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COPYWRITING AS A CREATIVITY TOOL IN MARKETING

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U skladu sa članom 54. Pravila studiranja za I, II ciklus studija, integrisani, stručni i specijalistički studij na Univerzitetu u Sarajevu, daje se

IZJAVA O AUTENTIČNOSTI RADA

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COPYWRITING AS A CREATIVITY TOOL IN MARKETING

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SAŽETAK

Akademsko zanimanje za copywriting, kao jednom od temeljnih elemenata marketinga nije proporcionalno njegovom doprinosu i važnosti za marketing u globalu. Počevši od svima vidljivih reklama na uličnim reklamnim panelima, preko tradicionalnih medija kao što su radio i TV, pa sve do neograničenih prostranstava interneta, copywriting pronalazi svoje značajno učešće u promidžbenom aspektu marketinga. Međutim, oglašavanje kompanija prema svojim krajnjim kupcima, ne predstavlja jedini slučaj upotrebe za copywriting, obzirom na to da se on također koristi i u tzv. B2B marketingu gdje kompanije komuniciraju sa drugim kompanijama u svrhu promocije, otvaranja novih kanala komunikacije između njih, ili jednostavnoj prodaji. Svaki email, svaki landing page, svako prodajno pismo, ili opis proizvoda, kao i mnogi drugi oblici pisanog teksta, spadaju u copywriting.

U ovom magistarskom radu, fokus je bio na psihološkom aspektu pristupa copywritera prilikom pisanja svojih tekstova. Rad se bavi konkretnim metodama ubjeđivanja i njihovom utemeljenju u poznavanju psihologije kupaca. Pokušaj da se odgovori na pitanja: " Koje to metode/tehnike ubjeđivanja copywriteri najviše koriste i zašto smatraju da su baš te tehnike najefikasnije? ". Također, fokus je bio i na moralnom aspektu njihovog posla, te njihovim moralnim načelima i pogledima na cjelokupni proces ubjeđivanja, prodaje i generalne komunikacije sa potencijalnim kupcima.

ABSTRACT

Academic interest in copywriting, as one of the fundamental elements of marketing, is not proportionate to its contribution and importance to marketing as a whole. Starting from the visible advertisements on street billboards, through traditional media such as radio and TV, to the limitless expanses of the internet, copywriting finds its significant role in the promotional aspect of marketing. However, advertising companies to their end customers is not the only use case for copywriting, considering that it is also used in so-called B2B marketing, where companies communicate with other companies for the purpose of promotion, opening new communication channels between them, or simply sales. Every email, every landing page, every sales letter, product description, and many other forms of written text fall under copywriting.

In this master's thesis, the focus was on the psychological aspect of a copywriter's approach when writing their copy. The paper deals with specific persuasion methods and their grounding in the understanding of customer psychology. An attempt was made to answer the question: "Which persuasion methods/techniques do copywriters the most and why do they consider these techniques to be the most effective?". Furthermore, the focus was on the moral aspect of their work, as well as their moral principles and views on the overall process of persuasion, sales, and general communication with potential customers.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

TV - television (televizija)

B2B - business to business (poslovno-do-poslovnog)

US - United States (Sjedinjene Američke Države)

SEO - Search Engine Optimization (optimizacija za pretraživače)

ELM - Elaboration Likelihood Model (Model elaboriranja vjerovatnoće)

FOMO - Fear of Missing Out (Strah od propuštanja)

AI-artificial intelligence (Vještačka inteligencija)

GAD-Generalized Anxiety Disorder (generalizovani anksiozni poremećaj)

GPT-Generative Pre-trained Transformer (Generativni unaprijed obučeni transformator)

CTA-Call to action (poziv na akciju)

QDA-Qualitative Data Analysis (analiza kvalitativnih podataka)

1. INTRODUCTION

In the ever-evolving landscape of marketing, where the battle for consumer attention becomes increasingly fierce, copywriting emerges not merely as a tool for selling but as a crucible of creativity. This thesis explores how the art and science of copywriting serve as a pivotal mechanism for engaging audiences, fostering brand loyalty, and driving consumer behavior. At its core, copywriting transcends the conventional boundaries of advertising, melding persuasive language with creative insight to captivate and influence the target audience.

The significance of copywriting in marketing cannot be overstated. In a digital age saturated with information, the ability to cut through the noise and resonate with consumers on a personal level is both an art and a strategic imperative. Copywriting, in this context, acts as a bridge between the brand and its audience, employing creativity to craft messages that not only inform but also entertain, persuade, and inspire. This thesis posits that copywriting, when executed with creativity and strategic acumen, becomes an invaluable asset in the marketing toolkit, capable of transforming passive readers into active participants in the brand's narrative.

To explore this thesis, we will first establish a foundational understanding of copywriting within the marketing domain, tracing its evolution from mere text production to a strategic creative discipline. We will examine the role of creativity in copywriting, identifying how it influences the effectiveness of marketing campaigns and contributes to the overall brand strategy. Through interviews with seasoned copywriters and analysis of successful marketing campaigns, we aim to uncover the techniques and processes that exemplify the use of copywriting as a creativity tool.

Further, we will investigate the psychological underpinnings of persuasive copywriting, examining how principles of human behavior and cognitive biases are leveraged to craft compelling messages. The exploration will extend to various copywriting techniques—such as storytelling, emotional appeal, and the use of persuasive elements like scarcity, authority, and social proof—and how these techniques are creatively applied to engage and influence the target audience.

In addressing the ethical considerations inherent in persuasive copywriting, this thesis will also ponder the fine line between persuasion and manipulation, exploring the moral responsibilities of copywriters in shaping consumer perceptions and decisions. By highlighting examples of ethical dilemmas faced by copywriters and the strategies employed to navigate these challenges, we aim to shed light on the importance of integrity and authenticity in creative copywriting.

Moreover, the impact of digital transformation on copywriting will be scrutinized, with a focus on how emerging technologies and platforms have expanded the canvas for creative expression in marketing. The discussion will include the role of artificial intelligence in augmenting human creativity, offering insights into the future trajectory of copywriting as a tool for innovative marketing.

In conclusion, this thesis will synthesize the insights gathered to articulate a comprehensive perspective on the role of copywriting as a creativity tool in marketing. By examining the multifaceted interplay between creativity, strategy, and ethics in copywriting, we aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of its significance in contemporary marketing practices. Through this exploration this thesis aspires to underscore the indispensable role of creativity in crafting messages that not only sell but also resonate deeply with the human experience, ultimately enriching the discourse on the art and science of marketing communication.

1.1. Research problem and object of research

The main objective of this thesis is to analyze the creative and persuasive techniques used by copywriters in their writing to influence prospects to make a purchase. This study aims to answer the central question of what approaches copywriters take when persuading prospects, and how these techniques are rooted in human psychology.

The research will examine the ways in which copywriters use specific psychological aspects to their advantage when crafting messages that tap into the psychology of their target audience. According to Cialdini (2007), the process of persuasion is rooted in the fundamental principles of human psychology, such as reciprocity, social proof, authority, and commitment. This thesis delves into the intricacies of these psychological factors and how they intertwine with copywriting strategies, thereby providing a comprehensive analysis of the persuasive elements in copywriting.

A deeper understanding of the relationship between copywriting and human psychology requires examination of why people buy. The process of purchasing is influenced by a wide range of psychological factors, such as motivations, emotions, beliefs, and values (Aaker, 1997). Martin (2010) highlights that by examining these factors, the research will uncover how copywriters use specific psychological aspects to their advantage when persuading prospects.

1.2. Research goal

The research goal of this thesis is twofold. Firstly, to systematically examine and analyze the creative and persuasive techniques used by copywriters in their writing, with a focus on the usage frequency and purpose of psychological techniques. Secondly, to highlight the significance of creativity in copywriting and its impact on the effectiveness of persuasive techniques. The research will strive to arrive at a theoretical conclusion by conducting a comprehensive examination of the copywriting techniques used by copywriters and their underlying psychological foundations. This examination includes a detailed analysis of case studies and real-world examples to understand the practical application of these techniques.

The study aims to identify the most frequently used psychological techniques in copywriting and understand their purpose and effectiveness in influencing the buying behavior of prospects. Additionally, it will explore the role of creativity in enhancing the impact of these psychological techniques. The study will also consider the evolving nature of digital marketing and how it influences the development and implementation of copywriting strategies.

The findings of this research will contribute to the existing literature on copywriting, persuasive techniques, and creativity in marketing. The results of this study will have practical implications for copywriters and marketers, as it will provide a better understanding of the most effective techniques for persuading prospects to make a purchase and the importance of incorporating creativity in copywriting.

1.3. Research methodology

In this thesis, the focus will be on copywriting techniques. Main research questions are:

RQ1: What approaches do copywriters use when persuading prospects to buy a product or a service?

RQ2: What techniques do they find to be the most effective?

RQ3: Do they have any moral dilemmas or resistance when using these techniques?

To get an answer to these questions, first, there should be an understanding of why people buy. Although we will not delve too deeply into this issue, it is essential to understand the psychological processes and aspects that influence the purchase. It is the only way to grasp how copywriters choose the aspects of human psychology to focus on when persuading. The goal of this research is to understand the creativity process behind writing a copy. We want to know what steps copywriters go through when shaping up the idea and what ap-

proaches do they take. This includes identifying the key elements of the creative process and understanding how these elements interplay with psychological persuasion techniques.

In order to investigate the desired research questions, a qualitative research design has been created. The research will be implemented through semi-structured online interviews with active copywriters. With the rise of the technology, it makes sense to use online interviews to mitigate the physical distance, and to increase the pool of possible interviewees (Hooley, Wellens, & Marriott, 2012). People who practice copywriting daily will be able to participate in the research. This methodology ensures a broad range of perspectives and experiences, enriching the research with diverse insights into the art of copywriting.

Both freelancers, as well as in-house copywriters, will be eligible to take part in the research. Interviews will have open-ended questions asking for answers in the form of a detailed description of the working process which is being researched. Questions will be created in a way to create an atmosphere which enables the interviewee to speak freely while making sure to lead the conversation and the research in the desired direction (Isaacs, 2014). This approach is intended to foster a comfortable environment for the interviewees, encouraging them to share their authentic experiences and insights.

