EVALUATING SUCCESS IN A CREATIVE PROJECT ECOLOGY: NAKED COMMUNICATIONS AS AN AGENCY LEGACY BRAND IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE (2000-2019)

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis is an exploratory case study contextualizing the history and success of Naked Communications, an influential agency in the advertising industry founded in 2000. Despite the closing of its key offices by 2019, this case study draws inspiration from economic geography grounding advertising as a creative and cultural industry built atop urban-based clusters with a project ecology, to evaluate what success means for agencies in highly volatile and competitive settings. Faced with the dual and sometimes paradoxical interest to achieve creative and business success by way of its reputation and performance, a framework was created to navigate the historiography the advertising industry as well as how values are managed in shaping the actual and perceived success of an agency. This study argues that Naked was a successful agency despite the closing of his business because it built a legacy brand of itself, through its ability to leverage the agency values of positioning, process, people, place, and purpose, with the four main stakeholders (clients, competitors, talents, and insiders) of Adland's milieu and beyond. The implications of these findings are to provide an alternative framework to contextual success for firms with an agency-based business model in urban clusters in the creative economy.

Keywords: Naked Communications, advertising, success, project ecology, creative economy, creative industries, cultural industries, clusters, knowledge transfer, culture

PREFACE/ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This master's thesis was completed between November 2019 and July 2020 as part of the Erasmus Mundus Joint-Degree Masters' program 'Global Markets, Local Creativities' (GLOCAL) between the University of Glasgow, University of Barcelona, and Erasmus University Rotterdam. Guidance for this thesis was provided through the thesis workshop, 'Business of Innovation' at Erasmus University, led by Prof. Ben Wubs and PhD candidate Alice Janssens. As a proposal, this paper has been accepted for presentation at the 2nd World Business History Conference, 'Business History in a Changing World', to be held at the University of Nagoya in 2021, with financial support to attend from the European Business History Association.

The data processing, analyses, and writing phases of this research took place under Coronavirus quarantine conditions in the Netherlands since Erasmus University campus closed in mid-March. Despite these undesirable circumstances and limited access to the libraries, most material for this research was already collected or available online.

There are several people to thank for helping shape my thesis and its developments. Firstly, I would like to thank my main thesis supervisor, Prof. Wubs for his enthusiastic support and feedback throughout. I would also like to thank my second reader, Prof. Fear, for his feedback at various stages of my work, as well as Prof. Miravitlles for agreeing to be my third thesis reader. As much of my thesis centres around a historical case study of Naked Communications, I am grateful to its original founders, Jon Wilkins and Will Collin, for their enthusiasm, encouragement, and trust in me to write about their inspirational agency, as well as the other former Naked staffers I had the chance connect with. I have enjoyed hearing their stories wholeheartedly.

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Rotterdam, July 2020

Dyana Wing T. So

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CHAPTER 1 | INTRODUCTION

This research aims to contextualize the 'success' of a creative business beyond the scope of revenue and longevity, while paying respect to history.

The advertising practice and profession evolved as an art and a science across changing media landscapes, different regional cultures, and developments in globalisation since the 19th century. Reputation and performance are as intertwined as business and creativity within the countless agencies that have shaped the advertising industry over time. This thesis endeavours to contextualize success using a legacy brand framework to produce a business historiography and an exploratory case study evaluating the success of an influential agency, Naked Communications (Naked), founded in 2000. Using a mixed methods approach including interviews, survey, and discourse analyses of press coverage and published articles and books about the firm, this research finds that Naked's success lies in its ability to build a legacy out of managing its five agency values (positioning, purpose, people, and place) with industry stakeholders in the project-based ecology of the London advertising cluster and beyond. The transcendence of the Naked brand's value through its legacy despite the closing of its original London office in 2017 and penultimate office in Sydney, revisits Lash and Urry's 1994 conceptualisation of advertising agencies as being spaces of postmodern reflexivity, and the definition of 'success' along with it. Looking beyond the objective definitions of business success and instead, from that of the bottom-up, contextual vantage point of an innovative agency in advertising for its time, this thesis also hopes to provide a broader reflection on the power of embedded industrial milieus and labour in further shaping the creative economy.

This research takes interest in agencies because they represent three key features of firms within the creative economy. Firstly, agencies are spaces that constantly see the collision and coexistent of the business and art worlds. Secondly, agencies are places where one can study creative management from the perspective of creative professionals. Thirdly, agencies are often innovations in themselves, because some are founded not merely on the desire of veteran advertising professionals to make money by running their own businesses, but also as a direct response to counter existing business models with something better and more conducive to the

creative process and its talents, all while challenging conventional and vertical paradigms. These three characteristics make agencies a dynamic unit to understand how creativity is organised within the context of capitalism. Moreover, and for the scope of this research, these characteristics shape the culture of agencies and the advertising industry at large. Culture is often the key feature creative and cultural industry firms focus on cultivating, both for its internal work and environment, and for its external identity as a brand of creative service from the eyes of their clients, rivals, and prospective talent.

Naked Communications is an example of an agency innovation. It was founded as an agency providing a counter process to the dominant conventions in its project ecology at the time. It's purpose was clear: "to become the acknowledged leader in creating communications solutions globally". It positioned itself as 'brilliant misfits' because it invested heavily in its people, and managed to take their ideas and culture into different places, ultimately impacting the global advertising industry at large and leaving that as their dominant legacy, despite their eventual fall.

Naked is not an outlier when it comes to innovative agencies in advertising. In fact, Naked is part of a wider global advertising history that is full of bold personalities and agencies that share a common desire to challenge existing conventions, often blending the paradoxical aspirations of creating wealth and creating big ideas. In an industry where everyone competes by how well they can sell anything, and where starting a new agency requires little overhead beyond a hearty rolodex of accounts and a dash of luck, the actual rate of 'success', in the traditional sense, is low. Rather than jumping to the conclusion that an agency's demise by merger, acquisition, or bankruptcy spell failure, creative destruction should be accepted as an inherent nature to the advertising industry. It is in this view, that an alternative meaning of success can be explored, and from which the main research question is raised: *What made Naked Communications a successful agency in the global advertising industry despite its business failure?*

1.1 Overview of Research Approach and Methodology

This research embraces oral history to identify the core elements leading to Naked's success. Theory provides the underpinning for the historical plight of creative professionals, while interviews and the articles written about Naked by the press both provide the narratives detailing Naked's real-time and retrospective developments. This research prioritises the real experiences

of past Naked employees and journalists to identify how success is valued and narrated within the industry. While admittedly subjective, these accounts provide a much-needed perspective in evaluating company success by its legacy, kept alive by the memories of those who have worked there and that of the industry milieu where Naked's reputation and performance were shaped.

The history of agencies is often told in-house or by institutions dedicated to preserving advertising as a cultural heritage, such as the Heritage of Advertising Trust (HAT) in the UK. Their narratives provide windows into the bottom-up challenges and opportunities experience in a fast-pace industry that is highly sensitive and reactive to exogenous shocks and internal tensions. Influential figures are common units of interest, and such biographical accounts show how volatile their professions tend to be. By focusing on agencies as units on the other hand, it is hoped that success is nuanced beyond the cliché of the founder as entrepreneur, and beyond the limits of traditional, quantifiable approaches (such as awards). The methodology of this research aims to get at the heart of why Naked was successful from those who worked there and who have since moved on to more senior-level positions in the industry.

Oral history is a controversial method because of its subjectivity. This is particularly the case in highly politicised settings such as the aftermaths of mass atrocities where, as Erin Jessee writes, is riddled with traumatic memories, and often risks to the safety of the interviewee and interviewer.[1] Applying oral history to recount business history, by comparison, is not as risky, but concerns over its subjectivity revolve around how the narratives of a firm's past may only share a certain aspect of what is otherwise a very complicated, and often hierarchical operation, possibly spanning generations. Despite these concerns, the valuation of a firm, including its pragmatic potential as a 'retro brand', falls most poignantly in the domains of subjective experience and memories, whether completely accurate or not. The point is that this value is not judged by absolute accuracy, but by the collective imagination that gives the brand a life beyond its own, as well as cross-referencing that to available, real-time documentation of its performance (e.g. articles, firm artifacts, photos, etc.), and the motivation behind their coverage whenever and wherever it is obvious.

[1] Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, ed., "Advocacy and Empowerment," *The Oral History Reader* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 573.

Thirteen individuals were interviewed for this research. A majority were former Naked employees including two of the three original founders. Selection of interviewees prioritised founding partners and employees who worked in a range of Naked's many global offices, to qualify the perception of the Naked brand despite local market divergences. One of the interviewees, Tim Burrowes, is a trade journalist who followed Naked closely within the Australian advertising and marketing industry context. Sera Miller, another interviewee, is a co-founder of a more recent agency alongside former Naked strategist and interviewee, Amelia Torode, who has also conducted research into innovative agency business models for her master's and is aware of the Naked brand. The full list of all interviewed, and where they were based at the time of their interview can be found in the Appendix (Figure A).

In addition to interviews, a survey with similar questions was shared to members of a Facebook group for former Naked employees, by one of the founders. This survey received nine responses. Two of the respondents were later asked to also take part in full-length interviews. Full-length interviews were designed to be semi-structured and a minimum of an hour in length. The structure consisted of similar questions asking each former Naked employee about their role in Naked and the changes they witnessed during their time there. Subsequent questions delved deeper into their perception of Naked's success, culture, approach to generating ideas, and how its environments fostered creativity. The unstructured parts of the interviews consisted of follow-up questions inspired from the interviewees' responses. When relevant, for example, founding partners were asked now Naked influenced their current career trajectory, practices, and in some cases, agencies.

The information provided via retrospective interviews of Naked's history were cross-referenced with available coverage of Naked's activities that were available online. All articles referencing 'Naked Communications' by *Campaign* magazine were subject to a focused, discourse analysis. *Campaign* was picked because it is the leading trade magazine of the British advertising industry, and one that followed Naked's development closely from the very beginning. Using subscription to access www.campaignlive.co.uk, a total of 871 *Campaign* articles were identified by June 2020, spanning 2000 to 2020. After a review and omitting duplicates, only 804 were ultimately organized and categorized into an Excel-based spreadsheet for further analysis, and 172 articles saved into a digital archive by the author. About 130 *Campaign* articles directly informed the scope of this thesis. In addition to the *Campaign* articles, another digital archive was created

to organize over 100 articles from various sources (*Ad Age*, *Mumbrella*, *The Drum*, *Fast Company*, *Australian Financial Times*, etc.) and other online media (videos, photos, slides, etc.) about Naked, its former employees, work, and parent company. Because of Naked's global reach, some of these materials were translated from their original language to English using a Google Translate browser extension. Studying the history of coverage about Naked through *Campaign* and other press sources, provided insights into how Naked's developments were perceived in real-time; how Naked's developments were judged relative to local histories and trends; how Naked leveraged this channel for press releases; and how values are communicated between stakeholders through the insider as intermediary.

Press coverage, photos, blogs, and the occasional references to Naked in published books are not without their limitations, however. Although the Internet provides a vast, public database to multiple sources and sub-databases referencing Naked, there is no way to determine, for instance, which content may have been removed up to the point of retrieval. The original websites for Naked are no longer available per the closing of its many global offices since 2019, so the agency's services and values were pieced together from the mix of materials. Thus, part of the motivation to create a digital database was to archive the business history of Naked in one designated place.

CHAPTER 2 | INTERDISCIPLINARY THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

This chapter outlines the theoretical foundations and ideas across disciplines which this thesis engages with to answer the research questions. Specifically, this thesis draws inspiration from business history of advertising; economic geography on innovation of creative industries within the creative economy; how business and creativity converge; and the evaluation of success in advertising. These areas illustrate the different tiers that the business and creative worlds intersect between and within agencies.

2.1 PUTTING RESEARCH ON ADVERTISING AGENCIES IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

"Agency – (n.)
a business that represents one group of people when dealing with another."[2]

What agencies do within the advertising industry depends on which period you are looking at. The transformative nature of these business reflects the dynamic changes of the people which an agency represents, as well as their clients, according to external changes brought to them. Historically, topics about advertising agencies were part of a wider discourse among practitioners and business scholars seeking to legitimize the young industry originating from the Anglo-Saxon world. Despite waves of criticisms across different generations, the industry remained intact, but the agency as subject became markers global networks for large advertising conglomerates and parts to a fragmented value chain. From being part of the dangerous regime of the 'culture industry', agencies were now businesses of 'cultural and creative industries'.

Most business history of agencies is told by a historian, such as Mark Tungate in his book *Adland: A Global History of Advertising,* or by an industry insider, like David Ogilvy and his famous *Confessions of an Advertising Man*. Trade magazines such as *Campaign* document the developments of agencies and occasionally publish feature articles summarizing retrospective trends like the British creative wave of new agencies coming out of 1960s Soho. While most

[2] "Agency," accessed June 25, 2020, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/agency?q=Agency.

archives tend to focus on digitizing the multimedia advertisements themselves, they are also organised according to the agencies that produce them. Some digital archives like AdBrands and the Historical Advertising Trust (HAT) of the UK, provide accompanying profiles about agencies. What is central to the different ways advertising agencies are recorded in history is in its distinctions, whether by influential personas, creative advertisements, or both.

Research on advertising is historically contentious, reflecting its ongoing debate as legitimate business and its role in capitalist societies. As the industry grew in the late 19th century in the United States, advertising had become a hot topic among American advertising practitioners and business scholars seeking to legitimize its profession and counter criticisms against advertising as the 'defamation of the landscape'.[3] By the 1940s, advertising had become more 'slippery' because of these contradictions, but the significance of its influence in society and business was undeniable. Furthermore, advertising was here to stay. In his review of Harvard business school professor Ralph Hower's *The History of an Advertising Agency* (1949), which touts the 'pioneering spirit' of the US's first ad agency N.W. Ayer & Son, former Head of Advertising for Wanamaker (1901-1936) Joseph Appel, called advertising an 'assistant in economic exchange.'[4] But across the Atlantic and two years after Appel's review, German philosophers Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer of the Frankfurt School, published their seminal *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) and introduced the concept of the 'culture industry', a cumulative regime of cultural goods that manufactured and standardized 'popular culture'. Adorno and Horkheimer argued that the 'culture industry' was dangerous because it created false psychological needs among the masses, which the consumption of capitalism's products could remedy. Although Adorno and Horkheimer was referring to radio, film, and magazines specifically, advertising was an intermediary in the commercial marketing of culture and used those media channels as part of their service to clients. The modernizing of American advertising, according to Pamela Walker Laird resulted from informing consumers to creating them. The debates of whether advertising was a 'fixer of capitalism' (Williamson 1978, Thrift 1987); a 'new culture mediator' (Bordieu 1984); an exploitative regime (Jackson & Taylor 1996), or all of the above, is inseparable to an industry that

[3] Pamela Walker Laird, *Advertising Progress: American Business and the Rise of Consumer Marketing* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), page number not available in Google Books preview.
[4] Joseph H. Appel, "A Case Study of an Advertising Agency and Observations on Advertising in General," review of *History of an Advertising Agency: N. W. Ayer & Son at Work,* by Ralph M. Hower. *Bulletin of the Business Historical Society* 13, no. 4 (October 1939): 56.

has only become a more robust mainstay despite its criticisms. So inseparable, for some like Scott Lash and John Urry (1994), that there was more to be understood about advertising by recognising it formally as a post-Fordist, 'fully fledged culture industry' that directly assists in the branding and circulation of intellectual property.[5]

Contemporary research and interest in the advertising industry have shifted away from the semiotic analyses of advertising and cultural valuation of the industry however, as John Sinclair summarised in 2015. Sinclair finds that research about advertising have reoriented towards "a broader conceptual landscape of consumer culture, and by contemporary theory and research on branding". Sinclair also writes of the following research gaps about advertising: clarity on contemporary advertising practices; how advertisers relate with one another; and the role of the industry in the wider political and cultural economy.[6] Part of the struggle in filling these gaps is how much the industry changes. What was advertising agency in the 1950s usually meant a full-service agency in Madison Avenue, but by 2010, it could be any agency contributing its service to some part of a value chain for a client's campaign. The dynamic approaches and theories of the advertising industry's function reflects the rapid changes it undergoes as an intermediary business service between consumers and brands.

Research about agencies in advertising mirrors this diversity in focus over time. If agencies are businesses representing a group who provides services based on the shifting needs of their clients, then they are highly reflexive organisations that adapt itself within the structure of the advertising industry, thereby changing what the industry does over time. This self-preservation logic was cemented by efforts to counter criticism against advertising's effects and advertising as part of Adorno and Horkeimer's 'culture industry'. As agencies' clients expanded globally into larger multinational corporations (MNCs), so too did advertising agencies and its categorization as a 'cultural industry'. Scholars like Sean Nixon and Liz McFall take a sociological approach to study the culture among professionals working in advertising agencies. Management and marketing research find interest in studying agencies to understand how they work to improve business service with them. [Von Nordenflycht, 2007; Horsky 2006]. In their review of articles written about advertising creativity from the *International Journal of Advertising,* Sasser and

[5] Scott Lash and John Urry, *Economies of Signs and Space* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), 21-22.
[6] John Sinclair, "Advertising, the Media, and Globalisation," *Media Industries Journal* 1, no. 3 (2015): 42-43.

Koslow (2008) found that, in their categorisation of creativity into people, process, and place, the current research lacked a consensus of what 'advertising creativity' was, despite the quantity of research engaging with some aspect of it.[7] Research on agencies as case studies are less common however. One of the oldest business history case studies about an agency is Ralph M. Hower's *The History of an Advertising Agency: N.W. Ayer & Son at Work* (1939) which, as Joseph Appel reviewed, provides a representative account of a distinctive agency told through its 'soul'.[8] Thiel's case studies of Springer & Jacoby (S&J) and Jung von Mattt show how agencies can be driving forces of influence to legitimise informal clusters into creative city hubs like his example of Hamburg. The subjective and nature of agencies makes them fascinating perspectives in business history, indicating the important role that the personalities they represent, play in shaping its firm culture, creativity, and management, as external factors also shape them in return.

2.2 Innovation Clusters of Culture Industries in the Creative Economy

The categorisation of advertising as a 'creative industry' or 'cultural industry' (used interchangeability, linked its business activities with local and global economic developments. Some argue that advertising was more so an informational industry serving clients because roughly 90% employed within the industry in the United States did not fit in even the broadest definitions of cultural workers as Markusen et al. (2008) found. However, bearing in mind that these statistics represent a snapshot of the *American* advertising industry in 2002, Markusen et al. also acknowledged that advertising hired five times more artists than the whole economy did.[9] A level of employed artists mixed in with accountants and managers does not make advertising an exception as a cultural industry. Rather, it may be the most exemplary of the cultural industry for its role in mediating and capitalising on culture, all through the management of creative labour. The categorization of advertising as a 'creative and cultural industry' may be problematic for some, but it also expanded emphasis on the labourers who are crucial in making these industries 'creative' and whose values form the basis of Florida's urban 'creative class', Landry's 'creative city', and

[7] Sheila Sasser and Scott Koslow, "Desperately Seeking Advertising Creativity: Engaging an Imaginative '3Ps' Research Agenda," *Journal of Advertising* 37, no. 4 (2008), 5-6.
[8] Appel, "A Case Study of an Advertising Agency," 50.
[9] Ann Markusen et al., "Defining the Creative Economy: Industry and Occupational Approaches," *Economic Development Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (2008): 36.

Howkins' 'creative economy', three related works all published within two years of each other at the turn of the 21st century.

The discourse of creative and cultural industries also led economic geographers to apply agglomeration theory and measure the economic developments of the advertising industry over space and time.[10] Leslie was one of the first to study the globalisation of agencies into international networks in their expanding roles as the intermediary between the consumers and brands in 1995. Since then, more research contributed to better understand advertising clusters within global cities and how they contribute to innovation and adapt to external financial shocks and technological disruptions. In London's advertising cluster in Soho, Grabher finds an active 'ideas village' by the early 2000s that evolved from a tradition of 'rubbing shoulders' for gaining knowledge and climbing the professional hierarchy.[11] In both London and New York, Faulconbridge expands on this village concept through the idea of 'institutional thickness' and how professional association play an active role in mediating a cluster's collective learning.[12] Thiel (2005) and Bergus (2009) deeply research the formation of advertising clusters in Hamburg and Oslo, respectively. Whereas Thiel explains how Hamburg became an advertising hub by its local entrepreneurs adopting advertising business models and ideas to the German context, Bergus specifically sought to understand how the Internet affected the advertising industry globally and locally within Oslo. The similar urban, local economies that advertising industries depend on to maximize their successes, including its access to a diverse pool of skillsets and talents, to its attraction to multinational clients to source advertising services from a single location as well as enter specific consumer markets.

