evidence gleaned from participant-observation at Cannes Lions, this PhD

examined the ways in which media planning is represented within the broader array of the promotional industries.

Change and data have emerged as two issues core to thinking about the work of media planning. On the issue of change, Deuze (2007) and Grainge and Johnson (2015), amongst others, have noted the realities of fluxing working conditions to be an encompassing facet of media work. This is also true for media planning, with a notable difference; in media planning work the constancy of change is not necessarily experienced as a negative and is instead taken to be a given. The perception of ongoing change as an accepted characteristic of media planning work and media agency work life is evident throughout many of the cases in this study. Chapter 1 highlighted the fact that changing modes of media consumption along with increased availability of consumer data were the very conditions that, in the late 1990s, led media planning agencies to splinter or otherwise form as distinct entities, separate from full-service ad agencies. Chapter 2 drew on existing scholarship to help foreground a study of media planning, looking first to advertising studies before drawing on promotional studies research and finally emergent work on promotional intermediaries. These bodies of work are interlinked and yet the shifting language used to delimit these fields of study echoes the changing delineations of media planning, from its early status as a component part of advertising into, in the late 20th century, a discernible sector of promotion. Here, again, we see change reflected as intrinsic to media planning, as it is something at once part of and separate from advertising, shifting in position as the media and technological landscape around it evolves.

Firsthand accounts from media agency employees in Chapter 3 coalesced once more around issues of change and data as being two key facets for understanding media

planning work. The work lives of media agency employees are tinged with a perceived sense of persistent and ongoing change. In semi-structured interviews, the media agency employees I interviewed spoke freely about the uncertainties that characterize their work on individual, organizational and industry-sector levels. Notable in these accounts was the privileging of adaptability as a media agency skillset, as evidenced for example, in Account Director Nik Gill's statement, 'Our ethos is about being adaptive' (Gill 2016). Rather than perceiving change as threatening or harmful, media agency employees displayed a sense pride in their ability to thrive in the uncertainty of a fluxing industrial landscape. In my interviewees' disavowal of change as a danger to their work, these media agency employees epitomized the need to consider different media industries each on their own terms, echoing Mark Deuze's sentiment that, 'an emphasis on the individualistic and idiosyncratic nature of media workers suggests that contemporary trends . . . not only mean different things to different people, but are also differently articulated in the context of specific media products, genres, and organizations' (Deuze 2007: 92). In interviews with agency employees, the apparent challenges of working in an often-taxing industry sector were reframed as opportunities.

Chapter 4 examined the circulation of research reports as a way of understanding how media agencies position their work. Semi-embedded self-theorising texts, like UMWW's *Wave 7* and Havas' *Hashtagnation*, are mobilized as tools for courting and keeping clients, while also being operationalized within agencies as sources both of insight and assurance. The content of both the *Wave 7* and *Hashtagnation* reports suggests that media agencies are engaged in critical practices that seek out means to chart the shifting landscape in which they operate. Both reports called for a shift in approaching consumer targeting, moving away from dominant practices of disruption

and toward an understanding of consumers as savvy and aware of their import. These reports asked their respective agency workers reconsider their roles in impacting consumer behaviour. Beyond displaying each agency's acuity in tracking consumer habits, these and similar reports are intended to highlight their respective agencies' abilities to locate and evolve along with changes in consumer behavioural trends, highlighting their ability to respond to these challenges. Writing on semi-embedded texts, John Caldwell has noted that, 'reflexivity operates as a creative process involving human agency and critical competence at the local cultural level as much as a discursive process establishing power at the broader social level' (2008: 34). *Wave 7*, *Hashtagnation* and other reports of their kind are discursive sites in which the unruliness of the media planning profession is simultaneously exhibited and contained, and in which the saliency of using a media agency is demonstrated not only to clients, but also to agency employees. Thus, both in interviews with media agency employees, as well as in semi-public research reports circulated by media agencies, the ability to manage change was stressed as a valued skill. The ability to navigate change is, in both cases, presented as being a feature of media planning work.

Both of the research reports discussed in detail in Chapter 4 focused on methods for building relationships between consumers and brands, reinforcing media planning's historical links to consumer data. In the conditions of the early 21st Century media landscape, characterized by saturation of messaging, channel fragmentation and fierce competition for attention, it is the capacity of media planning to unite consumer attention with brand messaging that enables media planning to persist and even thrive in uncertain conditions. The content of these reports was culled from exhaustive proprietary surveys conducted on an annual and semi-annual basis, and the reports are

also a means of selling access to the complete data set, along with attendant analytic tools, to clients. In interviews with agency employees, interviewees also stressed the emphasis within media agency work of efficient and savvy use of data to justify decisions. The expectation of data-driven working practices can be seen as constituting the second recurrent thread that emerged throughout the course of my research, that is media planning's data imperative. The media agency employees I interviewed were largely critical of the impact of this data imperative. Some found that the insistence on data-driven justification hindered swift decision-making (Ly 2016), while others felt it limited use of intuition gained from experience (Wright 2016). Still others felt that data could be used to obfuscate, ultimately leading to poor relationships with clients and media owners (Jambren 2016). On the whole the attitude of agency employees toward this data imperative was a negative one, with Strategy Director Richard Wright calling data 'the media agency curse' (Wright 2016).

The issue of media planning's data imperative denotes a core tension in the presentation of media planning on an industrial level versus the lived experience of media agency employees on an individual level. Where Chapters 3 and 4 illuminated media planning from a sector-specific point of view, Chapter 5 widened its focus to examine the portrayal and positioning of media agencies within the broader promotional industries web, as seen via the representative lens of Cannes Lions 2016. Chapter 5 outlined the ways in which media planning figured at Cannes Lions 2016, in which representatives from media agencies were called upon to speak to issues of data. In this regard media agencies were given a specific role at Cannes Lions. Yet at the same time, in the festival's lauding of data, media planning seemed poised to be granted a more central position within the festival's unspoken hierarchy. On the whole, a deeper

exploration of this tension merits further research, as the data imperative seems at once to be a strain on media agency work while simultaneously presenting the opportunity for media planning to rise in prominence. Further to this, a chronologically driven research study tracing media planning's portrayal at Cannes Lions would yield fascinating results, particularly with regard to media planning's shifting status in the digital era, from the late-1990s onward.

