From a 'Idea Generator' to a 'Solution Facilitator': A Study of the Changing Roles of Advertising Professionals in the Social Media Marketing Era

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Abstract

The rise of social media marketing has brought significant implications for advertising industry and its organizations. The traditional role of advertising professionals had been changing from a clear identity to an unclear one. However, previous research has studied relatively little about advertising professionals' roles and identities or how they may be changing in the social media marketing era. Thus, this study explores the changing roles and identities of the advertising professionals in the social media era through an interpretive, qualitative approach. The findings indicated that the role of advertising professionals is innovating from a traditional 'idea generator' to a 'solution facilitator' in response to the changes.

Keywords:

Role identity; Social media marketing; Advertising professional; Change management; Organization studies

Introduction

The emergence of social media marketing has brought tremendous changes in consumption patterns and consumer culture, and the use of social media becomes dominant in the marketplace. Based on this assumption, consumers are potentially playing a leading role in all kind of social and marketing activities (e.g. Acar and Puntoni 2016; Scheinbaum 2016). Advertising professionals are no longer dominating the advertising media and message distributions as in the past. As Schultz (2016) states, it is going to be a reversal of buyer and seller roles in future advertising practices. Consumers influence other consumers over the social media, discussing brand choices and making decisions. This is why some pioneer advertising professionals and brand managers have made use of this powerful channel to promote their brands.

This paper investigates advertising professionals' working lives in order to further understand their changing roles and identities in the social media marketing era. These creative employees (advertising professionals) are key stakeholders in the advertising industry, and even the 'life-blood' of advertising organizations, given their responsibility for the creative expression of advertising strategies. They work at the boundary between organizations, clients and consumers (e.g. Kumar and Gupta 2016; Taylor 2017). To study their changing roles in the rise of social media marketing era should provide us with insights into how these new media are changing the nature of the advertising industry and advertising working process.

The advertising professionals, the key concern in this research, are inevitably playing a crucial role in connecting marketers and consumers by making creative advertising

strategies. Traditionally, advertising professionals have had a broader influence on consumer culture through their creative ideas and successful advertising campaigns. This is also how they have constructed their roles and identities in the advertising industry in the past. However, as the emergence of social media marketing and the shift of consumer culture (e.g. Liljedal 2016), this phenomenon has affected many aspects of advertising professionals' identities, for instance, a completely new set of knowledge and skill-sets are required in doing advertising on social media platforms. Could it be an "educational mismatch" (Stenard and Sauermann 2016) in organization? On a positive note, the popularity of social media and the rise of user-generated content within the networks makes the role of the advertising professionals more important than before due to the extended nature of creativity in this new media. Likewise, the nature of openness and accessibility in social media has provided advertising professionals with the potentials to enhance their creativity in making advertising strategies in a co-production process. This is an entirely different way of doing advertising. Nonetheless, the emergence of social media marketing has created both challenges and opportunities for the advertising organizations as well as the traditional role of advertising professionals, in particular with regard to their role identity, role expectations and performances.

The advertising industry is a knowledge-intensive industry. The construction of the advertising professionals' identity is crucial for them to perform their work roles effectively. Role identity is essential to one's role because it links to one's goals, values, beliefs, and normative ways of thinking and acting in a social system. However, one's role is not given by scripted rules but rather is improvised while interacting with other members in the social system. In other words, the advertising professionals' perceived role and identity is one of the continuous engagements in

forming, maintaining, strengthening, repairing or revising the expectations in the social system. Unfortunately, previous research has studied relatively little about advertising professionals' roles and identities or how they may be changing in the social media marketing era. It is indeed very limited research on studying the roles and identities of advertising professionals in this new digital world.

Why studying advertising professionals' roles? Does it matter?

Biddle (1979) suggested that 'role theory' is the major construct for integrating the studies of role and human behavior in social science studies. There are two sociological perspectives on studying one's roles: (1) the structural-functionalist; and (2) the symbolic interactionist (e.g. Blumer 1969). Structuralists define roles as 'sets of behavioral expectations associated with given positions in the social structure' (Ebaugh 1988, p.18), and view roles as a function for the social system within which they are embedded (Parsons 1951). Some role theorists (e.g. Nicholson and West 1988) have used the term 'role' to mean shared expectations held by the role set; some to designate patterned predictable behaviors; and some to refer to social or occupational positions held. Nevertheless, researchers (e.g. Pratt *et al*. 2006) generally believe that employees' perceived role identities could influence how they act and interpret their work situations. Thus, the roles help professionals to formalize tasks and capture services by negotiating a personal space (Ashforth 2001). Negotiation plays a very crucial part in role identification, particularly in the advertising industry, where employees (particularly advertising professionals) are the core assets of the organizations (Nixon and Crewe 2004).