Questions will be process-oriented and focused on the cognition derived from the interviewee's experience. Interviews will be flexible with the possibilities of improvisation during the interview in order to get some new perspectives and complete insight into the research topic. Moreover, this flexibility will allow for the exploration of unexpected but relevant topics that may arise during the interviews, providing a richer understanding of the subject matter.

Different types of questions will be asked: 1) Descriptive - to get the general socio-demographic statements and better insights into the interviewee's history; 2) Structural - to identify categories and frames that the interviewee uses during the perception of the copywriting job and the processes they engage with daily while doing the job; 3) Contrast - to get the comparisons from the interviewee about different opposite ends of the spectrum that the research is covering; 4) Evaluation - to get the interviewee's subjective feelings about the processes under research. The data extracted from the interviews will be analyzed by thematic analysis. These varied question types are designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interviewees' perspectives, from objective facts to personal opinions and experiences.

2. THEORY OF COPYWRITING

The theory of copywriting involves understanding the principles of persuasion and psychology, as well as the characteristics of the target audience and the product or service being marketed. But what makes some copy more effective than others? In this paragraph,

the focus will be on the general theory of copywriting, its history, and the psychological principles and triggers which are crucial to understand in order to explain the psychology behind the words.

2.1. Definition and history of copywriting

Copywriting is the use of language to promote or persuade customers to take action (Albrighton, 2010). The primary objective of copywriting is to capture the attention of the prospect and convince them to make a purchase. The average person is exposed to thousands of ads per day (Ghose, 2019). This means that copywriters have a big responsibility in capturing the attention of the audience and providing a compelling reason to take action.

The role of copywriters has expanded beyond just creating ads, and today, they are involved in creating sales letters, emails, landing pages, video sales letters, brochures, webinars, and other promotional materials that are critical in any marketing campaign.

The origins of copywriting date back to the mid-19th century when advertising started to emerge as a legitimate industry (Wilmshurst and Mackay, 2000). In the beginning, the ads were mostly simple announcements that were printed in newspapers. However, as competition grew, companies needed a way to stand out from the crowd, and thus, the importance of compelling and persuasive copy increased. This meant that the creativity also had to increase, and to find its way into the world of business.

The introduction of new advertising channels, such as posters, billboards, and magazines, further fueled the development of copywriting techniques (Presbrey, 1929). Advertisers began to experiment with visually appealing layouts, captivating images, and memorable slogans to captivate their audience (Scott, 1916). The use of persuasive language and psychological principles started to play a more prominent role in crafting advertisements that resonated with consumers.

A significant turning point in the history of copywriting occurred during the early 20th century with the emergence of modern advertising agencies (Fox, 1984). These agencies employed dedicated copywriters to create targeted ad campaigns for their clients. One such example is the legendary adman, Claude C. Hopkins, who was instrumental in pioneering scientific advertising and direct response marketing (Hopkins, 1923). His work laid the foundation for many contemporary copywriting principles, such as the use of testimonials, coupons, and free samples to persuade consumers.

One of the earliest examples of copywriting is the famous slogan "Have a Coke and a Smile," which was introduced by Coca-Cola in the late 1970s (McCarthy, 2004). This slogan was a prime example of how copywriting could evoke emotion and create a positive association with a product which would turn out to be very significant in the future of copywriting and marketing.

Copywriting continued to evolve in the 20th century, as companies began to realize the importance of connecting with the audience on a personal level. They started to use humor, storytelling, and emotional appeals in their advertisements to engage with the audience. The iconic "Think Different" campaign by Apple in the late 1990s is an excellent example of this evolution.

Copywriting is an essential part of marketing, and it plays a vital role in creating a brand image. A well-crafted copy can create a lasting impression on the audience, whereas a poorly written copy can result in the audience moving on to the next ad. It is the job of copywriters to create copy that stands out, engages the audience, and ultimately prompts action. Their ability to weave words into a compelling narrative is key to capturing and retaining the audience's interest.

While the fundamental principles of influence have not changed, the advent of technology has significantly influenced the field of copywriting. The presentation of the copy has undergone a transformation from traditional media such as newspapers and TV to digital platforms such as websites, landing pages, and product pages (Maslen, 2015). Copywriters must adapt their writing to these new forms and layouts to ensure maximum impact.

In the digital age, prospects are more likely to discover copy through search engines. Therefore, copywriters must also consider search engine optimization (SEO) rules while writing copy. The copy must be optimized to rank high in search engine results to attract the attention of potential customers.

In conclusion, copywriting is a crucial element of marketing and is vital in attracting new customers and creating a brand image. This paper seeks to examine the thought process and techniques behind copywriting by surveying active copywriters. By gaining a deeper understanding of the creative and persuasive techniques used by copywriters, we can better appreciate the significance of copywriting in marketing and its impact on the behavior of customers. This study aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice in copywriting, shedding light on the intricacies of this essential marketing skill.

2.2. Creativity in marketing

The 1990s have been marked by the focus of management in various industries on cost-cutting, whereas the new millennium meant a new, more creative approach. Companies tried to focus on organizational innovation and creativity to boost revenue (Coy, 2000).

The shift towards innovation and creativity was spurred by various factors. The rapid advancements in digital technology, the rise of the internet, and the subsequent explosion of social media platforms presented new opportunities for companies to engage with their target audiences in creative and innovative ways (Wind & Mahajan, 1997). Additionally,

the emergence of disruptive business models and startups challenged established industry players to innovate or risk being left behind (Christensen, 1997).

The interest in creativity has been growing for some time within the discipline of marketing (e.g., Jacobs, 1984; Levitt, 1986; Hamel & Prahalad, 1991; Gilbert, Preshaw, & Ivy, 1992; Ramocki, 1994, 1996; Titus, 2000; McIntyre, Hite, & Rickard, 2003; Eriksson & Hauer, 2004). In the classic book *The Marketing Imagination*, the author, Ted Levitt (1986), established a firm connection between the practice of marketing and creative thought and imagination. To him, creativity and imaginative ideas are the beginning of any marketing success.

As the interest in creativity within marketing continued to grow, researchers began to explore the role of creative thinking in various aspects of marketing strategy, such as product development, advertising, and brand management (Keller, 2008; Reinartz & Saffert, 2013). For example, Goldenberg, Mazursky, and Solomon (1999) introduced the concept of "creative templates" as a systematic approach to generating innovative ideas for new products and marketing campaigns. This framework provides marketers with a set of cognitive tools to develop original and effective marketing solutions. These tools assist in challenging conventional thinking and fostering unique approaches to marketing problems.

In advertising, creativity has been identified as a key driver of advertising effectiveness and a critical factor in breaking through the clutter of competing messages (Koslow, Sasser, & Riordan, 2003). Creative advertising has been shown to enhance message recall, improve brand attitudes, and ultimately increase the likelihood of purchase (Till & Baack, 2005). To better understand and manage creativity in advertising, researchers have proposed various models and frameworks, such as the Creative Pyramid (Smith & Yang, 2004) and the Creative Strategy Wheel (Smith, Chen, & Yang, 2008). These models serve as guidelines to navigate the complex process of creating effective and innovative advertising content, balancing creativity with strategic marketing objectives.

Moreover, the rise of digital marketing and social media platforms has further highlighted the importance of creativity in marketing. These new channels provide marketers with unprecedented opportunities to create engaging, interactive, and shareable content that can generate buzz, foster brand loyalty, and drive consumer behavior (Deighton & Kornfeld, 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). As a result, digital marketing and social media strategies increasingly emphasize the need for creative content and innovative approaches to engage and retain audiences. This shift towards digital media requires marketers to be not only creative but also adaptable, as they must constantly evolve their strategies to keep pace with the changing digital landscape.

Reid, King, and DeLorme (1998) consider that creativity (even though it is the least scientific aspect of advertising) is probably the most important. Boston Consulting Group (2005) surveyed 940 executives from all over the world, and 74% of them said that the

amount of money they are spending on innovation is constantly increasing. More than 90% said that it is essential for their business to generate growth from innovation. This consensus underscores the critical role of creativity and innovation in driving business success, particularly in the highly competitive and fast-paced global market.

According to the Harvard Business Review (1997) hiring staff should put more focus on art program graduates, who are more creative and have a more developed right side (creative) part of the brain. The idea behind this is that these people will be able to find a more creative approach to the problem, and consequently come up with a solution.

The vital value of creativity is its importance in problem solving of any type. Creativity in approach to the problem is crucial to its resolve. If we don't take a creative, new approach to the problem that seems to be unsolvable, then it is not to expect any significant improvement (Campbell 1960; Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi 1976).

Having said that, the definition of creativity according to J.A. Howkins is the neurochemical process involving emotions and pleasure that has *one's own mind operations*. This process is subjective, and it differs from innovations which are external manifestations of creativity. This perspective emphasizes the potential for innovative thinking and problem-solving that individuals with a strong background in the arts can bring to various fields.

The importance of creativity in marketing cannot be overstated. As discussed earlier, creativity is the starting point of any marketing success, and companies that focus on organizational innovation and creativity are more likely to boost their revenue. In today's competitive marketplace, businesses must constantly innovate and differentiate themselves from their competitors. This is where creativity comes in. Companies that fail to innovate and be creative in their approach to marketing risk being left behind. This makes creativity a crucial element in marketing.

2.3. Persuasion and human psychology

Persuasion and human psychology have always been closely intertwined in the world of marketing. Copywriting is a crucial tool for marketers to communicate with potential customers, and the effectiveness of a copy is heavily dependent on how well it resonates with the reader's emotions and desires.

Copywriters count on the fact that one of the central pedestals that human psychology is based on is self-interest. People always tend to operate in a manner that generates favorable outcomes and avoids undesirable ones (Wells, W.K. 2014). This concept of self-interest is a key driver in crafting persuasive messages that align with the individual's perceived needs and desires. Obviously, each person has a distinct vision and understanding of what is beneficial and harmful to them. Understanding these personal perceptions and values is

crucial for copywriters, as it enables them to tailor their messages in a way that is most likely to appeal to the target audience's unique motivations and interests.