Inasmuch as the events of Cannes Lions 2016 suggested the persistence of certain promotional industry hierarchies around creativity, it also hinted toward the beginnings of a sea change in the ways in which creativity is understood and operationalized, specifically in the festival's reframing of data as a creative tool. This effort to absorb data within the purview of promotional creativity is no doubt a strategic move designed to maintain industry structures and revenue streams. Nevertheless, it troubles dominant media and promotional industry understandings of creativity, as evidenced in criticism by some high-profile attendees over the lack of focus on so-called 'creative' at Cannes Lions 2016. The workings of the discourse of creativity in promotion as rooted specifically in the production of ads is linked to the idea, per McStay, of affective work as having particular value. Yet criticisms of the lack of emphasis on creative at Cannes Lions 2016 from veteran Cannes Lions attendees are illustrative of an emerging concern about the dilution of attention on 'traditional' forms of promotion, only rendered more frantic by the wealth of branded communications opportunities in the 21st century promotional landscape.

The notion of creativity as it pertains to media planning is a fruitful area for further research and debate. In addition to the changing ways creativity was incorporated at Cannes Lions 2016, the interviews conducted for this PhD also

suggested that the boundaries of what is considered creative work in the field of promotion are, at present, being troubled. Amongst the individuals I interviewed for this PhD there was discord regarding whether they are engaged in creative work. Most emphasized the distinction between media and creative agencies and were happy for this distinction to be made. For example, Adam Kanter of Initiative Media said,

The first thing people ask me when I say I work in advertising is, ‘oh, so you’re a creative.’ And my answer right away is, ‘actually, no, I’m not.’ There’s a lot of roles and jobs in advertising that are not on the creative side.
(Kanter 2016)

Though less explicit in his language, Nik Gil of MediaCom echoed this distinction between media and creative, saying,

There’s a fusion between the media plan and the creative assets, where the creative idea can often spark media planning, and media planning can drive the idea, so there’s a bit in between where we have kind of integration sessions between the two agencies.
(Gil 2016)

In contrast to these accounts, other interviewees suggested a kind of creativity in the work that they do. Richard Wright for example, described media agency work as ‘the science of understanding people, and the science of being able to buy in a certain way, combined with the art of curiosity and intuition and creativity and all of that kind of stuff’ (Wright 2016). This understanding of creativity stands in contrast to dominant notions of creativity in promotion as referring specifically to the production of advertisements. Holmes’ and others’ comments suggest a privileging of creativity in some form in media agency work, paired with an understanding of the significance of data in the contemporary promotional landscape. I closed every interview by asking my interviewees if there was anything more they wished to add, or anything they would like Academia to know about the world of media planning. In response to this final

questions Scott Holmes echoed Wright's comments above, saying, 'Data is fundamental in everything we do but if you don't understand what to do with it, it only gets you part of the way.' He continued, 'That's the objective part of it, but there's a very really subjective, creative part of it that's how do we use this, how do we do something that makes it special' (Holmes 2016). These statements open up space for further research into the relationship between data and creativity, in media agency work specifically and in the promotional industries more broadly.

In seeking to highlight the work of media agencies, this PhD has therefore also located a further nascent issue for consideration in evolving debates around classifications of creativity in the media and promotional industries. In the popular binary of creativity versus commerce attributed to all manner of media industries, media planning fits neatly into neither of the two. Media agencies are neither 'suits' nor 'creatives.' One of the major aims of this research was to chart out the work of media agencies in a considered manner, without issuing judgment on the creative merits of this type of work. Instead, this research has aimed to make space for the consideration of media planning as a sector, in order to better understand its role in and relation to the promotional industries. This PhD now makes way for further research that might investigate classifications of creative work in media planning, perhaps by focusing more closely on the different roles and teams within media agencies. Further research on media planning would be well positioned to examine interactions between media agencies and clients, as well as other partner agencies. An account of how media agencies and the work of media planning are perceived by the brands they represent would also help to shed light on the issue of whether media planning is considered to be creative work, and, if so, in what ways. It would be illuminating, as a next step, to

conduct interviews with media agency clients; such work would give depth to the question of media planning's place in the promotional industries and its status as promotional intermediary.

This PhD project emerged out of a desire for access to a focused study of media planning as it is practiced by media agencies, and a frustration that no such research exists. In seeking to shed light on the work of media planning, I have focused herein on media agencies as loci of media planning work, investigating the work of media planning agencies from the mid-2010s to 2018. Throughout the duration of my research, I have operated with an awareness of the ongoing evolution of the media and promotional industry landscapes of which media agencies are part. It is my hope that, by offering a foundational study of media planning as a sector, this PhD will have made space for future research into the many issues surrounding media planning and media agency work. As an integral component of both the media and promotional industries, media planning deserves close attention, and the work of media agencies to be brought out from behind the curtain.

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APPENDIX 1: ETHICS APPROVAL FORM: INTERVIEWS

Faculty of Arts Ethics Approval Form

Researcher	Victoria Gerstman
School/Division	CLAS – Culture, Film and Media
Project title	Understanding the Notion of the 'Consumer' in Media Planning
Date	13 ^h July 2015
E-mail	aaxvg@nottingham.ac.uk

(1) Researcher Information. Please tick as appropriate.

YES ☐ NO ☒ Member of staff conducting research project

If ticked YES above, is the research funded by a RC that needs proof of ethics approval? And what is the funding body?

YES ☐ funding body _____
NO ☐

YES ☒ NO ☐ Postgraduate Researcher

If ticked YES above, indicate level of studies and supervisor.

PhD ☒ MA ☐ Supervisor Paul Grainge, Cathy Johnson

YES ☐ NO ☒ Member of staff obtaining approval for data collected by students on a module.

If ticked YES above, indicate level of studies.