In views of the organization studies, employees' roles link to interdependent or complementary roles in a social system (Biddle 1979). To understand the individual's role more clearly, Ashforth (2001) conceptualized it in terms of three major constructs: (1) role boundary (the environment); (2) role identity (the nature or content); and (3) role expectation (the social expectation for behavior). This framework has been used to aid the understanding of work performance in organizations (e.g. Walumbwa, Cropanzano and Hartnell 2009). A role boundary refers to whatever delimits the perimeter and, thereby, the scope of a role (Ashforth Kreinet and Fugate 2000). It is important to note that the role boundaries are imposed and/or socially constructed (Ashforth 2001). Second, the role identity refers to the various meanings attached to an individual by the self in a social system. An individual's role identity shapes how he/she reacts to organizations and social structures (Ashforth 2001). The third element of Ashforth's classification is the role expectation. This places demands and constraints on specific individuals, while their behavior provides their social peers with information about the extent of compliance with expectations (Ashforth 2001). Nonetheless, the role expectations and performances of advertising professionals are linked closely to clients' satisfaction in a client-organization relationship. In other words, an advertising organization may fail to satisfy its clients because of unmet expectations and requirements. Beard (1996) suggested that employee experience role ambiguity occurs if there is a lack of a clear role requirement and expectation associated with work leading to poor performance and hence to dissatisfaction in the client-organization relationship. Role identity is particularly crucial to a person's role because it is associated with the goals, values, beliefs, and normative ways of thinking and acting in a social system (Ashforth 2001).

The identity construction in creative organization

It is important to understand how employees construct their identity in relation to their working environment. Employees working in an organization engage in identity construction; they are trying to achieve a strong and coherent self-concept in relation to their work tasks and social relations (Alvesson 2000). A strong employee's role identity is central to the development of an individual's sense of self, and creates a strong commitment to protect his/her identity, and motivates role performance (Burke 1991). This concept is particularly important in studying innovative organizations like advertising agency. It is because, employees' creativity is affected strongly by intrinsic motivation, and a strong role identity is an important driver for creative performance (Amabile 1998). Research in organizational studies contributes to understand the relationships between organizational and self-identities of empolyees, not least in creative industries. Several researchers (e.g. Drazin and Schoonhoven 1996; Petkus 1996; Ford 1996) found a strong relationship between role identity and organizational creativity in the workplace. Creative employees usually have strong self-images linked to their creative work (Barron and Harrington 1981). Furthermore, employees with strong creative role identities are expected by their peers to be more creative at work (e.g. Barron and Harrigton 1981; Pratt 1990; Fisher 1997), and employees are more likely to define themselves as 'creative' if their co-workers expect them to be so (Farmer, Tierney and Kung-Mcintyre 2003). Likewise, Amabile (1996) suggested that the organizational environment should promote the value of creativity in work performance. In fact, more and more senior managers have realized the importance of encouraging their employees to be creative in tackling unpredictable technological changes in an increasingly competitive marketplace (Shalley and Gilson 2004). Some studies (e.g. Madjar *et al*. 2002; Zhou and George

2001) have shown that employees' creativity within the workplace is developed through mutual support, open communication, encouragement and informational feedback. Openness and accessibility are intrinsic values of social media (Saunders 2010), which suggests that its growing popularity has the potential to increase employee's creativity. Given the focus of this study on advertising professionals, who are acknowledged as crucial employees within their knowledge-intensive industry (Malefyt and Moeran 2003).

