Fostering The Concept Of Creativity In Business: An Employees’ Perspective

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Abstract
This research focuses on a contemporary theoretical paradigm emerging in the study of human creativity in the field of business. The question is where creativity can be best fitted? It is argued that creativity is a multi-disciplinary approach Darbellay, Moody and Lubart, 2017. While this concept and its application of theories/models can be applied in different fields of knowledge which includes but not limited to psychology, sociology, anthropology, economy, business and management and philosophy. This study explores creativity in business perspective for instance to how people see creativity as creative practitioners. To conclusion the purpose of this research is explain creativity that aims to provide a concrete guide to the 'fostering' of creativity in business and to complement a deeper understanding of its application from the perspective of working people in the UAE.

Keywords: Creativity, Psychology, Business

1. The Concept of Creativity
The study of creativity can be approached from a variety of angles. Creativity has been defined as motivation (Kris, 1952), blind variation (Campbell, 1960: Simonton, 2011), divergent thinking (Dollinger, Urban, & James, 2004; Torrance, 1972), an ability to discover new problems (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988), a complex phenomenon as a journey from an idea to a product (Mumford & Gustafson, 1988), as novel and useful (Amabile & Pratt), (Jones, Svejenova, Pedersen, & Townley, 2016).

According to American Association of Psychology, creativity define as “the ability to produce or develop original work, theories, techniques, or thoughts. A creative individual typically displays
originality, imagination, and expressiveness. Analyses have failed to ascertain why one individual is more creative than another, but creativity does appear to be a very durable trait. If we go beyond the basic concept creativity there are broad factors to get vast perspective e.g. psychology of creativity, creative imagination, creative thinking and divergent thinking”.

1.1 Creativity and Its Paradigms

Creativity is described as the ability to generate original ideas or products that are also adaptable to the environment and restrictions of certain jobs (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Depending on the application, creativity refers to a process that is both general/generic and relatively specific (Plucker, 1998). The creative process mobilizes multiple resources at the intersection of several study disciplines, according to a multivariate model, which by definition is complicated and involves several connected variables. Despite the fact that Teresa Amabile has advocated the social psychology of creativity as such since the early 1980s, much of the work done within it still embraces a picture of the social that relates more to individualistic paradigms than to a truly social perspective.

Cognitive, and emotional factors specific to each individual, which are in dynamic interaction with the environmental context in which the creative activity takes place, are all involved in the creative process to varying degrees and weightings depending on individuals and areas of expertise. All of these characteristics and their interrelationships must be considered when analyzing and understanding creativity from an interdisciplinary, global, and integrated perspective. Thus, creativity is an object of research that lends itself to an interdisciplinary approach, and it is found in educational, economic, social, and cultural contexts across borders.

1.2 Creativity: An interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Approach

Interdisciplinary research combines information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of specialized knowledge to advance fundamental understanding or solve problems that are beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice.

As previously stated, creativity is linked to interdisciplinary research not only because it is an interdisciplinary field at the intersection of psychology, sociology, management, and other fields, but also because it participates in interdisciplinary research and is likely to contribute to its development. Advances in creativity research are numerous and very much in line with interdisciplinary knowledge production mechanisms, based on work on divergent-exploratory thinking, convergent-integrative thinking, generation of new ideas and cognitive flexibility, creative personality traits (openness to new experiences, tolerance for ambiguity, risk-taking), and cognitive styles (Lubart, Mouchiroud, Tordjman, & Zenasni, 2003). If the relationship between creativity and interdisciplinary can be weaved, creativity, like interdisciplinary, is brought to
connect with design thinking from a trialectic standpoint (Darbellay, Moody and Lubart, 2017)(Darbellay, 2015).

1.3 Significance of the Study

There was a persistently increasing interest in creative skills in industries throughout 2015-2020. The study by the World Economic Forum (2016) indicates that within the span of the five specified years, the requirement for cognitive abilities has been increased, which includes creativity, is augmenting (Perlovsky and Levine, 2012). Creativity is an emerging skill, and it is the highest in comparison to other skill sets in the “Professional Services” sector (World Economic Forum, 2020). Hence the research analysis aims to convey the bearings as to why companies should bolster this cognitive ability. The Committee for Economic Development designates creativity as a skill that is scarce within organizations (Herk, 2015).

