Abstract: Creativity is not a new phenomenon. Neither is entrepreneurial marketing. This paper offers a discussion, based on both classical and contemporary evidence from the world of art, on how creative ability can give both the individual and the smaller firm a competitive advantage. Instead of adopting a replicative, quantitative methodology, as found in many smaller firm studies concerning marketing and entrepreneurship, this work embraces an alternative methodology by examining actual creative practice, as well as investigating the creative metaphor. It is believed that a range of useful outcomes will emerge from this, ranging from the promotion of awareness of the need for creativity in the smaller firm, given the inherent lack of many other resources, to the belief that those researching at the Interface will also benefit from adoption of alternative methodologies in order to generate new theory.

INTRODUCTION

At the age of six I wanted to be a cook. At seven I wanted to be Napoleon. And my ambition has been growing steadily ever since (Dali 1993:1).

Little previous work has sought to describe the creative behaviour of the entrepreneurial marketer by utilising the creative metaphor and through the examination of successful creative practice (Arndt 1986; Hunt and Menon 1993; Goodwin 1996; Rindfleisch 1996; Carney and Williams 1997). This work attempts to close the gap by exploring the possible contributions to understanding the phenomenon further by examining both the success and failure of risk-taking artists such as Salvador Dali and Vincent Van Gogh in seeking to move forward existing artistic and business practice. The above quotation is just some of the evidence of the self-belief and arrogance of Dali the artist, designer and author, among his many other guises, which contributed towards his success. It is a cruel irony that Van Gogh embarked on what many now agree to be a groundbreaking creative and novel approach to artistic practice although he remained almost totally
unsuccessful in his lifetime, selling one painting to his brother Theo (Roskill 1967; Sweetman 1990). He might now be described as the perennially failing entrepreneurial risk taker. Now Van Gogh’s *ouevre* has not only achieved the dizzy heights of global popularity and financial investment strategy by multinational corporations, but has been reproduced to the extent that his touch has become instantly recognisable. Conversely, Salvador Dali was a successful creative risk taker. On closer examination of his work output over time, the artist has been much more shrewd in evaluating market conditions, moving through a number of genres, from Impressionistic to Surrealist to Religious art (Ades 1988; Dali 1993; Gibson 1997). Graham (1997) observes that Dali was perhaps the best known of the Surrealists, deliberately interpreting reality and dreams in a way never seen before in order to court controversy and then revel in the publicity received. Graham (1997:95) summarises Dali’s approach:

Dali creates an alternative experience rather than capturing the visual in our normal experience, and at the same time his creations can be seen to be explorations of that experience.

Alternative experiences and interpretations are also needed in researching at the Marketing and Entrepreneurship Interface. New theory generation can benefit from embracing non-traditional modes of enquiry such as that outlined here. An example of the usefulness of the Marketing and Entrepreneurship Interface Paradigm itself (Carson et al. 1995) is in internationalisation research where theory generation has stagnated to a large degree due to the inability to successfully model the effect of factors such as globalisation, technology, cross-cultural factors and the impact of the smaller firm in international markets (Douglas and Craig 1993; Bell 1995).

**CREATIVE METHODOLOGY**

Dali was careful to build up a network of shrewd patrons throughout his life to ensure a steady income. One of the key differences between Dali and Van Gogh is that the former was able to envelope a creative mystique around himself which he promoted to great effect to the artistic, business and wider community, much like the methods adopted by Andy Warhol (Warhol 1975). Conversely, Van Gogh was continually unable to persuade the wider public to accept his artistic output. He believed in the worth of his artistic product but was unable to develop the necessary relationships in order to secure business success. By examining the contribution of artists such as these, overlapping characteristics and behaviour found in current
Interface research and also in artistic/creative behaviour can be utilised in prescribing sets of desirable competencies which are believed to be realistically achievable in enabling the firm to grow both domestically and internationally. This should also serve to encourage the researcher to adapt a more creative stance when designing and implementing their research methodology.