The construction of professional identity is a key to successful organizations

Professionalism is a term used in researching occupational change, particularly the process of development in professions (Evetts 2005). Evetts (2005) defined it as 'the process to pursue, develop and maintain the closure of the occupational group'. This seems to be an ultimate goal for forming an occupational group. This assumption explains why it is essential to stay together within a professional community. Professional identity is one of the core areas for understanding changes in professionalism. Professional identity is also commonly described as the distinct role of a professional, and this identity affects a professional's behaviors and self-concept (Empson 2004). Although the traditional concepts of professional identity have been discussed substantially within the area of sociology (e.g. Abbott, 1992), they have been challenged by social change. Cooper, Hinings, Greenwood and Brown (1966) gave a clear explanation of this:

> *'The attributes which sociologists of the professions used to*
> *identify as the hallmarks of a professional, such as education,*

vocation, esoteric knowledge, self-regulation, and civility,
have been replaced, or at least augmented, by an
interpretation that stresses punctuality, style, dynamism,
financial success and entrepreneurialism''(p.631).

An employee's professional identity involves not only his/her professional image, but also how he/she relates to other members in the same occupational group by continuously sharing specific knowledge, common norms and professional ideology (de Bruin 2004). This sharing process is complicated because it involves interaction between professional and organizational identities. According to Albert and Whetten (1985), the fundamental questions of organizational identity asked by members of an organization are concerned with 'Who are we?' 'What business are we in?' and 'What do we want to be?' For example, in a study of advertising agencies, Alvesson (1994) discovered that the organizational identity of advertising professionals, in relation to other professional members including account managers and strategic planners, was regarded as more honest, open and implicitly communicating professionalism. One of the key functions of a well-defined organizational identity is to help members identify themselves within the organization in order to remove insecurity regarding their employment situation (Empson 2004).

Schein (1978) also highlighted an assumption that professional identity can be developed through work experience and meaningful feedback in the workplace. Pratt (2006) explored how medical residents constructed their professional identity through 'doing' (i.e. what they do) and 'being' (i.e. who they are). Hackley and Kover (2007) explored advertising professionals in the United Kingdom as they negotiated and resolved their senses of professional identity. It is particularly important in those

knowledge-intensive organizations. These companies are organized and managed in the way that rely on employees' self-determination (Kunda 1992), but these companies also rely on interactions between their well-educated, expert employees (Morris and Empson 1998). Alvesson (2000) noted that advertising agencies use employees' knowledge as a major resource, and he pointed out that the study of identity construction in knowledge-intensive organizations is complicated due to the presence of multiple and competing identities. This is because the knowledge-intensive organization provides space for employees to develop multiple identities based on their own understanding and knowledge. Therefore, studying the construction processes of professional identities in knowledge-intensive organizations is essential to understanding their working lives and management strategies related to these social groups (Alvesson 2000).

The role change and the change of an organization

According to Schein (1978), work identity and professional identity are comparatively stable relative to other identities, because people can define their professional roles easily in terms of work attributes, values, motives and experiences. Nonetheless, the fast pace of change in contemporary society has created competitive pressure on industries and has made it a matter of urgency for organizations to develop new products and services. This means that organizations have to look continuously at their own roles as well as those of their employees. Facing a constantly changing environment, traditional assumptions about the stability of jobs and careers have become obsolete in many occupations (Arthur and Rousseau 1996), with the advertising industry no exception. When change is the norm and stable equilibrium

the exception (Nicholson 1987), people are always in a state of 'becoming', as they move between and through different roles, identities and relationships (Ashforth 2001). In other words, a work environment and the careers within it are always changing, requiring individuals to adapt constantly to new roles and responsibilities (Ilgen 1994). More generally, there has been a shift from industrial-based to knowledge-based work in contemporary society. Individuals are required to engage in continuous learning and the mastery of new and diverse experiences (Arthur and Rousseau 1996). Moreover, work identification has come to be based more on individual rather than organizational role identity. Individuals are expected to be proactive in seeking opportunities for career development, moving across functional, organizational and even national boundaries (Ashforth 2001). Individual initiative, networking and learning are therefore increasingly important for career development and work identification (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996), in the advertising industry as much as elsewhere (McLeod *et al*. 2011). Moreover, it is preferable for organizations to have employees who are more flexible rather than attached to rigid roles (Zaleznik 1989); the 'protean career' (Hall and Mirvis 1996) is driven by the individual rather than by the organization (Hall 1976). Hence, understanding role from an individual perspective is crucial in order to understand how organizations work. It seems that an employee's role may no longer be defined primarily by organizational or social expectations; it is indeed a subjective standard (Ashforth 2001). This echoes a symbolic interactionists' stance whereby roles are negotiated as part of understandings between individuals.