Research identifying advertising hubs in global cities led to a better understanding of the globalisation of the advertising industry in distinct phases and business models. Adding to research by Lash and Urry (1994), Leslie (1997), and Grabher (2002), Röling identified four waves of advertising starting from the early 20th century, with the intent of providing a typology to understand the spatial and social organisation of the contemporary international advertising industry, and the divergence of two agency business models in 2010 (his typology is provided as

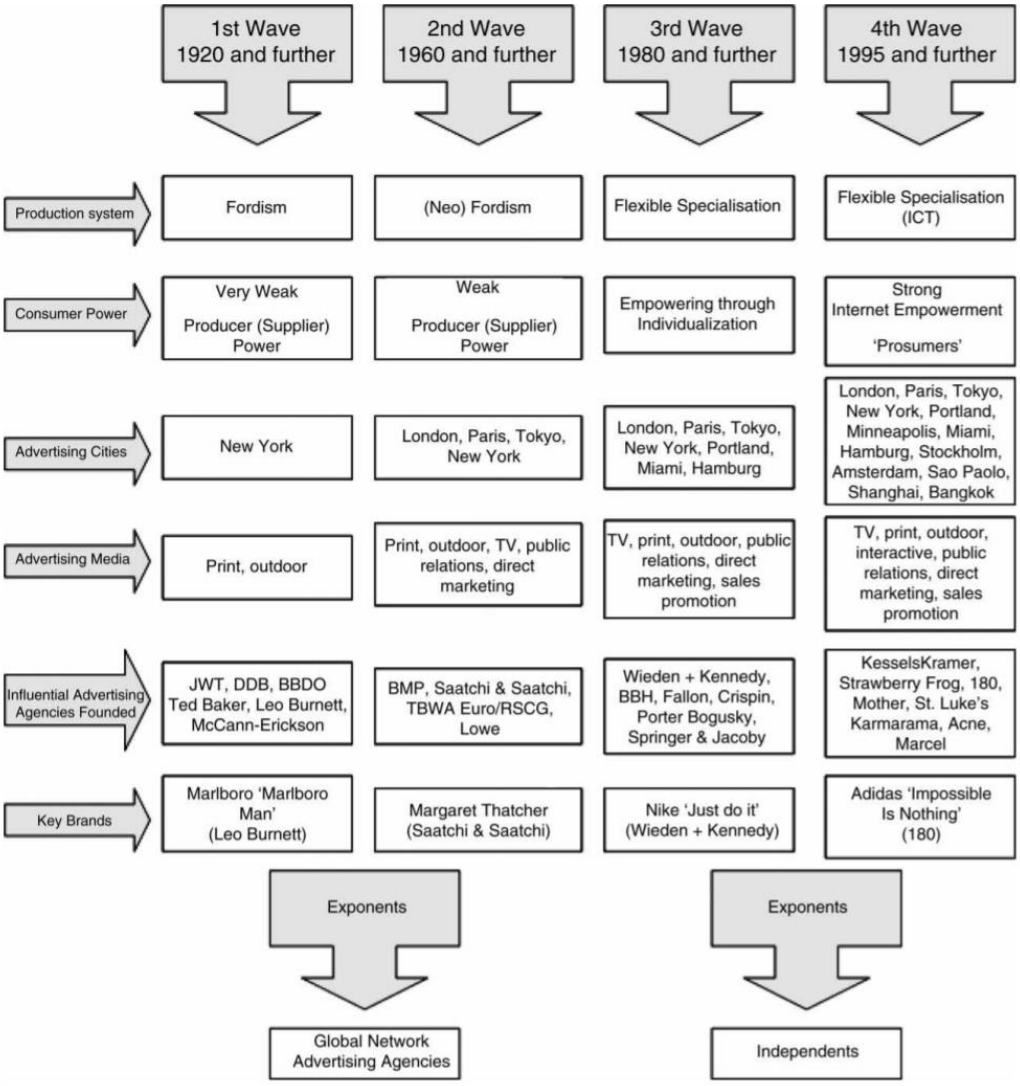
[10] Markus M. Bugge, "Creative Distraction: The Digital Transformation of the Advertising Industry" (PhD diss., Uppsala Universitet, 2009), 23-28.
[11] Gernot Grabher, "Ecologies of Creativity: the Village, the Group, and the heterarchic organisation of the British advertising industry A" 33, no. 2 (2001): 368.
[12] James Faulconbridge, "Exploring the role of professional associations in collective learning in London and New York's advertising and law professional-service-firm clusters. Environment and Planning A" 39 (2007): 965 - 984.

Figure 1).[13] "Each different phase evolved from an underlying logic that is a combination of changes in the production system, the introduction of new technologies, and also highly important, as an adaptation to changes in consumer behaviour."[14] The first two waves resulted in the founding of influential agencies whose globalisation had a more 'national' orientation, acquiring agencies overseas to form a global network advertising agency (GNAA). By contrast, and largely as a response to the first two waves, the third and fourth waves saw the rise of two different generations of independent agencies that were global by their outlook through their local base and adoption of 'flexible specialisation' in their production. The identification of international independent agencies in contrast to GNAAs are important because it recognizes another competitive business model that thrived in its ability to be flexible by virtue of its small size, while also leveraging its creativity more intensively as an essential distinction from its larger, more bureaucratic counterparts.[15] Unlike GNAAs, Röling argues that international independent advertising agencies from the third, but predominantly the fourth, wave, are capable of having 'strong ideas without borders'.[16]

Röling's typology provides a helpful framework in differentiating global advertising agency business models and using this divergence as a bridge in connecting advertising industries as a cultural and creative industry by how work is spatially and socially organised. Each wave does not replace the next, but rather, add to an increasingly complex industry landscape where changing consumer powers and technologies can influence the orientation and creation of urban clusters. In his case study of Amsterdam's rise as an advertising capital, Röling uses his typology to explain how the city evolved into an internationally-oriented hub of GNAAs and independent agencies competing and at times, collaborating, with on another. By looking at globalisation from the unit of campaign productions, rather than from the firm (the basic unit within economic-geographical research), Röling echoes Grabher in arguing for seeing advertising as an industry built around projects, made up of project-based organisations operating in a project ecology.[17]

[13] Robert W. Röling, "Small Town, Big Campaigns. The Rise and Growth of an International Advertising Industry in Amsterdam," *Regional Studies* 44, no. 7 (2010): 830.
[14] Röling, "Small Town, Big Campaigns," 831-832.
[15] Ibid, 833.
[16] Ibid, 834.
[17] Ibid, 834-835.

FIG. 1 | THE FOUR WAVES OF THE GLOBAL ADVERTISING INDUSTRY



Source: Röling, "Small Town, Big Campaigns" (2010): 830.

2.3 Culture, Collaboration, and Competition in the Project Ecology of Advertising

Whereas the last sub-chapter focused on how innovations emerge through firm proximities, this sub-chapter delves deeper into theories on how knowledge-sharing creates informal and formal networks that define the culture of the local industry, foster collaborations between, and drive competition among them. Specifically, in advertising, such networks manifests in urban clusters as project ecologies. According to the economic geographer, Gernot Grabher, who coined

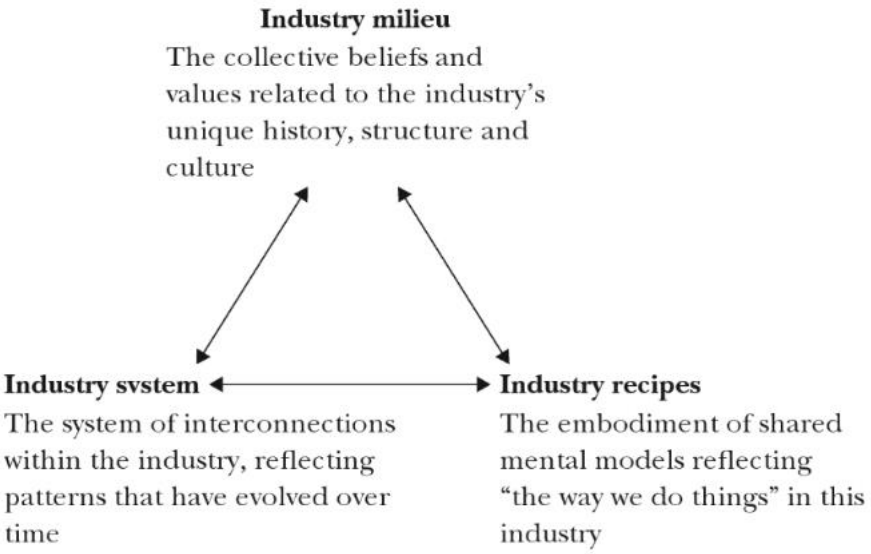
the term, a project ecology is defined as the following: "the organizational and physical space constituted by the interdependencies between projects and the particular firms, personal relations, localities and corporate networks from which these projects draw essential resources."[18] Within a project ecology are four broad layers: the core team, the firm, the epistemic community, and the personnel network. In an advertising project ecology, the core team includes the specific talents constituting the temporal group coming together for a creative brief; the firm is the agency; the epistemic community is the extension of stakeholders contributing to the completion of the project (such as the client's marketing manager or a creative freelancer); and the personnel network include the relationships between clients and creatives that can come in handy for a project.[19] Project-based work, over time, becomes an embedded permanent context sensitive to past experiences for future collaborations and opportunities that becomes an embedded and more permanent culture distinct to an advertising hub.[20] This technological-organizational characteristic makes the advertising project ecology similar to cultural industries clusters, whose features include small to medium-sized establishments having a strong dependency to one another for specialised inputs and services.[21]

From the perspective of knowledge-transfer, Defillippi et al. created a tripartite framework illustrating how the industry activities of its milieu, recipes, and systems overlap to form the culture of London's advertising cluster, or 'Adland' as it is known colloquially (Figure 2).[22] The 'industry milieu' describes the broadly shared values, beliefs, and sense of mission among Adland's 'participants' that encourages their interaction and knowledge sharing. Specifically, for Defillipi et al., this includes the creatives' desire to be recognized for their work among their peers, and the managers' desire (within agencies and among client marketers) to develop lasting business relationships and share a common creative purpose with one another. 'Industry recipes' are the industry-wide 'best practices' that have resulted from the accumulated know-how, experiences, and organisational capabilities that have resulted from generations of knowledge-sharing. In

[18] Gernot Grabher, "The project ecology of advertising: tasks, talents, and teams," *Regional Studies* 36 (2002): 246.
[19] Gernot Grabher, "Learning in projects, remembering in networks? Communality, sociality, and connectivity in project ecologies," *European Urban and Regional Studies* 11 (2004): 99-119.
[20] Grabher, "The project ecology of advertising," 252.
[21] Röling, "Small Town, Big Campaigns," 835.
[22] Although Tungate uses Adland to describe the global industry, this term is mostly used among British advertisers (and some in the US). Because it is not a global colloquial term, Adland, in this thesis, specifically refers to the advertising cluster in London.

Adland, there is a strong internal acknowledgement of 'lineages' between key agencies as shaping a certain generation of creatives who would become executives in top agencies elsewhere, or founders of agencies of their own. Where one has worked before matters and Adland's 'bible', *Campaign* magazine, rolls out articles frequently to track the movements of key professionals from their annual 'A List' from one agency to another, as well enlist a few of them to write opinion pieces as the industry's thought leaders. Finally, Defillipi et al.'s 'industry system' describes the formal and informal interconnections of Adland which become the way everything – knowledge, social capital, talents, and financial capital – flows within the industry.[23]

FIG. 2 | THREE DIMENSIONS OF INDUSTRY ACTIVITY



Historically, embedment is not without tensions inherent in the creative process as business objective. According to Hackley and Kover, is a palpable, sub-cultural divide between 'suits' and 'creatives' within the firm in the advertising industry.[24] Broadly, the 'suits' (account managers, directors, media planners, etc.) who interface between clients and creatives, prefer structure, convention, and scientific measurements assuring the impact of an ad on a clearly defined

[23] Robert Defillipi et al, "Industry Knowledge at Work," in *Knowledge at Work: Creative Collaboration in the Global Economy* (London: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 104-107.
[24] Chris Hackley and Arthur Kover, "The Trouble with Creatives: Negotiating Creative Identity in Advertising Agencies," *International Journal of Advertising* 26, no. 1 (2007): 63-65.

consumer group. 'Creatives' (copy writers, illustrators, designers, etc.), by contrast, tend to oppose this rigidity. Although titles have evolved and definitions of creativity have blurred in the process since the 'deconcentration' from GNAAs to the rise of independents in the 1980s as Röling finds, the history of these tensions run deepest in the most embedded and longstanding milieus. For creatives in Adland (post-fourth wave), Nixon and Crewe finds many sharing in the feeling of a 'social splitting' within their work.[25] More than ten years later, this experience has not changed much for creatives, as Hackley and Kover find that, among senior-level copywriters in Mad. Ave, "ad agencies are a site of conflict and insecurity…yet also of potential fulfilment." This conflict, they argue, continues to leave creatives complicit in order to hold up their professional identities within this kind of working environment.[26] Despite waves implying the rising role of creative entrepreneurs leading independent agencies and being enabled to play a more robust role in shaping the milieu, the project ecology also perpetuates the 'suits vs. creative' tension as part of its locked-in characteristic.

2.4 Agencies as a Space of Creativity and Management Convergence

The 'suits vs. creative' tension is a microcosm of the ontological paradox between creativity and capitalism. Tungate's history of advertising has no shortage of disputes between 'suits' and 'creatives', which have led to the eventual separation of media and creative departments within full-service agencies, into the specialised agency services and the advertising value chain that we have today. In the Anglo-Saxon tradition, and according to Bilton and Cummings, creativity and management were historically understood as opposites, but in both academic research and business practices, the two concepts are increasingly seen as complementary.[27] Fourteen years earlier, Lash and Urry saw this as a dialectic convergence rather than irreconcilable differences. Lash and Urry called this a paradigm of culture and economy converging together as a feature of postmodern society, where objects and subjects of capital were blurring – the advertiser is as much the embedded consumer as he or she is its cultural intermediary.[28] Rather than

[25] Sean Nixon and Ben Crewe, "Pleasure at Work? Gender, Consumption and Work-based Identities in the Creative Industries," *Consumption Markets & Culture* 7, no. 2 (2004): 143.
[26] Hackley and Kover, "The Trouble with Creatives," 63.
[27] Chris Bilton and Stephen Cummings, "A framework for creative management and managing creativity," in *Handbook of Management and Creativity,* ed. Bilton and Cummings (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd., 2014), 1-9.
[28] Lash and Urry, *Economies of Signs and Space,* 1-8.

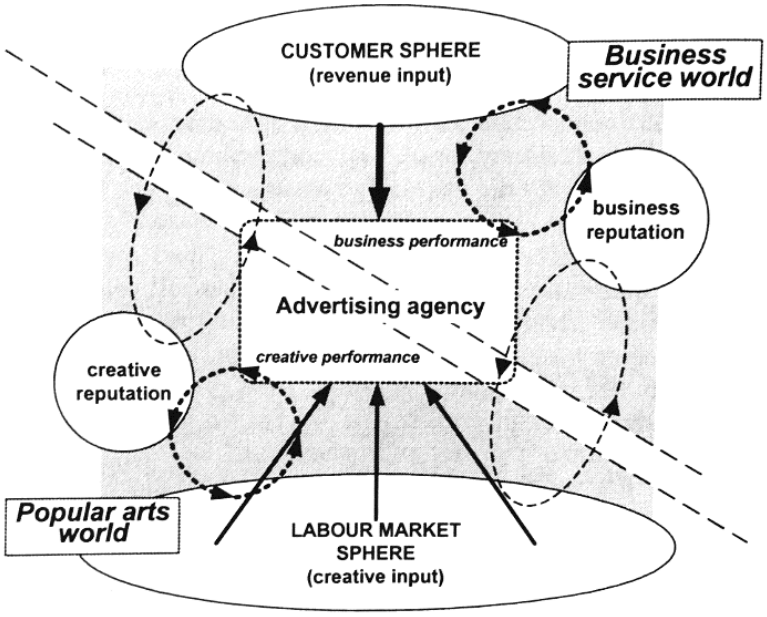
generating amplified "meaninglessness, homogenisation, abstraction, anomie, and destruction of the subject [the labourer]", Lash and Urry argue that there was also a simultaneous opportunity for "recasting the meaning of work and leisure, for the reconstitution of community…the reconstruction of transmogrified subjectivity, and for the heterogenization and complexity of space and of everyday life."[29] In other words, contemporary advertising was an apt context to look beyond the 'tensions' of creativity and business, and consider what new forms arise out of its coexistence. Referencing Weiberg (1986), Boden (1994), Sternberg (1988), and Prichard (2000), Bilton concludes that the creative process was essentially an extension of the innovative process, particularly within the creative economy. Bilton identifies three realms where creativity as innovation overlaps: creative management; creativity as a desired trait among managers; and creativity as a desired feature of a brand for clients.[30] For McRobbie, another outcome of this blurring and adapted meaning of business and creativity, is the rise of the creative lifestyle as an inseparable concept, expectation, and association of working in the creative industries.[31] Within the individual worker, personal creativity and management are not seen as conflicting dualities but a largely inseparable reality. As early as the late 1990s, Nixon's accounts of the lives of London advertising executives detail this blurring of work and leisure vividly.[32]

Although theory paints this picture of complementarity instead of conflict between business and creativity, it does not mean that they do not exist in the reality of contemporary advertising industry. Bilton and Cummings finds that both sides continue to embrace the stereotypes of their counterparts: for management (within agencies and among client's marketers), creativity can add 'out of the box' thinking to their operations, whereas for creatives, management provides 'structure' to their uninhibited ideas. Furthermore, though 'creativity' has evolved significantly beyond simply being 'outputs', to encompassing creative innovation, strategy, agencies, and managers, business models have been slower to evolve as their core revenue source continues to come from clients. Within the agency context, the 'popular arts world' and 'business service world' converge in contemporary advertising, as Thiel illustrates in Figure 3. This

[29] Ibid, 2.
[30] Chris Bilton, "Relocating Creativity in Advertising: From Aesthetic Specialisation to Strategic Integration," in *Creativity, Innovation, and the Cultural Economy*, ed. Andy C. Pratt and Paul Jeffcutt (London: Routledge, 2009), 23-24.
[31] Angela McRobbie, "Introduction: Pedagogical Encounters and Creative Economy," in Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), 1-16.
[32] Sean Nixon, *Advertising Cultures: Gender, Commerce, Creativity* (London: Sage, 2003), 1-12.

illustration identifies a specific kind of reputation and performance that is distinct to the 'business' sphere, which inputs revenue to maintain the agency's operations, and the 'creative' sphere, which inputs the creativity from its talents that the agency's core service depends on and is defined by. Both 'worlds' depend on each other to run an advertising agency.

FIG. 3 | ADVERTISING BETWEEN BUSINESS AND POPULAR ART



For creatives working in agencies, they repress their pure creativity to channel this energy towards what is asked of them within the context of their job title and role. Novelty and value, the hallmarks of creativity as identified by scholars like Weisberg (2006), Sawyer (2006), and Sternberg (1999), is adapted as both aesthetic skill and way of 'problem-solving' from a management perspective.[33] Meanwhile, managers cannot purely focus on profit while foregoing the creative performance and reputation of its advertising agency because it is what attracts their revenue input and high-quality, creative talent. As for how agencies' reputation and performance are evaluated, it is not only judged by individuals, but also by the jury of one's peers.[34] The latter pulls at the ambitions from 'both worlds' and makes for a highly competitive environment.

[33] Bilton and Cummings, *Handbook of Management and Creativity,* 1-7.
[34] Margaret Boden, "What is creativity?" in *Dimensions of Creativity,* ed. M. Boden (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 75-117.

Agencies do not just need high performance and reputations, but also a 'creativity identity' to go with it. "No creative organisation," wrote Ogilvy in 1963, will produce a great body of work unless it is led by a formidable individual."[35] Although it is true that Adland and Mad. Ave's history are full of outrageous characters, Hackley and Kover observed that despite their paramount significance, creativity identity, like the dualities between creativity and business within an agency, are constant sites of negotiations.[36]

2.5 Contextualising 'Success' in Advertising

Because of its duality between art and business worlds, the success of agencies in advertising must be understood from both lenses. On one hand, a successful agency is creative, and on the other, it is exemplary in how well it manages this creativity, as that balance was explained in Figure 3 in the last sub-chapter. Both perspectives face the same challenges of a liberal market, whether that is keeping up with new technologies and changing trends; fending off competitors; adapting to changing client demands; or all of the above. But looking a bit deeper, both perspectives also overlap in their creative talent. Without the people who make up these agencies, there is no creativity to produce and no creativity to manage. In other words, a truly successful agency in advertising can balance achievement within a narrow and paradoxical criterion while keeping their talent's engagement intact within a highly dynamic and volatile environment.

Historically, the success of an advertising agency was the success of its advertisement's effectiveness. Under the Fordist production system logic in the American advertising industry, scientific approaches were introduced, including 'the principle of repetition' as one of the first 'laws' of effective advertising.[37] Also known as the 'hard sell', modern American advertising from the 20th century believed that campaigns needed to be direct, forceful and repetitive to lead to the desired goal of a purchase – as opposed to its counterpart of the 'soft sell'.[38] Today, such metrics have evolved into sophisticated indexes such as the Award Creativity Score (AWS) by

[35] Mark Tungate, *Adland: A Global History of Advertising* (London: Kogan Page Ltd, 2007), 39.
[36] Hackley and Kover, "The Trouble with Creatives," 75.
[37] Röling, "Small Town. Big Campaigns," 381.
[38] Fred K. Beard, "Hard-Sell 'Killers' and Soft-Sell 'Poets': Modern Advertising's Enduring Message Strategy Debate," *Journalism History* 30, no. 3 (2004): 141-142.

McKinsey digital. The AWS is based on the correlation between the number of Cannes Lion awards won (between 2001-2016); their breadth of category representations; and their consistency of awards over time, they concluded that the 'winning' firms in their top quartile were not only the most awarded, but also had superior financial performance and also ranked highly on another McKinsey index, their Innovation Performance Score, relative to their peers.[39] However, there are flaws in quantifying awards and correlating them with success, even when those awards as prestigious and respected in the cultural and creative industries as the Cannes Lions. One specific issue is the rising cost of submitting work and attending the international festival as a barrier of entry.[40] A more general issue is putting too much authority in awards for the final products created, when the actual creative process is more complicated, and talents tend to stick around the industry longer than the agency they work for.