Copywriters use various psychological tactics to influence a person's decision-making process and ultimately persuade them to take action (these tactics will be addressed later). Copywriters use these and other psychological principles to create persuasive messages that can elicit desired responses from consumers. By understanding the cognitive biases and emotional triggers of their audience, copywriters can tailor their content to be more effective and appealing.

The copywriter's job is to try and pinpoint these values, incite the desired emotions, reinforce them, and use them to persuade the prospect to buy. However, these emotions are not necessarily only positive. Evoking negative emotions like fear, anger, or guilt can be equally or even more effective. Copywriters are aware of this and use it regularly (Cotte & Ritchie, 2005).

However, it is essential to note that the use of negative emotions must be ethical and not manipulative. Copywriters have to be careful not to cross the line between persuasion and manipulation to protect the consumer and the business's reputation. The challenge lies in striking a balance where the message remains impactful without being deceptive or harmful, maintaining the integrity of the marketing process.

Persuasion is a crucial component of marketing, and there are several principles that marketers and copywriters use to create effective messages. One of the most well-known frameworks for persuasion is the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which suggests that individuals can be persuaded through two different routes: the central route and the peripheral route (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The central route engages the audience through thoughtful and logical argumentation, while the peripheral route influences through more indirect factors like emotional appeal and credibility.

The central route is based on cognitive processing and logic, where individuals carefully consider the arguments presented and make a decision based on the merits of the message. The peripheral route, on the other hand, is based on more superficial cues, such as the appearance of the message or the credibility of the source.

In addition to these principles, emotional appeals are also frequently used in persuasive marketing. As mentioned earlier, emotions such as fear, anger, and guilt can be powerful motivators for action. Affective responses can also serve as heuristics, or mental shortcuts, that individuals use to make decisions (Slovic *et al*, 2002). This interplay between logic and emotion in decision-making highlights the complexity of the persuasion process and underscores the need for a nuanced approach in crafting marketing messages.

Generally speaking, persuasive techniques in marketing are based on a combination of cognitive and emotional factors. By understanding how people process information and

make decisions, marketers can create messages that are more likely to influence behavior. However, it's worth noting that ethical concerns can arise when marketers use certain tactics, such as those that exploit people's vulnerabilities or manipulate their emotions (Hastings, Stead, & Webb, 2004). Therefore, it is imperative for marketers to maintain a balance between persuasive effectiveness and ethical responsibility in their strategies.

3. TYPES OF PERSUASION TECHNIQUES

The second part of the theoretical examination of the copywriting process is the persuasion techniques analysis. Particularly, the interest will be targeted towards the specific persuasion techniques, and their psychological background. How do they work, when did they start being implemented and why are they so effective?

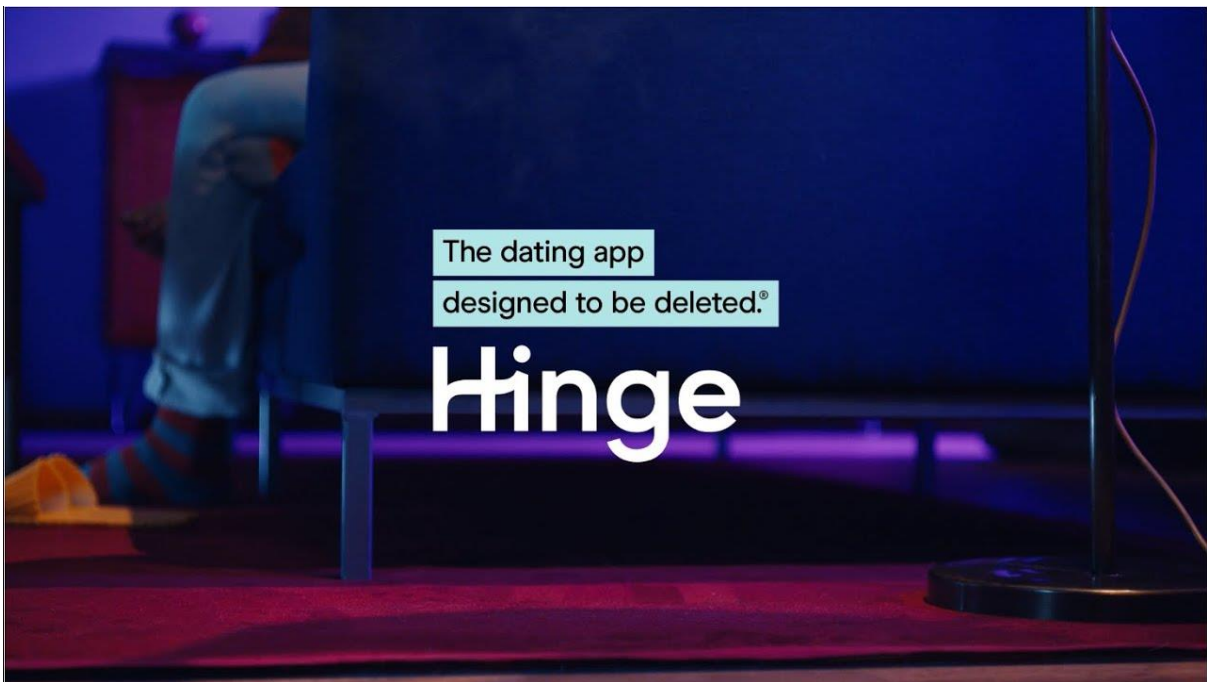
3.1. Future pacing

Future pacing is a persuasion technique used in marketing that involves projecting an image of the future that a customer can enjoy after making a purchase or engaging with a product or service. The goal of future pacing is to make the customer feel positive emotions associated with the future vision and to encourage them to take action in the present to bring that future vision to life. This technique works by creating a mental image of the desired future outcome and getting the prospect to visualize it in detail. Once the prospect has vividly imagined the future, they are more likely to take action to make it a reality (Cialdini, 2009). By leveraging the power of visualization, future pacing effectively bridges the gap between the present moment and a potential, more satisfying future.

The technique is based on the idea that people are naturally drawn to positive and optimistic visions of the future, and that by creating an image of a desirable future state, marketers can motivate customers to take the steps necessary to achieve that vision. This method taps into the aspirational aspects of human psychology, encouraging individuals to make decisions that align with their ideal future selves. Future pacing can take many forms, from simply describing the benefits of a product or service in a positive and compelling way, to creating elaborate visualizations or hypothetical scenarios that help customers to imagine themselves in the future state.

The concept of future pacing is rooted in the idea of mental simulation, which is the process of imagining oneself in a future scenario (Kappes & Oettingen, 2011). Mental simulation has been shown to increase motivation and goal attainment (Oettingen & Mayer, 2002), which makes it a powerful tool in persuasion.

Image 1: The dating app copywriting, example



Source: <https://www.thedrum.com/creative-works/project/red-antler-hinge-the-dating-app-designed-be-deleted> (Accessed: 11th May 2023)

Future pacing is commonly used in a variety of marketing contexts, such as in real estate, financial planning, and weight loss programs (Gorawara-Bhat, 2015). In real estate, for example, the agent might encourage the potential buyer to imagine themselves living in the home and enjoying its features.

A real estate agent might use future pacing by describing in detail the features of a dream home, how happy the buyer will be once they move in, and the benefits of the location and community. By doing so, the agent creates a powerful and emotional connection with the buyer and encourages them to take the necessary steps to make the dream a reality. This process not only helps in painting a vivid picture of a desirable future but also strengthens the buyer's emotional attachment to that future, making the decision to purchase more compelling.

As already stated the objective of the copywriter is to elicit an emotional response and stimulate dopamine release in the prospect. However, future pacing can work both ways, and the emotions the copywriter is looking to evoke could also be quite negative. For instance a copywriter promoting a gym membership might write a sentence like this: "Imagine waking up in the hospital after suffering a heavy heart attack that resulted from inactivity and bad habits." This tactic is also frequently employed to instill fear and anxiety with prospects. While this approach can be effective in motivating action, it's crucial for copywriters to balance such tactics with ethical considerations to avoid exploiting the fears and vulnerabilities of their audience.

We can conclude that future pacing is a persuasive technique in marketing that involves getting the prospect to imagine themselves in the future enjoying the benefits of the product or service being offered, or suffering from the consequences if not doing so. This technique is based on the concept of mental simulation, which has been shown to increase motivation and goal attainment. By creating a mental image of the future outcome causing an emotional response, future pacing can be a powerful tool in persuasion.

3.2. Reciprocity

Reciprocity is a persuasion technique that is widely used in marketing. It is based on the principle of social exchange and the idea that people are more likely to comply with a request or purchase a product when they feel indebted to the requester or seller. In other words, when someone does something for us or gives us something, we tend to feel obliged to return the favor (Regan, 1971).

Copywriters use reciprocity by giving something of value to the consumer, which in turn makes the consumer feel obligated to reciprocate by making a purchase or taking some other desired action. For example, a copywriter may offer a free ebook or discount code to a potential customer in exchange for signing up for a newsletter or following the brand on social media. By offering something of value, the copywriter is building goodwill and establishing a relationship with the consumer, which can lead to increased trust and loyalty. This tactic not only enhances the likelihood of immediate action but also fosters a longer-term reciprocal relationship between the brand and the consumer.

Another example is when a salesperson gives a potential customer something small, like a pen or a keychain, before presenting their sales pitch. The small gift creates a sense of indebtedness in the customer, making them more likely to listen to the sales pitch and potentially make a purchase (Cialdini, 2009).

This creates a sense of obligation and gratitude, and the prospect may be more likely to return the favor by making a purchase or taking another desired action. Additionally, copywriters may use language that conveys a sense of giving, generosity, and helpfulness, to establish a sense of reciprocity with the reader. For example, a copywriter may write a copy that says "we're giving away this free resource to help you achieve your goals" or "our team is dedicated to helping you succeed." By using language that implies a gift, copywriters can create a sense of obligation that can lead to more conversions. This strategy leverages the natural human inclination to balance the scales of giving and receiving, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of marketing efforts. Furthermore, it subtly encourages the audience to engage more deeply with the brand, fostering a sense of loyalty and long-term connection.