PhD ☐ MA ☐ UG ☐

Module Code and Module Name

If obtaining approval for a module, in the sections below provide an overview of the type of projects the students will do. Attached with your paperwork the guidelines given to the students about the type of data they will collect, as well as the information about the relevant areas of the ethics protocol that they will need to follow. Students need to provide signed informed consent forms from ALL participants with their submitted work, as well as the tick sheet signed by them.

(2) Provide a brief summary of the research aims/questions [max 500 characters & spaces].

This PhD research project aims to illuminate the ways in which media planning professionals make sense of the consumer as justification for media planning work. The objective is to help bridge a gap in the understanding of how advertising messaging reaches the public. Interviews with media industry professionals will be necessary to understand how these individuals conceptualize their role within the broader schema of the advertising industry.

(3) Methods – tick as appropriate and provide an explanation as indicated below.

Part A YES ☐ NO ☒ psychophysiological measures (e.g. response times, eyetracking, ERP, etc.)

YES ☐ NO ☒ prolonged visual and/or auditory stimuli

YES ☒ NO ☐ interviews (focus groups)

YES ☐ NO ☒ questionnaires

YES ☐ NO ☒ other

Part B YES ☐ NO ☒ using data produced by students (e.g. their essays)

YES ☒ NO ☐ using data freely available on-line

YES ☐ NO ☒ using data available on-line only available to members of the group

YES ☒ NO ☐ were the participants aware that work would be used for research purposes

Part C YES ☐ NO ☒ procedures likely to change participants' mood, be aversive or stressful

YES ☐ NO ☒ misleading participants about an experiment or withholding information

YES ☐ NO ☒ information-gathering on sensitive issues (e.g. sexual, racial, religious or political attitudes, etc.)

YES ☐ NO ☒ procedures which might be harmful or distressing to people in a specially vulnerable state (e.g. depressed, anxious, bereaved, etc.)

YES ☐ NO ☒ discussion or investigation of personal topics (e.g. relationships, feelings of success and failure) or any other procedure in which participants may have an emotional investment

For anything ticked YES, please provide more detailed information. Indicate any potential risks to participants and justify this risk. For interviews, please be clear whether the interviews are being recorded, how the identities of participants are being protected, and who will have access to the data (e.g. will participants' recordings be presented at conference presentations). For Part B, for any data not publically available, indicate how you will obtain permission from participants to use their data.

Interview – interviews will be recorded through digital voice recording and note-taking. These recordings will be stored electronically by the researcher in password-encrypted files. Participants will be asked for consent to record the interviews. Participants engaged in interviews can choose to remain anonymous and any information given in confidence during interviews will not be publicly disseminated (see data storage and anonymity).

Online Data – Press releases and publicly available agency-produced research reports will be used as background information regarding the type of research done within

media planning agencies. In some cases interview subjects may be asked to comment on these publicly available reports.

(4) Location of data collection.

YES ☒ NO ☐ Will the task be performed outside of campus.

If data collection is occurring on campus please give the location. If data collection is occurring off campus, please provide information about the location.

Media agency offices in Central London

(5) Participants, access, and inducements.

YES ☐ NO ☒ participants under 16 (if so, you may need to undergo a CRB check)

YES ☐ NO ☒ participants recruited from special sources (e.g. prisons, hospitals, schools. etc.)

YES ☐ NO ☒ participants whose capacity to give consent may be in doubt (e.g. learning disability, confusion, etc.)

YES ☐ NO ☒ participants who have received medical, psychiatric, clinical psychological or other similar attention

YES ☐ NO ☒ participants being investigated in connection with a performance deficit (e.g. dyslexia)

For anything ticked YES, please provide more detailed information and justification.

YES ☐ NO ☒ are there any inducements for taking part

If YES, please provide more detailed information and justification.

(6) Data storage and anonymity.

YES ☐ NO ☒ is there a possibility of disclosure of confidential information (e.g. to other participants)

YES ☒ NO ☐ is there a possibility of identification of participants (e.g. when reporting results)

If YES, please provide more detailed information and justification.

The results of the research will be written up as a PhD dissertation and potential academic article. Since I shall be interviewing individuals employed at well-known media planning agencies, there is a possibility that interview sources may be identified. I shall ask participants whether they wish to remain anonymous, and clarify that they may request to become anonymous at any time, even after the conclusion of the interview. In the event that subjects wish to remain anonymous, no identifying information will be supplied (regarding either the individual or employer). Prior to any publication, participants will be offered the opportunity to

review and approve quoted material. I will share the content of interviews to be used, and ask subjects whether they consent to being identified and their quoted material used. Participants may agree to all, part, or none of the above options.

The data from interviews will be kept securely (in password protected files in cases where interviewees wish to be anonymous) for seven years, after which they will be destroyed.

(7) Awareness of ethical behavior when collecting data.

Researchers must indicate awareness of ethical behavior when collecting data from human participants by submitting the completed *Awareness of Ethical Behavior for Data Collection* (next pg) with this application. For students on a module, this form must be submitted with their work.

(8) Informed Consent Form

Provide an informed consent form for approval. The final page gives guidelines for producing one.

For Office Use Only

YES ☒ The form Awareness of Ethical Behavior for Data Collection has been included and ticked appropriately.

YES ☒ An appropriate consent form has been provided.

Approved By: Jen Birks Date: 30/07/15 Agreed By: Liz Evans Date:
06/08/2015

Awareness of Ethical Behavior for Data Collection

- ☒ Data gathering activities involving schools and other organizations will be carried out only with the agreement of the head of school/organization, or an authorised representative, and after adequate notice has been given.
 - ☒ The purpose and procedures of the project, and the potential benefits and costs of participating (e.g. the amount of their time involved), will be fully explained to prospective participants at the outset.
 - ☒ My full identity will be revealed to potential participants.
 - ☒ Prospective participants will be informed that data collected will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be reported in anonymised form, but that I will be forced to consider disclosure of certain information where there are strong grounds for believing that not doing so will result in harm to research participants or others, or (the continuation of) illegal activity.
 - ☒ All potential participants will be asked to give their explicit, normally written consent to participating in the research, and, where consent is given, separate copies of this will be retained by both researcher and participant. These consent forms should be submitted as an Appendix, along with this form.
- N/A In addition to the consent of the individuals concerned, the signed consent of a parent, guardian or 'responsible other' will be required to sanction the participation of minors (i.e. persons under 16 years of age) or those whose 'intellectual capability or other vulnerable circumstance may limit the extent to which they can be expected to understand or agree voluntarily'.