Examples of works by Dali and Van Gogh have sold recently for vast amounts of money (The Economist 1990; Forbes 1994). In May 1994 a pre-Surrealist Dali painting sold for $2.2m and a Van Gogh painting was sold by Alan Bond to the Getty Museum in 1990 for between $50m and $55m. Although the style and format of their work is undoubtedly different, the author argues that it is their approach, philosophy, and creative thinking which distinguishes them from mainstream artists of the period. The one major difference was that in their own lifetime, the various publics came to accept and then applaud Dali’s efforts but it was only Van Gogh’s contemporaries and his brother Theo who lended him support; yet he was still motivated to keep producing work despite his apparent failure. It can be argued that one of the key differences of the periods in which Van Gogh and Dali practiced was the state of development of marketing, publicity and general business thinking.

While Van Gogh used the traditional methods of promotion such as exhibiting, Dali was able to use such technological inventions of the 20th Century such as film and television. An example of his joint work with Louis Bunuel, the Surrealist film maker, *Un Chien Andalou*, is still viewed by many today as groundbreaking and challenging of existing thought and practice (Evans 1995). Dali was an expert in identifying opportunities to promote his own work and also himself, to the extent that it was sometimes difficult to differentiate between Dali the artist and the creative output itself. A similar observation can be made in relation to the owner/manager and the microenterprise. Since a large proportion of firms consist of only one or two personnel (Storey 1994), the firm and the manager almost merge into one entity at times, with subsequent implications for modelling behaviour at firm and owner/manager level. Dali’s wider competencies outside painting included the creation of the dream sequence in Hitchcock’s film Spellbound (Condon and Sangster 1999), designing jewellery, furniture and a lobster-shaped telephone. Another example of Dali the self-publicist and commodifier can be seen his setting up of the Dali Museum in Figueres, with members of his own Dali Foundation employed to manage it. More recently a project has been developed to build a Dali theme park nearby (The Economist 1991).
Van Gogh may not have been adept at managing his affairs but he adopted a novel and adventurous approach in his painting which won few admirers outside his own social and artistic circles at the time, yet he still persisted with his individual style. Ehrenzwig (1970) believed that what differentiated Van Gogh from his contemporaries was his ability to handle colours in order to develop dramatic tension. His use of strong brushstrokes also differentiated his work from others by indicating his own desire, motivation and ambition, characteristics also found in many entrepreneurial marketers. A detailed insight into Van Gogh’s character can be gained by reading the well documented collection of his correspondence throughout his life (Roskill 1967; Van Gogh 1999). This enables the extraction of Van Gogh’s central attributes to be made, not just at one moment in time, but also longitudinally. Effects of both social and work environments can be analysed with respect to shaping creative behaviour. In addition to carrying out traditional methods of research such as the postal survey and the personal interview (Malhotra and Birks 2000), the researcher at the Marketing and Entrepreneurship Interface may find it beneficial to gain access to a range of documentation belonging to the owner/manager in order to gain an improved understanding of decision making. Van Gogh believed in tackling issues at a sometimes basic level, echoing the hands-on approach of many owner/managers of microenterprises (Derrida 1987: 255):

.. truth is so dear to me, and so is the seeking to make true, that indeed I believe I would still rather be a cobbler than a musician with colours.

Adams (1996) notes the way in which Van Gogh differentiated himself from those around him, mainly due to his refusal to conform to existing ways of thinking, describing him as making an odd, intense impression at times. Entrepreneurial marketing behaviour can also differ from accepted ways of thinking and practice but can also result in significant business success. Van Gogh not only produced unique pieces of artwork but also re-interpreted existing masterpieces such as Rembrandt’s The Raising of Lazarus in his own style (Walker and Chaplin 1997:124). Although formal approaches to marketing tend not to be described as great masterpieces of strategy, the entrepreneurial owner/manager adjusts these practices to suit the environment of the smaller firm.

WIDER EVIDENCE OF CREATIVITY

The origins of creativity research are founded mainly in the field of social psychology where both work and social environments shape the creative personality of individuals and groups as well as impacting upon innovative
outcomes of the organisation (Guilford 1950; Gruber et al. 1962; Amabile 1998). As well as identifying precursors to contemporary creativity in the art world, there is also evidence of creativity being found in non traditional fields such as engineering and computer programming (Raudsepp 1983). Schwarz (1990:13) comments on the phenomenon of engineering creativity:

Engineering design...involves the use of scientific principles, numeracy, synthesis, analysis, creativity, decision making, together with the timely consideration of human factors, technical information and market demand in the definition of a product...