However, it is important to note that an individual's future role may also be influenced by role behavior through the continuing interpretation of previous role activities (Grube and Piliavin 2000). Expectations of an individual will also change

over time as life conditions change (Jackson 1998). In this case, some research (e.g. Dörner, Gassmann and Morhart, 2012; Chan and Amran, 2014) has indicated the use of Innovative Work Behavior (IWB) is positive to enhance professional's task performance and constructing their new role. Nonetheless, the employees' role behavior will be developed continuously in order to fulfill the changes in role identity through a balance of social and personal costs (Stryker 1980). In other words, advertising professional has to adapt his/her role behavior continuously in order to satisfy social and personal expectations.

The dynamic nature of working roles is evident in Pratt's (1990) identification of three major categories on identity construction: (1) career and role transition, (2) socialization; and (3) identity work. Regarding the career and role transition, one's identity is not static, but will change according to the organizational and environmental influences. According to Hall (1995), career and role transition give people 'new roles' over the course of their time in an organizational setting. This process of change, or 'transition', is concerned with how an individual aligns with and fits the role expectations from him/herself and others over time. Hall (1968) used a term 'sub-identity' to illustrate the importance of an individual's career and role transitions as he or she moves on to new roles. Hall explained that this sub-identity involves '*the aspects of identity which are relevant to particular social roles*' (1968, p.447). Although Hall (1968) did not explain clearly how identity changes during transition, he highlighted the importance of perceived competency in making the transition. Perceived competency is one of the key factors affecting an employee's professional performance. Some researchers (e.g. Bern 1972; Deci 1975; Staw 1976) have explained that attempts to enhance an employee's feelings of personal competence or self-efficacy can increase his/her intrinsic motivation. Others

(Nicholson 1984) have elaborated on the transition process of a work role. Figure 1 depicts the role transition based on the 'modes of work adjustment' (Nicholson 1984, p.175) with reference to the personal change and role innovation. It can be categorized into four modes of work adjustment: no change in either the person or the role (replication); change in the person (absorption); change in the role (determination); and change in both the person and the role (exploration).

Insert Figure 1 here

Ashforth (2001) argued that changes in roles, or role transitions, involve psychological and physical movement between roles. This movement includes disengagement from one role (role exit) and engagement in another (role entry) in both society and organizational contexts (Burr 1972). According to Louis (1980), career transition means that an individual either moves from one role to another or changes his/her existing role. Some researchers (e.g. Bruce and Scott 1994) explained that the most common macro transitions in a career could be defined as intra-organizational transitions (e.g. promotion, demotion, and transfer), inter-organizational transitions, inter-occupation transitions and exit from an organization (e.g. retirement and layoff). Under these macro role transitions, individuals usually become involved in permanent changes within organizations and social structures (Ashforth 2001).

Of course, for different individuals in different situations, experiences of role transition might be different. Ashforth (2001) suggested four psychological motives cued by role transition: identity, meaning, belonging and control. These psychological motives are key components in the relationship between role and self. They work in

shaping an individual's identity as follows: (1) The motive for identity is about self definition (Who I am?) in the organization; (2) the motive for meaning is about sense-making (What) and searching for purpose (Why); (3) the motive for control is a drive to master influence (How); and (4) the motive for belonging is a desire to attach to others (Who). Nonetheless, according to Ashforth (2001), role identification and the experience of success can reinforce individuals' views about the subjective importance of their role identity and encourage them to satisfy these motives.

Overall, it seems that theories of role identity helps us to understand the intersection of roles, role transition and the self of individuals within organizations and social structures (Ashforth 2001), and thus provide insights into how advertising professionals may experience their working lives and identities when faced with the growing importance of social media.