- ✓ Undue pressure will not be placed on individuals or institutions to participate in project activities.
 - ✓ The treatment of potential research participants will in no way be prejudiced if they choose not to participate in the project.
 - ✓ I will provide participants with my contact details (and details of the module convenor) in order that they are able to make contact in relation to any aspect of the project, should they wish to do so.
 - ✓ Participants will be made aware that they may freely withdraw from the project at any time without risk or prejudice.
 - ✓ Research will be carried out with regard for mutually convenient times and negotiated in a way that seeks to minimise disruption to schedules and burdens on participants.
 - ✓ At all times during the conduct of the research I will behave in an appropriate, professional manner and take steps to ensure that neither myself nor research participants are placed at risk.
 - ✓ The dignity and interests of research participants will be respected at all times, and steps will be taken to ensure that no harm will result from participating in the research.
 - ✓ The views of all participants in the research will be respected and special efforts will be made to be sensitive to differences relating to age, culture, disability, race, sex, religion and sexual orientation, amongst research participants, when planning, conducting and reporting on the research.
 - ✓ Data generated by the research will be kept in a safe and secure location and will be used purely for the purposes of the project (including dissemination of findings). No-one other than markers and examiners will have access to any of the data collected.
 - ✓ Research participants will have the right of access to any data kept on them.
 - ✓ All necessary steps will be taken to protect the privacy and ensure the anonymity and non-traceability of participants – e.g. by the use of pseudonyms, for both individual and institutional participants.
 - ✓ Where possible, participants will be provided with a summary of research findings and an opportunity for debriefing after taking part in the research.
- N/A If working with children 16 and under for a prolonged period of time, I have received Advanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure.

Signed Victoria Claire Gerstman
Date 27th July 2015

APPENDIX 2: ETHICS APPROVAL FORM: PARTICIPANT-OBSERVATION

Faculty of Arts Ethics Approval Form

Please submit this form to your School Ethics Officer **at least 2 months** before you plan to begin your research, along with:

- consent form
- written information sheet for participants
- signed declaration of ethical awareness
- questionnaire or focus group plan (if possible).

Please read the **Guidelines for Completing the Arts Ethics Form** (available on Workspace) before submitting the form to your School Ethics Officer.

Researcher name	Victoria Gerstman
School/Department	CLAS / CFM
Project Title	Navigating Media Planning: Industrial Self-Theorizing and Processes of Innovation in Media Agencies, 2005-2015
Date	26 April 2016
Email address	aaxvg@nottingham.ac.uk

(1) Researcher Information – please tick as appropriate

- ☐ Member of Staff
- ☒ Postgraduate Researcher

Supervisors: Paul Grainge, Cathy Johnson

- ☐ Member of staff obtaining approval for a module

Module Code:

Module Name:

Is the research funded by an external body or part of an external funding bid?

- ☐ Yes Funding Body: ☐ No

If yes, does the funding body require proof of ethics approval?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

(2) Research aims/questions

Provide a brief summary of the research aims/questions [max 100 words]

This PhD research project aims to illuminate media planning as a distinct subset of advertising. The objective is to help bridge a gap in the understanding of how advertising messaging reaches the public. Participant-observation and interviews at Cannes Lions

International Festival of Creativity 2016 will illuminate how media planning professionals conceptualize their work within the broader media industry landscape.

(3) Methods

a) Please indicate which methods you will be using:

- ☐ Questionnaire
- ☐ Focus groups
- ☒ Interviews
- ☒ Observation
- ☐ Psychophysiological measures (e.g. response time, eyetracking, ERP etc.)
- ☒ Data found online
- ☐ Data produced by students (e.g. their essays)
- ☐ Other; please specify:

b) Please give brief details of how you will be employing these methods [max 200 words]

Participant-Observation – I have approval from the festival organizers to attend as a participant-observer, and have been provided a complementary pass in order to facilitate my PhD research. I will use this opportunity to observe/take part in lectures, panels, and workshops in which members of the creative industries discuss industrial practice. I will be identified as a PhD student and observer by my nametag. Public talks will not be anonymized, however I will anonymize any interactions or conversations in which the participants could not reasonably be expected to know they are being observed and/or can not be approached in order to obtain consent.

Interview – I will also conduct follow-up interviews with willing attendees. Each interviewee will be provided with a consent form and given an opportunity to ask questions. These interviews will be recorded through digital voice recording, and stored electronically by the researcher in password-encrypted files. Participants will be asked for consent to record the interviews. Participants can choose to remain anonymous and any information given in confidence during interviews will not be publicly disseminated (see data storage and anonymity).

Online Data – The Cannes Lions website includes industry case studies and research data, which will be used as background information.

(4) Research Location

Please confirm where the research will take place:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ On Campus | ☒ Outside the UK |
| ☐ Elsewhere in the UK | ☐ Online |

If you are conducting your research outside of the UK, please state where:

Cannes, France

(5) Research topics

a) Please confirm if your research involves any of the following:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| Yes ☐ | No ☒ | Procedures likely to cause participants distress |
| Yes ☐ | No ☒ | Misleading participants about your research or withholding information |
| Yes ☐ | No ☒ | Investigation of sensitive issues (e.g. sexual, racial, religious or political attitudes, illegal activities etc.) |
| Yes ☐ | No ☒ | Investigation of personal topics (e.g. personal health, learning disabilities etc.) |
| Yes ☐ | No ☒ | Online data that requires a password to access |

If you have ticked YES to any of the above, please provide more details below. Indicate any potential risk to participants, justify this risk and what steps will be taken to minimise it. For online data please provide details of the websites and how you will ensure consent is given.

