

THE TYPE OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIALISTS IN THE CONCEPTUAL AGE

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Abstrak

Kita sekarang berada di zaman konsepsual. Ekonomi dan masyarakat yang dibina berdasarkan urutan logik pada zaman informasi kini disemai untuk memenuhi keperluan emosi dan persepsi dunia. Globalisasi telah mencapakan lagi fenomena ini yang mana ianya menular ke dalam zaman konseptual itu sendiri. Perkara ini telah menyumbang kepada permintaan para pengguna hari ini yang mahukan agar mereka diperakui sebagai individu – mereka menghendaki produk-produk yang mampu membuatkan mereka berasa sesuai selain produk-produk yang boleh berfungsi secara baik untuk mereka. Sehubungan dengan itu, ianya amat penting di kalangan pekerja kreatif untuk mengubah cara pemikiran mereka agar dapat dipertingkatkan kemahiran-kemahiran inovasi dan kreatif sejajar dengan kehendak zaman konseptual. Kertas kerja ini memberikan penerangan am mengenai corak perkembangan dan rekabentuk, mengupas ciri-ciri pekerja kreatif yang diperlukan dalam ekonomi kreatif dan mencadangkan jenis-jenis latihan yang diperlukan untuk mempertingkatkan lagi kemahiran-kemahiran inovasi dan kreatif di dalam industri kreatif.

Kata Kunci: Industri Kreatif, Zaman Informasi, Zaman Konseptual, Pekerja Konsep.

Abstract

We are now in the conceptual age. The economy and society built on the logical order of the information age are now nurtured to fulfil the emotional and perceptual world. Globalisation has further magnified such phenomenon as it encroaches on the conceptual age. Consequently, today's consumers demand to be treated as individuals – they want products that make them feel right instead of products that can just do the right thing for them. In conjunction with this, it is now imperative that creative workers need to change their mind-sets so as to enhance their innovative and creative skills in line with the demands of the conceptual age. This paper aims at providing a general overview of the development and design trend, illuminating on the characteristics of creative workers required in the creative economy and proposing types of trainings needed to enhance their innovative and creative skills for creative industries.

Key words: creative industries, information age, conceptual age, concept worker.

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Introduction

This paper discusses the type of human resources required in the creative industries. The booming creative industries in today's world have undeniably resulted in turning countries into high-income nations. Equipped with knowledge of ICT and hi-tech since the 20th century, we have now, without realising, begun to experience the "Conceptual Age". The type of human resources in the 20th century can be identified as "knowledge workers" whilst in the 21st century the human resources management consists of "concept workers". In the current 21st century, human civilisation has passed the development trend of science: the age of exploration and mechanisation and now we almost reach the peak of the development trend of information: the age of hi-tech, virtual knowledge and ICT. As technology is still ubiquitously prevalent in today's life that further augments creative industries thus making them technology-dependent, the creative industries must find ways to engage with consumers. Consumerism plays a vital role in the creative industries. This paper proposes that, creative industrialists, in order to remain engaging, they need to fulfill the spiritual, meaning and emotional needs of the consumers. The spiritual, meaning and emotion are all conceptual in nature. In this sense, they become the "concept workers." Therefore all creative workers in the conceptual age can be identified as the concept workers. They become the type of human resources in today's burgeoning creative industries. In understanding the idea of the concept workers and their attributes, this paper divides the discussion into five major sections: The Natural Sequence, Types of Brain, Characteristics of People Required in the Conceptual Age, The Design Trend and Types of Training (Courses) for the Conceptual Age. In the first section, the paper traces the trends of development in human civilisation from the age of hunter-gatherer society through the industrial age to the conceptual age. The second section briefly reviews Premack's "Theory of Mind" that entails further discussions on the types of brain needed in each of the development trend in human civilisation. In section three, the paper focuses on the conceptual age and its classification of people required in this particular development trend. Section four further delineates the design trend that explicates the relationship between product and emotion. In the final section, the paper elucidates the types of training needed in facing challenges of the conceptual age. The discussions are illuminated further with the support of our own table and figures so as to make arguments clearer in the forms illustration.