Reciprocity is effective in copywriting because it taps into the principle of self-interest and the desire for fairness and balance in social interactions. When someone does something for us, we feel a sense of obligation to do something in return (Regan, 1971). In marketing, this is often achieved by providing the consumer with something of value, such as useful information or a free sample, thereby initiating the cycle of reciprocity.

However, it's important to note that the reciprocity technique can backfire if the offer is not seen as genuine or if the consumer feels manipulated or deceived (Gouldner, 1960). Copywriters must ensure that their offers are transparent and truly add value to the consumer's experience. Additionally, it's important to avoid creating a feeling of indebtedness in the consumer, which can lead to negative associations with the brand and decreased trust and loyalty (Regan, 1971).

In conclusion, reciprocity is a powerful persuasion technique that copywriters can use to influence consumer behavior. By offering something of value and framing it as a favor or a gift, copywriters can tap into the principle of self-interest and the desire for fairness and balance in social interactions.

3.3. Scarcity

Scarcity is a persuasion technique in marketing that relies on the principle that people tend to perceive something as more valuable when it is less available or scarce. This technique is based on the fear of missing out (FOMO), a strong psychological motivator that drives people to take action in order to avoid losing out on something that is perceived as valuable. It plays on the natural human tendency to place a higher value on resources that are less available, thereby making them more desirable.

Copywriters often use scarcity in their messages by creating a sense of urgency and emphasizing the limited availability of a product or service. For instance, by highlighting that a special offer is only valid for a short period, they can compel the audience to act quickly. This can be done by using phrases such as "limited time offer," "limited quantity available," or "while supplies last." By using such language, copywriters can create a sense of urgency in the reader and encourage them to take action.

The principle of *scarcity* states that things are more valuable and desirable the less available they are or seem to be. This principle has been around for a long time and is one of the principles of the famous commodity theory (Brock, 1968). There are different variants of scarcity, and copywriters use them all.

Quantity scarcity:

" Just 200 of these limited edition music albums are left. Hurry up and get one for you!"

Time scarcity:

" This offer expires soon, so do not hesitate and buy it immediately, or it might be too late."

Image 2 Scarcity, example



Source: <https://swiped.co/file/timed-offer-from-dodocase/> (Accessed: 19th May 2023)

Competition scarcity:

" We have received more than 100 calls for this product this morning. Everyone is after it, and there is a reason for that."

In addition to creating a sense of urgency, scarcity can also increase the perceived value of a product or service. When people believe that something is scarce, they tend to place a higher value on it and may be willing to pay more for it (Worchel, Lee, & Adewole, 1975). This perception of increased value can transform a regular product into a coveted item, intensifying the consumer's desire to acquire it.

However, it's important for copywriters to balance scarcity with authenticity and transparency to avoid potential backlash from customers (Fuchs & Schreier, 2011). Misusing scarcity can lead to skepticism and damage the trust and credibility of a brand. Overall, scarcity is a powerful tool that copywriters can use to motivate consumers to take action, but it needs to be used thoughtfully and strategically.

3.4. Authority

The *authority* principle is a persuasion technique that relies on the idea that people are more likely to follow the advice or orders of someone who is seen as an authority in a particular field (Cialdini, 2001). In the realm of marketing, this principle is evident when companies use well-respected experts or celebrities to endorse their products, thereby leveraging the authority's credibility to enhance their own. In marketing, the use of authority figures can be seen in advertisements and endorsements by celebrities, experts, or professionals. For example, a celebrity endorsing a product can lend their authority to the product, making consumers more likely to trust its effectiveness.

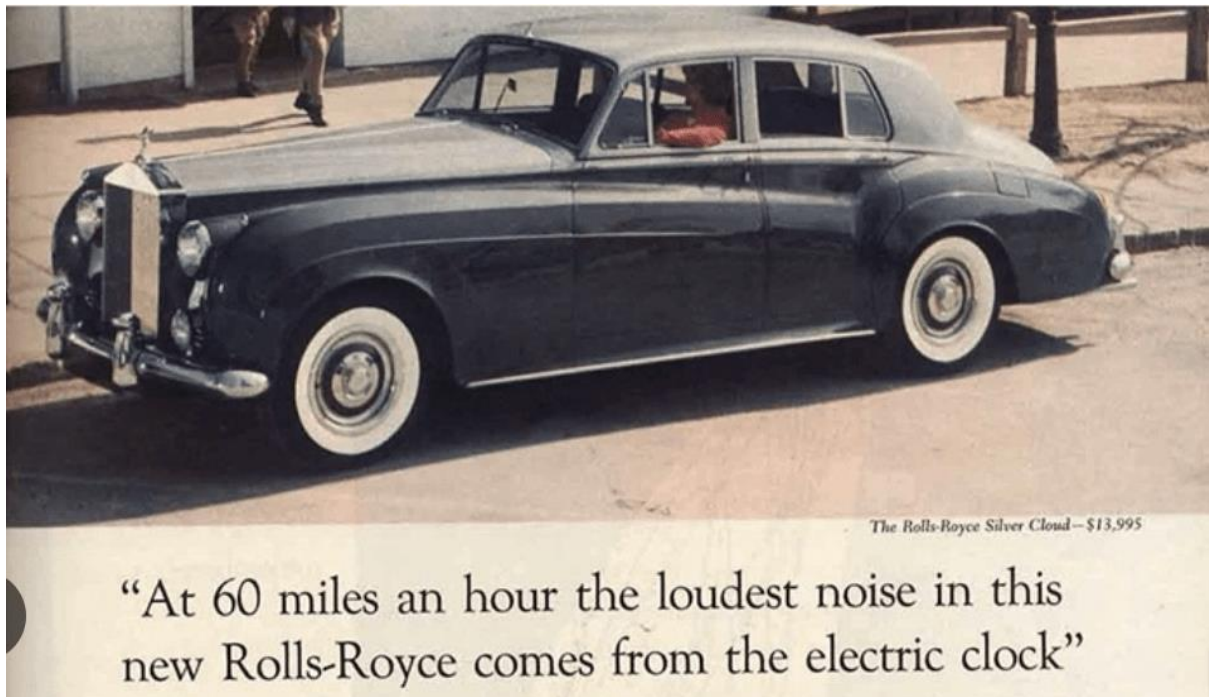
We can look at the Milgram experiment and find out how much power authority has over the judgment of any individual (McLeod, 2007). People's brains are wired to listen to authority and act in a way that authority asks them to. This is very important to know when trying to persuade people, which is why companies are trying to get established as an authority in the field they operate in. The effectiveness of this strategy is rooted in the psychological tendency to trust and respect figures perceived as knowledgeable or influential in their respective domains.

Copywriters also employ this strategy when advertising a product, doing their best to establish the credibility of the brand they represent. Generally, companies employ authorities such as doctors, engineers, and other product-related specialists. This use of specialists not only enhances the product's credibility but also helps in simplifying complex information for the average consumer.

However, these authority figures do not have to be necessarily logically connected to the product. For example, companies can utilize famous people like actors or athletes to serve as authority figures and promote products unrelated to sports or acting.

Another way of showing authority is the focus on values of tradition and the time that they've spent perfecting their craft. This approach appeals to consumers' respect for heritage and long-standing quality. Some of the companies that have been around for decades have established a brand image which they use as a form of authority. So, these companies don't necessarily provide quantitative proof for their claims, nor do they hire authoritative personas to double down on them. They simply publish claims that are based mostly on the public perspective of them and the quality of their products.

Image 3 Authority persuasion technique, example



Source: <https://swiped.co/file/rolls-royce-ad-by-david-ogilvy/> (Accessed: 11th June 2023)

The authority principle can be effective because people tend to rely on social proof, or the idea that others' opinions and behaviors can influence their own decisions (Cialdini, 2001). When an authority figure endorses a product, it can serve as a form of social proof that the product is worth buying. In addition, people may feel a sense of obligation to comply with the requests or recommendations of an authority figure, especially if they perceive that person as having expertise in a particular field. This sense of trust is further reinforced when the endorsements come from individuals who are not only authoritative but also relatable to the target audience.

Copywriters can use the authority principle by incorporating endorsements or testimonials from authority figures in their marketing materials. This can include quotes or reviews from experts, industry leaders, or celebrities. Additionally, copywriters can use language that emphasizes the authority or expertise of the company or product, such as highlighting awards or certifications. Using specific and verifiable information about the authority's credentials or the product's accolades can bolster the credibility and persuasiveness of the message

Image 4 Authority persuasion technique, example number 2



Source: <https://twitter.com/wordmancopy/status/1248870665949675525> (Accessed: 9th June 2023)

3.5. Liking

Copywriters use flattery and liking to persuade the prospect (Fogg & Clifford, 1997). They do this to establish a friendly rapport with the prospect by complimenting them or implying that there are some things in common between the copywriter (or the brand) and the prospect. For example: "Since you know how to recognize a good style, we are confident you will like our new sunglasses."

Copywriters can use the "liking" technique by creating marketing materials that emphasize shared values, interests, and experiences between the company and the target audience. This can be achieved through the use of personalized messaging, relatable images, and endorsements from people who are already well-liked by the audience. This sense of trust is further reinforced when the endorsements come from individuals who are not only authoritative but also relatable to the target audience. By building a connection based on shared traits and values, copywriters can tap into the persuasive power of "liking" to increase the chances of a sale or conversion.