(6) Participants, access and inducements

a) Please confirm if your sample will involve any of the following:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| Yes ☐ | No ☒ | Participants under the age of 16 |
| Yes ☐ | No ☒ | Adults of limited mental capacity |
| Yes ☐ | No ☒ | Participants recruited from special sources (e.g. educational institutions, prisons, hospitals etc.) |

If you have ticked YES, please provide more detail information and justification:

b) Please confirm if you will be offering inducements for taking part:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Yes ☐ | No ☒ |
|------------------------------|--|

If YES, please provide more detailed information and justification:

c) Please confirm if there is a risk of participants being identified in any form of dissemination

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Yes ☒ | No ☐ |
|---|-----------------------------|

If you have answered YES please provide more detail information and justification

If you have answered NO please confirm how you will protect participants' identities

The results of the research will be written up as a PhD dissertation and potential academic article. Since I will be interviewing high-level individuals employed in various media industry

roles, there is a possibility that interview sources may be identified. I will ask participants whether they wish to remain anonymous, and clarify that they may request to become anonymous at any time, even after the conclusion of the interview. In the event that subjects wish to remain anonymous, no identifying information will be supplied (regarding either the individual or employer). Prior to any publication, participants will be offered the opportunity to review and approve quoted material. I will share the content of interviews to be used, and ask subjects whether they consent to being identified and their quoted material used. Participants may agree to all, part, or none of the above options.

The data from interviews will be kept securely (in password protected files in cases where interviewees wish to be anonymous) for seven years, after which they will be destroyed.

(7) Data Storage & Dissemination

a) Please confirm that you will be storing your data in password-protected files

Yes ☒ No ☐

b) Please confirm if you will be destroying the data seven years after publication

Yes ☒ No ☐

If you have answered NO, please provide a justification and give details of where the data will be deposited

b) Please provide an indication of any intended dissemination or impact activities (if such activities are planned after the project is approved, please inform your School Ethics Officer of these changes and update consent procedures appropriately)

The Cannes Festival organizers have asked that I share my findings with them, in the form of an article or follow-up meeting. There is a possibility of presenting these findings at next year's Cannes Festival of Media, and working toward a continuing partnership with Cannes Lions.

(8) Declaration

Signed Victoria Gerstman

Date 26/04/2016

Office use only:

Approved Jen Birks
(School Ethics Officer)

Date 03/05/16

Confirmed __Dominic Thompson_____
(Second School Ethics Officer)

Date__17/05/16_____

Send for full committee approval ☐

Approved _____
(Faculty Ethics Officer)

Date_____

Awareness of Ethical Behavior for Data Collection

- ✓ Data gathering activities involving schools and other organizations will be carried out only with the agreement of the head of school/organization, or an authorised representative, and after adequate notice has been given.
- ✓ The purpose and procedures of the project, and the potential benefits and costs of participating (e.g. the amount of their time involved), will be fully explained to prospective participants at the outset.
- ✓ My full identity will be revealed to potential participants.
- ✓ Prospective participants will be informed that data collected will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be reported in anonymised form, but that I will be forced to consider disclosure of certain information where there are strong grounds for believing that not doing so will result in harm to research participants or others, or (the continuation of) illegal activity.
- ✓ All potential participants will be asked to give their explicit, normally written consent to participating in the research, and, where consent is given, separate copies of this will be retained by both researcher and participant. These consent forms should be submitted as an Appendix, along with this form.

N/A In addition to the consent of the individuals concerned, the signed consent of a parent, guardian or 'responsible other' will be required to sanction the participation of minors (i.e. persons under 16 years of age) or those whose 'intellectual capability or other vulnerable circumstance may limit the extent to which they can be expected to understand or agree voluntarily'.

- ✓ Undue pressure will not be placed on individuals or institutions to participate in project activities.
- ✓ The treatment of potential research participants will in no way be prejudiced if they choose not to participate in the project.
- ✓ I will provide participants with my contact details (and details of the module convenor) in order that they are able to make contact in relation to any aspect of the project, should they wish to do so.
- ✓ Participants will be made aware that they may freely withdraw from the project at any time without risk or prejudice.
- ✓ Research will be carried out with regard for mutually convenient times and negotiated in a way that seeks to minimise disruption to schedules and burdens on participants.
- ✓ At all times during the conduct of the research I will behave in an appropriate, professional manner and take steps to ensure that neither myself nor research participants are placed at risk.
- ✓ The dignity and interests of research participants will be respected at all times, and steps will be taken to ensure that no harm will result from participating in the research.
- ✓ The views of all participants in the research will be respected and special efforts will be made to be sensitive to differences relating to age, culture, disability, race, sex, religion and sexual orientation, amongst research participants, when planning, conducting and reporting on the research.
- ✓ Data generated by the research will be kept in a safe and secure location and will be used purely for the purposes of the project (including dissemination of findings). No-one other than markers and examiners will have access to any of the data collected.
- ✓ Research participants will have the right of access to any data kept on them.
- ✓ All necessary steps will be taken to protect the privacy and ensure the anonymity and non-traceability of participants – e.g. by the use of pseudonyms, for both individual and institutional participants.
- ✓ Where possible, participants will be provided with a summary of research findings and an opportunity for debriefing after taking part in the research.

N/A If working with children 16 and under for a prolonged period of time, I have received Advanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure.

Signed Victoria Claire Gerstman

Date 19th April 2016

Awareness of Ethical Behavior for Data Collection

- ✓ Data gathering activities involving schools and other organizations will be carried out only with the agreement of the head of school/organization, or an authorised representative, and after adequate notice has been given.
- ✓ The purpose and procedures of the project, and the potential benefits and costs of participating (e.g. the amount of their time involved), will be fully explained to prospective participants at the outset.
- ✓ My full identity will be revealed to potential participants.
- ✓ Prospective participants will be informed that data collected will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be reported in anonymised form, but that I will be forced to consider disclosure of certain information where there are strong grounds for believing that not doing so will result in harm to research participants or others, or (the continuation of) illegal activity.
- ✓ All potential participants will be asked to give their explicit, normally written consent to participating in the research, and, where consent is given, separate copies of this will be retained by both researcher and participant. These consent forms should be submitted as an Appendix, along with this form.