Research Methodology

The key research question of this study is "*How are advertising professionals' roles and identities changed under the challenging circumstances of the social media era?*" In order to answer this question, an interpretive, qualitative approach has been adopted in this study. The use of in-depth interviews worked as an essential tool to understand the personal journeys and expectations of the current advertising professionals in the social media marketing era. The key reason of applying the interpretive approach to study advertising professionals' experiences are, according to Berger and Luckman (1967) and Rowlands (2005), social members construct their own social realities. Interpretive researchers aim to understand social context and/or

phenomena through the study of social members' subjective and inter-subjective experiences (Walsham 1995). In this study, the research design followed the principles of interpretive qualitative research by exploring advertising professionals' experiences, feelings and perceptions in relation to their current working environments and how they made sense of the behavior and norms surrounding their work roles. This study employed the strategies of questioning, listening, observing and immersion in the working world of advertising professionals in order to generate descriptions of a culture (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). Researchers take an emic perspective in exploring what people do and think, seeking an insider's view of what is meaningful to them within their culture; they take an etic perspective when examining participants' words or actions from an outsider, and more theoretical, standpoint. This study involves 'inquiry from the inside' (Evered and Louis 1981), attempting to produce a rich account of the advertising professionals' working lives with the researcher also being an active practitioner in the field.

Generating the Data – In-depth Interview

A set of semi-structured face-to-face interviews are used to explore advertising professionals' experiences, perceptions and working practices in relation to the rise of social media. The interviews aimed to explore advertising professionals' working lives from an emic perspective, and in the context of their particular work environments. All interviews therefore take place in participants' workplaces within a private meeting room. The advertising professionals and the researcher are collaborated in the co-construction of knowledge through the interviewing process. As indicated by the interviews, questions are designed to be open-ended in order to

encourage elaboration and further conversation, and 'floating prompts' (McCracken 1988) are used to probe responses to questions.

Sampling

A core set of data in this qualitative study is generated from 32 semi-structured in-depth interviews with the advertising professionals. Following a purposive sampling approach (Patton 1987; Johnson 1995), interviewees are selected from four categories of advertising organizations, namely (1) multinational full-service agencies; (2) independent full-service agencies; (3) multinational digital agencies; and (4) independent digital agencies (Figure 2). The advertising professionals are selected based on their work experience, work role in advertising and level of seniority in advertising agencies. In other words, the sample covers different creative roles, different levels of experience in advertising, and different levels of seniority, within different types of agency.

Insert Figure 2 here

As shown in Figures 3 and 4, four levels of advertising professionals and their abbreviations are identified, namely (1) executive creative director/creative director; (2) senior art director/interactive art director/copywriter; (3) art director/copywriter; and (4) assistant art director/interactive designer. These four levels of advertising professionals corresponded to (1) management level; (2) middle-management level; (3) senior-operational level; and (4) operational level. There are 20 male interviewees and 12 female interviewees were participated in this research,

Insert Figure 3 here

Insert Figure 4 here

Analysis and Discussion

Based on the result of the empirical research, a key change has been identified is that advertising professionals are generally face divergent role identities that are distinctly 'traditional' and 'digital' in responding to the rise of social media marketing, in which these identities evolve in relation to their working organisations, workgroups and relational identification. According to the interviews, the interviewee DH/CD2, creative director of a multinational digital agency, characterized himself and his 'team' as 'digital professionals' and other colleagues as 'traditional professionals', even while he identified commonalities across the two categories:

DH/CD2   *"...My work as an advertising creative is probably the same no matter whether I work in traditional or digital teams. We work in advertising and it is all about communication. Even though my team and I work more on digital platforms as digital professionals, the process that we go through or the thinking method of the traditional professionals in other teams is the same. The major difference is that we may use different channels or media to reach our target audience".*

This notion of 'traditional' and 'digital' identification is also reflected by professionals who work in multinational full-service agencies - FH/AAD1:

FH/AAD1 *"For a traditional creative team, we present our idea to clients and we will present the big idea first, and tell them how the big idea could work on TV, print, online etc. We will think of a big picture in the first place. We have to work with the digital team very often. I mean…digital professionals are more expert in interactive media, but maybe we are more expert in traditional media".*

Those advertising professionals had been negotiating their roles in the social media marketing era and their role identities developed over time, resulting in an interpretation that linked with their current organizations, whether these were traditional or digital. However, the expansion of advertising services worldwide required the integration of traditional and digital media works. Advertising professionals in organizations have been adopting social media strategies and other forms of digital media continuously for advertising practices, and the interviewees in this study are positive in suggesting marketing ideas for social media campaigns where the client or account managers had not requested this.