Recently however, there is growing interest among scholars to understand what constitutes as success in these creative spaces of contradictions through the lens of culture and values. Is in these sectors that one finds labourers capable of encapsulating an individual "reflexive modernity" and autonomy through their creative work and "think the unthinkable, to be original" as Nixon and Crewe summarise.[41] This suggests a degree of autonomy that can come from within an agency to counter an overarching industry system, milieu, and recipes that it does not align with. However, as McRobbie point out through her extensive work on creative employment, this autonomy is also built atop the blurring of 'leisure' and 'work' that also results in a lifestyle and identity that becomes synonymous with creative labour.[42] On one hand, that suggests a rise in what Munoz and Shields have identified as the 'art entrepreneur' and their ability to channel their creativity towards business solutions to support their creative work.[43] But on the other hand, it can also lead to the over-prioritizing of business and management to keep an agency in operation. A 2018 Growth Report conducted by HubSpot found that among more than 1,000 agencies based in English-speaking regions (majority from the US), the biggest pain point were 'finding new clients' (60%),

[39] Marc Brodherson et al., "Creativity's Bottom Line: How winning companies turn creativity into business value and growth," *McKinsey Digital,* June 16, 2017.
[40] Noor Fathima Warsia, "Concerns at the Cannes Lions," *Business World,* July 8, 2017.
[41] Nixon and Crewe, "Pleasure at Work?," 130-131.
[42] McRobbie, *Be Creative,* 520.
[43] Mark Munoz and Julienne W. Shields, *Arts and Entrepreneurship,* ed. Munoz and Shields (New York: Business Expert Press, 2018): X.

and having 'not enough free time to focus on administrative tasks' (43%), with the biggest barrier to their growth goals being that they 'need more sales/or marketing' (55%) and cash flow (31%).[44]

Furthermore, the value of company culture is especially important for small and mediusm enterprises (SMEs) to standing out among larger competitors. "Success is not just about marketing differently from other companies: more daring ads, more new products, more aggressive use of Twitter and Facebook. It is also, and perhaps more important, about caring more than other companies — about customers, about colleagues, about how the organization conducts itself in a world with endless opportunities to cut corners and compromise on values."[45] However, as Taylor argued with the example of the company USAA, large companies can also benefit from having a quality brand culture. The ability for a firm to establish a strong personal connection between the employees and their work, provides motivation to do good work, as well as come up with innovations.

Beyond agencies, the success of the advertising industry also speaks of the scaled need to collaborate to preserve the existence of the industry. The 'death of advertising' is a recurring theme in its history, which suggests how often the industry feels it is at the brink of its own demise with every technological and economic change. First it was television, then it was the Internet. Now it is social media, user-generated content, big data, and AI. Seen at this level and perspective, success of advertising as an industry, is its ability to evolve and adapt itself, changing job titles, merging similar departments, expanding its services offerings, and abandoning outdated processes, all while keeping as much of its existing infrastructure and resources intact. Advertising never dies. It is constantly in a cycle of creative destruction to meet the next level of media complexity as the intermediary between consumers and those seeking their attention.

2.6 Combining Theories Across Disciplines

What do these different theories tell us about the context from which an agency's success should be evaluated? Research on urban innovation clusters illuminate how geographic proximity aids knowledge transfer and encourages innovation, but this also makes these spaces

[44] Timothy Dearlove, Mimi An, and Sarah Williams, "Marketing Agency Growth Report 2018," Hubspot Partner Publication.
[45] Bill Taylor, "Brand is Culture, Culture is Brand," *Harvard Business Re/view*, September 27, 2010.

simultaneously more collaborative and competitive. Meanwhile, the history of advertising's evolution gives attention to the role spontaneity, personalities, and the occasional 'stroke of genius' plays in why some agencies rise – even if it's as response against established ways of working like the third wave breakaway from Fordist and neo-Fordist advertising processes. The theories of agglomeration and local economies is not sufficient to explain the individual success of agencies, and the focus on founders' role is also too narrow in scope within an industry where other industry stakeholders have influence. This kind of social capital is particularly valuable in clusters with deep roots in institutional thickness like Adland. Finally, a range of research seeking to better understand the relationship between creativity and business within the recent categories of 'cultural and creative industries' and 'creative economies', acknowledge the timeless tensions and adaptations both undergo depending on a given situation, while also expanding frameworks in assessing value of creativity.

As for success, the project ecology plays a big role in articulating the art and science of successful advertising. Despite the never-ending debates it encompasses across generations and regions, having them is crucial to the survival of the advertising industry and its ability to legitimize its value as a business service in marketing. The question is whether this self-preservation of an industry must always be at the expense of perpetuating the tensions between creativity and business. If not, perhaps another framework to understand success despite this paradox is necessary.

CHAPTER 3 | A LEGACY BRAND FRAMEWORK FOR HISTORIOGRAPHY AND SUCCESS EVALUATION

"Like a creative idea in advertising, a company is successful through an extremely complex confluence of circumstance, conditions and time."

– Faris Yakob[46]

The previous chapter introduced some of the key theories to consider when contextualising the environment from which Naked Communications emerged in 2000 and how its success should be evaluated retrospectively within the greater ongoing developments of the dynamic, global advertising industry. This chapter explains how a mixed methods approach informs the creation of a framework to answer the research question. Again, this question asks: *what made Naked successful despite its business failure?* To answer this question, two things will be provided: a history of Naked's rise and fall in context with the history of agency innovations, and an evaluation of what constitutes Naked's defining legacy as a successful agency. Both this historiography and analysis draws from the same sources introduced as the mixed methods in the introduction of this thesis, but they are applied in different ways. Both draw from the interviews and survey with ex-Naked people; the database of all *Campaign* and other news articles written about Naked; and other sources that cover Naked at different stages of its business history, but the theories set the focus for the historiography, while it drives the analysis of Naked's success. The purpose of having a framework is not to limit nor customize the research around Naked, but rather the opposite. As the quote by Yakob illuminates on the importance of context in assessing success, this framework provides an atemporal lexicon to articulate history, make direct analyses, and provide a means to better organize those 'confluences of circumstance, conditions, and time' unique to what an agency lives through.

Naked Communications was an innovative agency whose growth from 2000 to 2010 captured the fourth wave spirit of the global industry as well as the local milieu of Adland where it originated from. The Adland bible recognises Naked as one of the UK's twenty best agencies in

[46] Faris Yakob, interview with author, February 13, 2020.

the last fifty years, putting it in the ranks of other influential agencies that defined British advertising and introduced core processes like account planning to the global industry.[47] Being 'best' according to *Campaign*, had less to do with success by revenue and longevity (five of these agencies are no longer in operation in London), but more to do with its influence to the local industry over time. Unfortunately, this article did not have a consistent framework explaining why those twenty agencies specifically, but it inspired the design of one based on its general logic of acknowledgements, which included legendary personalities, memorable works, and a clear influence on other agencies via its knowledge transfer and legacy.

3.1 The Legacy Brands Framework

Defillippi et al. introduced the three overlapping industry activities (its milieu, system, and recipes) that make up the culture of its local industry cluster, with Adland as an example. How industry activities develop and subsequently influence each other over time inform the clusters' dynamic values, all atop the inseparable convergence of creativity and management, which also adapts with time. These values are broadly shaped by four key stakeholders that form the commercial and knowledge-transferring networks within an advertising cluster: clients, competitors, talents, and insider. Among the power these stakeholders have is how they value both the busines and creative reputations and performances of agencies in their own ways. Clients determine which agencies to work with. Competitors determine which agencies to compete or collaborate with. Talents determine which agencies are coveted to work for. And insiders, like *Campaign* magazine, determine which agencies are talked about and why. Annual award programs like *Campaign's* prestigious Media Week Awards in London, and the Cannes Lions, are two examples among many that encapsulate how stakeholders converge in distinguishing exemplary creative outputs.

Agencies enter and operate within this network of stakeholder values. The pros of accessing the stakeholders' inputs and resources outweigh the costs of operating outside a geographical cluster, despite the advances in technologies enabling remote work. Agencies depend on these stakeholders to operate and innovate, but agencies also introduce their own values relative to their expected performance and desired reputation. Broadly, an agency's performance and

[47] "The 20 Best Agencies of All Time," *Campaign,* October 4, 2018.

reputation are manifested and identifiable through its positioning, process, people, place, and purpose, or the 5P's.[48] ***Positioning*** refers to how an agency is compared with other agencies and its relative prestige based on its performance and reputation. ***Process*** refers to what an agency's services and approaches are. ***People*** refers to who works for an agency that forms its company culture. ***Place*** refers to where an agency manages to expand its operations. Finally, ***purpose*** refers to why an agency was founded and what its aims are within in the industry.

How these five agency values interact with those of a cluster's four stakeholders is summarized in Figure 4. These stakeholders and agency values are not new concepts, but their interaction have become more important within the creative economy context. This context increases the value of creativity within an industry cluster and how its quality in performance and reputation are conceptualized and measured. Managing these relationships becomes a crucial element for an agency's success, not only in real-time for its performance and reputation, but also in hindsight in shaping the local industry's values. Even the successful performance and reputation of an agency that is no longer in operation or have lost its original name as a result of a merger or acquisition, like Collett Dickenson Pearce, continues to have substantial influence in Adland because of its tangible and intangible legacies. The tangible legacies include how these five agencies values are transferred and applied by former employees who continue to work within the industry cluster and global network. The intangible legacies include the agency's general influence in shaping a generation of stakeholders who subsequently impact the values of incumbent and new agencies, whether they are competitors incorporating their rivals' processes to improve their service offerings, or talents taking what they've learned at the agency to start their own independent firm.

[48] I took inspiration from Sasser and Krowlow's categorisation of 'advertising creativity' along 3Ps (people, process, place), adding positioning to add the element of perception and judgement onto creativity.

FIG. 4 | AGENCIES AS LEGACY BRANDS FRAMEWORK

		Stakeholders in Advertising Cluster			
		Clients	Competitors	Talents	Insiders*
Agency Values	Positioning	How an agency ranks among other agencies; its relevance and value to achieving the client's project.	How the agency compares to its agency; whether the agency is deemed a threat; opportunity to partner, merge with, or acquire.	How prestigious the agency is as a place to work and develop skills.	How to narrate the agency's standing among other agencies and relative to the industry's history; what about the agency is worth telling (awards, accounts won/loss)
	Process	What the agency offers as a service worth investing in to achieve its goals.	What the agency claims to offer differently or better to clients.	What system the agency operates in to develop skills and foster creativity.	What does the agency claim to do, and how this compare with other agencies past and present.
	People	Who to work with and the culture to expect.	Who they are competing against and can collaborate with.	Who makes up the company culture and who their colleagues are.	Who makes up the agency's culture and its main personalities.
	Place	Where the agency's resources are located and dispersed that aligns with its goals.	Where the agency is located for possible collaboration and likelihood of competition.	Where work is done and where its global network touches.	Where the agency decides to locate and its influence across its global network.
	Purpose	Why the agency exists.	Why the agency claims to be different.	Why the agency is a meaningful place to work in advertising.	Why the agency is valuable for the industry at large.

**Depending on the local advertising industry, this stakeholder of insiders (usually the press) may not be large enough nor existent to be an influential stakeholder in valuing an agency's brand.*

CHAPTER 4 | THE HISTORY OF NAKED COMMUNICATIONS IN CONTEXT

This section provides a historical overview of how agencies evolved across distinct waves within project-based ecologies, and where Naked Communications fits in. Having provided the legacy brand framework as a guide to bridge theories and anchor history in the previous chapter, the historiography in this chapter focuses on how industry stakeholders (clients, competitors, talents, and insiders) and agency values (positioning, process, place, people, and purpose) shape one another in the overall development of Adland's project ecology culture. This ecology shaped the emergence of Naked as much as Naked ultimately shaped Adland and clusters overseas, particularly in Australia. Although Naked was not referenced as a sample of one of the influential agencies from the fourth wave in Röling's typology, Naked shares in its cohorts' characteristics, and imparted a unique influence of its own by its creative and business success in introducing communications strategy to the advertising mix – even after the closing of its original London office in 2017.

As waves occur frequently and much can happen within advertising history, the historiography of Naked is broken into six parts. The first two parts provide a brief, historical overview of how the advertising project ecology developed, first out of Mad. Ave in the 20th century, then out of Soho from the 1960s onward. The remaining four parts take over the history of advertising from 2000 to 2019 from the perspective of Naked Communications' rise and fall, with each part representing a thematic phase in Naked's developments and its key events.

4.1 BEFORE ADLAND

The first cluster of the global advertising industry originated in New York, operating under a Fordist logic and the creation of the consumer alongside the science of marketing. Since the 1920s, modern American advertising methods of the 'hard sell' and market research dominated industry practices.[49] The urban environment was integral in bringing stakeholders of advertising together that would evolve into the famed 'Mad. Ave' capital of modern advertising in the 1950s,

[49] Röling, "Small Town, Big Campaigns," 831.

a Golden Age of advertising in the United States that included American globalisation via horizontal acquisition overseas.

After the founding of N.W. Ayer & Son, the world's first 'full-service agency' in 1869, a new generation of American advertising was built around the proto-creative department, led by the synergy of copywriters and artists who were often first or second-generation European immigrants. The public sensation over specific print advertisement designs, such as Leyendecker's illustration for Arrow Collars and Shirts on behalf of Calkins & Holden, set the tone around a competition of creativity between agencies, and clients seeking to beat their own competitors with more visually appealing ads. Successful performance and reputation of agencies were always subject to the scrutiny of insiders and competitors, which drove agency innovations in processes to gain market share as a key way to position themselves better from other agencies. Claude Hopkins, a journalist by training turned copywriter, believed strongly in research informing the creative process and products. Like Albert Lasker, the boss who spotted him and someone who is widely seen by historians as the 'true father of modern advertising', Hopkins believed that modern advertising in the 20th century needed efficient management and close oversight of its impact on clients' sales, not just creativity by way of captivating copy and illustrations. After the Great Depression, Young & Rubicam (Y&R) emerged with the tagline, 'ideas founded on facts', with the self-identified purpose of offering creative services informed by market research methods led by the likes of Dr. George Gallup, who the American national public polling organisation is named after. Raymond Rubicam believed scientific methods went hand in hand with the creation of entertaining and persuasive ads.

This purpose was shared by an admirer named David Ogilvy, who travelled from Great Britain to the United States to learn about advertising on behalf of a British ad agency, only to stay indefinitely. Ogilvy modelled the value of 'people' with his personality, charming stakeholders to his 'British advertising agency in New York,' which opened in 1948. Ogilvy knew how to brand himself, using his 'Britishness' and accent effectively to position himself and his agency from others, and he knew how to apply it in his advertising process through the creation of iconic personalities like 'the man in the Hathaway shirt'. Despite the wit behind his work, Ogilvy ironically did not want advertising to become more creative, but a more respectable profession against the backdrop of an increasingly concerned public over how the ads flooding their television

screens were manipulating their purchase decisions, especially after the publication of Vance Packard's bestselling book, *The Hidden Persuaders*.[50]

Throughout the 20th century, American advertising evolved rapidly. On one hand, new agencies continued to emerge because of frustrated veteran creatives wanting to approach the creative advertising processes differently, but on the other, mergers and global office expansions became increasingly popular means to establish competitive advantage. New agency start-ups often touted its independence and leadership of creativity by appealing to dissatisfied talents and clients, whereas the latter wanted to capitalize further on their creative empire with better account management, overseas market resources, and the manpower to service creative output as efficiently as possible. Both aspired to be successful in the advertising, but their purposes diverged.

4.2 'THE BRIT PACK' SWINGS IN (1960S-1990S)

The Americans brought advertising to Great Britain, but the second wave sowed the seeds of the British advertising tradition and London as a leading advertising city. After World War 2, the first wave of American competitors acquired British firms from the late 1950s to 1970s, driven by their MNC clients. By 1970, American agency competitors accounted for 42% of declared billings out of British agencies and 86% by 1972.[51] Beyond this accounting however, American domination of European advertising was in decline, as 'a new creative élan' of young and creative entrepreneurs, particularly from Paris and London, were emerging in the 1960s with a strong desire to counter the dreariness and seriousness of American 'hard sell' advertising tactics.[52] The 'Brit pack' that broke away from American agencies to start their own hot shops transformed seedy Soho into 'the Village' – the centre of gravity for the Golden Age of British advertising.[53] This creative revolution was greatly influence by the cultural revolution of 1960s-70s 'Swinging London'. Second-wave British advertising's hallmarks of British humour and personality-led 'soft sell' tactics emerged alongside The Rolling Stones, David Bowie, Vivienne Westwood, and Monty Python, all reflecting the diverging consumer tastes and rise of coloured television in post-war

[50] Tungate, *Adland*, 46.
[51] Lash and Urry, *Economies and Signs and Space*, 22.
[52] Röling, "Small Town, Big Campaigns," 832.
[53] Tungate, *Adland*, 79-97.

Great Britain.[54] Adland, for its early adoption of American, Fordist, and corporate advertising from the 20th century, was never without its inseparably rebellious and punkish tendencies as each successive wave would reveal.

The second wave of British advertising saw the founding of Saatchi & Saatchi, Loew, and Boase Massimi Pollit (BMP) as some of the 'best examples' from London.[55] Collett Dickenson Pearce (CDP), founded in 1960, is also worth mentioning from this wave as it is a favourite among Adland insiders like *Campaign* and the HAT for the generation of creatives and planners it trained, and who have gone on to become leading advertisers in Adland's third and fourth waves. The competition and collaboration between second-wave agencies against the backdrop of technological and consumer shifts as well as national pride to differentiate from American advertising, led to innovations in processes like account planning and media planning – neo-Fordist British additions to the global industry in the mid-1960s. J. Walter Thompson's London-based agency and BMP turned the role of the advertising planner into a department-wide process but diverged in their ideologies. Despite their differences, their process innovations had a profound impact on changing the project ecology of Adland. As consumer choice for media skyrocketed into the swinging 1970s and 'pinning them down' became more challenging for advertisers, the gap between account planning and media planning widened, to the extent that the latter split from being a department within full-service advertising agencies to becoming independent media agencies.[56] This split contributed to the start of the third wave in Adland. The service of buying media divorced from full-service ad agencies, leaving ad agencies to shift their focus more towards their creative output, strategy offerings, and how to build collaborations with their new media agency competitors per project. The project ecology was fragmenting away clients interfacing with agencies expecting everything under one roof.

Fuelling the rise of third-wave, independent media agencies in the 1980s was the clients' preference for more cost-saving media options compared with buying them through a full-service agency's media department. These new, media independents actively tried to bolster their positioning for clients and among their competitors by investing in the measurability of media and

[54] Röling, "Small Town, Big Campaigns," 832-833.
[55] Ibid, 833.
[56] Collin, Will. "The interface between account planning and media planning: a practitioner perspective," *Emerald Intelligence and Planning,* 441.

building the discipline of media strategy to move further 'upstream' in the advertising value chain. Increasingly, media planners became more like account planners, but because the former had separated from the ad agencies, its services around media buying, research, and strategy stopped short on providing their clients with creative outputs.[57] Meanwhile, Adland's stakeholders had grown accustomed to the media planning vs. account planning divide, for better or for worse. As the site of this highly influential process innovation and a major benefactor of FDI from American GNAAs, "London's burgeoning creativity was inspiring Madison Avenue" and not the other way around.[58] Röling notes that it was the third wave that turned London into a leading global advertising centre.[59] Since 1978, total ad spending in the UK ballooned by 315%.[60] The formerly dodgy, red-lit streets of Soho had become the backdrop for "the Porsche-driving, champagne-drinking, coke-snorting image of 1980s advertising," wrote a journalist for *Independent.*[61]

The start of Röling's fourth wave in 1995 fittingly saw the internal coup of the Saatchi brothers from their lucrative agency empire, and a fresh cohort of new agencies with unconventional names (for the time), like Mother, Karmarama, and St. Luke's – the latter named after the patron saint of artists – that broke from the founders' surname naming convention.[62] Many of these fourth-wave agency founders built their careers as colleagues during Adland's Golden Age, sharing friendships, mentors, and practices, as well as developing strong creative and client networks for their independent agencies. Frank Lowe, the managing director of second-wave agency, CDP, and founder of Lowe Howard-Spink (est. 1981) is remembered by *Campaign* as having "singlehandedly cajoled a whole generation of writers, art directors, and film directors into revolutionising British and world advertising."[63] Fourth-wave agencies shared a common interest to break away from another project ecology culture that had developed by the 1990s: the widening gap between 'suits' and 'creatives'.

This gap resulted partly because Adland become more lucrative from the infamous dotcom 'gold rush', and partly because of the physical separation of media and creative departments into

[57] Ibid. 442-43.
[58] Tungate, *Adland,* 99.
[59] Röling, "Small Town, Big Campaigns," 832-33.
[60] Tungate, *Adland,* 100.
[61] Stephen Bayley, "Good-Bye to All That," *The Independent,* December 22, 1996.
[62] Vicki Maguire, "*The Evolution of Ad Agency Names," Campaign,* September 24, 2018.
[63] "The 20 Best Agencies of All Time," *Campaign,* October 4, 2018.

independent agencies. The dotcom boom poured huge amounts of venture capital spending into advertising very quickly in the late 1990s, with over 15 billion towards Adland alone. This led to big advertisements being churned out quickly to sell the services of these new dotcom companies. Few of these ads were creative and effective, as little was spent on the development and engagement of dotcom brands with consumers still adapting to the Internet and the value of online-based services. Creativity was subordinate to servicing the huge advertising budgets to largely unprofitable companies. Additionally, the separation of media and advertising agencies, while giving clients more specialised options to pick from per project, also made the creative process more inefficient and duller for many agency talents. After the dotcom bubble bust in 1999, the global advertising industry was rocked by two resounding lessons: that more temperance was needed in general to produce great advertising, and that despite the many dotcom failures, the Internet was going to revolutionize the advertising equation forever.[64] Fourth-wave agency independents entered this context, hoping to offer something different than all the previous waves, and they had no intentions of returning every department back under one full-service roof.