N/A In addition to the consent of the individuals concerned, the signed consent of a parent, guardian or 'responsible other' will be required to sanction the participation of minors (i.e. persons under 16 years of age) or those whose 'intellectual capability or other vulnerable circumstance may limit the extent to which they can be expected to understand or agree voluntarily'.

- ✓ Undue pressure will not be placed on individuals or institutions to participate in project activities.
- ✓ The treatment of potential research participants will in no way be prejudiced if they choose not to participate in the project.
- ✓ I will provide participants with my contact details (and details of the module convenor) in order that they are able to make contact in relation to any aspect of the project, should they wish to do so.
- ✓ Participants will be made aware that they may freely withdraw from the project at any time without risk or prejudice.
- ✓ Research will be carried out with regard for mutually convenient times and negotiated in a way that seeks to minimise disruption to schedules and burdens on participants.
- ✓ At all times during the conduct of the research I will behave in an appropriate, professional manner and take steps to ensure that neither myself nor research participants are placed at risk.
- ✓ The dignity and interests of research participants will be respected at all times, and steps will be taken to ensure that no harm will result from participating in the research.
- ✓ The views of all participants in the research will be respected and special efforts will be made to be sensitive to differences relating to age, culture, disability, race, sex, religion and sexual orientation, amongst research participants, when planning, conducting and reporting on the research.
- ✓ Data generated by the research will be kept in a safe and secure location and will be used purely for the purposes of the project (including dissemination of findings). No-one other than markers and examiners will have access to any of the data collected.
- ✓ Research participants will have the right of access to any data kept on them.
- ✓ All necessary steps will be taken to protect the privacy and ensure the anonymity and non-traceability of participants – e.g. by the use of pseudonyms, for both individual and institutional participants.
- ✓ Where possible, participants will be provided with a summary of research findings and an opportunity for debriefing after taking part in the research.

N/A If working with children 16 and under for a prolonged period of time, I have received Advanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure.

Signed Victoria Claire Gerstman

Date 19th April 2016

APPENDIX 3: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Project title Understanding the Idea of the 'Consumer' in Media Planning

Researcher's name Victoria Gerstman

Supervisor's name Paul Grainge

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I may choose whether or not to be identified, and my personal results will remain confidential. **{Please select one below}**
 - ☐ I consent to being identified alongside the presentation of my data.
 - ☐ I wish to be referred to anonymously.
- I understand that I will be audiotaped / videotaped during the interview.
- I understand that data will be stored electronically in password-encrypted files, accessible only by the researcher.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Chair of the Research Committee of the School of Cultures, Languages and Area Studies, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Signed (research participant)

Print name **Date**

Contact details

Researcher: Victoria Gerstman, aaxvg@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr Paul Grainge, paul.grainge@nottingham.ac.uk

School of Cultures, Languages and Area Studies ethics officer: Dr Jennifer Birks
jennifer.birks@nottingham.ac.uk

Chair of CLAS Research Committee: Dr Dirk Goettsche dirk.goettsche@nottingham.ac.uk

APPENDIX 4: SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interview with Scott Holmes, 16 February 2016

VG: What's your job title and your responsibilities?

SH: Creative Director, Europe. Basically my responsibilities are coming up with weird and wonderful content ideas that travel. So anything kind of out of the ordinary. Basically if someone's done it before it's not something I would do, its coming up with new, interesting ways to engage consumers.

VG: Taking a step back, can you explain what you mean by content, for someone who might not know?

SH: That's a really interesting one. Content typically, the way the industry sees it, is long form video. I don't see it like that. This year, a couple of months ago, I judged the Crystal Awards, and the year before I judged the Euros in the content category and the things that were winning weren't content as people typically understand it, the kind of three minute film. The way I see content, I think the industry's now starting to come around to this, is – advertising works, ok? And it's the cheapest way of doing it. People think oh you make a film and it goes viral that's cheap but it's not. Things don't go viral. These people have spent a lot of money making it go viral. So if you can say something in 30 seconds it's probably the best way of doing it. The type of things content are, are things that wouldn't work necessarily as an advert. When I was judging that Crystal thing we had the Lexus Hoverboard thing. So I don't know if you saw it, but it won, it will win big things at Cannes this year. It was about hoverboarding, so Lexus made a hoverboard and they released it

around the time back to the future came out trying to show new technology. But the point is, if they made that as a 30 second ad or a print ad, people wouldn't pay attention. But they made a series of films showing how they built this thing, how it worked, and it was real, people could share it with others and talk about it. And that's the difference, that kind of deeper engagement, a different type of engagement other than just a kind of awareness thing out there. One of the heartening things I saw recently, I think last week in *Campaign*, they had 'Turkey of the Week', they gave it to Nike – don't quote me on this – Nike was given Turkey of the Week, they had just come out with a piece of content online for their women's brands, like a sitcom. And it was beautifully produced, and they gave it Turkey of the Week. And their argument in *Campaign*, and what we've been saying for a while now, is people don't want brands to supply content. Everyone goes "oh, content's king, brands should be making content" no, they don't. people are overrun with content. They don't need anything more. Netflix queues, you know you've got new films coming out every day. You don't need, you know what's, fucking Land Rover's point of view on travel, you've got enough to watch. But what people are interested in is stuff to talk about with others, and if brands can start that conversation then that's a good place, content's one way of doing that. Brands that get content right are ones that look for things that spark conversation, get people talking. And that Lexus example is a good example of doing that, as opposed to just putting a 30 second TV ad out or pre roll out or something like that. But actual create a deeper level of engagement. The thing that I do, if you were to sum it up, is do stuff that gets people talking, really. Other things, TV ads, typical advertising is built on the fact of making a million people see it, and it's all measured in terms of ratings and touch points. It's that simple, you spend money and you hit people. My stuff, what I do, is I try and catch people's attention and make them talk for a bit. So

everything I've done is not you know a two minute film – it can be a two minute film – but content can be a new game someone's made, it can be a weird film online. It can be anything. But the point is it's not just about buying an impact, effectively, it's about getting people talking.

VG: So how can you predict what's going to get people talking?

