

# Artificial intelligence should be used to augment human creativity - not replace it

 By [Natascha Torres](#)

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*"It's easy for AI to come up with something novel just randomly. But it's very hard to come up with something that is novel and unexpected and useful." - John Smith, manager of Multimedia and Vision at IBM Research*



Image source: [123RF.com](#)

One of the most exciting opportunities an age of big data and artificial intelligence (AI) holds for marketers is the ability to hyper-personalise advertising on a massive scale. The tools we have at our disposal make it increasingly viable to customise messaging and creative on digital platforms for different people without the need for human intervention.

Platforms such as Google's Smart Display and Dynamic Search and Facebook's Dynamic Creatives enable brands to automate the process of tailoring ads for different audiences and to do so at a highly granular level. In theory, this enables us to improve engagement and conversion by getting the right message to the right person at the right time.



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But in practice, the technology cannot yet replace the intuition, imagination and insight of a good creative thinker. The ads we can create with the Facebook or Google algorithms are more personalised, but they often don't create the engagement or emotional response you'd hope to get from a great campaign.

## Merging two worlds

At this stage, we are trying to merge two worlds that used to be distinct: the tech-driven world of data, analytics and algorithms and the human world of strategy and creativity. As we do so, we are leaning more heavily on the technology side, with some brands and agencies even thinking of it as an eventual replacement for human creativity.

But AI cannot be truly creative in the sense of using imagination to develop truly original ideas and make something. AI systems are limited by the original datasets humans give them to learn from. So, the question shouldn't be technology or creativity, but rather how AI can help creatives to meet their goals.



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AI and machine learning are useful for collecting data, analysing it to understand users' intent and behaviour, and then presenting content that is most relevant to each person. But as the AI tailors ads to generate the right headlines, body copy, images and videos for different people, it can only work with the creative assets put at its disposal.

Getting it right isn't as simple as testing various combinations of assets to achieve the highest relevance for each person and to ensure the best results for the campaign goal. It's not just about putting together the right images and copy to address the needs of the user, but also about ensuring that the ad the person sees is interesting and emotionally engaging. That's where human creativity comes in.

So where do brands, agencies and marketing teams go from here?

**1. Start thinking about AI as an assistant for the creative team** rather than a potential replacement for human insight and emotional intelligence. AI is invaluable and cost-effective for the rapid gathering of data and testing of different creative combinations, freeing up time for human creatives to dream up original thoughts and build emotionally engaging creative assets. Creatives and marketers will need to rapidly upskill to keep ahead of the tech advancements.

**2. Marketers still need their creative agencies, perhaps more than ever.** They should find ways to bridge the gaps between creative agencies and data & analytics teams and agencies. This will help them use data to drive better creative, while leveraging human strengths around cultural nuances, understanding human motivation, and original thinking.

**3. Creative teams will need to move beyond the one killer concept or the one big idea** towards developing multiple concepts that can be tested across various audience segments. The good news is that we can now try numerous ideas – cheaply and rapidly – without focus groups or surveys. This enables creatives to quickly create engaging assets and messages answering to different stages of the customer journey, and different consumer behaviours, demographics, interests and so forth.

**4. It's time for media owners and digital media agencies to work more closely with creative agencies.** A good media strategist will be able to offer a lot more value upfront when creatives are brainstorming rather than at the end. The role is no longer simply to select the best channels and propose the most suitable ad units, but also to help creatives to understand the potential of various channels and machine learning.

To close, here are some practical tips for AI-enabled creativity:

- Brief media and creative agencies together.
- Give creative and media agencies more freedom and time to test different media and asset combinations.
- Don't wait for a new campaign to test new concepts and ideas.
- Don't waste time finessing creative according to what you think people will want to see before you test it.
- Test multiple concepts and then finesse the ideas that perform best for each audience segment.
- If one concept performs well, don't leave it as the only creative running for months to avoid it going stale.
- Take learnings from the results and use them to optimise your creative.

## ABOUT NATASCHA TORRES

Natascha Torres is the Digital Strategist at DataCore Media, which helps organisations to drive better results from their digital marketing investments by unlocking the full potential of campaign performance data. She has over 14 years of marketing experience working at agencies like FCB, Ogilvy and Publicis Groupe.  
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