The research distinguished the multiple dimensions of creativity and acknowledges that creativity is not a topic easily compacted and summarized. Creativity is relative to inventiveness, enhancement and innovation, it is both physical and abstract, a process and a product, having both functionality and practicality of use. Furthermore, creativity is a personality and a skill, utilized to break through old practices and adapt through new scenarios. Therefore, the concept is apt in assisting the company in generating an edge against competitors.

Research Question

The central phenomenon being subject to this research is the understand creativity in business perspective. The following research question is subject to this paper:

How employees perceive creativity in organization which values it and how organizations can get benefitted by fostering creativity among their employees?

2 Literature Review

2.1 Defining Creativity

Creativity is derived from the word ‘creo’ meaning – ‘to create’ or ‘to make’. Spearman (1931) “Creativity is the power of human mind to create new contents by transforming relations and generating new correlates”. Moreover, it is defined by Drevdahl (1956): “Creativity is the capacity of a person to produce compositions, products or ideas which are essentially new or novel and previously unknown to the producer”. However, according to the Guilford (1959): “Creativity is the capacity to produce ideas that are both new and useful through divergent thinking”.

2.2 Interdisciplinary, Creativity, and Design Thinking
Creativity, and design thinking are academic topics that are part of separate fields of study yet have linkages that can be highlighted. These two theoretical and practical concepts pertain to interdisciplinary studies, creative studies, and design studies, respectively, with each subject claiming a degree of interdisciplinary openness. Indeed, creativity is not a strictly psychological approach, it is also social, cultural, economic, and finally, design does not belong solely to designers; it is studied by specialists from several disciplines. Each of these areas of research has reached an advanced stage of development. They are structured, with some flexibility, around relatively specific theories, concepts, and methods. Certainly, creativity is more than a psychological concept; it is also social, cultural, and economic. Finally, design is not only the domain of designers; it is researched by experts from a variety of fields. Each of these study areas has progressed to a high level of maturity. They are organized around somewhat definite theories, concepts, and methodologies, with some flexibility. For example, progress in interdisciplinarity research is described in papers that provide an organized body of knowledge while avoiding a disciplinary paradigm that would be decontaminating for the field's development (Darbellay & Paulsen, 2008; Frodeman, Thompson Klein, & Mitcham, 2010; Hirsch Hadorn et al., 2008; Repko, Szostak, & Buchberger, 2013).

Likewise, research on creativity has achieved this manual setting, exhibiting this multidisciplinary field of research in the complementarity of theoretical, conceptual, and methodological approaches (Glăveanu, 2016; Kaufman & Sternberg, 2010; Runco, 1997; Runco & Pritzker, 2011).

In terms of design, it also brings together scholars from several disciplinary backgrounds, making it a center of attention in the field of research. The interdisciplinary publication in Design Studies (The Interdisciplinary Journal of Design Research) is representative of this field. Design thinking, in particular, is the focus of various publications, guidelines, and manuals that define the stakes, methodologies, and application domains (Brown, 2009; Cross, 2011; Plattner, Meinel, Leifer, 2010).

### 2.3 An Imperative Skill

Following Puccio’s paper (2017) and Lambert’s book (2017), creativity has been acknowledged as the “survival skill” in the current century. Puccio and Cabra (2010) anticipate that individuals who lack creativity face difficulties obtaining employment (Rao, 2015). In a recent LinkedIn study, creativity lists as the top amongst other soft skills required in 2020, implying its significance in the workforce nowadays (Anderson, 2020).

### 2.4 Creativity in Relation with Employee Engagement and Productivity

Phasing out of the conventional work arrangements, and establishing an environment that grants employees ownership, responsibility, autonomy and leeway of coming up with creative solutions, will help with reducing employee turnover, maximized skill utilization and boost creative thinking
amongst the workers (Gregory, 2011; Parboteeah, Cullen and Paik, 2013). Permitting the sharing of opinions and ideas gives an employee a sense of autonomy, which is the stimulus of intrinsic motivation (Ohly, 2018; Giancola, 2014). And this translates to improved performance (Muecke and Iseke, 2019). Allowing employees to contribute with decision-making, valuing respective input and promoting collaborative effort through brainstorming and communication spurs the flow of creative views and perception (Mueller and Kamdar, 2011; Khazanchi and Masterson, 2011).