So even in disciplines of a sometimes routine, methodical nature, creative inputs are needed in order to offer situation specific solutions. Rampley (1998), on linking creativity with product aesthetics, believes that as long as a process offers something different to the usual method, it can be perceived as creative. Rampley also links genius, imagination and subjectivity to being creative. It is worth noting that genius status cannot be achieved by all, but that creativity in both work and social environments can certainly be practiced. The question is, whether or not the groups and individuals concerned are prepared to do so. The reasons behind being creative and original may not always be immediately apparent. Some individuals derive creative solutions but their ideas appear to have no logical basis, as demonstrated by Kant (1952: 168):

…where an author owes a product to his genius he dos not himself know how the ideas have entered his head, nor has he in it in his power to invent the like at pleasure or methodically.

Bohm (1998) identified the importance of creativity within the realms of physics where problem solving can be best achieved by being able to respond in an original and creative way. Transferring this notion of creative ability and meaningful output into the smaller enterprise, Bridge et al. (1998: 46) note the necessary requirements of the creative business:

(Enterprising) people tend to have more originality than others and are able to produce solutions that fly in the face of established knowledge. They are also inclined to be more adaptable, and are prepared to consider a range of alternative approaches. They challenge the status quo, which can sometimes conflict with their colleagues.

There is some evidence at national and government level for supporting innovation and creativity. The current British Prime Minister, Rt. Hon Tony Blair, stated that a competitive edge can be gained through the input of
creativity into science, engineering, technology and design, resulting in the development of world class products and services (Blair 1998). The then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Rt. Hon Peter Mandelson, outlined the importance of turning creative talent into realisable products and services demanded by the customer (Mandelson 1998:31). He also linked knowledge with creativity, commenting that:

The creation of the knowledge driven economy is not some far distant dream. It is all around us. The creativity driving it affects every stage of the manufacturing process. Product design. Innovation. Marketing and after sales service.

In differentiating between creative performance from ordinary performance, the focus should be on determining which personal abilities and characteristics impinge upon the process, together with assessing how the social environment affects the outcome. This tends to differ from the majority of modelling attempts from the Marketing and Entrepreneurship literature which tend to focus mainly on fixed internal and external factors and characteristics of the individuals, groups and companies involved, while ignoring the social dimension. In the export behaviour literature, for example, sets of internal and external factors are continually modelled with respect to their apparent impact on export strategy, performance and success (Jaffe et al. 1988; Aaby and Slater 1989; Madsen 1994; Stewart 1997). However, in some smaller firms, other factors should be taken into consideration, such as lifestyle (Pioch and Schmidt 2000). Here, profit may not be the main motivation behind forming the business. Instead, the owner/manager believes more in the worth of the lifestyle attached to operating the business (Scase 2000). This is not to say that such firms do not take risks, are creative or exhibit entrepreneurial marketing behaviour. The typical arts and craft microenterprise has been shown to take risks in terms of both the product itself and in the way in which the business is developed, despite the fact that many of these firms are restricted in their growth due to the problems associated with small batch and one-off methods of production and the impact of a strong lifestyle orientation (Dormer 1997).

Creative concepts do not always have to be complicated; sometimes the most simple notion is the most effective (Collings 1999). The willingness to accept the basic idea, when management may perceive that much more time and effort are needed, may be all that is required to differentiate firm performance from its competitors. In order to achieve this, a cult of change may be required within the firm. This may be easier to achieve within the smaller firm environment where flexibility occurs much more readily than
in the larger enterprise (Storey 1994; Poon and Jevins 1997). In the microenterprise, where the owner/manager usually has a high degree of locus of control (Delmar 2000), the entrepreneurial marketer should be willing to examine formal marketing procedures and adapt them to suit the needs of the firm, developing an in-house system if that is what is required. Creativity can then be linked directly to this flexible approach, with the entrepreneurial marketer being prepared to challenge existing methods and implementing changes if they are needed.