Copywriters can use the liking principle in various ways to persuade their audience. For

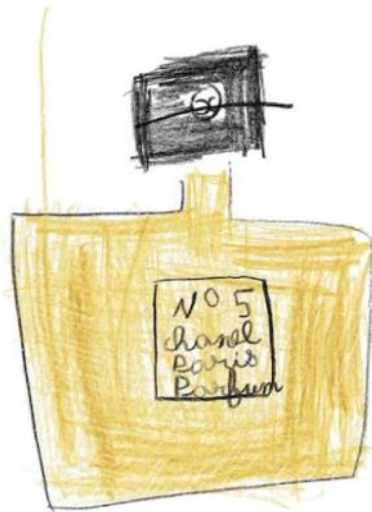
instance, they can create ads featuring attractive and likable people or use celebrity endorsements to leverage the audiences' pre-existing positive feelings towards a celebrity. Copywriters can also try to establish similarities between the audience and the brand or its representatives. People tend to like and trust others who are similar to themselves, so by finding commonalities between the audience and the brand, copywriters can increase the chances of persuading the audience to make a purchase. Additionally, copywriters can use humor or other pleasant stimuli to create positive associations with the brand, which in turn can increase the audience's liking for the brand.

Image 5 Liking persuasion technique, example



Source: <https://www.brothers-brick.com/2009/07/14/what-it-is-is-beautiful/> (Accessed: 17th June 2023)

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY



CHANEL

Source: <https://onlykutts.com/index.php/2022/11/23/iconic-ads-chanel-no-5-mothers-day/>
(Accessed: 20th June 2023)

Furthermore, copywriters can use the mere-exposure effect, which is the tendency to develop a preference for things simply because they are familiar. This means that by repeatedly exposing the audience to a brand or its message, copywriters can increase the audience's liking for the brand, even if they have no prior experience with it. One way to create a connection through similarities is to show how the product or service fits with the customer's lifestyle or personality. By doing so, the copywriter is demonstrating an understanding of the customer's needs and desires and is therefore more likely to be perceived as trustworthy (Solomon *et al.*, 2012). Compliments and flattery are also commonly used in copywriting, as they can create positive emotions and make the customer feel good about themselves.

By using the liking principle in their copywriting, marketers can tap into the natural human tendency to be influenced by individuals and organizations that we like. Through creating connection with the target audience, copywriters can make their products or services more appealing, increasing the chances of a sale.

3.6. Social proof

Social proof is a persuasion technique used in marketing to convince people to make a purchase or take a certain action by showing them that others have already done so. This technique leverages the idea that people tend to conform to the actions of others when they are uncertain about what to do (Cialdini, 2001). In other words, people tend to believe that if others are doing something, it must be the right thing to do.

Copywriters use social proof by incorporating testimonials, reviews, and endorsements from satisfied customers to persuade prospects to purchase a product or service. By providing evidence that others have had positive experiences, copywriters aim to alleviate any doubts or skepticism potential customers may have and encourage them to take action. Social proof can be particularly effective in situations where there is a high degree of uncertainty or risk involved in making a purchase, such as when buying a new product or trying a new service (Cialdini, 2009).

Copywriters use social proof in various ways to persuade potential customers. For example, they might use customer reviews or testimonials to show that other people have already purchased and enjoyed the product or service (Goldstein *et al.*, 2008). They might also use social media follower counts, social share counts, or subscriber counts to demonstrate popularity and social acceptance (Nelson, 2016).

Image 7 social proof, example

The image shows a young boy in a blue t-shirt and a green and black baseball cap, smiling and holding a white cardboard box labeled 'PLATE CRATE'. The box has a logo with a baseball bat and the website 'PLATECRATE.COM'. To the right of the boy is a dark blue overlay containing white text. The text reads: 'WE WAIT ALL MONTH FOR THIS BOX!!' followed by five red stars. Below the stars is a testimonial: 'My son absolutely loves this baseball subscription!! Variety in each box is something to look forward to!! From the snacks to the epic t-shirts to the training equipment, he is never disappointed!!' attributed to '-Susan M.'. At the bottom of the overlay is a red button with white text that says 'SEE ALL REVIEWS'.

Source: <https://www.platecrate.com/> (Accessed: 24th June 2023)

One common technique used by copywriters is to highlight the number of customers who have purchased or used the product or service. For example, they may use phrases such as "Join over 1 million satisfied customers" to demonstrate social proof and imply that the product is popular and trusted by a large number of people.

Finally, copywriters may also use the number of customers or sales to create a sense of urgency and scarcity, which can trigger the fear of missing out (FOMO) and further persuade potential customers to take action (Cialdini, 2001).

3.7. Consistency (yes-set)

The theory behind consistency is that by accumulating "yes" answers to more minor questions and/or requests, the prospect is more likely to be willing to say "yes" to the purchase. This technique is commonly employed in psychology as a means of entering hypnosis, and in sales to promote compliance and develop a favorable attitude in the prospect (Snyder & Cunningham, 1975).

Consistency is a persuasion technique used in marketing to influence people to behave in accordance with their previous commitments and beliefs. When people commit to a certain belief or action, they tend to remain consistent with that commitment over time. Marketers use this principle to encourage people to take small actions that lead them towards larger commitments, such as purchasing a product.

Copywriters use consistency in several ways to persuade the audience. One of the most effective ways is by getting prospects to make small commitments to the brand or product, which makes them more likely to be consistent with larger commitments in the future. For example, asking people to sign up for a free trial of a product can increase the likelihood of them buying the product in the future (Cialdini, 2001). Copywriters can also emphasize the consistency of the product with the prospect's beliefs and values, as people tend to be more receptive to messages that are consistent with their existing beliefs (McGuire, 1964).

Another way copywriters use consistency is by emphasizing the past behavior of others. People often look to the behavior of others as a guide for their own behavior, especially when they are uncertain about what to do (Sherif & Hovland, 1961). By highlighting the actions of others who have used the product or service, copywriters can create a sense of social proof, making the audience more likely to follow suit and use the product or service as well.

Copywriters use this method by asking simple questions. For example, if the copywriter is writing a sales letter for a man's watch, they can ask the following questions at the beginning of the letter: "Do you like looking good? Do you like getting nice compliments and attention?"

These are the questions to which nearly everyone will respond affirmatively. This should increase the compliance of the reader to keep being engaged. Overall, consistency is a powerful persuasion technique that copywriters can use to encourage prospects to commit to the brand or product, and to emphasize the consistency of the product with the prospect's existing beliefs and values.

4. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

4.1. Research methodology

The primary objective of this research is to analyze the persuasion techniques employed by copywriters in their daily work. By uncovering these strategies, the goal is to provide insights into how copywriters navigate the psychology of their target audience, crafting messages that resonate and call for action. This exploration is crucial not only for enhancing the effectiveness of marketing communications but also for advancing our understanding of persuasive communication in a digital age. A secondary objective of this research is to explore the ethical factors that accompany their persuasiveness. As influencers, copywriters navigate complex moral landscapes, often reflecting on the impact of their work on consumer behavior and societal norms. Do copywriters face moral dilemmas regarding their impact on consumers? This question underscores the need to balance persuasive efficacy with ethical considerations, highlighting the delicate interplay between influence and integrity in marketing practices.

To gather firsthand insights, ten active direct-response copywriters were identified and approached via LinkedIn. These professionals were specifically chosen because direct-response copywriting, by nature, requires a deep understanding of consumer psychology to draw out immediate action. A mixed-method approach was adopted for data collection: three participants were interviewed online, while the remaining seven provided their responses via Google Docs. This methodology ensured flexibility for the participants and enriched the diversity of responses.

The questions were designed to cover various aspects of the copywriting process: from personal journey into the profession, crafting the "big idea," dealing with writer's block, to the specific persuasion techniques used. While some of these techniques, such as 'future pacing', 'reciprocity', and 'authority', have been widely discussed in academic and professional circles, this research is looking to understand their application from the position of a practicing copywriter. The inclusion of personal narratives and professional experiences aims to provide a richer, more nuanced understanding of these techniques in action. Moreover, by discovering techniques not listed in the interviews, this study hopes to uncover new strategies which could be overlooked in the academic discourse. Identifying such strategies not only enriches the existing body of knowledge but also opens the door to in-

novative approaches in persuasive copywriting.

Lastly, while not central to the research's primary goals, the topic of artificial intelligence (AI) was mentioned, mostly driven by pure curiosity. With advancements in AI, its increasing influence on various professions, including copywriting, is undeniable. Copywriting could be one of the professions that are mostly influenced by this new technology, so looking into copywriters' perspectives on this technology would offer us unique insights from this category of people. Exploring these insights could shed light on the broader implications of AI in professional settings, highlighting potential shifts in skill sets, creativity, and job roles. Additionally, this exploration may reveal how professionals anticipate adapting to or collaborating with AI technologies, providing valuable foresight into the evolving dynamics between human creativity and machine efficiency. This could help us understand the process of AI technology substituting humans in a certain profession.

4.2. Research question 1 analysis

Research question: What approaches do copywriters use when persuading prospects to buy a product or a service?

A majority of interviewees adhere to specific, predetermined steps when embarking on the task of writing copy. *"I have developed a reliable process like a ritual, a frame that guides me while I work on various projects in various industries."* Contrary to this, there was an individual among the participants who negated utilizing any structure in his writing approach. *"I don't have a set routine. It all depends on the topic at hand. Sometimes, I find inspiration by diving deep into research or observing how others tackle it, and at other times, I just go with the flow and jot down the first thing that pops into my mind."* This flexibility highlights the inherently unpredictable nature of creativity, suggesting that for some, innovation comes from a less constrained environment.

The prevalent initial step for most copywriters involves a substantive amount of research. *"Research is everything,"* one interviewee emphasized, underscoring the critical role that thorough investigation plays in the development of impactful copy. The initial research is focused on the product, the target audience, and the competition. *"First, you must know who you're writing for. So, I start with getting familiar with the target audience. I like to go in depth and learn everything about their interests, fears, dreams etc."* This approach ensures that the copy resonates on a personal level with the audience, making it more likely to motivate action. Meanwhile, another participant posited: *"I believe it's crucial to spend a significant amount of time researching products, observing how people react to them, and trying to identify pain points to focus on when writing."* By deeply understanding the product and its reception in the market, a copywriter can craft messages that directly ad-

dress and alleviate consumer concerns, thereby enhancing the persuasive power of the copy.