By valuing employees’ creative input and ideas in the company, employees perceive positive organizational support (POS), which according to Bammens et al. (2013), motivates and empowers the employees to put forth more effort in doing responsibilities (Anand and Banu, 2011; Jose and Mampilly, 2014). Green (2016) and Shmailan (2016) stress that a productive workforce can sustain the quality delivered and enhance performance and the participation required to meet the firms’ goals (Asio, 2021). Organizations that instils an open space for the exchange of opinions impresses emotional connection from the employee to the company and therefore compels workers to reciprocate dedication towards the organization (Asif et al., 2019; Lin, et al., 2014; Paillé and Raineri, 2015). Zak’s study (2017) identifies that high-trust companies with high employee locus of control generally function on a positive note.

### 2.5 Increases Employee Satisfaction and Retention

Singh and Jain (2013) delineate satisfaction acquired from respective jobs as the favorable conditions that an employee experiences that elicits positive behavioral tendencies (Zhang, Yao and Cheong, 2011). Jalagat (2016) and Ayyagari and Lathabhavan (2020) postulate that satisfaction induces employee commitment with the processes set in the organization. There are tendencies wherein employees’ are more likely to become more punctual and engaged whilst doing tasks (Inayat and Jahanzeb Khan, 2021).

According to Hassan, et al. (2015), employee turnover is closely linked to low satisfaction and work engagement levels. Concurrent employees set standards that are guidelines when looking for a job. One of the justifications for resignation and lower retention is a stagnant work environment that does not provide opportunities for growth (See Figure) (MRI Network, 2016; Teng, et al., 2020). However, once an organization enacts creative thinking, the workplace becomes more dynamic and stimulating for intellectual capabilities, challenging and fostering professional development (Alzyoud, Othman and Mohd Isa, 2015; Brewer and Kennedy, 2013).

Nonetheless, companies can increase satisfaction by flexibly embracing new practices, such as providing an option for remote work (Ray and Pana-Cryan, 2021). Alloting spaces for conversation to ensue or even granting the freedom to work from home is seen as a work benefit, nurtures employee well-being and engagement and lengthens employee retention rates (See Figure) (Imran, et al., 2020; Bloom, et al., 2015). This initiative is beneficial in that, by being flexible, adaptive and accommodating, employees are granted continuity and are not restricted to limited working hours, resulting in more work output produced (Gubler, Larkin and Pierce, 2018).
2.6 Problem-Solving

There has been a recent trend where employers gravitate more towards soft skills than technical skills (Hurrell, 2016; Halpern, 2013). Critical thinking is amongst other factors that promote success within the organization (Dana, Hancock and Phillips, 2011). Critically thinking treats the information gathered through questioning and evaluation to provide rationale and clarity of the matter or issue at hand (Davies and Barnett, 2015; Young and Balli, 2014). Such assessments would equip the organization with the understanding and judgement of present circumstances and formulate ingenious ways of tackling and mitigating other scenarios from ensuing (Lai, 2011; Birgili, 2015). Zhou, Hirst and Shipton (2012b) and Corsi and D'Ippoliti (2013) learnt that there had been a favorable effect on self-efficacy that spurs motivation to work for those employees who engage in such an activity.

3. Methodology

The paper’s purpose was to solicit information from an existing company workers, working in different organizations in the UAE, on how creativity is effected into the workspace and what has this brought about for the organization. The researcher utilized a qualitative form of obtaining insight through interviews (Busetto, Wick and Gumbinger, 2020). Interviews would enable the researcher to inquire in a semi-structured questionnaire, which may involve and probe to impromptu questions as the conversation goes along (McIntosh and Morse, 2015; Adams, 2015). The interviewee is an employee at a company that acts as an agent of interior design brands from Europe in the United Arab Emirates.

After acquiring info, the researcher would transcribe the responses verbatim to apply the analytical method of “thematic analysis”, which is a kind of approach that identifies patterns within the interview conducted, that would indicate organizational implementation of creativity (Walsh, et al., 2019; Joffe, 2012). The researcher would use the patterns to draw and solidify a conclusion that justifies why a company should immerse operations in creative endeavors.

The questions essentially seek to identify these:

1. The participants’ experience concerning creativity in the organization.
2. The participants’ perspective on the how organizations can be benefitted by fostering creativity within organization.

4. Results

A thematic analysis was used to evaluate the response that was given by the participant. Thematic analysis is a type of qualitative data analysis that entails going over a set of transcribed data from an interview and looking for patterns in themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It is a way for data analysis, but it also includes constructing codes and the creation of themes.