The factors discussed here have also been found in the way the artist Picasso worked, where he refused to acknowledge criticisms from the more conservative in his industry, developed his own methods of producing his work and, as time progressed, was prepared to change his perspective and working style to suit his own needs (McCully 1981). Other contributing factors relating to creativity include the freedom to develop creative concepts and self expression, acting on instinct and spontaneity, together with an element of chance. An artist who followed this path was Jackson Pollock (Varnedoe and Karmel 1998; Collings 1999) who received fierce criticism in the early stages of his career due to his adoption of non traditional methods of expression but who has since achieved the status of one the world’s best modern artists of the twentieth century. The ability to shock in a creative sense is another method of achieving notoriety and competitive advantage. Collings (1999) gives the example of Jake and Dinos Chapman succeeding in shocking the artworld through their use of mannequins and creative soldering techniques. Their method relies on shock as an innovation, an outcome of playful invention. The opportunity recognition and exploitation of a creative void and the production of what can be perceived as angry rather than boring products has also contributed to their success. The resultant work is perceived as having feelings and emotions, with the consumer being drawn to it as a result of the initial shock and then building up a relationship through interpretation of the shock.

Of course, not all small firms can afford to develop such products or services but there is a lesson to be learned. Conforming to what is expected and to follow the marketing principle ad nauseum by producing what the customer wants (Lancaster and Massingham 1988; Dibb et al. 1997; Baker 1999; Kotler 2000) would mean that there would have been no Van Gogh, Salvador Dali, Tracey Emin (Brown 1998), Gilbert and George (Obrist and Violette 1997), or new technologies where the customer has never previously experienced such a product before. Another type of creativity is creative annoyance, with the entrepreneurial marketer exploiting the dark side of the customer. Damien Hirst has followed this strategy successfully.
with his fish tank animals in formaldehyde satisfying the demand for the artistic counter culture which was also so successfully followed by Andy Warhol (Warhol 1975; Hirst 1997; Collings 1999). In contrast to the creative output from the Chapman brothers and Damien Hurst, Henri Matisse (Clement 1994; Matisse and Morgan 1996) developed beautiful creative products. His success was achieved partly through his radical nature and in his ability to promote the persistence of beauty in the consumer’s mind. This beauty characteristic resulted in the evoking of an intense experience within the viewer of his work, with creative rhythm and simplicity being key success factors. Creativity at the Marketing and Entrepreneurship Interface occurs on a variety of levels and can have a range of successful outcomes at individual decision maker level as well as impacting upon firm and industry levels.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This work has sought to promote an alternative perspective on researching at the Marketing and Entrepreneurship Interface, given the importance of creativity as a key success factor in both the smaller firm and in relation to those involved in researching Interface phenomena. By examining the creative attributes and outputs of successful creative practitioners, a number of conclusions and recommendations can be made in the hope that future research endeavours will at least aim at embracing this philosophy, if not the practice itself.

One of the central lessons emerging from this work is that creative people tend to have a high level of self belief in what they do, despite receiving fierce criticisms at times. As long as a body of quality values and opinions is generated, then the adoption of an alternative methodology seems justified. Researchers at the Interface should ‘practice what they preach’ and be prepared to initiate innovate ideas and practices themselves. Promotion of these alternative conceptualisations can be carried out in a variety of ways, including workshop and seminar settings where positive feedback can be gained from peer groups, and through teaching at both undergraduate and postgraduate level where students can be exposed to these different methods of enquiry.

Instead of resisting change, entrepreneurial marketers (both practitioner and researcher based) should be prepared to work with it, anticipating future trends. An example of an emerging creative approach can be seen in the way in which teaching and learning is beginning to embrace electronic
methods, instead of relying on traditional modes of facilitation where educator/learner physical presence is required. Although the majority of entrepreneurial markets may not believe themselves to be, or be perceived as, geniuses, they should believe in the worth of visionary thinking in order to stimulate new theory generation and improved practical understanding. Creative ability should be used as a strategic weapon, as a type of competitive advantage over those not prepared to take risks and change their ways of thinking and operating.

The Marketing and Entrepreneurship Interface may only be an emerging paradigm of enquiry, but it only takes one lone New Entrepreneurial Marketer to attract a following in order for a new school of thought to be formed.

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