Adland's 'Agency of the Decade' for the noughties was awarded by *Campaign* to the 'hot shop everyone wanted to emulate': Howell Henry Chadecott & Lury (HCCL). In addition to their iconic, "you know when you've been Tango'd" advertisements, HCCL was recognised for challenging the divide between 'suits' and 'creatives' by fashioning their whole team as 'professional radicals' and upholding the belief that creative ideas could come from any of their employees hot-desking around in their open floor plan. Despite their acquisition by advertising conglomerate WPP in 1997, HCCL had two defining influences from their new take on creativity within advertising: process innovations such as '3D Marketing' (now called 360 Degree Marketing), and inspiration for more fourth-wave agencies to follow and continue in their footsteps. One of these agencies was Mother an independent advertising agency founded in 1996, where everyone was a 'strategist'. Mother's ability to service multinational clients despite opting for a low-key profile with their operation in Clerkenwell instead of Soho, and having a small global network compared to their GNAA competitors, reflected changes among Adland's clinets, according to Tungate. "Many senior positions are now occupied by a younger, more creative generation with an instinctive grasp

[64] Tungate, *Adland*, 215.

of popular culture. Putting themselves in the shoes of the consumer, they are looking for advertising that is warm and engaging rather than bombastic and over-branded."[65]

4.3 NAKED PUNKS AND THEIR BATTLE CRY FOR 'MEDIA NEUTRALITY' (2000-2005)

"Naked didn't just launch, it exploded on to the UK advertising scene.
It was irreverent, maverick, creative, and above all, pulsatingly energetic."

– Stef Calcraft, partner of Mother.[66]

Naked Communications was founded as an independent, communications consultancy in August 2000 by three friends and former senior-level strategists from New PHD, an independent media agency founded ten years earlier. While New PHD brought the trio of John Harlow, Jon Wilkins, and Will Collin together, their individual career trajectories, up to the point where their paths crossed, reflect the volatility talents experienced in Adland's dynamic project ecology within only four decades of its rapid development. Collin and Wilkins worked together as account planners from second-wave agency BMP, and Harlow led PHD's third-wave agency spinoff, Rocket, shortly after his former employer, Abbott Mead Vickers merged with PHD. As part of the fourth wave, Naked was as independent its cohort, but at the time, its bold, declarative breakaway from both the account and media planning disciplines stirred Adland to wonder if signs of the fourth wave had indeed, finally arrived.[67] With initial financial backing from Mother, Naked also aimed to carve a niche out of 'communications strategy' that was neither confined by the limitations of a creative ad agency context nor one of a media agency. Naked wanted "to provide creative media thinking to all leading creative service points, in advertising and beyond," told Harlow to *Campaign,* one month before the three set up shop aboard an office on the former military vessel, HMS President on the River Thames.[68] The move literally positioned Naked away from Soho's centre of gravity and figuratively as something completely different for difference's sake. "We really didn't care too much about success; we just wanted to change the industry,

[65] Tungate, *Adland,* 206.
[66] "Industry salutes a 'brilliant misfit'," *Campaign,* August 15, 2013.
[67] Alasdair Reid, "Media Forum: New agencies claim to remake the media model – is the launch of Naked proof that there really is a fourth wave?," *Campaign,* July 13, 2000.
[68] Anna Griffiths, "Top New PDH Staff in Breakaway Move," *Campaign,* July 7, 2000.

highlight the injustice, shine a light on the bias and stupidity, set fire to the blandness of it all and be the true agitant of the advertising market," recalled Wilkins in 2013.[69] And what a battle-cry it was.

Naked 'exploded' onto the advertising scene because its bold claim to offer a new agency model, process, and purpose was immediately met with unprecedented business and creative success from a diversity of clients. In its first eight months, Naked won £15-£20 million worth of businesses, beating out a range of competitors, including Michaelides & Bednash – the first agency to offer communications strategy exclusively – for the XY Network account.[70] Within its first three years, Naked had won high-profile accounts for major brands including Reebok, Honda, Campbell's Soup, Sony PlayStation, and the Tate Modern Museum. In their explanation for why Naked was deserving of being its 'Agency of the Year' in 2002, *Campaign* wrote: "…[Naked] was a breath of fresh air. The passion and dynamism of its founders has been rewarded with creative and business success. Its success is all the more impressive coming in a year of grim financials for many of the large media networks and at a time of client caution because of tough market conditions. Naked's work for big clients such as Honda and the former marketing and communications agency for the British government, Central Office of Information (COI), demonstrated it is more than a conjuror of cheap washroom stunts. It fights for great ideas and implements them equally well."[71] Naked, the underdog, wound up winning Media Week's 'agency of year' for four years straight, with its last year met with "resounding 'boos'" (Wilkins) and an outright ban from re-entering altogether on the behest of their competitors.[72] [73]

Clients were attracted to Naked's call for 'media neutrality' and their claim that clients were being sold biased solutions from media agencies because they were predisposed to sell the most lucrative channel deals – "it's like asking a butcher what advice on what you should have for dinner."[74] Some clients, like Peter Buchanan, then Director of Marketing Communications at COI, welcomed fourth-wave agencies like Naked and Unity in Adland because they represented the leadership of industry veterans trying to improve working relations throughout the fragmented

[69] Jon Wilkins, "We were the punks of the agency world," *Campaign,* August 22, 2013.
[70] Media Week, "Naked secures strategy account for XY Network," *Campaign*, March 16, 2001.
[71] "Top Performers of 2002: Media Agency of the Year – Naked," *Campaign,* January 10, 2003.
[72] Jon Wilkins, "We were the punks of the agency world," *Campaign,* August 22, 2013.
[73] Faris Yakob, interview with author, 2020.
[74] Jon Wilkins and Will Collins, written interview with author, February 10, 2020.

project ecology: “These agencies want direct relations with clients where they are equal partners with the creative agency. They find communications planning much wider and more exciting than traditional agencies.”[75] Other clients resonated with the fresh perspective Naked offered because it reflected the changes in the media landscape at the time. “We were searching for a company like Naked, people who could bring us something extra. We liked their ideas, enthusiasm and understanding of the challenges we face,” said then Director of Communications, Lisa Tomkins, from Hutchinson 3G on the appointment of Naked to its direct marketing assignment to launch their new product in 2002.[76]

Naked was often appointed to work with other agencies for a client’s brief, and in this role, further developed its positioning as a complementary collaborator, particularly with creative agencies. With Naked’s creative performance and reputation centred around new ideas beyond standard advertising media channels, creative agencies could bring them to life. The first five years of Naked saw the launch of several joint ventures with creative agencies, usually out of a desire to gain more business and exchange knowledge together. For example, together with Clemmow Hornby Inge (CHI), a creative agency that Naked collaborated in multiple projects with prior, Naked Inside was created in November 2002, as an additional arm within CHI where their creative processes would begin with Naked’s media-neutral planning methods. On the flip side, Naked’s success in attracting clients and collaborations with creative agencies, also met with intense competition, particularly from media agencies like Manning Gottlieb OMD, who pushed back against Naked’s specialism by pointing out its limitations in media buying and creative output in 2003. “Just about everyone in town has been toying with the notion of launching their own Naked-style unit,” observed *Campaign* insider Alasdair Reid. “Me-too Nakedness is often a defensive measure. Which, if nothing else, continues to be flattering stuff for Naked itself, doesn’t it?”[77]

In tandem with Naked’s serious proposition to Adland was also its self-fashioned identity as ‘brilliant misfits’. This agency persona was embodied in Naked people’s casual dress over business attire, their pride in each individuals’ creative hobbies ranging from DJing to fashion, and their ‘delightfully kitsch’ interiors of their converted factory office relocated to Clerkenwell by

[75] Ian Darby, “Death of the Media Agency,” *Campaign,* August 17, 2001.
[76] “Hutchison appoints Naked to roster for 3G telecoms launch,” *Campaign,* March 22, 2002.
[77] Alasdair Reid,“Behind the Hype: Manning Gottlieb expands to planning specialism,” *Campaign,* November 7, 2003.

2003.[78] This persona stuck with the press, amused clients, made a few competitors' eyes roll, but most importantly, attracted likeminded creative talents to join and support Naked's approach and culture. Faris Yakob recalled his motivations for joining Naked in 2004: "The whole industry seemed dull and I wanted to just kick it...I think a lot of us felt that way. We were frustrated in various aspects and we thought maybe it was an opportunity to try and radically course-correct."[79] Naked offered a flat organisational structure where everyone had the same title as 'strategists', new recruits could sit directly across from the founders, and hires without advertising backgrounds were welcomed. These features were attractive to talents across different disciplines in Adland and beyond, and after its first few year in operations, Naked hired new strategists from various management backgrounds, including Saatchi & Saatchi, Mindshare, and Beyond Interactive, and Deloitte.[80] [81] Naked's first formal hierarchy was imposed with the promotion of several employees into new leadership roles in management, innovation, insights, and strategy, such as Amelia Torode becoming Naked's first Director of Strategists in 2005 and Yakob becoming the Global Head of Digital, per his hobby-turned-expertise about the Internet.[82] [83]

These promotions and restructuring freed up the founders to focus on Naked's positioning within Adland and beyond. The 'brilliant misfits' had global ambitions to revolutionize the advertising industry with their process innovation. "Ideas should be strong enough to live in any channel," argued Harlow, who also criticized advertising agency business models for being too 'producer centric' and limited as a result.[84] Naked boldly declared that its vision was to "become the acknowledged leader in creating communications solutions globally." Some critics found Naked's proposition to be 'vain and ridiculous', but Naked's successful appointment alongside Mother on Coca Cola's marketing account to address declining sales in the UK, and the creation of the APG Creative Planning Awards to recognize the planner as the creator of ideas in 2005, Naked's critics were eating their words. Competitors like PHD and AMV BBDO came together to create Lunar in an attempt to bring media and creative together, and Ivan Pollard, the co-founder

[78] "DIARY: Naked chooses home comforts over chrome in refurbished offices," *Campaign,* March 3, 2003.
[79] Yakob, interview, 2020.
[80] "Hotline: Appointments at Naked Communications," *Campaign,* September 14, 2001.
[81] Ian Darby, "Naked hires Banaie and Dudley to boost accounts and deals," *Campaign,* May 22, 2003.
[82] Amelia Torode, interview with author, February 13, 2020.
[83] Yakob, interview, 2020.
[84] Media Week, "Brainwaves-Time for agencies to embrace the future of communications," *Campaign,* January 25, 2005.

of Naked's competitor, Ingram, and a former colleague of Collin and Wilkins at BMP from the early 1990s, ultimately joined Naked as its fourth partner. "Naked wasn't part of the wave. It was the new wave," a *Campaign* insider observed, but, he cautioned, Naked's ambitions were up against more than fifty years of lock-in and it was going to take more than setting up joint-ventures to change Adland's project ecology overnight.[85] On the global front, Naked's vision captivated many mid to senior level advertising professionals to join as founding partners to set up Naked in their advertising hubs. Naked opened its first international office in Amsterdam in 2003 alongside the launch of their work for a Heineken campaign, followed by Oslo and Sydney in 2004, and Paris in February 2005, through a partnership with KR Media. By the Fall of 2005, Mad. Ave. knew Naked was coming, and while critics from the original capital of advertising were quick to dismiss Naked as another group of European wunderkinds playing consultants, Danielle Sacks of *Fast Company* remarked that Naked's arrival was a clear indication that the young cohort of independent agencies since the mid-1990s were going to change the industry.[86]

Naked was part of the youngest cohort of fourth-wave specialist and independent agencies, alongside Droga5, Nitro, R/GA, Anomaly, and Crispin Porter & Bogusky. In ten years, full-service agency models fell out of fashion across the global industry, and Campaign *questioned whether media independents would survive amid the* lull' in new, full-service agencies emerging out of Adland, which media agencies relied on to purchase media for.[87] Insider, Jim Taylor, positioned Naked as the global leader in its new niche of communications planning, providing a fifty-year forecast of how advertising would evolve through this new framework.[88] Culturally, agency independents were setting the trends around Adland with their flexibility and willingness to experiment with the Internet, but their first few years were not always so fashionable. In 2005, Adland's East London scene was satirized by a British television series called *Nathan Barley*. Despite its stereotypes, Yakob admits there was some truth in *Barley's* portrayal of the 'wanky East London creative assholes' at the time. "We hid all our scooters, and we got better haircuts…we became aware of our self-awareness again and again."[89] However, while the brave

[85] Alasdair Reid, "Media Forum: Can media input aid creative?" *Campaign,* September 8, 2005.
[86] Danielle Sacks, "Is Mad. Ave. Ready to Go Naked?," *Fast Company,* October 1, 2005.
[87] Alasdair Reid, "Media Forum: Can a media start-up survive?," *Campaign,* June 24, 2005.
[88] Jim Taylor, *Space Race: An Inside View of the Future of Communications Planning* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2005), 57-70.
[89] Yakob, interview, 2020.

new world of the Internet opened fresh opportunities for young and flexible agencies to specialise and experiment, incumbent GNAAs were not going anywhere. Instead, they doubled down on understanding how they could better adapt to the legitimizing of Internet as mainstream, global consumer medium and subsequent the rise of 'branded content' as a major advertising process.[90]

4.4 NAKED GLOBAL AND THE 'ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLE' ENTERS BUMPIER RIDE IN ADLAND (2006-2009)

"When Naked and Mother got strategists in the early 2000s,
every agency in the world for the next five years had strategists."

—Faris Yakob[91]

Naked was at an upswing by the mid-2000s. With many new offices opening internationally and communications planning becoming popular as a result. Flexible and digitally savvy agency independents were winning client accounts from GNAA incumbents and forced them to restructure their media offerings, sometimes outright buying up independents to cross-sell the skills they lacked. When Tungate published his book on the global history of advertising in 2007, Naked Communications opened his final chapter on 'The Agency of the Future' because of its influential process innovation and fashioning as an 'all-terrain vehicle' against 'a territory where there is no longer any safe ground'.[92] Part of this volatile and unpredictable environment, was adapting advertising towards marketing in the digital world and navigating newer concepts like brand communications across channels, and one-to-one marketing to consumers online and on social media. While Naked's managed to traverse different markets and open 11 new global offices by 2009, the competitive landscape of Adland became bumpier for Naked's original HQ. Furthermore, and the global financial crisis withstanding, 2008 became a major turning point for the advertising industry, particularly for Adland, but especially for Naked. That year, advertising officially became a 'creative industry' in the UK, and the last British ad agency with ties to the 'high 60s', CDP, lost its name after it merged with Japanese holding company, Dentsu. Adland

[90] Tungate, *Adland,* 211.
[91] Yakob interview, 2020.
[92] Tungate, *Adland,* 259.

felt a new era was upon them, and *Campaign* captured an industry bracing for it as the global economy gradually recovered. Having agreed to an acquisition deal by the start of 2007 with Australian holding company, Photon, in exchange for more financial resources and autonomy, Naked was forced to slow its expansion and catch up with its competitors in Adland by 2009. Much of Adland had integrated communications planning into their agencies and networks by that point, but Naked was no longer its clear leader.

GNAAs adapted to the increasingly digital future by investing a lot of money into research and updating the skills in their massive network. In 2006, Publicis launched a group of 'marketing futurists' in Chicago to find new opportunities in digital marketing and paid $1.3 billion to acquire Boston-based online marketing agency, Digitas. That same year, the Interpublic group merged Draft and FCB, combining 9,000 direct marketing and traditional advertising staff together across its network of 110 countries.[93] These big industry shifts were as much a reflection of the changing consumer, as large clients changing their marketing strategies towards one-to-one marketing online and on social media. Coca-Cola, for example, wanted to overhaul their global marketing business to meet the changing media landscape, calling out for new teams of agencies to work on their briefs[94] Client spending on digital media started to outpace those in other media types, and Naked's founders adapted by entering into their second joint-venture with Fallon to integrate their strategy expertise with Fallon's digital capabilities, creating Hyper in 2006.

Naked's global ambitions continued well into 2009. The brilliant misfits achieved one of its biggest expansion milestones when they opened Naked New York in 2006, after much planning and scouting for its ideal founding partners two years prior. Former Worldwide Planning Director at Ogilvy, MT Carney, and former co-founder of Media Kitchen, Paul Woolmington, took the helms, with Neal Davies joining shortly after. Naked Buenos Aires opened briefly from 2006 to 2008 through Naked strategist Tiffany Shields. With a minority stake by Dentsu, Naked Tokyo opened the following year with the appointment of Jonny Shaw from BBH Japan and Kaz Maezawa from Nike Japan, as founding partners. That same year, Naked hired Paul Mukherjee to grow Naked's European reach, which recently added Naked Copenhagen and shortly after, Naked Stockholm, as the sixth European Naked office. Naked Auckland opened in 2008, further

[93] Tungate, *Adland*, 263.
[94] Glen Mutel, "Coca-Cola asks agencies for big idea," *Campaign*, July 29, 2005.

strengthening Naked's position in the Asia-Pacific region, with its eyes set on Singapore, China, and India.[95]

Business boomed immediately for Naked's offices in New York and Australia. Naked New York made $3 million in its first year, and Naked Australia won 'agency of the year' for three consecutive years shortly after its founding.[96] But just like in Adland, the threat of competitors also came quickly and pressured the offices to adapt. "The strategy was only proposition," recalled Adam Ferrier, one of the three founding partners of Naked Sydney and Melbourne. "The creative agencies and media agencies lifted their game in strategy, and it squeezed our positioning in the markets."[97] With autonomy to adapt the Naked brand in their local markets, Naked New York became a pure communications consultancy within the world's largest market for marketing, and Naked's Australian offices in Sydney and Melbourne integrated more creative output with their strategic offerings. In January 2009, Naked Australia shot to national fame for its controversial advertising stunt on YouTube in generating press coverage.[98] In June 2009, *Fast Company* identified Woolmington of Naked New York as one of the ten most creative people in marketing and advertising, along with those who have shaped the industry in the last fifty years.[99]

With Naked's (now four) founders investing more time and energy towards scaling Naked, a younger team of managing partners were put in place to handle Naked London's 50+ staff, as well as manage its 60+ clients and their increasingly global accounts. Niku Banaie, Geoff Gray, and Jo Pearce were internally promoted for the task, but some critics at the time were critical that 'beneath of surface' of its founders, "the talent pool [was] desperately thin".[100] Naked continued to hire more strategists to bolster their core offerings, including the appointment of Nigel Long in September 2007 to help manage Naked's global expansion and the 150 staff across its six markets. Ben Richards, who joined Naked in 2006 as a strategist after working as a management consultant, helped build Naked's 'Big Tool', which codified Naked's communications planning and strategy processes to be passed onto new strategists within London and beyond. In an effort to maintain its

[95] Ian Darby, "Naked's Jon Wilkins to move to new role in Australia," *Campaign,* June 16, 2009.
[96] "Top 100 Agencies: School Reports. (3 of 4)," *Campaign,* February 23, 2007.
[97] Adam Ferrier, interview with author, February 25, 2020.
[98] Tim Burrowes, "Naked accused of 'screwing' the industry over girl-with-the-jacket fake," *Mumbrella,* January 20, 2009.
[99] Danielle Sacks, "The 10 Most Creative People in Marketing and Advertising," *Fast Company.* June 10, 2009.
[100] Ian Darby, "Naked's next generation steps up to the plate," *Campaign,* March 10, 2006.

leading position, Naked London continued to launch new projects and strategy specialisations, including Naked Numbers in April 2007, to measure the return on investment (ROI) of their creative media thinking and Naked Ventures in October 2007, to develop content with the music and entertainment business. Naked also invested in the creation of a creative agency called ODD, which continues to operate today.

With the emergence of newer strategy start-ups, competitors improving their strategy offerings, and clients taking strategies in-house or consolidating their agency portfolios, Naked's competitive difference was greatly challenged in Adland and rumours about the death of communications planning picked up in 2006.[101] "[Naked] has always seemed vulnerable to the charge that its offering is flaky and not grounded in results," observed a *Campaign* journalist, and a series of account losses from 2006-2008 only amplified Naked's critics. For the first time, some of Naked's earlier clients pulled their business from the communications consultancy. Scottish Widow, a client from 2004, had a change of marketing management who did not see the added value of Naked's services and pulled its £15 million account in April 2006.[102] Selfridges, Honda, and Boots, the latter two having had a change in management, also dropped their accounts with Naked in from 2006 to 2007, despite Naked having made award-winning campaigns and communications improvements for them in the years prior. Specifically with Boots, which Naked worked with since 2003, the £45 million media account, was reassigned to the WPP's MediaCom, a media GNAA by August 2007.[103] Large media agencies like MediaCom, TBWA, BBH, and Lowe had adapted communications planning in some way, contrary to speculations of the end of media agencies, and Adland saw a rise in new communications consultancies, including Money, Rise, Good Stuff, and Village Green.[104] With the loss of yet another account with client 118 118, critics wondered if Naked had indeed lost its 'spark'. Naked was not the only agency struggling against the media business competition in Adland, but as the leader of its niche, it became an embodied barometer of the sector's success.