Upon transcribing the data, the researcher systematically reread the interviews throughout, to familiarize and recognize patterns of information, and to extract the essence of what was said to
create codes. These codes serve as chunks of information that summarizes meaningful context from the given answers (Braun and Clark, 2006). Afterwards, the data was combined altogether to create themes that simplify the context of processes undertaken in the company, and assists in decluttering texts, and to make the act of elucidating meanings easier (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). Responds were working in product and service based organizations in the UAE. Random sampling technique was used and focus group interview were conducted from three participants. These four themes are extracted by combining number of codes, which were not possible to include.

4.1 Fostering Adaptability “Versatility”

Adaptability makes the company proactive in familiarizing and attuning to the changes that prevailed with the surrounding environment. Adjusting to prevailing circumstances shows non-conformity and change from what was prior, and this, the essence of being novel, is connected to creativity (Orkibi, 2021).

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<td>Collaborative Effort in Solving Problems</td>
<td>Fostering Adaptability</td>
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Throughout the interview, it came under the discuss that the companies became proactive when making decisions. Deviating from the physical nature of work into remote work and training, changing the production line in meeting urgent dates, and adjusting behavior depending on the clients encountered. All three sub-themes are similar in terms of occurrence, all three arising in response to unexpected and spontaneous events such as Covid-19, changing market demand, and the diverse market audience.

Furthermore, one interviewee indicated that:

“We cannot call or say that it is a standard in the company to do because it’s very rare, but we meet it by finding a way in solving these issues.”

Also it was mentioned that

“The way the people or the client are thinking are changing as well, their selections are changing, so they don’t want something that is already there or they’ve seen already. We have to keep thinking on different ideas to meet their need”

Moreover, one more responded said that:

“We want to study and train ourselves to become more skillful but it was not possible before but due to pandemic it become possible to take all these facilities online which is also helping us to do things in different ways, so even during this natural disaster, we try to do our work creatively to fulfil unusual requirements of our customers”.

Similarity, as Alzyoud, Othman and Mohd Isa (2015) stated, this creates a dynamic work culture by making decisions that often suits or may apply to the occurring issues, thus promoting creative thinking. The concept is not restrictive, which according to Gubler, Larkin and Pierce (2018), has produced higher output, which is also prevalently seen in the company despite the uncertain situations.

4.2 Employee Involvement “Think Out of the Box”

The other theme extracted is employee involvement as a resolve in meeting problems and as a manner of uplifting employees. Employees are assets that drive the company forward because of the contributions made in operations that they integrate into (Nwaeye and Obiekwe, 2017). The
workforce owns knowledge and expertise on a variety of subjects. Once these are cohesively combined, produce a creative outlook and proposition on problem-solving (Obiekwe, Zeb-Obipi and Ejo-Orusa, 2019).

However, this is only applicable to organizations that value varying opinions and perspectives. Nonetheless, the interviewee described the workplace as an inclusive “out-of-the-box” environment. A space that encourages employees to stimulate competencies by granting training on multiple skillsets and voicing potentially valuable ideas. The interviewee expressed being taught by the manager to write emails and challenge them to present to the clientele, which has positive correlations to professional development – a prominent variable to the retention and low turnover rates (Teng, et al., 2020).

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When a workplace is inclusive, employees can grasp and obtain new knowledge and cooperate in discussions. An open work culture helps the employees develop a newfound understanding of operations, allowing employees to do more than required and adding personality to their work completed. Creativity and personality are interrelated, particularly the extraversion type of personality. This insinuates that the more creative a person is, the higher chances a person enacts in extraversion (Jirásek and Sudzina, 2020).

As interviewee mentioned that:

“Organizations are providing with environment where we have full authority to make decision for instance while any conflict occur with customers, we have authority to solve their issue with our own style, as we are dealing with them, we have authority to express our opinion and make decision, which gives us feeling of belongingness”

Also, one more participant discussed that:
“May be because of nature of our product, we are totally flexible and always welcomed in getting ideas on design of product and other related factors. There are no boundaries in getting suggestions on products that also keep us engaging during throughout product development process, also helps us to understand and deliver product specifications to our customers”.

Other said very excitedly that:

“I feel myself as a valuable member of the organization and I believe the company is very happy with what I am doing because amongst the rest of my colleagues, I am the only one who can go to the client to present, and the only difference is our managers and how Kamal (manager) has allowed me to grow.”