SH: You can't! That's the beauty of it, you can't. The way I work is just thinking, why would people bother? And just try and – I mean, media is becoming a science, but it's not really. And what we do, what I do, is just think, why would someone bother. And this is something that's my biggest bugbear with the industry. You see people saying 'oh, continue the journey on Facebook,' or do this. No, who's going to that? You know what I mean? No matter how much you gave a shit, why would you do that? So that's kind of, all you can do is just ask yourself, "Would people care?" and that's kind of just always what advertising's been. Just trying to put yourself in the place of the audience, and go, would they bother, would they be interested. And there is no right way. Especially because, the things that I do, because we're small here and we have to pick up projects, well, relatively small, no one's done it before. So there is no kind of, this has worked in the past, this will work again. So it is going out on a limb, which is why it's so hard to get off the ground. But if you get them right it's all the more rewarding.

VG: Can you walk me through a recent project that you worked on? You don't have to say the brand's name if you don't want to.

SH: Yeah, okay. I did something a few months ago for Exxon, that was, they sponsored McLaren Formula 1 team last year, and they wanted to promote that, and kind of – we

need to be careful for quoting this, but it's all public knowledge – but the whole industry back then and still today are talking about virtual reality, it's a big thing that everyone's going on about and we wanted to make McLaren fans close to Formula 1, they want to be part of it. So we gave them a VR formula 1 fan, feel the excitement of a McLaren formula 1 car, sit inside it, look around, that sort of thing. So we made that. But the interesting thing and again kind of looking back to why would people bother, we know that even though VR's such a hot topic few people have even tried it yet, and it is hard to try you need a big computer to give it a go, and even though everyone's talking about it no one's actually put a visor on and done it. And so what we came up with, we knew there was this thing called Google Cardboard, where you can just get a cheap couple of dollar bit of cardboard, put your phone inside it and use it for VR. Long story sort, what we did was we made thousands upon thousands of these cardboard viewers and put them in petrol stations. So people around the formula 1 circuits who were going to the race, they went to an Esso service station, they could get one of these cardboard viewers and try the piece of video content that we've got. That got covered in the Daily Mail and the Sun, because we were right at the front of doing it. So it was asking the question, other brands were making VR films, but they weren't thinking about how are people actually going to see this. We then realized that the big thing about Esso is they've got this whole retail network of places, so why don't we put those things in there so people can actually go test it out, play with it themselves, and take it away. And as I said that got coverage in all the major news websites, and lots of people talking about it, and again created a connection. So they had a normal ad, you might have seen the ad where the kid's in the back of the car making racing car noises, his mum's driving, and it's kind of 'feel the excitement that fuels the McLaren Formula 1 team, we made something that was a rich deeper experience and

connect with people and actually kind of proved the point. And that ran alongside the ad, it didn't replace it, it kind of sat beneath it, and that ran in four or five countries across Europe.

VG: Did they tell you who they wanted to target with what you were doing?

SH: Yeah. They told us who they wanted to target. Where we come in is to say, how are we going to target them. What are the things that are going to excite the audience, what are the opportunities we can do with it. Kind of getting the budget right against those things. But sometimes it's different. Sometimes clients will say this is who we want to target, and we will, and I think should, say, no you're wrong on this one. A good example – again, this is another one you have to be careful with quotes – we did something for Xbox, that won I think actually Best Digital at Festival of Media last year, globally, but that was targeting a completely different audience to the one the clients said. So they wanted to target as most brands do, a broad audience. We said we'll target a very small section, but a very important section of the audience and make them feel loved, and do something for them. And so we actually kind of went against. We took them along on the journey, but rather than just taking the brief and saying this is who we should target, actually going, there's more reason, these are reasons for targeting a different audience. I think any media agency worth its salt that's kind of the minimum they should be doing. Have an opinion. The best clients will argue back. And then you get together, you get to somewhere. For me it always works best when clients and agencies are together. It's not these kind of separation. You both come at it from different viewpoints and then make it work together.

VG: Your job requires you to know basically every opportunity that's out there for the client, it seems like, so how do you stay on top of that?

SH: We changed our position, it's Curiosity. And to be honest that's a good point of view for any job, but in a media agency where things are changing every day it's fundamental. And I just read a lot. There's a load of bollocks and tech sites and things but you never know when something's going to inspire or take off. It's just being well read, watching lots of things. I mean I got into media years and year ago, because I was round a friend's house and he came back on a Sunday and he had every newspaper out there, he'd bought them. And I said, why do you need that? And he said I need to be up to date on everything, and I loved that thought. And that's how I got into media. I since found out what he did, he was in media sales. And so he was going out and buying every newspaper, looking who was advertising in them, and then ringing them up, and going, you should be. But that thought of just being up to date with everything, knowing everything, and having an opinion, that's what I love. And that's kind of the only way you can really do it. I never go to conferences or sit in on these things, I find them a bit contrived. It's just being well-rounded and read and keeping up on things. Like I said, it helps to be naturally curious.

VG: How long have you been in media?

SH: Thirteen, fourteen years

VG: What are the main changes that you've noticed, maybe let's say over the last ten years?

SH: Do you know what, it doesn't change that much. Every year you have the latest hot thing that everyone chases, when people don't understand it either. This year it is VR 360

videos, you see it on every bloody response and people can't get enough of it. One year it was second life, and everything has to be second life. And everyone kind of leaps on these things without understanding what they're about. The thing may change but it's always the same. There's always something that everyone races to jump on board and it's not interesting, and they're trying to do something with it. So even though the things change, the kind of tech opportunities change, it's always the same thing. The big thing now, people talk about data how that changes how things are delivered but the opportunities change but the theory's kind of always the same. A commonality that's run through the whole time I've been here is people still aren't using the opportunity, so they're kind of racing to, 'oh this is the new interesting thing', rather than saying 'what do we need to do?' and using it, and I don't think that's changed. The one thing that maybe has changed from my side of things in my job is a media agency is no longer the numbers and data people. "Gorillas with calculators", they used to be called. Creative agencies would come up with how you say it and media agency would buy it and put it out there. The blurring of the lines between the two, that's probably the biggest change. Just the very fact that I would make content and come up with these things, that wouldn't have happened six or seven years ago, that was the preserve of the creative agency. And I think the reason media have been able to is because media look at the new opportunities and come up with ideas from that. Even now if a media agency turned round and said, 'we want to make a 30 second TV ad,' they'd probably be shot down, and quite right too. But media have looked at all the new opportunities that are out there and come up with stuff, whilst creative agencies are still doing posters and TV ads. So that's probably in terms of the landscape the biggest change. But that whole idea of analyzing data and targeting better that's always been there it's just kind of improving and getting better as it goes along. But in terms of the difference

between media and creative agencies you could walk through a lot media agencies now and see more creative work coming out. Likewise you go in creative agencies you see brilliant media work, where it's actually the media idea first and foremost that makes it special rather than the creative itself.