The result of this study also shows that the advertising professionals roles appeared to be internalized; based on their personal experiences and social interactions, they constructed a specific identity-based creative role which also influenced their behaviour. They used the terms 'we' and 'they' when they differentiated between traditional and digital advertising professionals. However, the use of social media marketing and the integration of traditional and digital forms of advertising media seemed to have left the advertising professionals struggling to create a stable definition of their roles, identities and careers. According to Ashforth (2001), individual role transition involves engagement and disengagement, both psychological and physical. Supporting organisational identity theories (e.g. Ashforth and Mael 1989; Dutton *et al.* 1994), advertising professionals' roles in doing social

media campaigns were found to be evolving continuously, and this required constant adaptation to new identities and responsibilities (Ilgen 1994; Hall and Mirvis 1996; Ashforth 2001). The advertising professionals were psychologically and physically engaging and disengaging in divergent 'traditional' and 'digital' creative identities in response to their work role transition. This study indicated that the advertising professionals' role identities are linked to their role sets (Katz and Kahn, 1978; Ashforth 2001), and to the set of expectations of the role held by other members in the organisations. The advertising professionals' role identities, as defined by the role set linked to traditional and digital communication agencies/organizations, were often multifaceted. For instance, DH/CD2, one of the interviewees who is the creative director of an international and multinational digital agency, reflected on his multiple roles in relation to creative idea generation within the creative department, strategic planning with the account managers, and production management with external suppliers. This study showed how the changing media environment influenced the advertising professionals' identification with either the traditional or digital camp, typically based on the advertising and communication organizations where they were working. That is, advertising professionals usually identified themselves as digital employees if they are working in a digital advertising organizations even if they are working on traditional media advertising such as poster and print advertisements. This misunderstanding is a structural issue that researchers should pay further attention on the relationship between social media and traditional media (Knoll 2016).

Moreover, the results show some confusion and struggle in this creative identification process. According to the data generated from the in-depth interviews, advertising professionals in both the full-service and digital sectors found that their role identities could be ambiguous, and that they are not always clear about how 'traditional' and

'digital' employees should work or be integrated together in the organization. This is particularly obvious for those advertising professionals who had changed their jobs from multinational full-service advertising organizations to digital organizations or vice versa. For instance, the interviewee FH/IAD1, an art director in an international and multinational full-service organization, had previously worked in a digital organization. She had moved to this new organization because she wants to work more on branding and integrated advertising campaigns, but she is struggling with her role because she feels that other colleagues in the creative department treated her as a source of digital technical support rather than an art director.

FH/IAD1   *Besides computer skills that I mentioned before, I think it is the*

ways of thinking, definitely! As I mentioned about the area driven

by different computer knowledge that we require to work on the

digital platform, it actually affects our ways of thinking and

working process. In fact, in our team, we have an off-line art

director and an online art director. The mode of thinking is

different from these two groups of professionals.

Her experience echoes Judeh's (2011) argument that a lack of clarity about identification can create role struggle. In fact, the advertising professionals are not clear about how 'traditional' and 'digital' employees are defined or the expectations, skill-sets and the different types of work to be done in both roles. These uncertainties led to struggle and confusion among different advertising professionals in the social media marketing era. Clear organisational identification (Dutton et al, 1994) and associated organizational values (Corley and Gioia 2004) are crucial for employees to make sense of their belonging and eventually affected employees' behaviour, and role

confusion can eventually reduce productivity in an organisation (Hamilton 2002). It is arguable that unclear identification among advertising professionals in the social media marketing era is creating role ambiguity, potentially leading to dysfunctional performance in advertising organizations.

In terms of workgroup and relational identification, an employee's identification partially involves looking at the definition of his/her work in relation to other employees (Copper and Thatcher 2010). This study found that the advertising professionals sought to understand the roles of traditional and digital employees based on the understandings and expectations of colleagues such as account managers and clients. These stakeholders do not seem to make a clear distinction between traditional and digital employees, in full-service, digital, multinational or independent organizations, leaving employees to define their own identities. This is consistent with the work of previous researchers (e.g. Larson and Pepper 2003; Press and Arnould 2011), who have described the process of negotiating and constructing a professional identity. In other words, the advertising professionals in this study make sense of 'we' and 'they' by negotiating their own experiences and others' expectations regarding their work identities.