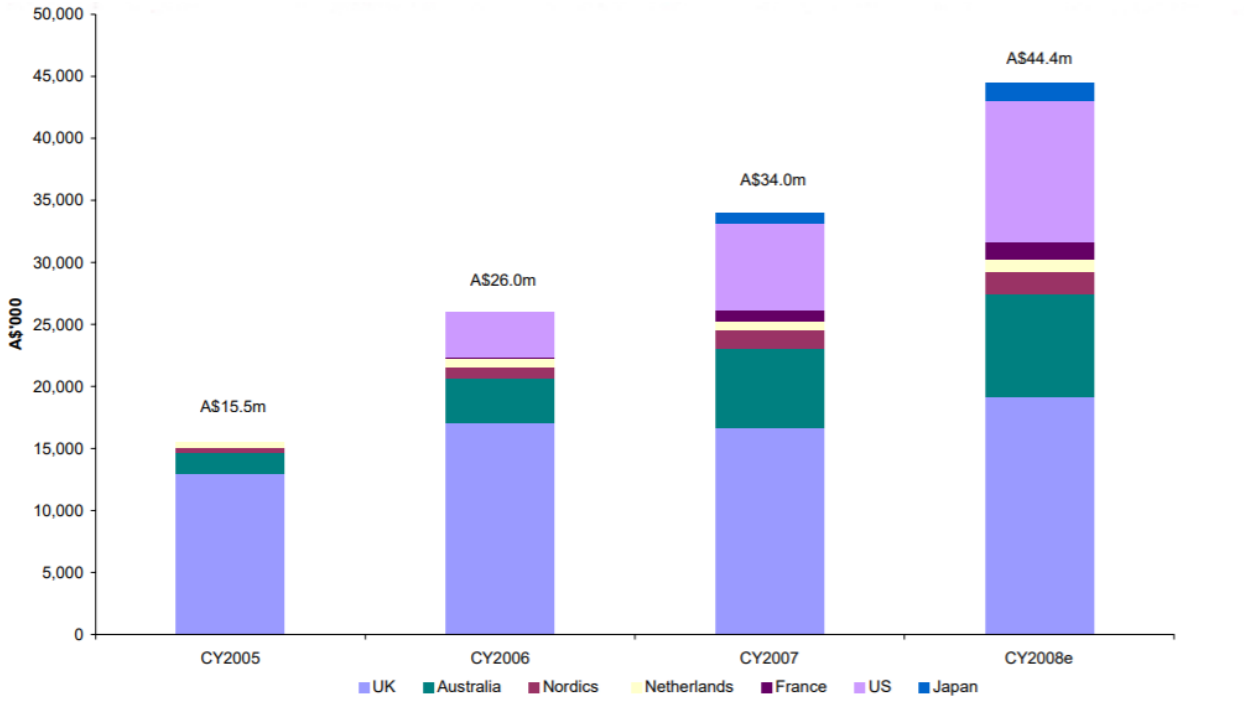
One of the side-effects of becoming an independent agency 'hot shop' in advertising, is facing the inevitable challenge of choosing between independence, a merger with another agency,

[101] Ian Darby, "Rumours of death of comms planning are greatly exaggerated," *Campaign,* July 20, 2006.
[102] Joanna Bowery, "Scottish Widows moves £15m work out of Naked," *Campaign,* April 11, 2006.
[103] Isabella Piasecka, "Boots hands £45m brief to MediaCom," *Campaign,* August 20, 2007. *Campaign.*
[104] "Media Change or Die," *Campaign,* July 5, 2007.

or an acquisition by a GNAA. Although fourth wave independent agencies proved to GNAAs that success can be achieved despite having a large network, GNAAs have historically proven that when they can't beat them, they can buy them. In April 2008, WPP acquired CHI (est. 2001) for 30 million to join into its full-service media agency, Group M, which essentially dissolved CHI's joint-venture with Naked, Naked Inside. Naked was also courted by WPP, among other GNAAs and holding companies for acquisition, but the founders initially declined because they were against having their identity taken and skills merged into one giant network. Naked's founders were not opposed to an acquisition however as they, like most independent agency founders, could also see the benefit of accessing larger resources and networks from a holding company. Thus, when an Australian marketing group called Photon came around in 2006, offering to acquire Naked while letting it keep its brand and independence, the pressure of fending off increasing competition in Adland and maintaining their young global operations, as well as the attraction of mutual interests at the time, led to Naked selling itself to Photon in February 2008 for A$ 36.7 million. According to AdBrands, "that deal was said to be less than the sum being offered by two private equity bidders, but Naked's shareholders felt Photon would be a more comfortable fit."[105] "We are attracted to Photon's model which mirrors our own culture of entrepreneurial spirit and allows our continued independence to pursue our vision, although backed by the resources of the wider group," said Long on behalf of Naked's shareholders. For Photon, the acquisition strengthened its business portfolio of companies and geographic presence to 16 countries. Based on the 16% annual growth of Naked (Figure 5), Photon expected that the debt it went into to fund its acquisition would become positive by 2009.[106] Neither expected the global recession that was to follow month later.

[105] "Naked (UK/Australia)," Adbrands, April 6, 2017.
[106] Tim Hughes and Nigel Long, "ASX/Media Release: Photon Group Acquires Naked Communications," Photon Group, February 5, 2008.

FIG. 5 | NAKED COMMUNICATIONS REVENUE IN AUS (2005-2008)



NB: Naked's historical consolidated management accounts have been converted at the current AUD:GBP cross rate for illustrative purposes only

Source: Acquisition of Naked Communications, Photon Group's Press Release (2008), p. 6.

The Photon acquisition was not supposed to change anything about Naked except further both its financial success mutually, but in hindsight, the purchase would coincide with Naked's turning point away from its original model and general decline in creative and business performance. For Collin, Naked London's 'hey day' peaked at the point of purchase.[107] "We loved [Photon] because they were maverick and weird and out there, and for a holding company, we thought we'd found a holding company with similar values," recalled Ferrier, who first met executives of the Photon Group in 2006.[108] Just a few weeks after the Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy, Naked reported 33% growth from its previous year.[109] The 'perfect storm' that followed led to a tightening of clients' marketing budgets. "Client expenditure in marketing services was being squeezed at the very same time as Photon's boom-era financial deal making

[107] Wilkins & Collin, written interview, 2020.
[108] Ferrier, interview, 2020.
[109] "The World: Sydney - Photon Group bosses reap rewards of profitability," *Campaign*, October 2, 2008.

was unravelling," recalled Collin. "[Clients] could choose to pay us for superior comms strategy, but equally they could choose not to, and carry on without our help."[110]. Naked and Photon found itself entering 2009 unable to fulfil either of each other's high expectations.

The recession brought new restrictions and opportunities to Adland. Clients increasingly prioritised their marketing spending to agencies that delivered consumer insights and cost-saving strategies over creative output and radical experiments. As a result, business reputation and performance overshadowed that of an agency's creativity. Sir Martin Sorrell, the founder and owner of WPP, further argued that the Goliaths of the industry, for their size and resources, would fare better than the Davids during this downturn.[111] Although Naked's oldest competitor, Michaelides and Bednash was acquired by media agency Mindshare in April 2009, and Naked found itself one month later working alongside Mindshare, who was assigned by Gatwick Airport to handle media planning and buying while Naked took on creative duties, this period also saw the emergence of creative agency, Adam & Eve. Co-founded by Naked's former Head of Strategist, Jon Forsyth, A&E represented another budding wave of agencies focused on digital marketing which GNAAs, with their older executives, were less nimble in adapting to. By the end of 2009, Naked's slowed growth in London pushed it further away from creative strategy and into execution, with the hiring of a new creative director, Malcolm Green, and managing director, Jane Geraghty. "The Naked team believes the change in direction is a natural progression for the agency," the *Campaign* journalist wrote shortly after Naked hired Green. "But it can't be ignored that content is a much more lucrative proposition than merely selling strategy and the agency's new Australian owner Photon is bound to be leaning on the agency to improve its profits."[112] For insiders, Naked's move was as much about magnetizing Naked's brand with new skills, as it was another indicator that communications planning had evolved and "media giants and independents have picked up their game."

Naked played a key part in driving that evolution, even if it came at the expense of being beaten by its own game in London. By the end of 2009, Naked's embodiment of communications planning, with its roots in 1960s Adland, greatly influenced the Scandinavian, Australian, and

[110] Ferrier, interview, 2020.
[111] Ian Darby, "The Rise of Media Muscle. Again," *Campaign,* April 3, 2009.
[112] Ian Darby, "Media Perspective: Naked's new get-up shows how comms planning evolved," *Campaign,* November 28, 2009.

Australian markets from the mid-2000s onward. Naked's participation in the 2009 Untitled Anonymous short-film festival is an apt metaphor of how the agency had evolved up to that point. On one hand, the 31 films Naked submitted from its 11 international offices reflected a 'global portrait of the Naked family', but on the other, it also marked another step closer that Naked took towards creative execution beyond communications strategy and planning. By the start of 2010, only three of Naked's founders remained – Harlow left quietly to take care of his alcoholism in 2009; Wilkins, the newly appointed Chairman of Naked, left to manage operations from Sydney shortly after the departure of founding partner, Mat Baxter in February 2009; and Collin and Pollard stayed in London – and they were optimistic that the 'brilliant misfits' would find their place in the new and digital decade.

4.5 NAKED TROUBLES AND TRANSITIONS (2010-2013)

In the next three years, Naked lost the control it once had in London, though its reputation continued to precede its waning creative and business performance. This was a period marked with troubles across Naked's global network, including years of weak revenue growth and major restructuring that altered Naked's original purpose and processes. This was also a period of frequent transitions among new, senior-level figures coming into Naked (14), and many going out (17). At the same time, Adland saw several former Naked employees ascend into new, senior roles across a variety of positions in the global advertising industry. Although the Photon Group narrowly managed to overcome its mountain of debt and rename itself 'Enero' to start its new chapter in 2012, Naked, which they called 'a work in progress' then, continued to see more departures – not the least of which being the untimely death of Naked's esteemed co-founder, John Harlow in August 2013. By the end of 2013, Collin was the last of Naked's original founders still working there. Under yet another round of management but a new Enero CEO, the 'new Naked' was eager to put the past behind them and start another chapter in a media landscape that had, not surprisingly changed again.

As Naked saw gradual divergences of its people and of itself from its founding identity from 2010 to 2013, the advertising industry increasingly saw convergences. By 2010, there was another rise in mergers and acquisition of agencies, partly due to the falling value of marketing

services since the 2009 recession.[113] Adland had become a "jack-of-all-trades climate" and standing out became more of a challenge for agencies. With more people flowing across agency networks globally, and the world becoming more integrated due to social media, Claire Beales, current editor of *Campaign,* argued that using an agency's billings as a 'barometer of its corporate health' was no longer representative.[114] As for the communications planning discipline, the recent wave of digital creative agencies like A&E (est. 2008) and Beta (est. 2009) was proof for some that the project ecology of Adland had moved on from when "Naked seemed to inspire the process that saw every advertising agency buying itself a media man with a scooter."[115] But PHD's creation of a communications planning unit exclusively for Unilever in January 2013, with former Naked strategist, Guy Cousins as part of the leadership, reflects how the discipline had also evolved towards greater integration in GNAAs. By 2012, it was all about "data, social [media], real-time, and content", according to Wilkins, who had become the Chair of the 360 Media Conference that year. What were once discrete disciplines with one another only five years ago – media, marketing, creative, content, and digital – have become colliding sectors in a traditionally fragmented industry.[116]

Since the recession, Photon laid low to refinance its net debt of A$450 million, so its ability to resurface debt-free by November 2011 was 'one of the corporate survival miracles of the decade.' Naked was one of the 17 out of 45 companies that stayed intact to Photon's holding group throughout these three years, which were fraught with difficult restructuring, negotiations, and restrictions.[117] At first, Photon was optimistic, predicting that it would see a 20% increase in earnings for the 2009 financial year (A$90 million) in May 2009, but by November 2010, its shares had dropped to its lowest point, and news broke that the Group could not pay back what it originally owed to some of the founders whose agencies they had bought.[118] [119] Photon received a A$100 million lifeline from UBS and Macquarie to stay afloat in August 2010, but it came with an ultimatum to reach an agreement with Naked Communications over the remaining earnout deal,

[113] Neil Shoebridge, "Photon Snaps its Wallet Shut," *The Australian Financial Review,* March 2, 2009.
[114] Claire Beales, "School Reports 2011: A-Z of agency year-end reports," *Campaign,* September 5, 2011.
[115] Ian Darby, "Media Perspective: Newest wave of ad agencies backing media can pull it off," *Campaign,* August 19, 2010.
[116] Jon Wilkins, "We need to take a 360-degree view of new media terrain," *Campaign,* May 3, 2012.
[117] Tim Burrowes, "Photon Group wipes out debts by selling field marketing and retail division for $146.5m," *Mumbrella,* November 3, 2011.
[118] "The World: Sydney - Photon predicts 20 per cent increase in earnings," *Campaign US,* May 15, 2009.
[119] Tim Burrowes, "Photon Group shares drop a third in a month," *Mumbrella,* November 5, 2010.

or sell the agency.[120] Photon did not sell Naked, but among its settlements included the merging of one of is Australian advertising agencies, Bellamy Hayden, into Naked Sydney in 2010, and Naked London with its former joint-venture-turned-digital agency, Hyper, into Hypernaked in April 2011. Steve Gatfield, who Photon appoints as the co-Chairman to join Wilkins in May 2011, later concludes in a statement to Australia's *Financial Review* that Naked's poor economic performance in 2011, particularly of its New York and London offices, were not due to Photon's debt problems, but a coincidence.[121] Meanwhile, insiders from *Campaign* argued that Naked's poor showing "weren't directly of its own making but related to the financial difficulties of its Photon parent."[122] For Wilkins, Naked made an attempt to regain control from out of New York, sometime after Photon's financial troubles mounted, but "once the control went back to Sydney and Enero, it really was the beginning of the end."[123]

Whether it was correlation or causation, the three-year refinancing period of Photon prompted a rapid series of people moves into and out of for what was once the world's leading communications consultancy in the 2000s. Particularly, Naked saw the exit of longstanding senior managers from Naked's peak years, and the replacement of top industry talent with a high turnover rate, as listed in Figure 6. Figure 6 captures some of the moves documented by industry insider sources. These moves do not share the same reasons for departure, though they all influenced this three-year period of Naked trying to move forward while their global network underwent consistent upheaval between incumbent and new management alike. For some, like Woolmington, the departure was timed with the completion of his earnout period with Photon.[124] For Naked Stockholm's founders, part of the reason was simply losing autonomy as directors of their offices within the Photon holding group structure. "A network has many advantages, but a disadvantage can sometimes be that you have to adapt to what applies throughout the network," said Svensson, who received SEK$3 million along with Falk, as part of their departure settlement from Naked.[125] For others, like Richards, Pollard, and Carney, their departures came because they were tapped to take on higher positions at another firm. "Inevitably this is a time when some

[120] Julian Lee, "Photon stays afloat with $100m lifeline," *The Sydney Herald Tribune,* August 18, 2010.
[121] Neil Shoebridge, "Photon not to blame for Naked truth," *The Australian Financial Review,* September 26, 2011.
[122] "School Reports 2011: Naked Communications," *Campaign,* September 5, 2011.
[123] Wilkins and Collin, written interview, 2020.
[124] Paul Woolmington, interview with author, February 20, 2020.
[125] Karl-Johan Byttner, "3 miljoner till Naked-ägarna," *Resumé,* May 15, 2012.

of our partner talent felt let down (not by us but by Photon)," recalled Wilkins. "We lost MT Carney who became Global Head of Marketing at Disney and also Ivan Pollard who became Global Head of Communications at Coca Cola."[126] Wilson, Ferrier, and Cresta depart after over nine years of being a 'brilliant misfits'.

FIG. 6 | NAKED COMMUNICATIONS: PEOPLE MOVES (2010-2013)

Talent	Role	Departure
Ben Richards	Director of Strategic Services	February 2010
Samantha Alonso	Head of Brand and Business	April 2010
MT Carney	Founding Partner (New York)	April 2010
Malcolm Green*	Creative Director (London)	November 2009 – April 2010
Dan Cresta	Strategy Director (London)	October 2010
Ivan Pollard	Founding Partner (London)	October 2010
Jim Thornton*	Creative Director (London)	April 2010 – May 2011
Jane Geraghty*	Managing Director (London)	November 2009 – 2011
Steve Gatfield*	Co-Chairman	May – September 2011
Phil Hayden*	CEO (Asia-Pacifc)	October 2010 – June 2012
Ornulf Johnsen	Founding Partner (Oslo)	January 2012
Paul Woolmington	Founding Partner (New York)	April 2012
Johan Falk	Founding Partner (Stockholm)	May 2012
Fredrik Svensson	Founding Partner (Stockholm)	May 2012
Guy Cousins*	Managing Director (Auckland)	January 2013
Brad Fairhead*	Managing Director (Hypernaked)	January 2013
Mike Wilson	Founding Partner (Australia)	July 2013
Richard Dunmall*	Global Chief Executive	November 2012 – September 2013
Adam Ferrier	Founding Partner (Australia)	September 2013
Jon Wilkins	Co-Founder & Co-Chairman	November 2013

**Refers to Naked talents employed after the Photon acquisition in February 2007*

The dizzying transitions of Naked people withstanding, the former communications consultancy was also trying to transition into being an 'integrated digital creative agency' during this period. Much of it was under its rebranding as Hypernaked from April 2011 to January 2013, led by the senior team of Hyper who took over the management of Naked London. From the outset, Hypernaked's new managing director, Fairhead, saw the merger as "a natural progression for both businesses, almost a happy coincidence as digital planning and execution has entered the mainstream, while Naked provides it with some extra clout." Fairhead's goal was to turn Hypernaked into an 'ideas-driven company' that could compete against the likes of Crispin Porter

[126] Wilkins and Collin, written interview, 2020.

& Bogusky (CPB).[127] Though *Campaign* journalist, Jeremy Lee, found the ambition 'laudable' at the time, Naked was grouped among CPB and other fourth-wave agency hot shops when it first opened its doors in New York just five years ago. For Collin, the creative culture had narrowed and become more conventional during this Hypernaked period. He attributed this decline to two main changes in clients: their expectations and their renumeration of Naked services. Naked's largest clients increasingly wanted 'creativity to order', rather than the creative strategies Naked was known for. Secondly, most clients paid Naked per project basis as opposed to retainer fees. Under a project-based fee, Naked London had "no wriggle room to do anything other than provide the agreed deliverables without risking that job becoming unprofitable."[128]

Incredibly, despite Photon's financial difficulties, 2010 saw the peak of Naked's global ambitions, with it reaching a peak of 15 offices in operation (see Figure B in Appendix for all offices of Naked Global). Three offices were added that year in Mumbai, Minneapolis, and Dubai, but all closed before 2013. Naked Singapore finally opened in 2011, four years after the first rumours surfaced, but the operation only lasted two years. Another Naked bucket list destination, Sao Paulo, was finally achieved in March 2012 through the leadership of rising advertising star, Fernanda, 'Fefa' Romano, who opened shop in her hometown, but it, too, was short-lived. Closing in less than one year, Naked would reach the end of its global ambitions. By 2013, Naked had seven offices on its payroll, but its most active were London, New York, Melbourne, Sydney, and Auckland.

The death of John Harlow in August 2013, followed by the return of the Naked name three months later, was a major turning point for the Naked brand. An outpour of condolences followed in remembrance of Harlow, from Adland to the Australian advertising milieu. Remembered as the ultimate brilliant misfit and Naked's very own 'Paul McCartney', Harlow's passing reinvigorated interest to reflect on Naked's legacy, especially out of Adland.[129] Under Matt Melhuish as Enero's new CEO, the 'new Naked', with its full logo redesign (Fig. 7), would no longer have its own Global CEO, but have Naked's three major hubs out of London, New York, and Australia reporting directly to him.[130] "Even after we reverted to just being Naked, the business operated as a strategy-

[127] Jeremy Lee, "The 'new-world evangelist' leading hypernaked," *Campaign,* May 12, 2011.
[128] Wilkins and Collin, written interview, 2020.
[129] Jon Wilkins, "'We were the punks of the agency world'," *Campaign,* August 22. 2013.
[130] Tim Burrowes, "Naked's global CEO Richard Dunmall departs after less than a year, restructure sees hubs reporting directly to Australia," *Mumbrella,* September 23, 2013.

and-in-house-execution agency, not the comms strategy boutique we had been at the beginning," recalled Collin, the last of Naked's original partners remaining.

FIG. 7 | NAKED COMMUNICATION LOGO REDESIGN (2013)

4.6 New Naked Directions (2014-present)

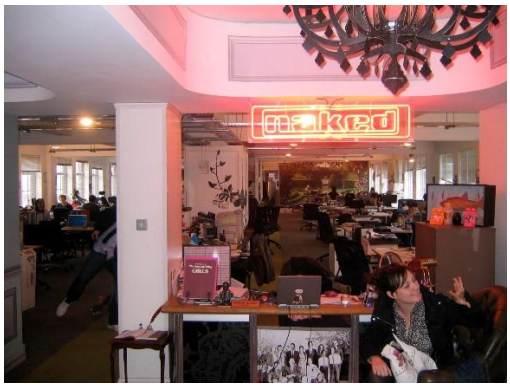
"When everyone's questioning your motives, you need a higher purpose."

– Will Collin (Naked Europe Tweet, February 23, 2016)[131]

After Harlow's death and Wilkin's departure, there was little left from the original Naked Communications except by name. Its global management was restructured by Enero in 2014, with Christian Gladwell, Troy Kelley, and Carl Ratcliff appointed as newly hired CEOs of Naked Europe, USA, and Australia, respectively. Naked's London office moved to the new, hip centre of Adland creativity in Shoreditch; the modern and minimalistic look of its new interior reflected its new logo and was the opposite to Naked's 'delightfully kitsch' interiors back in Clerkenwell (Figure 8). Apart from Naked Tokyo, which operated as an independent franchise, the remaining Naked offices reported directly to Melhuish, Enero's new CEO and co-founder of Australian ad agency also bought by Enero, BMF. Although the first two years drew in a few large clients like eBay, Desperado, and Virgin Atlantic and several fresh new faces, Naked Europe (formerly London) could not shake off its chronic turnover of senior leadership. In its last annual 'school report' by *Campaign* for 2016, Naked received its lowest rating to date (3 for 'poor' out of 9 for 'outstanding'), and the suggestion for it to "properly [draw] its battle lines in the digital world" to avoid further staff attrition.[132] After the Brexit referendum dropped Enero's earnings by 32% within six months and Naked lost its biggest account with Virgin Atlantic at the end of 2016, Enero closed Naked Europe and Naked USA in April 2017. Two years later, Enero merged Naked Australia into BMF. Naked, the agency, was no longer with Enero, leaving Naked Tokyo, as the last agency operating by name.

[131] "5 Minutes with Naked's Izzy DeBellis and Cyrus Vantoch-Wood," *Little Black Book*, 2015.
[132] "School Reports 2016: Naked Communications," *Campaign*, March 7, 2016.