Up until now, most of the copywriters had a pretty similar approach to writing a copy. However, after the research part is completed, the similarities decrease, and every copywriter shows signs of individualism when moving forward. Some of the copywriters simply start writing without any structure. *“I don’t have any particular steps, but generally I’ll do a little research, then go write a bunch, then I’ll go back to research and interviewing and the back and forth doesn’t stop until I have a draft on my table.”*

This method, akin to free writing, allows for a flow of ideas that can be refined through subsequent iterations. Others, however, start by creating a “skeleton” of their copy. *“Once I complete this research, I get a clear idea of what needs to be highlighted and the key features of the product. I jot down bullet points on what aspects I should emphasize and like to note down the sources from where I gathered certain data. Then, I sit down to write.”* This structured approach ensures a focused and organized progression from research to writing, facilitating a clear and coherent message. Here is another example: *“There are always three steps: Gathering and reviewing the material, Preparing the text structure as a sort of skeleton, and then Execution, which consists of several drafts.”* By adhering to this meticulous process, the copywriter ensures that every element of the copy is deliberate and contributes to the overall goal, allowing for a polished and effective final product.

The content of this skeleton is not mentioned by most of the copywriters. However, there are a few who spoke on it: *“Then, I prepare an outline that includes the structure, and the most important benefits, and the writing process begins.”* Another copywriter opened up on it: *“Then I plan the main points and create a catchy headline to grab attention.”* This step of drafting a headline early in the process underscores the importance of engaging the reader from the outset, setting the tone for the entire piece. Generally, it can be concluded that the copywriters who start writing by creating a structure do it by using the insights they got from the research to outline benefits, and bullet points that would be a part of their copy. However, the chief approach they select and the techniques they might employ typically formulate a concept that they mentally reference throughout the writing process. This conceptual framework not only guides the development of the copy but also ensures that the core message remains consistent and focused, allowing for a coherent and persuasive narrative.

Concerning the writing process, the copywriters do not possess a profound understanding of it beyond labeling it simply as "writing." They perceive writing as a wholly creative endeavor, one they cannot objectively observe, nor articulate the paths of creativity and the manner in which they construct their sentences. This perception underscores the deeply personal and often ineffable nature of creativity, where the act of writing is more about feeling and intuition than a process that can be easily defined or taught. For the most part,

they envision it as “connecting the dots” or “fitting small pieces of a puzzle together.” This analogy highlights the iterative and sometimes non-linear process of crafting a narrative, where each word and sentence is carefully chosen to contribute to the overarching message, much like assembling a complex and intricate puzzle.

In the deconstruction of the writing process, nearly all of the interviewees exhibited awareness of the concept of the “big idea,” with one exception. *“I’m afraid I don’t understand this question,”* he said. The remaining copywriters harbored varying perspectives on the necessity of the “big idea,” and their perception of it differed from one to another. A slight majority of interviewees endeavor to utilize the “big idea” in every project they undertake. *“How do I approach coming up with the big idea? It’s just natural, the more time you spend on a writing assignment, the more ideas start popping up, you test a bunch and you spend hours and then you leave it for a day and come back and there it is.”* This iterative process reflects the dynamic nature of creativity, emphasizing the importance of time and reflection in nurturing groundbreaking concepts. Additionally, some assign it a substantial role in their writing: *“This idea is like the glue that holds everything together – it shapes the tone, style, and how I make it persuasive. Think of it as the engine that drives the whole car.”*

For others, the “big idea” holds a more exclusive status, and they do not deploy it for every project. *“It’s not necessary to have a ‘big idea’ for every project. However, it’s important to be prepared for it in every brief and to approach the task professionally in the moments when someone says to you the idea is not so great.”* This perspective underscores the balance between aspiring for the ‘big idea’ and maintaining professionalism across all projects, regardless of whether such a momentous concept is at play. One copywriter considers that the “big idea” can be regarded as a kind of “once in a lifetime idea” for which every copywriter must labor diligently for years to uncover. *“I’m paraphrasing Ogilvy here, but he once said that he had two big ideas in his entire life. I believe it’s impossible to have a groundbreaking idea for every project.”* Reflecting on Ogilvy’s remark, this viewpoint elevates the ‘big idea’ to a rare and extraordinary milestone in a copywriter’s career, suggesting that while not every project will yield such a revolutionary concept, the pursuit of it remains a driving force in their creative endeavors.

These copywriters also didn’t have a clear set of steps to arrive at the “big idea,” unlike some others who use it in every project. For these copywriters, the “big idea” even has a dose of mysticism to it. *“A big idea comes from research. It’s not essential for every project, but there’s no concrete way to arrive at it. There isn’t a set of steps to follow to reach that big idea; it just comes on its own.”* This description highlights the intangible and unpredictable nature of creative inspiration, suggesting that the journey to discovering a big idea is as much about being open to moments of unexpected clarity as it is about deliberate search and research. Indeed, this acceptance of creativity’s unpredictable flow underscores

a broader understanding of the creative process as one that cannot always be rationalized or forced, but rather, one that often benefits from a blend of diligence, intuition, and patience.

Another very important aspect of writing copy is “writer’s block”. This is a lack of vision and creativity which presents itself as an obstacle during the writing process. Most of the copywriters have had these issues and think of it as a fundamental part of their job. *“It’s very difficult to be creative at all times and in every mood. When I have creative blocks, I usually start reading literature that is unrelated to my current writing topic.”* This strategy illustrates how stepping away from the immediate problem and immersing oneself in a different creative context can rejuvenate the mind and inspire new ideas. On the other hand, one copywriter denied the existence of this phenomenon: *“There’s no such thing as writer’s block, only insufficiently researched topics for which you haven’t prepared enough material!”* This perspective suggests that what is often perceived as a block can sometimes be attributed to a lack of groundwork, implying a more pragmatic approach to overcoming creative challenges.

Copywriters that accept “writer’s block” generally have their own ways of dealing with it. *“Sometimes, I take photos and create a story based on whatever is in that picture. For instance, I once captured a cat sitting on a windowsill. That cat reminded me of an old woman peeking out of her window, watching the street below. This inspired me to write a story about two women who live across the street from each other and constantly argue. However, one day, one of them didn’t appear at her window, leading the other woman to realize she wasn’t happy about it, contrary to what she had expected.”* This anecdote demonstrates the creative potential of everyday observations to break through writer’s block, highlighting the ability of external stimuli to spark imagination and lead to unexpected narrative paths.

One very interesting insight from this research is that copywriters are having even more issues with a lack of focus than with “writer’s block” as such. *“Thankfully, I have plenty of creativity. My biggest challenge is the presence of screens and other sources of dopamine. When I write, I try to distance myself from these distractions to think clearly.”* This comment reflects a common struggle in today’s digital age, where the constant barrage of notifications and the lure of instant gratification can severely impair one’s ability to concentrate on deep, meaningful work. Another issue that arises is simply a lack of motivation to work, and GAD (Generalized Anxiety Disorder). *“Other obstacles, for me personally, include dealing with GAD in my daily life which can absolutely hinder my progress in the profession. One of the symptoms is brain fog, and this is on a whole other level compared to writer’s block.”* Acknowledging the profound impact of mental health on creative professions underscores the need for supportive work environments and personal strategies to manage these conditions effectively, illustrating how personal well-being is intrinsically linked to professional productivity and creativity.

Most of the copywriters write one version (draft) of their copy, after which they start the editing process. The editing process usually includes reading the copy out loud and correcting the pieces that don't sound right. *“What I consistently do is read my work multiple times and edit it, often taking much longer than the initial writing process.”* This meticulous attention to detail in the editing phase underscores its importance in refining and perfecting the message, ensuring that every word and sentence serves the intended purpose effectively. One of the interviewees offered a more detailed explanation: *“There are always three steps: Gathering and reviewing the material, Preparing the text structure as a sort of skeleton, and then Execution, which consists of several drafts. The first draft, review and additions in the second draft, followed by proofreading and editing as the third step in the Execution process. This third step is extremely important because once a text is published, that's it.”*

Table 1. Codes and concepts answering the research question 2

Codes	Concepts
Deep understanding of the message	Research and understanding
Understanding target audience	
Understanding the product	
Embracing experimentation	Creative process and inspiration
Observing everyday stories	
Engaging in constant conversation and curiosity	
Ideas born from extensive research	
Emphasis on a unique perspective	
Creative thinking	
Literature as a source of inspiration	
Brainstorming with teams	
Role of AI in idea generation	
Handling writer's block through distraction	
Importance of taking breaks	
Recognizing and battling brain fog	

Dealing with writer's block through external activities	
Absence of writer's block	
Utilizing bullet points for key features	Persuasion techniques and strategy
Use of persuasion techniques based on project needs	
Using persuasion techniques strategically	
Relying on a structured process	Professional approach and workflow
Time assessment for projects	
Aligning with client's needs and adapting to feedback	
Continuous learning and exposure to best-performing content	
Iterative process (back-and-forth)	
Time constraints in the agency world	
Emphasis on editing	
Editing by reading aloud	
Authenticity in copywriting	
Discussing with peers for idea generation	
Collaborating with other creatives for fresh ideas	
Disconnecting from distractions	

Source: qualitative research

4.2.1. Concept analysis

In copywriting, the efficacy of persuasion is deeply rooted in research and understanding of various aspects of the communication process. This includes a deep understanding of the message, the target audience, and the product or service being promoted. Such comprehensive insight ensures that the copy is not only informative but also emotionally engaging, tailored to spark interest and compel action among the intended audience. These elements

are critical for developing persuasive content that resonates with the audience and effectively conveys the intended message.

1. Deep understanding of the message:

A key aspect of persuasive copywriting involves delving into the core message. One interviewee highlighted this, stating, *"I always take the time to figure out what's best for each project and ensure I do what will work the best."* This approach underscores the adaptability and strategic thinking necessary for effective copywriting, where a one-size-fits-all strategy is often not sufficient. This reflects the importance of not just knowing what to communicate but also comprehending the nuances and underlying themes of the message. A deep understanding of the message ensures that the copy is not only relevant but also aligns with the overall communication goals. By meticulously crafting each message to resonate with the specific audience and objectives of the project, copywriters can elevate their work from simply conveying information to truly engaging and persuading the audience, thereby achieving a more profound impact.