Despite the divergent role identities of 'traditional' and 'digital', there are characteristics in common and this is important to advertising professionals' identity construction and work behavior. Their work draws on a sense of personal style, the fusion of work, leisure and personal interests and the importance of freedom, both in terms of flexible working patterns and creative autonomy.

Another significant findings from this study are, advertising professionals appeared to be increasingly expected to work directly with clients and media organizations. For instance, one of the interviewee coded FI/CD1, who is the creative director of an independent full-service advertising organization, stated that he has to do brainstorming exercises with clients and media organization on social media strategy and advertising planning. He has more than 20 years working experience as advertising professional.

FI/CD1   *We don't have a choice and clients do not have a choice either. It is a must. Social media advertising is a "must" item nowadays…*

He reflects that work on advertising strategy formulation would have been beyond his understanding of what an advertising professionals should do in the old days, when advertising planners and account directors were responsible for this. In the past, advertising professionals work on creative ideas and production based on an advertising strategy that was formulated by clients and planners. With the rise of social media marketing, however, this practice is changed. He believes that clients and other colleagues often have very different understandings of doing social media marketing and advertising. These incongruities lead to conflicts and misunderstanding during working processes and relationships with clients. In order to resolve this problem, advertising professionals, especially creative directors, said they prefer to work together with clients and planners on marketing and advertising strategy at an early stage before the strategy is agreed. In other words, advertising professionals need to become involved in the strategic formulation of marketing and advertising activities together with planners and clients. This study found that collaboration on advertising strategy happening in both multinational and digital organizations. The

senior advertising professionals do not just generate advertising ideas, they also have to take responsibility for suggesting marketing ideas as well as working out strategic plans for their clients on products and services in the social media era. These advertising professionals have expanded their range of work beyond advertising concept generation; they are also providing creative ideas for marketing activities, advertising strategy and social media marketing strategy. That is to say, they feel they have to be more knowledgeable about marketing and strategy, and to have a more strategic mind-set for planning as well as brand activities in the social media era.

The expansion of advertising professionals' duties to a more strategic level has brought implications for their identities. According to Cook (2001) and Hackley and his colleagues (2007), advertising professionals are commonly stereotyped in popular culture as insecure and self-centred. Alvesson (2000) states that professional identity is related to self-image and self-concept in relation to work tasks and social relationships. This study suggests that the construction of self-image identity particularly important to advertising professionals because it is a tool to gain the clients' trust and respect, and to be seen as more than just a 'hired hand'. As researchers including Alvesson (2000) states, identity construction is related closely to an individual's self-concept at work, their organisation and social influences. Thus, if clients perceive advertising professionals as self-centred and insecure, their work relationships and trust issues on advertising professionals' performance will be reflected. Therefore, it is crucial for advertising professionals to negotiate a professional identity in this new digital era. The self-identities of employees are critical in the construction of organisation identity as well (e.g. Alvesson and Willmott 2002).

Limitation of the study

Regarding the limitation of this research, there are some potential difficulties and limitation anticipated in the research design and data generation process. For instance, the semi-structured interviews fail to generalize the situation on a larger scale. It implies that the data generated in this research is only able to project the entire advertising ecology from a small sample of professionals' views; Moreover, during the interviews, some sensitive topics require a trustful relationship between the interviewer and respondent. The researchers totally understand those respondents are not fully trust me in some sensitive topics like the employment situations, contracts and even the details of some current working projects. Again, in the semi-structural interviews, it is a limitation that all the questions asked are based on how the respondents' response. It implies the respondents are somehow leading some parts of their questions according to their interests.

Conclusion and implications

This study also argues that an important new element of advertising professionals' role is a '*facilitating role*' instead of that of a 'hired hand' for clients. The advertising professionals in this study expressed their dissatisfaction at being treated like 'hired hands', implementing or executing creative ideas rather than originating creative marketing strategies in traditional or digital media. This is because many ideas are constrained by fixed marketing strategies and plans that the advertising professionals have to follow. However, they see their role as changing from an executional level to a strategic level in the social media marketing. They contribute ideas on marketing and advertising strategy, going beyond advertising production ideas. Referring to the