FIG. 8 | NAKED LONDON OFFICE TRANSFORMATION



2008

2014

Naked's legendary positioning continued to draw in top talent like former founding partner of Berlin Cameron, Izzy DeBellis, who were willing to try and steer Naked into the 'thinkers to makers' direction that Enero outlined in its 2015 annual report. "Everyone knows Naked. They're great at thought leadership," said Cyrus Vantoch-Wood, Naked Europe's new Creative Lead in an interview. "But nobody knows what they do."[133] Although Vantoch-Wood hoped to bring out Naked's creative execution muscle in his role and was successful in leading certain projects like the promotional video Naked did for the 2015 Shots award, he ultimately left one year later because he was "not seeing a pathway to the standard agnostic work I've become known for."[134] This sentiment reflects how Gladwell described what made Naked unique in his interview to *CreativeBrief* in 2015: "Nothing. The sooner our industry stops obsessing over uniqueness and starts actually delivering results the better. I joined Naked for the same reasons I work with clients: ambition and permission."[135] In practice, channelling Naked's fresh talents in creative output towards results-led executions did not appear to bring this new generation of 'brilliant misfits' together. "Hiring for attitude became a luxury we couldn't afford," recalled Collin, who stayed

[133] "5 Minutes with Naked's Izzy DeBellis and Cyrus Vantoch-Wood," Little Black Book, 2015.
[134] James Swift, "Vantoch-Wood leaves Naked Communications," *Campaign*, October 29, 2015.
[135] "Five Minutes with Christian Gladwell, CEO of Naked Communications," Creative Brief, February 5, 2015.

with Naked until its very end. “Staff retention rates were declining: the agency began to feel more transactional and less like the family it once was.”[136]

Although Naked’s overall business was in decline, its reputation as a brand saw a revitalisation among its former employees. From 2014 to 2018, the Naked brand followed closely behind headlines and press releases announcing newly appointed global executives; founders of new independent agencies; and even top positions beyond advertising, such as Naked’s first Managing Director, Tracey DeGroose, becoming Executive Chair of Newsworks. For Ben Richards, who became the Global Strategy Officer of Ogilvy in 2014, the power of Naked’s brand was arguably stronger in 2017 when the Naked Europe office closed, rather in 2007 when the pre-Photon Naked business was at its ‘peak’ performance. Richards recalled in his interview, taking part in an unforgettable multi-agency pitch for a Coca Cola account right around the time when Naked Europe’s closed. The room was filled with mostly former Naked strategists representing their new agencies, including the client representative himself. Ivan Pollard represented the Coca Cola client, listening to pitches from Wilkins (Karmarama), Mukherjee (Anomaly), Bowers (Publicis), and Richards (Anomaly), among others. “Those are four radically different models of agencies that those Naked folks were spearheading the pitch teams for,” noted Richards. “In a way, that's almost the more interesting part of the story. The story is not that the industry is full of the fucking Naked mafia. I think the story is more than that.” Against the backdrop of the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic and Adland bracing for its impact, Jon Forsyth, “employee number six on the good ship Naked Communications” and now co-founder of his third agency, would agree: “People that are comfortable in uncharted times – the brilliant misfits out there – seem to be able to thrive faster. The same is true of agencies.”[137]

Meanwhile in Tokyo, the Naked legend continues (Figure 9). Interestingly, though it started as a franchise output in 2007, it continues to have one of the most loyal adherence and consistency with the Naked brand compared to former Naked offices. Despite Enero’s financial troubles and the cost of paying Enero to legally use the Naked name, Maezawa, Naked Tokuo’s founding partner, believes it was best to stay Naked. After Naked Australia was absorbed by BMF, Maezawa sought to buy the rights to the Naked brand from Enero and turn Naked Tokyo into an

[136] Wilkins and Collin, written interview, 2020
[137] Jon Forsyth, “Still swimming against the tide, three start-ups later,” *Campaign.* May 18, 2020.

independent agency again. Enero declined because, according to Maezawa, Enero may want to reopen an agency under the Naked name when the time was right.[138] For the time being at least, the rise and fall of Naked Communications may actually lend itself to another rebirth.

FIG. 9 | NAKED TOKYO 'ABOUT' WEBPAGE

Source: https://nakedcomms.tokyo/en/who_we_are.html (screenshot taken on February 4, 2020).

[138] Kaz Maezawa, interview with author, February 26, 2020.

CHAPTER 5 | ANALYSIS OF NAKED'S SUCCESS

As a business, Naked failed. Despite immediately winning big accounts and expanding globally, the agency did not adapt to the next wave of technological changes and recover alongside Photon's post-recession recovery to prevent the closure of its offices. But as the history of Naked's shows, there is much more beyond longevity and profit to consider evaluating its success. The global advertising industry has a tradition of professionals eventually breaking away to start their own agencies, usually after gaining several years of experience. Regardless of decade, the more successful an agency becomes, the more likely it attracts competition and propositions for acquisitions or mergers, all while raising its overall positioning positively in the industry. While business longevity is generally an important metric for success, it can be limiting to only study the oldest firms in industries with high volatility and the valuing of creativity alongside business success. Among the stakeholders of an advertising cluster, both creative and business success value reputation and performance. Historically, business performance and reputation overshadowed creativity, especially in times of crisis, but every generation of the advertising industry sees new debates, process innovations, and award programs raised to bolster the inseparable value of creativity in advertising.

There has been a myriad of ways to measure the impact of advertisements across the industry and within academia, which all affirm a historic lack of consensus on how to contextualize success in this fluid context, particularly for agencies as a unit of study. Using the legacy brands framework introduced in Chapter 3, the rest of this chapter explores how Naked was a success through its positioning, process, people, place, and purpose, relative to stakeholders in the industry, which value its positive legacy, knowledge transfer, and impact beyond its offices closures.

5.1 POSITIONING

"The brand was always ten times bigger than the business and so it had a lot of gravitas."

– Adam Ferrier[139]

Storytelling plays an important role in building the 'legends' of the advertising industry. Though the creative 'genius' and notion of a 'creative spark' have long become a myth, it doesn't mean these beliefs don't exist nor have value. Legends, be they key figures like Ogilvy and Bernbach, or agencies, are admired for their work produced for major clients.

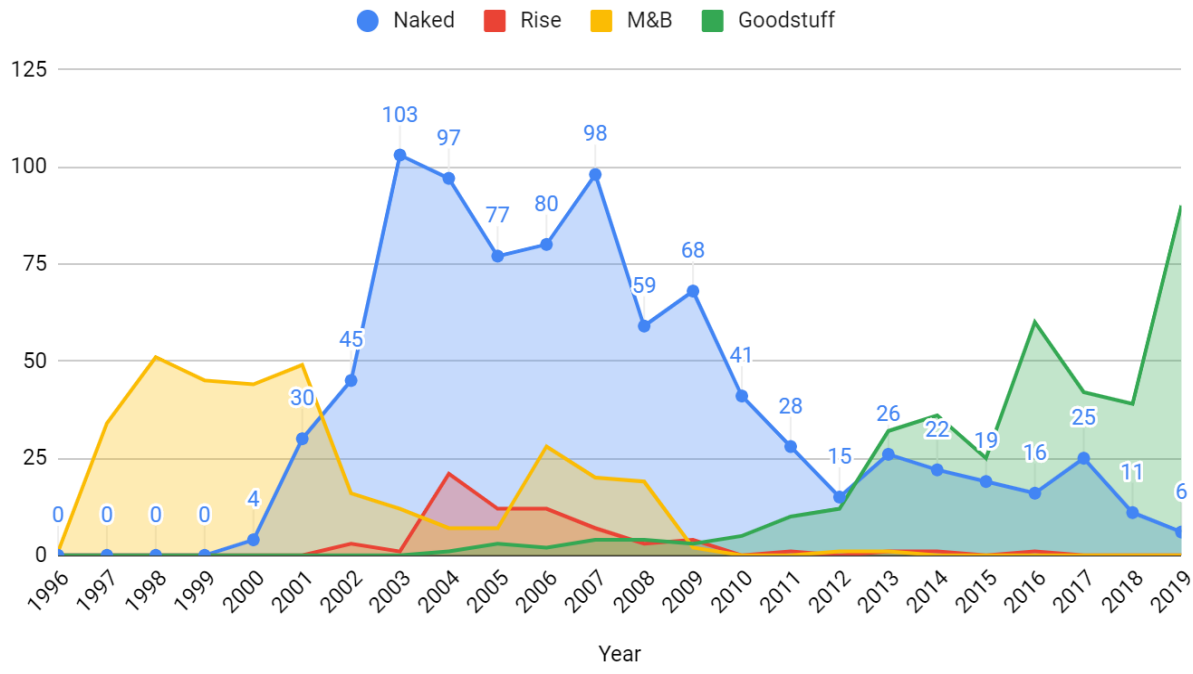
Industry insiders are invested in the market trends of a rapidly changing project ecology. Their work covering industry developments build their authority in how agencies are positioned among their competitors and carve the landscape from which clients and talents navigate for business and opportunities, respectively. *Campaign* has been the Adland 'bible' since it was founded as a print magazine in the late 1960s, and it is dedicated to covering topics on advertising, media, marketing, and other related commercial activities. Now owned by the Haymarket Media Group, *Campaign* also has overseas editions in the United States, Asia-Pacific, India, the Middle East, and Turkey. Each year, *Campaign* issues lists and special editions to evaluate agency performance (School Reports), rank top performers across categories (Annual Issue), and identify the industry's top executives (A-List) with Adland. Additionally, *Campaign* issues a series of prestigious awards each year, including the Campaign Media Awards, which recognises creativity within the media business, with categories for media planners and media agencies. As the industry evolves, so does *Campaign*, whether that is to keep up with changing creative processes, adding new award categories, or the flow of talents and clients' accounts between agencies. Thus, being acknowledged by *Campaign* is a powerful validation of existence and prestige for agencies and talents in Adland.

Campaign closely narrated the rise and fall of Naked, whose propositional thesis was clear from the start and immediately caught the attention of the magazine. Figure 10 compares the frequency that *Campaign* mentions Naked relative to some of its competitors, illustrating Naked's

[139] Ferrier, interview, 2020.

relative popularity among Adland insiders. After removing duplicates, *Campaign* mentioned Naked in 804 articles from July 2000 to June 2020. Event after Naked's London office closed in April 2017, *Campaign's* coverage of Naked continued by way of its staff ascending to notable, senior roles, or starting interesting ventures within Adland. Broadly speaking, *Campaign* saw Naked as one of the leading independent agencies from the fourth wave that forced media and advertising agencies to change through its successful championing of communications planning as the better way to serve clients and connect with consumers in the 2000s.

FIG. 10 | MENTIONS OF NAKED AND ITS RIVALS BY CAMPAIGN (1996-2019)



In the beginning, Naked's founders rejected their identity as an advertising, creative, or media agency, and they worked actively on their publicity to establish that image. "We saw ourselves as a 'creative' agency in the sense of an agency that came up with ideas, not in the usual sense of an ad factory."[140] However, in the available data of *Campaign's* annual School Reports, Naked's identity fluctuated in Adland, especially after major restructuring following its acquisition by Photon (Figure 11). This suggests that agency identity is a highly dynamic element, one put out

[140] Wilkins and Collin, written interview, 2020.

by the agency, but also constantly up for interpretations, especially as business services shift towards new market demands

FIG 9 | CAMPAIGN'S SCHOOL REPORTS FOR NAKED COMMUNICATIONS (2002-2016)

Year*	Agency Type	Company Ownership	Declared Income	Total Accounts (Accounts Won)	Accounts Lost	Staff Count	*Campaign* Rating	Naked's Rating
2016	Strategically-led Creative	Enero	N/A	15 (+6) Largest: BBVA	2 Largest: Mars Petcare	58	3	6
2015	Integrated	Enero	N/A	10 (+4) Largest: Ebay	0	55	4	7
2014	Advertising	Enero	£6.4 mil	18 (+18) Largest: Virgin Atlantic	1 Largest: Happy Egg Co.	61	6	7
2013**	Modern creative communications agency	Photon	£9.4 mil	28 (+12) Largest: JP Morgan Chase	2 Largest: Hotpoint	82	Too Early to Score	7
2011	Creative Communications	Photon	£9 mil	25 (+10) Largest: Foster's	6 Largest: Foster's	77	5	8
2009	N/A	N/A	£5 mil	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2006	Communications Planning	Private	£21.7 mil (2007)	73 (+47) Largest: Coca-Cola	2 Largest: Selfridges	74	7	8
2005	Communications Planning	Private	N/A	63 (+24)	1	55	7	8
2004	Communications Planning	Private	N/A	61 (+27)	0	46	7	N/A
2003	N/A	John Harlow (Principal), private	N/A	40 (+16)	1	35	8	N/A
2002	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	9	N/A

**Data from Campaign's School Reports did not include every year that Naked London was in operation. School report data started in 2002 and only accounted to providing their rankings. Over time, School Reports became more elaborate.*
*** The 2013 School Report of Naked rated 'Hypernaked'.*

Naked was founded out of a frustration against how things were done within Adland by the 1990s, which resonated with industry stakeholders for varying reasons. Having a bold proposition in a competitive industry that was quickly successful, represented more than just a new 'disruption', but an echoing of the industry's tradition and capacity to have people-led innovations challenge its Goliaths and outdated ways of working. Calling themselves 'Naked Communications', they broke from the generational tradition of naming their firm after the surnames of their founders, joining a cohort of new and unusually-named agency start-ups, like Mother, 72andSunny, Zenith, and StrawberryFrog.[141]

Even though Naked's success meant it had become a new challenger to the field, their rise to success is also admired and particularly well-liked by journalists of the advertising industry. Naked, in essence, represented the underdog story that one wanted to cheer on. "Naked was hot from the very beginning," recalled Collin, and the 'hype' the founders built around themselves was as strategic as their core service. Naked's founders embraced their unconventional identity as self-proclaimed 'brilliant misfits' and used personality as the complementary vehicle for their service proposition. If 'everything communicates' rather than distinct media channels where advertisements could go, then it was not just their process that communicated what the agency represented, but also the people that worked there and where they worked. Everything about Naked aligned with its founding principles.

To complement their leading position as communication planners and strategists, Naked actively put themselves out in Adland. They hosted Naked Sessions that often led to notorious party stories (as multiple interviewees shared). Senior staffers at Naked actively wrote 'thought pieces' and participated in interviews for *Campaign*, among other outlets. "They're an established way for agencies to build their reputation and raise their profile," said Collin, who continued to write well into Naked Europe's final years. Wilkins and Pollard, frequently wrote articles in *Campaign* commenting on other campaigns, gave their opinion about industry developments, and sat on judging panels for awards. Naked also explored unconventional approaches to engage the wider public, such as hosting art exhibitions in London. "As with the Naked Sessions, we treated these as both something to energise our own people, and as a profile-raising opportunity

[141] Vicki Maguire, "*The Evolution of Ad Agency Names," Campaign,* September 24, 2018.

externally."[142] In 2006, Naked published *The Book of Naked*, which laid out the agency's philosophy and beliefs, further cementing the value of its work beyond the confines of their agency.

Naked's positioning in Adland was a key to drawing in strong talents who reinforced the agency's position and work, beyond London. "Get the brand right, and the people will follow," reflected Woolmington on how he adapted Naked New York's hiring process from Naked London's 'brilliant misfit' identity.[143] Across interviews, press releases, and a survey among former Naked employees, the attraction to work at Naked boiled down to three things that the Naked brand got 'right' for them: an attractive work culture, the opportunity to approach advertising differently, and its prestige. Towards Naked's later years, prestige continued to be a strong magnet, despite internal changes in Naked's overall process and culture. In 2011, Gitanjali Sriram told *AdGully* what led her to becoming Naked Mumbai's founding partner: "I had known Naked since my Hong Kong days….I couldn't quite understand it completely, but it sounded really interesting".[144]

Naked's positioning aroused competitors to challenge the agency as well a collaborate with them. Large media agencies were quick to dismiss Naked's claims but also incorporate their own communications planning divisions, spin-offs, or recruits by 2010. In its early years, Naked's media-neutral' approach opened opportunities for creative agencies to think 'outside of the box' when most of their media agency partners encouraged them to apply their creativity within the media outlets they already sold to clients. "For many years we were a creative agency's best friend as they often felt the media agency was working against their ideas or the expansive view of how their ideas can play out."[145] Although Naked's provocative proposition ultimately left it to being eclipsed by the competitive adaptation of its competitors, it would not have influenced the change in industry processes without it.

This magnetism carried into most of Naked's oversea offices, though in varying ways, depending on the size and local culture of the market, according to Naked's first founding partners. Naked's 'hype' had a positive effect on the overall morale of Naked's employees. "Because Naked

[142] Ibid.
[143] Paul Woolmington, interview, 2020.
[144] "Naked to start India Ops. with small & tight team: Gitanjali Sriram," *AdGully*, May 19, 2010.
[145] Wilkins, written interview, 2020.

was so attention-getting, and always in the news, in some ways, it felt fun being at the centre of the [Australian] industry," recalled Ferrier, a founding partner of both Naked Sydney and Melbourne.[146] In other markets, Naked's arrival aroused a defensive response, such as in Paris and in New York City, where the former was sceptical about the impact that a foreign agency would bring, and the latter questioned if Naked could change the locked-in culture of Mad Ave. For Naked Tokyo, the brand continues to represent a counter approach and work culture not found in the Japanese advertising industry, that is worth it for the Maezawa to hold onto.[147]

It attracted strong and creative talents who immediately aligned with Naked's values and reinforced the creative media thinking the agency offered, even as the agency became an 'integrated creative communications agency'. As Woolmington, founding partner of Naked New York put it: Naked was not a hard sell for new recruits to embrace the agency and participate in building it along its values. Across interviews and testimonials by former Naked staff, Naked represented a special time and place of work and belonging. Matt Hardisty, one of Naked London's earliest recruits was "a bit of brand evangelist", recalled Wilkins. "He used soft skills to make the office environments/websites, etc. look and feel alike."[148]

Furthermore, Naked's positioning attracted major clients who were willing to try Naked's alternative approaches. "It turned out [media-neutral planning] was a more powerful way of describing Naked's service because it touched on something even more troubling for clients than the creative/media divide," said Collin. "It ignited a sense of indignation in clients that they were being taken advantage of – and we were the solution."[149] It is in this appeal to clients that Naked earned an 'unusual' seat among other agencies and the clients they served. They sat in-between all of them as the appointed 'consultants' to the clients, to manage and help execute the client's project – sometimes developing additional workshops and software when necessary.[150] "Over the years that followed, we evolved the media neutrality story to appeal to bigger, multi-national clients (often US-based) whose issues with strategic neutrality were as much caused by their internal silo structures as by their traditional agencies' biased advice. For these large clients (such as Coca-Cola and Kimberly-Clark) we described our evolved offering as Integrated Marketing

[146] Ferrier, interview, 2020.
[147] Maezawa, interview, 2020.
[148] Wilkins and Collin, written interview, 2020.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid.

Communications (IMC)."[151] Naked's service started as a response against how things were done in London, but it converged with global developments in marketing practice, such as the concept of IMC, which was taught in business schools.

Over time, Naked became a brand that developed a life of its own beyond Adland. "We were always perfectly trying to live up to [it] as a sort of promise," reflected D'Sa from the first years managing Naked's Scandinavian offices. "Which is a great feeling as well, learning about the power of brands from the inside, because most agencies don't have brands, they have names."[152] Even after as Naked's business declined from 2010 onward, its 'legend' continued, often as the source of industry gossip, criticism speculating its downfall, and praise for its influence, but also as a subject among scholars. At different phases of its developments, scholars and industry insiders wrote about Naked, which further cemented the agency in advertising history and established its influence in a rapidly changing industry. Jim Taylor, an industry insider, called Naked an exemplary agency leading the future of communications planning in 2005, and Chris Bilton, whose main research centres on management and creativity, used Naked as a case study of how the firm fundamentally 'relocated' creativity in the advertising value chain sequence in 2009.

Naked encapsulated an agency innovation that challenged the media and creative divide, at a time when the advertising industry struggled to respond to and recover from an external economic shock (the dot-com boom of the late 90s). Naked stood out because it represented clarity in this chaos, leading by its diverging philosophy, 'everything communicates' and investing in the hiring of 'brilliant misfits' to personify every part of their work.

5.2 PROCESS

In an industry built atop a project ecology, process is intertwined with the logic and culture of cluster's milieu. Since the development of modern advertising out of the US in the 20th century, advertisers engaged in ample debate on what were the best practices to sell to consumers. Today, the debate has evolved with consumer power and the media landscape, as enabled by technological innovations, but the advertising industry continues to wrestle with the ideal processes to get there. Although agencies shape their own processes, they are influenced by the dominant processes of

[151] Ibid.
[152] Eddie D'Sa, interview with author, March 5, 2020.

the broader, project ecology and its lock-in. To introduce a process innovation in this context that is successful in appealing to clients will inevitably spill out of the confines of an agency and into the wider milieu. The more influential the process, the more it changes the project ecology and adds a new layer atop previous lock-in.

Naked's process innovation of communications planning, encapsulated in the mantra 'everything communicates', revolutionised the project ecology of Adland by forcing GNAAs and independent agencies to address the new method. Whether it was to adapt to reject, Naked catalysed reflexivity among Adland agencies who shared a common, wider concern of adapting to the impact of media fragmentation brought by multichannel television and rise of the Internet. Naked created a niche in communications strategy on the premise that account planning and media planning were both constrained to meet these new, business and creative opportunities in advertising.[153] Their premise challenged Adland's incumbent ad agencies and media agencies because it countered their business models at their core. The more locked-in certain processes were within the culture of a particular project ecology, particularly that of Adland and Mad Ave, the greater the resistance to change. "Ad agencies like to make lucrative TV ads. Comms-neutral planning arms are hired to recommend a variety of media channels," wrote a *Campaign* journalist covering the rise of new media-neutral agencies competing within Naked's niche. "Only the noblest of advertising agencies would allow a subsidiary to make recommendations that would reduce its income."[154] Despite pushback from some competitors however, Naked's alternative approach resonated with many stakeholders who found value in approaching advertising as planning communications, rather than applying creativity within the neo-Fordist advertising approach. Naked echoed the flexible specialisation that their fourth-wave agency counterparts embodied, and insiders like *Campaign* accredited Naked for leading the process innovation for communications planning. Even after it was replaced by new innovations from a more globalised industry, Naked's role in introducing communications planning is now embedded as part of the project ecologies living history, most encapsulated by former Naked employees who continue to transfer their knowledge within the advertising industry.