1.0 THE NATURAL SEQUENCE

The inception of information age has transformed consumption demand from quantitative to perceptual consumption (Wang, 2011) where people do not only live in a society with logical order but they also live in a perceptual world. We are now moving from an economy and a society built on logical linear, computer-like capabilities of “the information age” to an economy and a society built on the inventive, empathic, big-picture capabilities called “The Conceptual Age” (Pink, 2005) (see figure 1 for further illustration). Such phenomenon may give rise to the future (re)defined as belonging to different kinds of persons with different kinds of minds such as creators and empathisers, pattern recognisers and meaning makers. These people (artists, inventors, designers, storytellers, caregivers, consolers, big picture thinkers) will now reap society’s richest rewards and its greatest joys (Pink, 2005).

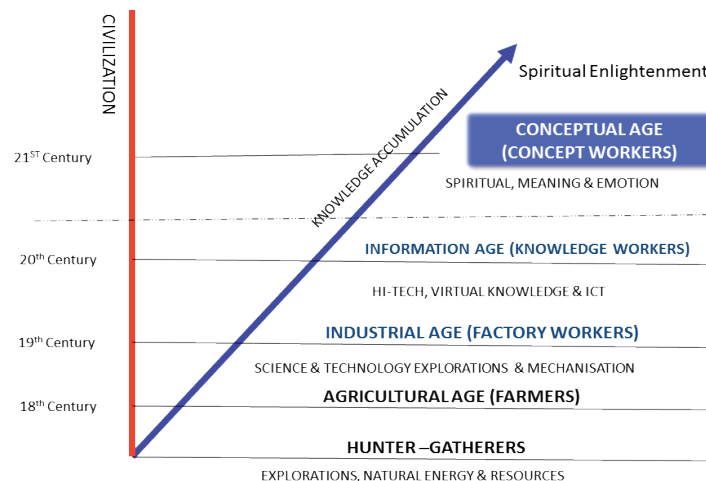


Figure 1: The Development Trend

The earliest humans known as “hunter-gatherers” lived primarily on scavenging where rather than killing large animals for meat themselves, they consumed carcasses of large animals killed by other predators or carcasses from animals that died of natural causes (Collins & Attenborough, 1990). Further Marlowe (2005) confirms that they survived on foods obtained from wild plants and animals. The coming of “Agricultural Age” replaced hunter-gatherers with farming and pastoralist groups. The groups rely mainly on domesticated animals and agriculture. Physical strength and manual skills were the order of that labour intensive period. They were intuitively driven by spiritual attachment, poverty and feudalism.

The advent of industrial revolution from 1750 to 1850 brought about the “Industrial Age” where agriculture, manufacturing, mining, transportation and technology had profound impacts on the social, economic and cultural conditions of the time. Industrial age was technology and material driven resulting in materialism, greed, war, automation and mass production. The next civilisation is marked by the era called “Information Age” – a knowledge-based society characterised by the ability of individuals to transfer information freely and to have instant access to information that would have been difficult or impossible to obtain in the past. In this sense, it is a knowledge-driven period that makes use of automation and skills. Globalisation is also directly associated with the mobility of these skills and automation. In other words, the key focus of information age is knowledge acquisition and application. Further the emergence of cross-domain disciplines particularly in outsourcing witnesses a trend towards creative knowledge, rational application and innovation. We are now progressing from an era that was information-dependent towards the era that revolves around the concept development; this age is referred to as “Conceptual Age” which will be dominated by new senses (design, story, symphony, empathy, play and meaning) to create a need to diverge from the current reliance on linear and sequential algorithmic practices in outsourcing and adopting cognition-based approaches (A. B. Patki, T. Patki & Kulkarni, 2009).



2.0 Types of Brain

Apart from its simple task of recognising other people, the brain has the uncanny ability to guess what other people are thinking. This is called “Theory of Mind” proposed by Dr. David Premack of the University of Pennsylvania. This simply refers to the ability of mind to infer thoughts of other people. In any complex society, anyone with the ability to correctly guess intentions, motives and plans of other people has a tremendous survival advantage over those who are not able to do so. Theory of mind allows us to form alliances with others, isolate our enemies and solidify friendships. As a result, this may increase the power and chances of survival and mating. To some extent, several anthropologists believe that the mastery of theory of mind is essential in the evolution of the brain (Kaku, 2014). Pink (2005) divides brain into the left-brain (L-directed) and the right-brain (R-directed). The left-brain is sequential, logical and analytical which is considered important for the information age. This type of brain though it is deemed necessary, however it is no longer sufficient. On the other hand, the R-Brain characterised as nonlinear, intuitive and holistic may help determine one either, flourishes or flounders in the conceptual age. According to Pink (2005), this type of brain has six senses: design, story, symphony, empathy, play and meaning.