theory of identity construction proposed by Alvesson and Willmott (2002), an individual's identity is improvised by a period of construction, re-forming, maintenance, strengthening and revision. The advertising professionals indicate that they are beginning to transcend the traditional creative role, constructing and negotiating a new, more diverse role in relation to the different stakeholders involved. Advertising professionals are changing the nature of their work, from concentrating on creative idea generation to the facilitation of social media marketing campaigns. Moreover, as consumers become empowered through using social media platforms, the advertising professionals are responsible for new ways of bridging advertising communication and consumer culture (Thompson and Haytko 1997). This study found that, with the rapid development of social media marketing and empowerment of consumers, the advertising professionals expand their role sets and include a wider range of stakeholders in the marketing and advertising process. These include digital experts, interactive designers, programmers and animators, which they referred to as the 'tech team'. They also described consumers as playing a more active role in brand activities. The advertising professionals facilitate the marketing and advertising process by providing their clients with knowledge and solutions regarding formulation of strategy, technology applications, and tactics for consumer engagement, in order to achieve the social media marketing goals. This implies that the role of advertising practitioner is changing from a traditional 'idea generator' to a 'solution facilitator' towards in response to the rise of social media marketing.

Nonetheless, the findings of this study have provided a greater understanding of how advertising professionals are experiencing their change of roles and professional identities. It is important to note that an employee's IWB is a strongest predictor of his/her Work Related Performance (WRP) (See. Chan and Amran, 2014). Therefore,

it is an urgent need for advertising organizations and professionals to "re-think" their organisational structures and the professionals' future development and positioning. According to the findings, the creation of new role of advertising professionals argues the classical models of role identity in workplace since a clear role of professional is no longer sufficient to survive in the era of social media in particular to advertising ecology.

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Figures

Figure 1: Modes of work adjustment (adapted from Nicholson, N. (1984) A Theory of Work Role Transitions. Administrative Science Quarterly, 29, p175)

Modes of Work Adjustment	
Replication	Absorption
Low role innovation and low personal change	*Low role innovation and high personal change*
Determination	Exploration
High role innovation and low personal change	*High role innovation and high personal change*

Figure 2: Sampling frame - selected advertising agencies

	Full-service (Traditional) Agencies	*Digital Agencies*
Multinational Advertising Agencies	Advertising professionals at different levels in various agencies (*e.g. Ogilvy & Mather Advertising, Grey Worldwide, McCann WorldGroup).*	Advertising professionals at different levels in various agencies (*e.g. OgilvyOne Worldwide, Grey Interactive).*
Independent Advertising Agencies	Advertising professionals at different levels in various agencies (*e.g. CTWTM, Metta, TURN).*	Advertising professionals at different levels in various agencies (*e.g. DesignerCity, Rice 5).*

Figure 3: Sampling frame – levels of advertising professionals

Levels of traditional advertising professionals	**Levels of digital professionals**
Executive creative director (ECD)/ Creative director (CD)	Executive creative director (ECD)/ Creative director (CD)
Associate creative director (ACD)/ Senior art director (SAD)/ Senior copywriter (SCW)	Associate creative director (ACD)/ Senior interactive art director (SIAD)/ Senior copywriter (SCW)
Art director (AD)/ Copywriter (CW)	Interactive Art director (IAD)/ Copywriter (CW)
Assistant art director (AAD)	Interactive designer (ID)/ Interface designer (ID)

Figure 4: Sampling – list of interviewees

	Multinational full-service agencies **FH**	Multinational digital agencies **DH**	Independent full-service agencies **FI**	Independent digital agencies **DI**
ECD/CD *(Management Level)*	FH/CD1 FH/CD2	DH/CD1 DH/CD2	FI/CD1 FI/CD2	DI/ECD1 DI/CD1
ACD/SAD *(Middle-management Level)*	FH/SAD1 FH/SAD2	DH/ACD1 DH/SAD1	FI/SAD1 FI/SAD2	DI/ACD1 DI/SIAD2
AD/IAD *(Senior-operational Level)*	FH/IAD1 FH/AD2	DH/AD1 DH/AD2	FI/AD1 FI/AD2	DI/IAD1 DI/IAD2
AAD/ID designer *(Operational Level)*	FH/AAD1 FH/AAD2	DH/AAD1 DH/AAD2	FI/AAD1 FI/AAD2	DI/ID1 DI/ID2