[153] Collin, "The interface between account planning and media planning", 2003.
[154] "Between the Lines: Neutral spin-offs struggle," *Campaign.* September 2, 2005.

However, because Naked's processes was not protected intellectual property, as most creative processes were in a project ecology (Anomaly being one of the few exceptions), it was inevitable that one of Naked's biggest threats was competitors adapting their processes as their own. "There's no competitive barrier to entry. There's no moat," recalled Yakob. "I would just get two of my men from media and creative and start a Naked-like offspring…There was like ten of them that started Naked clones, of which none survived." But some did survive – if not as communications consultancies like Naked, then as new job titles and departments within rivalling agencies. Furthermore, Naked's success also raised clients' demands and expectations, leading them to desire integration from their agency partners for more efficient work per project. Naked's attempt to adapt to the trends towards 'creative integration' by 2014 was unsuccessful because its competitive difference in strategy no longer reflected the dominant market demand throughout the 2010s. "A lot of time was spent trying to build on the strategic reputation Naked had established to expand that into creative work, where we tended to struggle," recalled Brett Rolfe, the last Chief Strategy Officer of Naked Australia.[155] Despite this ultimately leading to the closure of Naked's remaining offices by 2019, the value of Naked's process, as branded tools and methods, continue in Naked Tokyo. In an industry that thrives from knowledge transfer, process innovations are a key driver, even if it comes as the cost of agencies having to constantly adapt and stay ahead of competitors.

Thus, the success of Naked's process lies in its ability to fundamentally change the project ecology in Adland and the influence other urban clusters. When Naked first opened in London, Harlow said that Naked's goal was "to provide creative media thinking to all leading creative service points, in advertising and beyond."[156] This was achieved in more ways than within the confines of the firm. Although account planning and media planning brought researchers out of the 'backrooms' of second-wave agencies in Adland, Naked helped establish 'thinking' and 'strategy' as creative processes. Awards for communications planning and strategy were created to acknowledge this discipline like APG Creative Planning Awards. Elevating creativity to include strategy and output in advertising nuances this industry's definition as a 'creative and cultural industry', furthers Lash and Urry's theory of advertising as reflexive spaces for process innovations, and gives new meaning to the 'suits vs. creative' tension as something more than just

[155] Brett Rolfe (Naked Australia, 2008-2018), Naked Communications Survey, February 17, 2020.
[156] *Campaign*, 2001.

a historical stereotype, and more of a suits-creative hybrid. One of the latest examples of this hybrid are the rise of management consulting firms acquiring advertising and design agencies to diversify and converge their core processes for clients.[157]

The discipline of communications planning is not 'lost' however. Like most processes and concepts within the advertising project ecology, it has evolved. Collin, who introduced communications planning alongside Naked's founders in 2000, and located it beyond the media and account planning disciplines in 2003 through his publication in a marketing journal, continues to track its evolution. Collin reflects on its relevance despite the high volatility and changes in the industry, thereby contextualizing the inherent value of the process over time. "The noughties were the decade when the industry woke up to a profound change in the relationship between consumers and brands," reflected Collin in 2009. "In the face of such a profound change, the industry needed to take a long, hard look at how it operates, and make some fundamental changes. Did it grasp that challenge? I don't think so."[158] By 2015, Collin argued that not only had this profound change led to more unpredictability in the media landscape, but also the industry had not grasped this challenge through their pursuit of engagement. For these two reasons, Collin believes that the future of communications planning – its ability to transcend this 'double-bind' – lies in prioritising value creation for people through the logic of reciprocity.[159] The reflexivity of Naked's brand of 'creative media thinking' keeps the process innovation from a historical phenomenon, but a timeless part of the industry's ongoing debate on the ultimate value advertising provides through its processes.

[157] Accenture acquired creative agencies Karmarama in 2015 and Droga5 in 2019. McKinsey acquired design agency Lunar in 2015.
[158] John Tylee and Will Collin, "What the noughties meant to me," *Campaign*, December 4, 2009.
[159] Will Collin, "Naked's Will Collin on 'The Future of Communications Planning'," *Little Black Book*, 2015.

5.3 PEOPLE

"We showed people you didn't have to conform to succeed."

– Jon Wilkins[160]

The famous street artist, Banksy, once said: "the thing I hate the most about advertising is that it attracts all the bright, creative and ambitious young people, leaving us mainly with the slow and self-obsessed to become our artists." Though Banksy is criticizing the state of modern art in this context, his reference to advertising gets at the heart of why artists and creatives are historically attracted to working in advertising, despite its paradoxes with art. This leads to an industry characterised by infamous personalities and tensions between 'suits' and 'creatives', which have become a rich subject for popular dramas like the TV series, *Mad Men.* Beyond the stereotypes however, scholars have found an increasing convergence between business and art within advertising, particularly among the talents whose life and work blend together to form a distinct lifestyle of an advertising professional. Within Adland particularly, Nixon found an industry culture where advertisers were nationally esteemed and valued in their personification of creativity.[161]

Although advertising has no issue attracting creatives, many of them feel that agencies and companies traditionally did not reflect them. "There's no end to inspirational, interesting people [in advertising]," said Ferrier. But it's the companies themselves. They are not quite as good as the actual individuals in the industry may be."[162] Agencies actively position themselves as attractive places of work to bolster the talents they ultimately represent but having that mirrored from within an agency is rare. "If an agency hasn't got something which sits above what individuals need to do, that's not an agency. That's a group of people sitting in a room. Unless the agency has a way of doing something which supersedes the individual desires of staff. Otherwise everyone who works there would have gone in two years."[163] The high turnover rate within advertising is a perpetual challenge in the industry for all of advertising's stakeholders. As the most crucial

[160] Wilkins and Collin, written interview, 2020.
[161] Nixon, *Advertising Cultures* (2005), 3-4.
[162] Ferrier, interview, 2020.
[163] Yakob, interview, 2020.

‘ingredient’ to any agency’s creative performance and reputation, the discontent and frustration of talents continue to challenge the business performance and reputation. Finding a way to bring people together reach these ideals is a high value for talents seeking a fitting place to belong and develop themselves professionally.

From the beginning, Naked understood the correlation between culture and good work. Naked understood that some of the most creative ideas they could produce came from people who felt uninhibited to think ‘outside-of-the-box’, including people who may be outside of advertising altogether. The ‘brilliant misfit’ ethos became Naked’s de facto ‘recruitment strategy, according to the founders and founding partners interviewed. As its name suggests, Naked valued ‘brilliance’ – regardless of where and how it came – and welcomed ‘misfits’ – those who felt they did not belong to and with conventions in advertising. Initially, Naked stepped away from traditional hiring processes, opting instead for a flat organisation where employees from a diversity of backgrounds shared the same title as ‘strategists’, much like other fourth-wave agencies at the time. So long as they were some version of a ‘brilliant misfit’, Naked encouraged their employees to be themselves, experiment in shaping their roles, and trying out new ideas.[164] Yakob recalled that for many of Naked’s first recruits, everyone was as much a Naked strategist as they were ‘geeks’ about a certain topic of immense interest to them.

Every Naked office adopted their own version to hire for ‘brilliant misfits’, an appeal for nonconformists in the industry that worked better in some local markets better than others. For the Naked office located in the largest and more competitive market of New York, the brilliant misfits they recruited had to have an appetite to learn and thrive on the challenge. “When we hired you, we said that you had to be 'ambidextrous', or have the potential to be ambidextrous, or show a passion to be ambidextrous in order to succeed,” said Woolmington. For Maezawa, it was about a willingness to step outside of the convention of a traditionally conservative market. “I care about the process of who I hire because of course planning experience is important and people need to be smart and creative. But the most important thing for me to judge, is whether they are 'brilliant misfits'. So they have to see quite different in a way, in a good sense.”[165] Wilkins was particularly fond of how the Naked Australia offices gave its new recruits a stylised

[164] Wilkins and Collin, written interview, 2020.
[165] Maezawa, interview, 2020.

mannequin so that they could study the 'anatomy of brilliant misfits' and interpret its skills and attributes.[166] "A lot of it is down to not necessarily the right people, but creating the right environment for the right people, so if you can create a culture where the expectation is radical ideas or radical thinking, then clients expect to have radical ideas," said Ferrier. "So the stronger the brand is, in standing for something, the more it becomes self-selected and also a self-fulfilling prophecy…Our employment ethos was: get the brand right and the people will follow."[167]

Creating a space for expressing individuality as conducive towards the generation of creative ideas, turned out to be an attractive cultural virtue for many professionals in advertising. Encapsulated in a new agency that boldly wanted to change how things were done in Adland, the direct access brilliant misfits had in helping to shape that vision added to the appeal and pride of being part of "a small company trying to change the world."[168] Yet, it should also be noted that building a distinct culture was not part of the founder's initial strategy for Naked. "To be honest I'm not sure how much value there is in spending much time defining creative culture," said Collin. "If you have to do a lot of work to come up with a definition then it's probably not much of a culture in the first place. In the early years of Naked we just oozed culture and it was obvious to everyone inside and outside the business. There was no need to define it." The founders valued unstructured creativity to the extent that actively shaping, limiting, or defining it further would go against their own ideas and spoil the culture that formed organically. "What we wanted were people that most likely felt constrained or uncomfortable within established agency environments, regardless of the discipline they were from. We offered them a release from the restrictions of always having to push that agency's particular output and enabled them to think across disciplines and channels. And to work alongside people who felt the same."[169]

Putting so many 'brilliant misfits' together, Naked's culture was not without its incompatibilities and creative differences as well. For Torode, Naked's culture fostered its creative ideas, but as one of its earliest managers, it also hindered the structures and organisation needed to be put in place for the company to scale.[170] Carney also had some issues with the typically male-

[166] Wilkins and Collin, written interview, 2020.
[167] Ferrier, interview, 2020.
[168] Yakob interview, 2020.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Torode, interview, 2020.

dominated 'laddy' culture from Adland that made its way partially to New York.[171] In such a setting, certain misfits fit more than others, but for those that did not value the community as much, found value in what such a community enabled in the work Naked produced. "I wanted to be an account planner who would be able to have some say over communications channels. I was completely behind the media-neutral thinking approach," according to Tiffany Kenyon, former senior strategist of Naked London and briefly, Buenos Aires.[172]

Having a strong culture as part of its brand was also beneficial in attracting clients, who had grown accustomed to the notorious temperaments of advertising professions, for better or for worse. "The biggest enablers for creative work were our culture (which valued ideas and original thinking) and also the fact that most clients had hired us specifically because they were looking for more innovation in their communications."[173] The opportunity to produce unusual work for clients was a welcomed challenge and Wilkins adds that it allowed Naked to "pioneer in those spaces."[174] Naked's different approach and ability to represent it virtuously, had an advantageous spill over effect in standing out among other creative pitches to clients. Clients had gotten accustomed to the structured and predictable ways other agencies pitched their ideas, recalled Woolmington, and Naked's ability to be different with each pitch was like 'magic'. He recalled the example of how Naked won the Coca Cola brief in New York by unconventionally approaching their pitch and reminding their senior executives of Cola's unique assets (iconic bottle shape and secret recipe legend).[175] With each major account victory, Naked's decreased the perceived risks and stigma clients had about letting 'brilliant misfits' handle their accounts.

The ability for brilliant misfits to thrive with their provocative ideas in Adland intrigued the industry's insiders and got under the skin of some of Naked's competitors and critics. Naked Australia's controversial PR stunt for the fashion label, Witchery, caused a commotion.[176] Referencing the gesture behind pulling the stunt, critics, like Tim Longhurst, extended this as part

[171] MT Carney, interview with author, February 27, 2020.
[172] Tiffany Kenyon (Naked London 2004-05; Buenos Aires 2006-08; London 2008-10), Naked Communications Survey, February 17, 2020.
[173] Wilkins and Collin, written interview, 2020.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Woolmington, interview, 2020.
[176] Burrowes, "Naked accused of 'screwing' the industry," *Mumbrella,* 2009.

of the image Naked's brilliant misfit merely put for affect, rather than for substance.[177] "The whole 'punk attitude' was set by [Naked London], but we embrace that wholeheartedly and had quite a 'cavalier', 'fuck you' kind of anti-authoritarian approach," said Ferrier. "Because we were all quite young at the time, it created quite a lot of animosity in the marketplace. 'What the hell are you guys? You haven't even had your 'stripes' to be knocking in the industry, so why are you doing that'?"[178] This underdog positioning for Naked Australia only encouraged them to lean into their 'brilliant misfit' culture further, leading to such creations as their famous 2011 'Steal Banksy' PR campaign for Art Series Hotel, which not only led to the eventual stealing of the Banksy painting by a rival agency staffer but also Naked winning the Grand Prix by the Association for Data-Driven Marketing & Advertising in 2012.

However, as Naked grew, so too did the management challenges. "There's definitely a risk that creativity could suffer as the company grows and new joiners feel less connected to the original founding philosophy than those who were there at the beginning. But it all comes down to management, so it's not inevitable. Being acquired leads to a shift in management priorities and behaviour - e.g. some of the local market founders left Naked quite soon after the Photon deal - and this definitely changed the 'feel' of the place."[179] Wilkins, on the other hand, challenge whether it's the specific ownership or the scaling of an agency that should be to blame for its shortcomings. Rather, he finds the real culprit to be the wider industry and structures, and whether they compromise the vision and integrity of the people working there.[180]

Looking back on their time working for Naked, many feel a strong and positive attachment towards the impact that the experience had on their careers and personal development. For some, Naked was a highlight in their career in advertising because it truly encapsulated the difference it sought to be. Naked lived up to its purpose. "For most of Naked's heyday we were definitely way more innovative than most agencies. We were also more playful and anarchic. That was some of the best things about the agency, so much stuff that happened just wouldn't or couldn't happen anywhere else."[181] For some 'brilliant misfits', Naked was a springboard to more senior-level

[177] Tim Longhurst, "Ponytail people at Naked Communications strike again," Timlonghurst.com (blog), January 20, 2009.
[178] Ferrier, interview, 2020.
[179] Wilkins and Collin, written interview, 2020.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Ibid.

positions in the industry. "I think McCann almost tripled my salary and I became the chief tech officer at the biggest ad agency in the world, overnight," recalled Yakob. "Even though, yes, I wasn't having as much fun as I was before at Naked, that kind of offer isn't going to come along every day. I was not qualified to do that job, nor did I really like it, but that jump was a function of Naked's absurdly high reputational value and my slight reputational value as part of that, that happened at a moment in time."[182] Ferrier adds that in addition to the reputational value of being associated with the Naked brand, working there allowed individuals to improve their skills in the industry. "I think [Naked] gave a lot of people their confidence. It's helped them in their careers as a marker of them being a free thinker or somebody who is going to approach things slightly differently."[183]

In additions to vertical transitions for many of Naked's former employees, working at Naked has also led employment in a breadth of business models within the advertising industry, as well as entrepreneurial positions outside of it. Several of the former Naked founding partners interviewed, remarked that this variation in trajectory, both the depth and breadth of positions, speaks a lot about Naked's present influence in the global industry. "The diaspora of Naked alumni and how, what they've done is extremely, I think, telling. But in terms of the impact and how our language infected the industry, and how half [of the alumni] either had gone to run the biggest agencies in the world, and half worked for themselves."[184] Some, like Woolmington and Ferrier, decided to start agencies of their own, and in Carney's case, also a holding company. Some took on senior positions in world-renowned advertising agencies, like Richards who is now the Worldwide Chief Strategy Officer at Ogilvy, and D'Sa, who is now the CEO of Nord DDB Norway. Others have moved into the client side, like Pollard, who currently works as Coca Cola's Global Head of Marketing. Some took their advertising experiences to become entrepreneurs: Torode is a co-founder of The Fawnbrake Collective alongside co-Sera Miller, seeking to provide alternatives to existing business models in the industry; Yakob is an author and consultant for professional and agencies within advertising; and Rolfe is the founder of the Schoolhouse Centre for Progressive Education in Australia, which embraces innovative learning. Finally, Naked founders Wilkins and Collin now work as senior-level managers in Karmarama, an acquired digital

[182] Yakob, interview, 2020.
[183] Ferrier, interview, 2020.
[184] Yakob, interview, 2020.

agency that is part of Accenture Interactive, which rounds out Naked's influence towards the recent wave of management consulting firms entering into marketing, communications, and design.

The trio of 'John, Jon, and Will' was highly praised as being role model leaders whose differences complemented each other. "Somebody described the three original founders as the smart one, the nice one, and the crazy one was the third," reflected Ferrier on the unofficial 'formula' for identifying Naked's founding partners.[185] Harlow, in particular, exemplified Naked, as many felt he was "the most brilliant and the most misfit." Richards adds: "It's incredibly hard to encapsulate, but he was just quite simply the most creative person I've ever met. I just feel like there's a dark side for the brilliant misfits, sometimes. I think it's the same of brilliantly creative musicians and really creative writers or really creative artists of all sorts..Basically, the brilliant misfit is not without her or his weaknesses."

When the penultimate Naked office in Sydney merged with BMF in 2019, Maezawa reached out to the CEO of Enero with the request to buy the full licensing and ownership of the Naked brand to 'restart' Naked Communications as its sole owner, through Naked's last operating office, Naked Tokyo. Enero declined Maezawa's offer because it also had plans to possibly restart the Naked brand in five to ten years' time, according to Maezawa. Because "Naked is constructed by people", Maezawa does not believe that Enero's future Naked could really be authentic.[186] "My ambition, which has been consistent in the past 13 years, was [that] I really wanted Naked to be a culture brand," said Maezawa. "The first priorities are tied with how to make Naked Tokyo an aspirational company or a cultural brand, for young Japanese people." Despite the presence of Naked Tokyo in the Japanese marketing market since 2007, the industry remains ten years behind the West, and Maezawa sees Naked Tokyo taking on an active and leading agency role in communications strategy as well as modelling a fun place to work, just as Naked London had done in the 2000s.

[185] Ferrier, interview, 2020.
[186] Ibid.

5.4 PLACE

Naked had to start in London, the city where the process innovation of account planning goes far back as BMP in the 1960s. "Could Naked have started anywhere else in the world? Maybe not," according to Collin. "London had the ideal combination of scale, influence and willingness to innovate." Wilkins agreed, adding: "London is the best place, big enough to be meaningful, small enough to disrupt. Also the world of advertising has always been intellectually driven out of the UK, especially within planning. Many planning directors around the world started here in the UK." [187] The HAT considers advertising a cultural heritage of the UK, and since the creation of the Department of Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS), advertising was prominently featured as exemplary of 'British creativity'.[188]

In Adland, international expansion was a coveted goal, but difficult to achieve. According to *Campaign,* Naked took their expansion and ventures strategy from Mother.[189] The immediacy in going abroad was also a direct reaction against the rate of competition in London. "We were conscious of the risk of competitors starting up and replicating our model in their local markets, which would both make it harder for us to launch in those markets and also risk their growing into major competitors worldwide. So to some extent we felt an urgency to launch Naked in the most important market, the US."[190] Among its cohort of agency start-ups from the late 1990s and early 2000s, Naked and Ingram are among a few of the communications consultancies from the UK that have been successful in achieving global expansion, according to *Campaign.*[191] Additionally and retrospectively, investing in the global Naked network created a "band of brothers and sisters" that remains valuable to the former employees of Naked.[192] For Naked, becoming a global brand was never just about business and recognition, but also a passionate project in community-building.