- **Design:** design is critical to every business; in order to make products more user-friendly, beautiful, energy-efficient, ergonomic and useful, R-brain is necessary because it allows us to understand how people use products in order to make products not just functional but also beautiful and emotionally engaging.
- **Story:** This is how information has traditionally been passed from one generation to another. Pink (2005) asserts that story is a context enriched by emotion thus making story important because of its emotional impact that allows for information or memory restoration.
- **Symphony:** Pink (2005) defines symphony to be largely about relationships. In this manner, the conceptual age will reward those who can see connections between seemingly unrelated areas and those who can blend their knowledge of diverse talents and skills to push the boundary of accepted practices (Pink, 2005). This is because the greatest demand will not be analysis but synthesis.
- **Empathy:** This is an ability to be in someone’s shoes or it simply means to care for others. This attribute will be highly needed in the conceptual age; it will distinguish those who thrive.
- **Play:** According to Pink (2005), conceptual age will allow us to combine both work and play. The focus of play will be on the process rather than product; activity rather than its result; relationships rather than outcome (Huitt, 2007). Therefore, laughter and light-heartedness will be of benefit not only to health, but also professional performance because too much sobriety can be bad for career and worse for the general well-being (Pink, 2005).
- **Meaning:** This is the basic desire to find purpose and meaning in one’s life (Pink, 2005). Meaning has become a central aspect of our work and our lives; however pursuing meaning in life is obviously not a simple task.

Table 1 below illustrates types of brain and the development trend at each age:

PERIOD	TREND	BRAIN	IMPACT
Conceptual Age	Art & Humanities	Left & Right Brain	Spiritual, meaning & Emotion
Information Age, Knowledge Based	Science & Technology	Left Brain	Hi-Tech, Virtual Knowledge & Communication
Industrial Age	Science & Technology	Left Brain	Science & Technology Exploration & Mechanisation
Agricultural Age	Art & Technology	Left & Right Brain	Exploration, Natural energy & Resources

Table 1: Types of brain at each age and the development trend



3.0 CHARACTERISTICS OF PEOPLE REQUIRED IN THE CONCEPTUAL AGE

Figure 2 classifies the set of people needed in the conceptual age as people can be grouped into four: Theorists, Organisers, Humanitarians and Innovators.

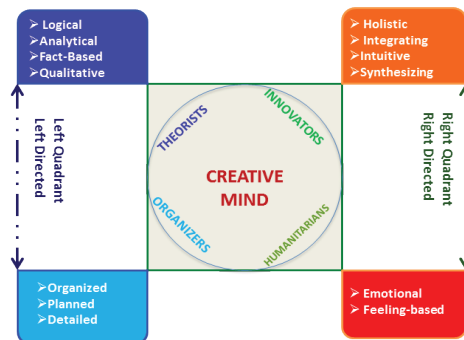


Figure 2: The characteristics of people required in the conceptual age

Theorists: These are people who can adapt and integrate observations into complex and logically sound theories. They approach problems in a step-by-step manner. They tend to be perfectionists who like to fit things into a rational scheme. They are logical and analytical rather than subjective in their thinking and are also fact-based.

Organisers: These are people with the ability to rally together resources such as people, materials and funders to create more efficient process, smarter solutions and better businesses. Some of their qualities are that they are organised and sequential in thinking and they detail their plans.

Innovators: innovators are people with the ability to introduce something new and better in reality as compared to the previous skills of perceiving or creating. They have a holistic mind set, intuitive in thinking as well as the ability to integrate and synthesise ideas.

Humanitarians: these are people with an ethic of kindness. They have interpersonal skills to communicate and interact with other people and the ability to meet people's emotional need. To surmise, in a world tossed by abundance and automation, the L-directed thinking (Science-based), although undoubtedly it remains necessary, it is, however, proffered that it ceases to suffice. Thus we must become proficient in the R-directed thinking (Art & Humanities-based) and master aptitudes that are high concept and high touch. We need to perform tasks so that knowledge workers can satisfy the aesthetic, emotional and spiritual demands of a prosperous time (Pink, 2005).