VG: So, what do you think that means for the future of the industry?

SH: (Laughs) I'd like to think it would mean there'd be consolidation, everyone gets together, because the clients benefit when media and creative work together. Really and truly I don't think it'll matter much. I think you'll see lots more great creative ideas coming out of media agencies, and more media ideas coming out of creative agencies. I actually think, I mean, one of my most controversial views is – remember Cadbury's Gorilla? I don't think that was good creative. I think it was brilliant media, from the creative agency. Because I remember when it first came out I was on this course with a load of people from different agencies, we were put together, and I was this creative team from Denmark, and I showed it, it was in the Big Brother final, the Cadbury Gorilla, and I showed them it, and they looked at it, and just kind of, shrugged their shoulders. And then after about 30 seconds we kind of got through to them that this ran on TV in the biggest ad break of the year. And that's when they went, "that ran on TV!" Jaws dropped. And the point was as a digital ad, it's kind of "meh," that kind of long hold, 90 seconds of the gorilla drumming. The fact that made it astonishingly impressive is it ran on TV. So it was really the media part behind it. Now I'm sure the creative team argued, this is our TV ad. Other people would be going, "put it online." But it was whoever, and I'm sure it was the creative agency or the client, who went "this is going to be our TV". That made that special. If you saw it just as a digital ad (shrugs) ... it's the context that made it special. And that's what I mean

about it being a brilliant piece of media. It was context that made it one of the best ads ever made.

VG: It seems like you're saying we can't really think of these things as being distinct from each other anymore.

SH: We never should have. But it always used to be that way. And the agencies that are doing the best work in the world, like the Cadburys Gorilla, are the ones that are thinking the two things together, context and content at the same time. It's as old as our industry, but only now when you've got media agencies trying to do creative, creative agencies trying to do media. You bring them together and stuff starts happening.

VG: I've been trying to map the industry for a background chapter and it's just impossible, to do a diagram that shows: this person does that, and then this person does that.

SH: Yea. We have just like my job title we'll talk to creative agencies, it puts them out. And then we'll talk to creative agencies and there will be people there with job titles you find here. At the end of the day, rarely will a client go to a creative agency or a digital agency which in itself is a ridiculous thing – I mean the best TV ad from last year was from a digital agency, the Beats RGA thing – it was a TV ad, it was magnificent – but clients rarely turn round to me and say “we want a four week digital campaign.” They'll come to an agency and say “he's our problem, we need to do X.” And then each agency should have the freedom to come up with it. And increasingly, the best solution could be from any one of them. So trying to map out and separate how they all fit together, that's a tough one. Even the big groups, like Publicis have just reorganized all their agencies. And then I know a lot of agencies, ones that are under the media umbrella and ones that are under the

digital umbrella, if you go on their websites and look at the services they offer, they're going to be the same.

VG: Do you think the industry needs to come up with a new way of thinking about this kind of work?

SH: That would be cool. We had it years ago, when we had people like Naked that kind of burst on the scene, talking about communications planning. And that felt like a step change at the time. And they certainly got all the attention and all the interest. Honestly though with them it wasn't really a step change in the industry, they just came up with really great work. I've seen it with other agencies all going "well, we're comms planning now," but you're missing the point of what they did, it was just great work. And that's why I think that whole thing has died down now. It's just that work that was coming out, could have come out of a creative agency, could have come out of media, they just called it that. But it was the work in itself, the quality of the work brought it all together. They just slapped a nice name on it.

VG: Is there anything else you feel like you would want people in Academia to know about what goes on here?

SH: (Laughing) No! God no! I dunno. I love advertising. I love marketing. For me though it is about entertaining people. If you do something people like then they'll buy it. So, especially in what I do, don't try and piss people off, try to excite and engage them. If you put that first then it's gonna work. That for me, kind of how do you make a better advert, you look at what people like and try to prove the benefit for people, that's not just a noble cause but it works. Again it's not an objective science. That's the problem with it. I guess

the other things is it's gut feel, which is difficult when you're trying to study stuff. The best example, which really shaped my whole media thinking was when I first started off, I was actually a TV buyer. And they had the BARB panel. And I think for the first time in history they changed the BARB panel, they moved it to different households, and the whole of TV trading is done on the ratings system. Then in one night the ratings had changed massively Coronation Street had gone from 11 million to 9 million or something, and it's just because they changed the panel. And that obviously wouldn't work because it threw everyone's deals out of the window. So what they did was they moved it around to make it the same as it had been before. Just by doing that you realize it's a commodity that's being traded. It's not necessarily what's happening out there. When you understand that, you get a better feel. It's like TV ads that are only shown once, like Nature Valley when they did the X-Factor, they only did it in one ad break. They make as much noise and attention as an ad does seen a hundred times over a week. And it's just kind of understanding how things are impact consumers and doing it that way., can actually make a real bigger difference rather than just being slave to the back end. Data is fundamental in everything we do but if you don't understand what to do with it, it only gets you part of the way. That's the objective part of it, but there's a very really subjective, creative part of it that's how do we use this, how do we do something that makes it special. That's the difference between why companies like Amazon and Google – they are data companies – they're not just sitting back, they're using it in creative ways, understanding the implications, and that's why they go off and do special stuff. Whereas others don't.