2. Understanding the target audience:

Knowing the audience is pivotal in persuasive writing. As one respondent put it, *"The choice [of persuasion technique] depends on the project's goals and the emotions I want to trigger."* This insight reflects the nuanced art of persuasion, where the effectiveness of a message hinges not just on what is said, but on how it is perceived and felt by the audience. This statement underscores the significance of tailoring the message to the audience's preferences, values, and emotional triggers. Understanding the audience allows the copywriter to connect more deeply and meaningfully, thereby increasing the likelihood of the desired response. By engaging the audience on an emotional level and aligning the message with their values and preferences, copywriters can foster a stronger, more impactful connection, driving the audience towards action in a way that feels both personal and compelling.

3. Understanding the product:

Equally important is the comprehensive understanding of the product or service. Another interviewee mentioned, *"Scarcity makes people act fast, authority builds trust, and social proof taps into the 'follow the crowd' mentality."* This insight emphasizes the strategic deployment of persuasive techniques that are most congruent with the product's unique selling propositions, ensuring that the message not only resonates but also motivates. This showcases the need to align the persuasive techniques with the product's features and benefits. Understanding the product aids in identifying which attributes to highlight and how to position them in a way that appeals to the target audience. By intricately weaving these features and benefits into the narrative, copywriters can create a compelling case for the product, one that is rooted in a deep understanding of its value proposition.

The art of copywriting is not just a mechanical task; it involves a dynamic and creative process and inspiration. This process is fueled by various sources of inspiration and techniques that enhance the writer's ability to produce compelling content. Based on the insights gathered from various copywriters, several key elements emerge as pivotal in shaping their creative process. From literature and art to everyday experiences and customer feedback, these sources of inspiration enrich the copywriter's toolbox, enabling the creation of content that is not only persuasive but also deeply engaging and relatable.

1. Embracing experimentation:

The willingness to experiment is crucial in the creative realm. As one copywriter put it, *"I pick and choose from techniques... based on what fits the project."* This adaptability and willingness to try different approaches underscore the value of experimentation in finding the most effective way to communicate a message.

2. Observing everyday stories:

The habit of observing everyday stories and engaging in constant conversation and curiosity fuels the creative fire. A respondent noted, *"You wouldn't believe the range of things I read and watch."* This diversity in consumption translates into a broader range of ideas and perspectives, enriching the creative output.

3. Ideas born from extensive research:

In-depth research is a bedrock for idea generation. A clear understanding of the product, audience, and market can spark unique ideas, as indicated by one interviewee: *"The best ideas come when you know your target audience inside out."*

4. Emphasis on a unique perspective:

Seeking a unique perspective is another vital element. As one writer expressed, *"I delve into understanding the product and the audience, with the goal of discovering a unique perspective that distinguishes it."* This approach demonstrates how striving for uniqueness can lead to more impactful and resonant content.

5. Creative thinking:

Creative thinking lies at the heart of persuasive copywriting. As one copywriter expressed: *"I don't hesitate to be creative and think outside the box, provided the topic allows for it."* This statement reflects the importance of thinking outside the box, applying different strategies to suit the unique demands of each project.

6. Literature as a source of inspiration:

Drawing inspiration from literature is a key theme. Books, articles, and other literary forms can open new avenues for creative thought, providing fresh angles and insights for persuasive writing. One interviewee highlighted the importance of diverse reading, saying, *"When I have creative blocks, I usually start reading literature that is unrelated to my current writing topic."* This approach underscores how literature broadens a writer's horizon, sparking new ideas and perspectives.

7. Brainstorming with teams:

Collaboration can significantly enhance creativity. As a copywriter mentioned, discussing ideas with peers can lead to "the more heads, the more ideas," showcasing the power of collective brainstorming.

8. Role of AI in idea generation:

The integration of technology, specifically AI, into the creative process represents a modern approach to idea generation. As one respondent noted, *"Sometimes I have an idea but struggle to execute it. In such cases, I often use chat GPT, which provides me with a perspective, and then I can write what I had in mind."* This showcases how AI tools like ChatGPT are instrumental in offering new angles and aiding the creative process, especially in the ideation phase of copywriting.

Writer's block is a prevalent challenge among writers, where they struggle to produce new content or experience a lack of creativity. There can be multiple reasons for this phenomena, ranging from mental fatigue to external pressures. However, copywriters came up with various strategies over time to help them navigate this obstacle.

1. Proactive brain stimulation:

When writers have issues with creativity with their current task, some of them proactively focus on different proactive endeavors, hoping that some other activity will serve as a sufficient bait which will make the creativity poke its head out from wherever it was hiding. One copywriter stated: *"Sometimes, I take photos and create a story based on whatever is in that picture. For instance, I once captured a cat sitting on a windowsill. That cat reminded me of an old woman peeking out of her window, watching the street below. This inspired me to write a story about two women who live across the street from each other and constantly argue."* This anecdote exemplifies the serendipitous nature of creativity, where seemingly unrelated activities can spark a chain of thoughts leading to fresh ideas. Engaging in diverse creative practices not only broadens a writer's experiential palette but also serves as a conduit for unexpected bursts of inspiration, demonstrating the fluid and interconnected nature of creative work.

2. Taking breaks:

The act of stepping away and then revisiting your work can be therapeutic. As one respondent aptly put it, *"If the situation permits, I simply give up and leave it for the next day."* Such breaks provide an opportunity to approach the work with a fresh perspective.

3. External activities as distractions:

Sometimes, a change in activity can ignite the spark of inspiration. One writer mentioned that *"I just close my laptop, and do something else instead (spending time with my family, walking, listening to loud music, etc.). Best ideas come when I'm not on my laptop."* Engaging in unrelated hobbies or activities can shift the mind away from the block, inadvertently allowing creativity to seep back in.

4. Absence of writer's block:

It's noteworthy that not every writer experiences this challenge in the same intensity or even at all. One copywriter stated that *"There's no such thing as writer's block, only insufficiently researched topics for which you haven't prepared enough material."*

5. Seeking external stimuli:

Interacting with external tools or seeking outside opinions can provide a fresh perspective. As one writer shared, *"Sometimes I have an idea but struggle to execute it. In such cases, I often use chat GPT, which provides me with a perspective, and then I can write what I had in mind."* Another copywriter stated: *"When I have creative blocks, I usually start reading literature that is unrelated to my current writing topic."* These practices underscore the importance of stepping beyond one's immediate environment or thought process to find inspiration or solutions that can break through creative barriers.

In the realm of copywriting, the strategic application of persuasion techniques is key to effectively influencing target audiences. Copywriters not only adapt their methods to suit specific project requirements but also employ these persuasion techniques and strategies in a manner that maximizes impact. Understanding the psychological underpinnings of these techniques—such as how scarcity incites urgency, authority builds trust, and social proof encourages conformity—enables writers to craft messages that resonate deeply with the target audience. By carefully selecting and applying these strategies, copywriters can create compelling content that motivates, persuades, and ultimately, drives action. Here's how different writers approach this:

1. Utilizing bullet points for key features:

To concisely highlight a product's advantages, copywriters often resort to bullet points. One writer emphasized, *"Once I complete this research, I get a clear idea of what needs to*

be highlighted and the key features of the product. I jot down bullet points on what aspects I should emphasize."

2. Use of persuasion techniques based on project needs:

Tailoring techniques to fit project requirements is a common practice. As a copywriter described, *"This really depends on the project, the target audience, and what the client wants to achieve with the copy. I use all of them, depending on the project."* Another copywriter stated: *"I pick and choose from techniques like scarcity, authority, social proof, and others based on what fits the project."*

3. Using persuasion techniques strategically:

Strategic application of these methods is crucial for effective persuasion. One interviewee said, *"The ones [persuasion techniques] that always deliver the perfect approach and combination of message and visuals, using suitable materials for each client and target. It's as simple as that."*

A professional approach and workflow in copywriting involves a combination of structured processes, adaptability, and a commitment to quality. Copywriters employ various methods to ensure their work aligns with client needs, meets project timelines, and maintains high standards. Here's an exploration of these aspects through specific codes:

1. Relying on a structured process:

A structured approach is fundamental. One interviewee noted, *"There are always three steps: Gathering and reviewing the material, Preparing the text structure as a sort of skeleton, and then Execution."*

2. Time assessment for projects:

Effective time management is crucial. As stated by a copywriter, *"I am well aware of my capabilities and can accurately assess the time needed to complete a task before its deadline."*

3. Aligning with client's needs and adapting to feedback:

Tailoring work to client specifications is key. *"Aligning with what clients want can be challenging. To tackle these issues, I keep open communication,"* explained one writer.

4. Continuous learning and exposure to best-performing content:

Staying informed and learning continuously is essential. A respondent shared, *"By reading best performing content, following authoritative brands, businesses, and creators, reading a lot, and writing a lot."*

5. Iterative process (back-and-forth):

An iterative approach enhances quality. *"I'll do a little research, then go write a bunch, then I'll go back to research,"* described a writer.

6. Time constraints in the agency world:

Working under pressure is a common challenge. *"In the agency world... it's expected that a blog post is produced in just a few hours,"* a copywriter mentioned.

7. Emphasis on editing:

Rigorous editing is vital for quality. *"The crucial step is editing,"* stated one interviewee, highlighting its importance.

8. Editing by reading aloud:

Reading aloud is a technique for refining content. *"I try to read my copy aloud... to identify any incomprehensible sentences, hard-to-read parts,"* a writer explained.

9. Authenticity in copywriting:

Maintaining authenticity is essential. *"Authenticity is the foundation of copywriting,"* said a professional, emphasizing its role in credible writing.

In the field of copywriting, collaboration and external inputs play a significant role in idea generation and creative storytelling. This approach helps copywriters to innovate and improve the quality of their work. Here's how they incorporate these elements:

1. Discussing with peers for idea generation:

Collaborative discussions are a key source of new ideas. As one copywriter shared, *"When it hits, I step back, take a break, or bounce ideas around with friends."* This highlights the importance of peer interaction in sparking creativity.