Therefore, since the company is flexible with its processes and the nature of doing work, employees can eloquently verbalize feelings and sentiment towards a product when presenting to a customer. Doing so is positively correlated to deeper engagement with the client, which builds up a relationship that fortifies the company’s customer base and increases company profits (Roberts and Alpert, 2010). Furthermore, personalizing work gives the employees a sense of autonomy and ownership, acting as an intrinsic motivation whilst working (Giancola, 2014).

4.3 Innovating Products “Differentiated”

This theme emphasizes and embodies the essence of innovation, for it is the way the company constructs and or reconstructs a concept to form something relatively fresh (Rosenberg, 2010).

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Linked to adaptability and the changing market demand, current trends prompt customers to purchase and influences the product expected. The company conform to trends as per the customers' request, creating something unique because this will render gains for the organization (Fillis and Rentschler, 2010).

One participants mentioned that:

“We are allowed to make change in colors, design and combination of different things to add more creativity in the product. We also personalized work process and can make customized product according to the customer’s demand”.

In this connection one more respondent said

“It is always important because clients are creative as well, they tend to choose product which is “out of the box” something different than you know”.

Meanwhile one emphasized that

“Creativity is not something going with the flow, it Means something new that you cannot purchase from shops, malls or anywhere else”.

The organization demonstrates creativity during the design and consultation process, where the clients indicate what they would like for in a product and where the designer begins ideation. Being unique reduces the likelihood of brand parity and creates a distinction where customers can distinguish who and where the product originates from (Rahman, 2014). Forming an identity facilitates targeting a particular niche that helps in making marketing less effortful and enabling the company to sell premium products (Jang, et al., 2015).

4.4 Customer Experience “Beyond their Expectations”

As discussed prior, creativity does not solely revolve around tangible outcomes but includes intangible ones like customer experience (Runco and Pritzker, 2011). The probability of customers repurchasing is dependent on the levels of satisfaction throughout different points of purchasing experience (Pei, et al., 2020).

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<td>Formulating Post-Purchase Problem Strategy</td>
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As it was explained by one participant that

“Oh we have to go around, like our sales manager went to Saudi Arabia on opening of our new office to introduce themselves. It’s easier to meet them on zoom but that does not apply to us because we tend to create relationship without clients, so we need to see them, visit them often”.

Similarly, other endorsed that:

“Yes, off course, we know our customers, we find different create ways to do interaction with them, we know them by their name, face. We drink coffee and spend time getting to know them deeply and personally ask them about their expectations about our product and services”.

Also one said

“We foster creativity to give customer best experience ever. During this we receive some damage product replacement request. when it happens, though rarely, as an example if it’s shipping and they received the item damaged, we replace the item. Sometimes fault occur in products, what we do is we took it back, we had it repaired, and of course we ship it back the item back no doubt, the shipping costs is too expens, still we try find creative way or try to become very flexible about it (refund option, coupon), so that at least the client would be happy about the product and services”.

Companies that implement creativity ensures to go beyond customers’ presumptions by enhancing experience from the last, especially if the past purchasing experiences were adequate. For instance, based on this theme, the company goes out of the normal consultation processes to offer complimentary coffee, to sit on furnishings and converse on differing topics besides the product itself, whilst as for post-purchase, the company guarantees repair. Since post-purchase issues are atypical in the company, the organization arranges flexible solutions that instigate collaborative effort and strategizing in the company, which, if in urgency, would prompt varying, out-of-the-box and improvised attempts to solve the problem at hand. Solved, client retention and sales contribute to the foreseeable success (Hmieleski, Corbett and Baron, 2013; Souchon, et al., 2016).

5. Conclusion
Throughout the research and the utilization of thematic analysis, creativity has been viewed in a different light compared to how the word would generally be delineated. The paper dissects and provides areas showing and specifying how creativity is more than artistic capabilities but constitutes systems and processes that guide functionality and organizations can foster creativity to get competitive edge in today’s era.

Creativity is a sought out skill, is multi-faceted in nature and applies to different organizational departments, a contributing factor that helps add value to the product or service by making the workplace more dynamic, services flexible, and product conceptualizations novel. The research underlined the relevance of employees to organizational development, and by embracing and fostering creativity, employees derive benefits that subsequently enhance the customers’ experiences with the company and the product altogether. Emphasizing that the adherence to creative implementation bears weight to achieving overall success.

References