4.0 THE DESIGN TREND

With great transformation taking place at this present time, consumers are now shifting from materialistic needs to emotional needs (Rolf, 2009). Consequently, people will get richer, wealthier and smarter but they will still seek more spiritual-related products. However, Rolf's theory may give rise to a potent issue that this would be the end of mass marketing era. This is because by focussing on small brand and individualism, producers would become smaller in quantity although they may still uphold their unique traditional ways. With these added values, price will be high, in spite of the fact that, the money is believed to be paid willingly and happily by future consumers who want to consume not just products but the story. According to Rolf (2009), if we limit ourselves to thinking in terms of realities, facts and knowledge, we have got the future all wrong because it is made, not of certainties as it is merely present in our thoughts and dreams. This has prompted many companies to start searching for the future in the rear view mirror because that is where certainties are found and parts of reality that can be verified. On this account, the strict scientific model of logic is a trap that prevents us from looking ahead (Rolf, 2009).

The influence of emotion in relation to products is evident in product purchase and use (Norman, 2004); therefore, choosing a product is largely an emotional process. A research by Boatright & Cagan (2010) reveals that people pay for products that address their emotional needs in all types of business. It means that product emotion is critical to the long-term success of any product that consumers interact with directly or indirectly. This is the reason why Pieter Desmet tries to unravel the relationship between product and emotion. In his research, he has developed a product emotion meter (PrEmo) where emotion towards a product can be measured (Desmet, 2002). In addition, Professor Mitsuo Nagamachi in the 1970s developed Kansei Engineering to translate feelings and impressions into product parameters. Therefore, to be relevant in the conceptual age, it is indeed necessary to develop the R-brain that can create products that have emotional and spiritual contents coupled with aesthetic appearances.



5.0 TYPES OF TRAINING (COURSES) FOR THE CONCEPTUAL AGE

In order to be fully familiarised with the conceptual age in creative industries, we need to be able to emulate the characteristics required to thrive in the future trend. In order to be theorists, organizers, innovators and humanitarians, some specific training are required as shown in figure 3 below.

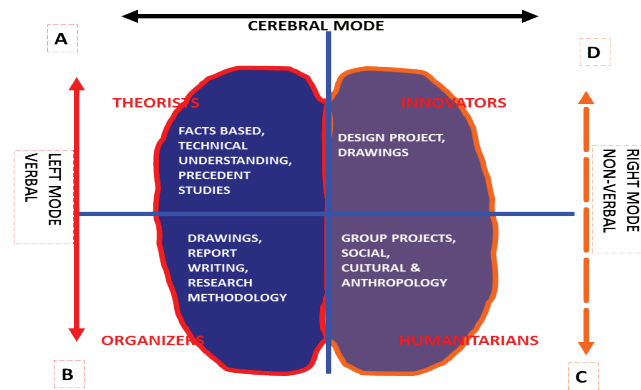


Figure 3: Specific trainings for the conceptual age

1. **Theorists:** In order to be able to integrate observation into complex and logically sound theories, we must train ourselves so that we are able to build fact-based theories and develop technical understanding of what is achievable and also provide guidance to ensure current thinking is integrated into decisions or projects.
2. **Organiser:** An organiser needs to be trained on skills related to drawings, writing reports and developing research methodology. All these will help organise resources to create efficient processes.
3. **Innovators:** An intended innovator must learn the systematic approach needed in designing projects and must also develop drawing skill as this will help conceptualise new ideas.
4. **Humanitarians:** humanitarians must learn how to manage group projects, study and understand the social and cultural life of people, their organisation, physical traits, behaviour and their variations among different groups of humans. This knowledge will help build interpersonal skills in communicating and interacting with other people and will also help meet other people's emotional needs.

6.0 CONCLUSION

It is important for those who are involved in creative industries to have the ability to know how to bring about a product experience in the conceptual age. This is because, designing for greatness based upon misguided vision will lead to failure (Luke, 2009). Therefore, the best solution would be for creative workers to invest more time and efforts to embrace the characteristics required in the conceptual age. Understanding how our brain works is of utmost important. This will help them conceptualise ideas that are suitable, make better judgements and lower the risk of product failure.



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