Traditionally, most agencies set up offices abroad to become appear more successful and capture big clients by appealing with their global reach. But Naked's global expansion was mostly an organic development, rather than one built from a long-term and concrete strategy. Though

[187] Wilkins and Collin, written interview, 2020.
[188] Nixon, *Advertising Cultures,* 4.
[189] Caroline Marshall, "How Mother Grew Up," *Campaign,* November 17, 2006.
[190] Wilkins and Collin, written interview, 2020.
[191] Ian Darby, "Media: All about…UK Consultancy Expansion," *Campaign,* September 29, 2006.
[192] Wilkins and Collin, written interview, 2020

Wilkins admits that he and his fellow founders were not really 'businesspeople', their ability to leverage their personal networks from decades working in the advertising industry, highlights the role that culture and linkages play in creating and manifesting international expansion opportunities. D'Sa, for example, opened the first Scandinavian office in Oslo because his girlfriend at the time, happened to be based there and the opportunity to become a founding partner was attractive to his professional career at the time. Despite being a British expat, D'Sa had some familiarity with the local Oslo market and had a network he could start with and draw from there. "It was because you ensured you had people who were passionate, and not just following the money."[193] Naked Melbourne was also founded because Ferrier's girlfriend at the time (now wife) was from there.[194] Naked Global was built on the randomness of the spontaneous, physical locations that people they knew were based in, and the likelihood of finding like-minded founding partners on-site, who could also recruit locally for their versions of the 'brilliant misfit'. However, in other places like Mumbai, Naked's expansion was also driven by opportunity to break into new markets and their client's interests. As Collin explained in an interview about the opening of a Naked office there in 2010: "As of now, we will only have an office in Mumbai until such time as our client commitments demand us to expand geographically."[195]

When it came to managing their global network, Naked adopted what Collin referred to as 'freedom within a framework.' Rather than have an overarching 'superstructure' where London was the centralised office, it was knowledge transfer that built the Naked brand overseas. That meant that, while London developed the core philosophy and rough template, each global office – with the exception of franchises in Tokyo and Sao Paulo – had the opportunity to adapt Naked locally. Yakob, who was one of the first to work in the Naked London office, also worked a bit in Sydney and New York, recalled that knowledge about the Naked brand resided in its staff. "I would try and connect those pieces together, but ultimately it was always just either me or someone who knew something existed," according to Yakob. "There was the book. There was a belief system. There was the Naked Garden, or the Naked Greenhouse, which was our set of tools."[196] Over time, and as Naked opened more offices, convergences started to develop as to what constituted a Naked agency, like its "branding, philosophy, and certain planning processes and tools." But, according

[193] D'Sa, interview, 2020.
[194] Ferrier, interview, 2020.
[195] Das Biprorshee, "The Indian advertising scene is very cosmopolitan: Naked's Collin," *afaqs!*, March 31, 2010.
[196] Yakob, interview, 2020.

to Collin: “the local partners had the freedom to pursue opportunities within their market as they saw fit. It turned out that we had relatively few clients that spanned more than one office, so unlike traditional network agencies we couldn’t rely on client relationships to be the ‘glue’ between offices.”[197] This was the case the Naked franchise in Tokyo. Naked Tokyo did not receive any piece of the business assigned to Naked Global. For example, while Naked Global had Coca-Cola as a global client, its entire network was not fully responsible for its brand. Naked Tokyo did not work on the global projects, according to Maezawa, but on its own, Naked Tokyo sought business with Coca-Cola Japan separately.[198]

The relatively small size of the Naked Global network, compared to other global agency networks, made the management of the brand among its different partners easier and more consistent before changes in management after the Photon acquisition. “There was a ‘family’ culture across the business which made it easy for local market decisions to be discussed and shared with the central management team in an informal way. This was a more effective way of maintaining consistency in the Naked brand than relying on formal documents or rules.”[199] The Naked brand was not a hard sell among the founding partners because “everyone bought into the important bits around values, culture, and even aspects of look and feel.”[200] The rest of it, fell into place as best fit for its local Adland, but the Naked Global brand was not always evenly distributed commercially. Maezawa, who operates a Naked franchise explains: “these 350 people are friends and fellows, and we are exchanging some ideas. However we haven't really had a very strong business connection, like aligning the pipe or something…we are a very unique and strong brand, but not necessarily good in business.”[201] Even the occasional global clients Naked had were shared among specific offices, such as Naked London and New York for Kimberly-Clark and Coca-Cola between Naked offices in the UK, US, Norway, and Australia. The majority of Naked’s businesses were local to each office.[202]

Naked was relatively successful in scaling its culture, with its founders putting the effort to find their trio founder counterparts in the foreign offices; let most of the oversea offices adapt

[197] Wilkins and Collin, written interview, 2020.
[198] Maezawa, interview, 2020.
[199] Wilkins and Collin, written interview, 2020.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Maezawa, interview, 2020.
[202] Wilkins and Collin, written interview, 2020.

the core culture in their own ways; and hire for the best talent, regardless of their industry backgrounds, to ensure an eclectic mix. "We kept our culture and fire going through our business model of having local partners who bought into the vision but also co-owned the business and that was smart…it was a testament to the strong feelings people had and have about working in that creative environment."[203] Typically, however, 'scaling culture' is extremely difficult and, according to Yakob, who now works as consultant helping firms, most agencies fail in doing so. Given this, it is worth noting how many places the Naked brand extended to during its peak, which was approximately 90 employees in London and 250-300 employees for Naked Global cumulatively.[204] For Yakob, a failed company culture is one in which its global offices have employees that are unable to mirror each other on what the company's core values are. "Culture means that there are three aspects in place: people have the same values, they define the certain key terms in the same way, and they share the same ambition or stories."[205]

Remarkably, Naked's global network managed to bring together 'brilliant misfits' from different parts of the world, all while allowing for a depth in local divergences across its international offices. "We obviously had a common brand and philosophy, and a small number of shared processes and planning tools. But beyond that, each office could and did pursue local opportunities however they could. It was rare for the central Naked management to intervene in local business decisions (although we occasionally did, when we felt they could have a negative impact on Naked overall)."[206] Before the Photon acquisitions, Naked New York was distinguished as a pure communications consultancy in the largest advertising market; Naked Australia blended Naked's strategic thinking with creative execution as well as tools inspired from consumer psychology; and Naked's Scandinavian offices was the foreign arrival that pushed for local innovations. In the Japanese market, Naked continues to be a unique and complementary service alongside more traditional advertising processes. "I was quite surprised that [Naked] was thinking about coming to Japan," recalled Maezawa. "It's a big challenge because if you look at the marketing industry Japan is probably 10 years behind Western countries, like European countries or the States. Then, back in the day, a lot of big agencies like Dentsu, Hakodo are focused on

[203] Wilkins and Collin, written interview, 2020.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Yakob, interview, 2020.
[206] Wilkins and Collin, written interview, 2020.

making some good TV commercials using some celebrities. So they didn't care much about strategies, but executions were everything."[207]

5.5 PURPOSE

There are many agencies in Adland today and while it is no longer uncommon to read about their value proposition on their website, it is another thing to have this purpose clearly understood from the perspective of industry stakeholders. Many claim to be different, unconventional, and innovative, but when so many agencies lead with similar purposes, the meanings become diluted and confusing, and their differences minimal. Naked was self-aware that it was offering something different and innovative in the industry, and that what it had to offer represented more than something profitable. Naked's success in business affirmed its proposition – that there was a different and better way for both clients and agencies to produce advertising creativity. In the 1990s, Adland had become ingrained to think of media relative to specific channels like print, radio, and television, but Naked was among a few agencies that argued that connecting to consumers was not about where an ad should be placed, but *how* an ad should communicate. Naked won clients by winning their interest to adopt their progressive ideas.[208]

Naked was not the first to introduce communications planning to Adland however, as Bilton and *Campaign* acknowledged. Before Naked, there was Michaelides & Bednash from the late 1980s. The difference was that Naked was more successful and influential in representing the concept, and their agency's brand became synonymous with their proposition, that 'everything communicates'. Naked is widely accredited among insiders for changing the industry by their process and forcing their competitors to adapt in the 2000s as a result. "It would be foolish to deny that the shape of the media planning and buying business has changed significantly in recent years – the very arrival of the specialists is testament to that," wrote Willot for *Campaign* in 2005. M&B may have introduced communications planning, but Naked excelled at it, brought it to the world, and forced competitors and clients to adapt, as well as drawing interest from industry talents and insiders to join their agency and movement.

[207] Kaz Maezawa interview, 2020.
[208] Woolmington interview, 2020.

Naked's success in changing and broadening client's preferences challenged competitors to innovate in a way that M&B did not. One of the first major adaptations to communications planning by competitors was in 2005, by incumbents like Bartle Bogle Hegarty (BBH) and Abbot Mead Vickers (AMV), which separately initiated their own agency initiatives to bring creative and media planning under the same roof to offer communications planning. Journalist Noel Bussey, who covered the story for *Campaign* at the time, questioned whether both agencies' claim to innovation was 'new', bringing up both Naked and M&B's influences. Representatives of the new initiatives did not argue that they were not 'first', but they criticised that Naked's business model and their claim to a different service, was merely a 'patch' for the fragmentation of services in the advertising value chain. Ian Pearman, the client services director for AMV at the time, further elaborated, "[Naked] come[s] into the equation when the communication between the creative agency and the media agency breaks down".[209] Other criticisms about Naked's proposition concerned how it measured the success of their strategies.

However, history would tell a different story and for *Campaign,* Naked's leadership in communications planning was not just about being part of a new wave, "[Naked] was the new wave."[210] Naked was deliberate in not borrowing from the same lexicon as the advertising industry they wanted to change and differentiate as an agency from, according to Collin. Naked saw itself as a communications company and did not refer to themselves as working with media (despite this, many journalists categorized Naked as a media planning agency, especially in its later years). Naked was also cautious not to use the militaristic language of marketing which was common in the late 1990s. "Our view was that communication was a process that brands conducted with people, not something they did to them. Hence we used words such as connection, participation, exploration, and so on. In the early days this made our presentations sound very different from most agencies. But over time this language became adopted by everyone in the industry." In hindsight, Collin finds that "Naked was instrumental in changing the language used within the marketing communications industry."[211] Despite the closing of its London headquarters, the influence Naked helped impart has resulted in a contemporary advertising industry where clients and agencies see strategy and planning as necessary before jumping immediately into media

[209] Noel, Bussey, "Close-Up: Live Issue, BBH and Lunar reintegrate Media and Creative," *Campaign,* September 30, 2005.
[210] Alasdair Reid, "Media Forum: Can media input aid creativity?" *Campaign.* September 9, 2005.
[211] Wilkins and Collin, written interview, 2020.

selection or creative ideation. For Bilton, this had wider implications because Naked nuanced creativity within advertising as more than just the output of illustrators and copywriters, but also problem-solving, strategy, and management.[212] This raises the value of creativity as a dialectic feature that agencies are in a unique position to offer clients.

Behind Naked's influential proposition was the motivation and principles the founders infused into the agency brand. This was that purpose that was made clear and accessible to some of the earliest Naked employees, who shared in the founders' restlessness for impactful change to the industry in the 1990s. The belief that communications should be done and approached differently became a fundamental and guiding principle among Naked's founders, partners, and its employees. At the time, Naked's purpose was at odds with how most agencies operated and were founded. "Most agencies are people who are just following the money. Most agency start-ups are designed from senior people in a network agency, to own their own shop to make money and Naked was much more idealistic. It was about doing a great job for our clients."[213] This purpose was also a key element among the leaders of Naked's different offices, to emulate that philosophy and differentiate from competitors and distinguish itself from the eyes of clients. D'Sa and Yakob recalled that Naked had been called 'cult-like'. "[It] was a strong philosophy, belief system. Everyone sort of knows how they should act without it having to [have] ever been put into a corporate mission or vision statements," said D'Sa. "We also have intuitive understanding of the senior people of what those principles meant in communication because they are, after all, the root thing that attracted us to Naked, which meant, it was leadership by vision -- which is the strongest form of leadership."

Naked summarised their purpose with five core principles. These 'Five Naked truths', as they were called (Figure 12), not only set the tone and philosophy of each of the offices, but also provided a minimum structure within which creative ideas were developed. Aside from that, there was a lot of freedom to solve a client's brief and come up with creative ideas. Naked valued originality and believed that inspiration and ideas could come from anywhere. "We'd meet, go and work on something else, regroup, play some foosball. It's kind of a loose process, but there's definitely a process but it was guided by the principle," said D'Sa, recalling his time working for

[212] Bilton, "Relocating Creativity in Advertising" (2009), 23-24.
[213] D'Sa, interview, 2020.

at the Scandinavian Naked offices. “That was really a guiding philosophy…People have generally found their way to us because those Naked founding principles resonated. You never had to have tell people that this is the agency's principles and apply it to their creative work, because they're already in people's hearts. Those principles were how they looked at the world anyway”.[214] From Naked Mumbai, Sriram adds: “They are real from-the-heart people and there is obviously the whole business aspect that drives the unit. The work they do is all based on principles. They are driven with right things where we will not have to bullshit about anything and just be real.”[215]

FIG. 12 | ‘THE FIVE NAKED TRUTHS’ OF NAKED COMMUNICATIONS

1. Everything Communicates
2. People are your Partners
3. There is a Better Way
4. See the Full Picture
5. Independence is a Virtue

For talents and former Naked employees, what also made Naked’s purpose attractive was that it showed how it could achieve its proposition by embracing the authentic unconventionality of the creative ideation process and have fun doing so. For many, Naked provided that ‘better way’ that was seldom found in other agency counterparts. Work and play blended together at Naked, Yakob recalled, and in hindsight, he found them essential to stimulating the big and unconventional ideas they generated. In addition to the notorious parties Naked threw, the early years of Naked hosted an annual two-day, weekend getaway at a remote farmhouse in Devon, themed after a murder mystery with all staff dressed in Edwardian-style attire. At one of these weekends, Naked returned to London releasing their own Christmas single. "Doing silly things with people breaks down barriers of inhibition and helps bond teams together – we all felt a sense of collective amusement having made it and then sending the video out".[216]

[214] Ibid.
[215] *AdGully*, 2010.
[216] Media Week, “Seeking the source of Innovation,” *Campaign,* August 16, 2005.

Since the closing of its prominent offices, several of Naked's former employees and media industry journalists, spoke out to acknowledge the impact Naked had on individuals and the wider advertising industry. The Naked brand adopted a 'legendary' status within advertising urban clusters, particularly in London and Australia. "We said people are partners in communication before social media existed," said D'Sa. "Now it's become the prevailing way to communicate."[217] Meanwhile, some of Naked's former employees, such as Woolmington and Torode, shared that they have taken some of Naked's principles to heart to apply to their own companies. Woolmington infused 'Naked Thinking' into his creative media agency (Canvas Worldwide) and Torode believes some of the flexible work culture that worked well at Naked inspired the design of her collective-based agency, The Fawnbrake Collective, co-founded with Sera Miller. Among some of Naked's former employees, their time at Naked was endearing not just for the skills learned and friendships made, but also for the feeling that one had been a part of something revolutionary that seldom happened in the industry. "Fame's become the objective in itself [today], rather than the by-product of being great at something. And I think what was good about Naked," reflected D'Sa. "We just felt that we wanted to do a good job. There's something not quite right. The scene has something rotten in the state of advertising that we wanted to fix."[218]

5.6 Putting it all Together

Often in the lexicon of branding jargon, agencies and marketing managers exchange their concerns with connecting brands with consumers. They speak of how to 'target' consumers at the right 'touchpoints' along their 'customer journey'. They speak of 'engagement' and how to measure it for 'impact', specifically towards driving sales for the client. For agencies, this helps them explain why they are worth a client's 'return on investment' and more. Designing an effective brand, to put crudely, is an art and a science in solving the problem of how to make customers make a purchase, and more importantly, become loyal to the product over others.

This same branding logic, however, does not simply exist in a consumer-facing world. Thoughtfully considered, agency innovations can apply it reflexively towards their own brands. The global advertising industry has ballooned in size beyond its nascent beginnings in the 19th

[217] D'Sa, interview, 2020.
[218] Ibid.

century. It has a history of influential processes, figures, and advertisements that hold value among its contemporaries. Its work exists within the minds of generations of consumers who remember their ads, but also in the minds of the professionals who, as a fellow consumer, digests their present experiences and observations into the ideas and ads that further saturate the media world. If agencies covet the prestige of winning awards and having major brands to tout in their portfolios, than their brand as a firm also hold significant value and influence within the industry. Like legendary figures, some of these agency brands live beyond their operations, particularly among the collective memory of the increasingly global milieu. History makes the legends and lays the blueprint of the milieu's values.

One of the zeitgeist of what makes certain agencies successful within the advertising industry, is its ability to solve the elephant-in-the-room problem that's long been a part of the advertising profession, and those in creative and cultural industries more broadly: the precarity of creative professionals. The longevity of agency start-ups may be short in the grand scheme of the industry, but not in the collective memories of its stakeholders, especially as the interviews among Naked employees show. Historically, the advertising agency has proven that it can turn profit atop the chronic dysfunction, convention, burnout, and discontent of its talents. For as long as the industry's existed, talents have succumbed to reconciling their duality in one way or another, simply accepting their insecurities as part of what they must exchange to thrive and make it in the industry. Over time, advertising talents have evolved to lean in on their distinct work culture and lifestyle as the prevailing aspect of why they choose to build their careers thre. By endeavouring to bring the branding logic from the consumer-facing process inwardly through the case study of Naked Communications however, we find that branding can also address the real problem agencies face in engaging talents meaningfully. Specifically, *legacy brands,* prioritise the kind of values that makes an agency a great place for talents to work and creative outputs to follow, as well as being what the agency is most remembered for. Such a brand provides signals to present and future stakeholders in the industry – clients, competitors, talents, and insiders – who all converge from different corners over the same desire to maintain the industry.

Naked is a rare example of an agency within advertising that was founded in building its brand from the inside-out. It had the typical beginnings of veteran creative professionals leaving their previous positions to strike out and create a different business together. They shared a

common vision in what their agency should do differently in the industry, but they also understood that without the right people, they could only 'tell' but not 'show'. Naked encapsulated the exciting underdog story that those in the industry wanted to follow, and even as it wound down, insiders praised their divergence and rivals commended their positive impact on the industry. "It's not the fault of the agency, or Enero," wrote Burrowes following news of Naked's transition from 'thinkers' to 'makers' in 2015. "If the market won't pay for the thing that makes you great, then you have to be something else, or go out of business."[219] Naked decided to adapt, as all independent agencies in advertising ultimately have to do, but the question is whether the agency's brand – it's identity and the values surrounding its history – matters to the industry's stakeholders, beyond its adaptation into 'something else'.

[219] Tim Burrowes, "Naked Communications faces the sad fact that being clever doesn't make money anymore," *Mumbrella,* August 26, 2015.

CHAPTER 6 | CONCLUSIONS

"We've worked with brands all our lives but it's not until we saw one grow and develop from the inside that we also, in our hearts, understood actually what the power of a brand is."

-- Eddie D'Sa[220]

The Naked case study inspired a 'formula' for another definition of success for agencies within a highly competitive industry in the global creative economy, which can be broken down by building on its reflexive positioning, purpose, people, place, purpose and how they are managed by an agency relative to the industry's stakeholders. The challenge with these factors, however, is that they are not static conditions and the environment from which they work is highly dynamic. This is further augmented for advertising agencies because their fundamental existence is built on the market complexities between producers and consumers, which are also changing rapidly to the dynamic environment. The great idea will always be challenged, while talents struggles to keep up with changes while finding those opportunities that maximise their passion. Meanwhile, in the mix of internal and external market pressures, and the widening gaps between GNAAs and independents, agency start-ups do not last long. Thus, longevity and survival of a firm should not be the primary indicator of their success as an innovation, but rather, their impact as legacies. Contextualising a creative agency's performance and reputation as its ability manage its values with those of the project ecology's stakeholders, provide a clearer view of which agencies were truly influential and novel, and thereby, successful.

The success of Naked was its ability to champion an idea through a strong brand at the peak of its global operations and leaving that as its main legacy. Naked continues to be influential through its legendary status as a firm within the industry, particularly by the knowledge transfer among its former employees into senior positions within the industry, and beyond. Naked's case study shows that its brand was built on its ability to cultivate its values – positioning, process, people, places, and purpose – and managing them against the industry's stakeholders (the clients, the competitors, the talents, and the insiders). Ironically, in an industry where branding services is

[220] D'Sa, interview. 2020.

a hallmark, there is disproportionate attention put on building the brand of one's agency versus those of their clients' brands. "We made Naked a brand with the same energy and attitude as you'd only usually find in a consumer-facing business," said Collin. "This was a breath of fresh air in the wider ad industry which was largely made up of anonymous business-to-business companies."[221] In her presentation at the India Social Summit 2012, Sriram, founding partner of Naked Mumbai, also provided a definition of a brand that, in hindsight, shows how Naked's work for clients, echoed the meta-level work Naked endeavoured for itself:

> *"A brand is merely a brand, an inanimate object, until enough people care about it. Once enough people care, they congregate and from a community around the brand. The confluence of the congregation creates an energy field around the brand. The energy field then reaches a critical mass, and as an organic force of nature, breathes life into the brand."*[222]

Following this logic, a strong brand that no longer exists as a business can continue to have influence through its 'afterlife'. The success of Naked is not only in building a strong legacy brand in its prime, but one that continues to have an afterlife in the industry that experienced its force and influence, and most importantly, the community that continues to remember it fondly. "What I love most is that the vast majority of ex-employees talk about their experience as being the best of their careers," reflects Wilkins.[223] Such energy surrounding a brand where only a sole franchise in Tokyo exists, invites this alternative perspective of legacy brand creation as an achievement. This is not new, and ironic as it is that agencies are often the preachers of these virtues on *product* branding, it is also highly applicable to agencies. Further, an agency as a strong legacy brand does not only benefit those who have worked for the agency, but also to the overall industry through innovation, competition, knowledge transfer, and inspiration. Creative destruction in advertising tends to supplant creative talent and norms to adapt to changes in technology and management, but its force can also be utilised to prioritise people and adapting structures to fit culture. In the end, that is what people remember.

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[221] Wilkins and Collin, written interview, 2020.
[222] Gitanjali Sriram, "I've Got a Pulse!," filmed 2012 at Power Talks: Branded Content at the IndiaSocial Summit, *YouTube*, uploaded April 24, 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-yE9RFROOTw/.
[223] Wilkins and Collin, written interview, 2020.

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APPENDIX

FIGURE A: INTERVIEWED FOR THESIS

	Name	Role in Naked	Current Occupation(s)
1	Jon Wilkins	Founder (2000-2013)	Global Managing Director of Accenture Interactive; Chairman of Karmarama
2	Will Collin	Founder (2000-2017)	Strategy Lead of Karmarama
3	Faris Yakob	Strategist, Head of Digital (2004-2008)	Founder of Genius Steals; Author of *Paid Attention: Innovative Advertising for a Digital World* (2015).
4	Amelia Torode	Strategy Director (2005-2006)	Co-Founder of The Fawnbrake Collective
5	Paul Woolmington	Co-founding Partner of Naked New York (2006-2012)	CEO of Canvas Worldwide (creative agency)
6	MT Carney	Co-founding Partner of Naked New York (2006-2010)	CEO and Co-Founder of Untitled Worldwide (creative agency) and Plan A (holding company)
7	Adam Ferrier	Co-founding Partner of Naked Sydney and Melbourne, Global Head of Strategy (2004-2014)	Founder of Thinkerbell and Space (creative agencies); Australia's Nation Brand Adviser
8	Eddie D'Sa	Co-founding Partner of Naked Oslo, Copenhagen, Stockholm, and Mumbai (2004-2010)	CEO of Nord DDB Norway
9	Ben Richards	Strategy Director, Head of Strategy (2003-2010)	Worldwide Chief Strategy Officer of Ogilvy
10	Brett Rolfe	Chief Strategy Officer, Head of Communications, Head of Brands, Director of Technology and Innovation, Digital Evangelist, Communication Strategist at Naked Sydney and Melbourne (2008-2018)	Director of Innovation at the Cranbrook School
13	Tim Burrowes	Founder and journalist for Mumbrella	
14	Kaz Maezawa	Co-founding Partner of Naked Tokyo (2007-present)	
*Pending interviews for March 2020.			

FIG. B | NAKED OFFICES AND YEAR OF OPENING