2. Collaborating with other creatives for fresh ideas:

Working with other creatives is crucial for fresh perspectives. *"Collaborating with other creative minds is like a booster shot for fresh ideas,"* a writer mentioned, emphasizing the value of diverse viewpoints.

3. Disconnecting from distractions:

Minimizing distractions aids focus and creativity. As a copywriter stated, *"I nurture my creativity by disconnecting from YouTube and other distractions, clearing my mind,"* showing the importance of a distraction-free environment for creative thought.

4.3. Research question 2 analysis

Research question: What techniques do they find to be the most effective?

Most of the copywriters chose similar techniques as their most effective ones. For example, the technique of creating social proof is one of them. One copywriter stated: *“I mostly use authority, social proof, and scarcity. Given that I write in the financial sector, these are the most important to me. I would highlight social proof and authority as I believe they are crucial.”* This preference stems from the inherent trust and credibility these techniques build, which are vital in the financial sector where decision-making is heavily influenced by the perception of reliability and expertise. Another copywriter had a similar view: *“Specifically, for e-commerce projects, I consistently rely on techniques like scarcity and social proof, as they have demonstrated their efficacy through testing.”* In the context of e-commerce, these techniques effectively tap into consumer behavior—scarcity creates a sense of urgency, while social proof leverages the power of collective endorsement, both driving conversions by appealing to fundamental psychological triggers.

However, there were some copywriters that had reservations towards using this technique. They stemmed from the negative experiences they had in their previous work when employing this technique: *“Social proof is my least favorite, perhaps because I've written countless testimonials myself that I know aren't genuine. I've also penned fake reviews for Amazon.”* This revelation sheds light on the ethical quandaries faced by copywriters and the potential for diminishing returns when persuasion tactics are perceived as disingenuous or manipulative. These previous copywriting endeavors made this copywriter stop considering social proof as a viable technique since it can be faked. This stance highlights a broader concern within the industry about the integrity of marketing practices and the long-term impact of such strategies on consumer trust and brand reputation.

Another technique used quite often (and seen as the most effective) is the scarcity technique. *“From my experience, scarcity and authority are on the top,”* said one copywriter. Another interviewee said: *“I consistently rely on techniques like scarcity and social proof, as they have demonstrated their efficacy through testing.”* This reliance on scarcity underscores its power to create a sense of urgency among consumers, compelling them to act quickly to avoid missing out.

Along with these two techniques, the technique that stands out as the one that is used most often, and considered to be the most effective is authority. *“Social proof, authority, and scarcity.”* was a direct answer to this research question by one of the copywriters. *“Social proof and authority usually hit the bullseye,”* one copywriter stated. Authority leverages the influence of experts, leaders, or well-respected figures to build trust and credibility, making the message more persuasive to the audience.

With this in mind, it is obvious that these three techniques stand out as the ones that copywriters perceive as most effective. For that reason, it can be concluded that these techniques are also the ones that are most frequently used. The consistent success of these techniques is not just anecdotal but is rooted in their ability to tap into fundamental human psychology, such as our fear of missing out, our tendency to look to others for guidance, and our trust in authoritative sources. This deep psychological impact makes them go-to strategies for copywriters aiming to craft compelling and persuasive messages.

As far as other techniques are concerned, they were also mentioned by the copywriters, but less frequently, and almost always exclusively in individual cases. When asked to name the techniques they find most effective, one copywriter said: *“Consistency, because I believe it's essential to establish a connection between the writer and the buyer. And future pacing.”*

Sometimes, the usage of the techniques depends on the project. *“For longer copies, I incorporate techniques such as future pacing, liking, and authority.”* This approach suggests a nuanced understanding of the narrative structure required for longer content, where engaging the reader and building credibility over an extended piece is crucial. Another copywriter named specifically the techniques that they are using when having a specific goal. *“I use Scarcity in the section with the CTA, Authority in the part where I provide evidence, and testimonials in the section where it's essential to convince that the product or service truly works, especially in the part where I address doubts.”* The strategic placement of these techniques demonstrates a sophisticated layering of persuasive elements designed to guide the reader through a journey from curiosity to conviction.

Another copywriter connected the techniques' usage to the goal: *“I pick and choose from techniques like scarcity, authority, social proof, and others based on what fits the project. Scarcity makes people act fast, authority builds trust, and social proof taps into the “follow the crowd” mentality. The choice depends on the project's goals and the emotions I want to trigger.”* This statement highlights the copywriter's role as a strategic communicator who meticulously crafts messages to elicit specific responses, underscoring the art and science of persuasive writing in aligning content strategy with psychological triggers and audience motivations.

While these interviews were focused on finding out which of the techniques mentioned in this paper were considered to be most effective, the interviewees were also asked to name some additional techniques which they are using, that did not find their place in this paper. One copywriter mentioned: *“Dimensionalization. It's about conveying a message on a secondary or tertiary level. Sending a message without directly stating it in those exact words. For example, when I wrote that an investor I was promoting had a meeting with some of the leading figures in the U.S. government, my intention wasn't just to state that fact. Instead, I wanted to convey that he is so esteemed and influential that he had such a meeting*

in the first place. I mentioned some conclusions from that meeting later on, but all of that is secondary. The main point was to showcase the power and expertise of that investor who recommends a particular investment package I was promoting.” This technique demonstrates a masterful use of subtext to enhance the message’s impact, employing implication and to suggest a deeper level of meaning that engages the audience's imagination and persuades through inference rather than direct assertion. Dimensionalization, therefore, requires not only a deep understanding of the message and the audience but also a high level of creativity and strategic thinking to weave complex layers of meaning into the narrative.

Few interviewees mentioned storytelling.

“Storytelling is something that, in my experience, resonates very well with the audience,” it was said. Also, one said: *“I often dive into storytelling and playing with emotions. Stories make things relatable, and emotions are like the secret sauce that drives decisions.”* This emphasis on storytelling and emotional engagement taps into the fundamental human love for narratives and the psychological impact of emotion on decision-making, illustrating how stories can transform abstract concepts into personal and impactful experiences.

Another copywriter mentioned price anchoring as a useful technique: *“Price anchoring gave good results for e-commerce projects.”* Price anchoring effectively utilizes cognitive biases to set a reference point for value perception, influencing how subsequent prices are judged in comparison. This technique leverages psychological principles to guide consumer perception and behavior toward more favorable outcomes for the brand.

Some copywriters used the term “formulas” rather than techniques. *“Whenever possible, I like to use the 4P writing formula (Promise, Paint, Prove, Push) as well as the AIDCA writing formula (Attention, Interest, Desire, Conviction, Action). Both are excellently structured and provide the opportunity to craft text that sells.”* These structured formulas encapsulate the essence of persuasive communication, guiding the writer through a series of steps designed to capture the audience's attention, build interest and desire, and ultimately drive them to action. By adhering to these formulas, copywriters can systematically address key components of effective persuasion, ensuring that their message is both compelling and actionable.

Table 2. Codes and concepts answering the research question 2

Codes	Concepts
Avoidance of adjectives	Subtle persuasion techniques
Importance of addressing reader skepticism	
Urgency creation	
Inclusion of a promise	
Making information engaging	
Ensuring readability	
Trust enhancement	
Dimensionalization as an advanced persuasive strategy	
Use of the 4P writing formula	
Application of the AIDCA writing formula	
Price anchoring in e-commerce	
Storytelling as an additional persuasive technique	
Tailored persuasion approach based on topic and client needs	Situational nuances (technical)
Reliance on scarcity and social proof with e-commerce material	
Repetition in longer B2B forms	

Utilization of scarcity in call-to-action sections	
Reciprocity and guarantees for rationalizing purchases	Specific use cases for techniques
Authority and social proof as purchase triggers	
Consistency for connection	
Impact of future pacing and liking on emotions	
Efficacy of authority by providing evidence	
Effectiveness of social proof via testimonials	

Source: qualitative research

Price anchoring bias occurs when people rely too much on pre-existing information or the first information they find when making decisions. For example, if a customer first sees a T-shirt that costs \$1,200 – then they see a second one that costs \$100 – they're prone to see the second shirt as cheap.

4.3.1. Concept analysis

In answering the question of which techniques copywriters find most effective, it's evident that subtle persuasion techniques play a pivotal role. These techniques are nuanced and less overt but highly effective in influencing the reader's decision-making process. Here's how these techniques manifest:

1. Avoidance of adjectives:

A copywriter mentioned the strategic choice of words, stating, *"I strive not to use adjectives; instead, I aim to describe the emotions someone might feel because of the product."* This approach focuses on evoking feelings rather than overtly describing features.

2. Importance of addressing reader skepticism:

Tackling doubts is key. *"Through testimonials and authority, we can dispel and alleviate those doubts,"* a writer explained, highlighting the need to build trust and credibility.

3. Urgency creation:

Creating a sense of urgency is a subtle nudge. *"Scarcity is a powerful technique I include in the section with the call to action,"* shared another, showing how scarcity can motivate immediate action.

4. Inclusion of a promise:

Promises can be compelling. *"Throw in a promise so they know they're not wasting their time,"* a copywriter advised, demonstrating the effectiveness of assuring value to the reader.

5. Making information engaging:

Engaging content is key. *"I grab attention, make the information interesting, exciting,"* said a writer, emphasizing the need to keep the reader interested.

6. Ensuring readability:

Readability is essential for engagement. *"Ensuring the text is both stylistically and grammatically correct,"* as one copywriter noted, is crucial for maintaining the reader's interest.

7. Trust enhancement:

Building trust enhances persuasion. *"Authority builds trust,"* a respondent mentioned, signifying the importance of establishing the writer's or product's credibility.

In addressing what techniques copywriters find most effective, it's clear that they often go beyond traditional methods, employing additional persuasive techniques. These techniques are tailored to enhance the impact of the message. Let's explore these approaches:

1. Dimensionalization as an advanced persuasive strategy:

A copywriter illustrated the depth of this technique: *"When I wrote that an investor I was promoting had a meeting with some leading figures... the main point was to showcase the power and expertise of that investor."* This approach goes beyond surface-level persuasion, adding layers of meaning to the message.

2. Use of the 4P writing formula:

This formula is a structured approach to persuasion. As one professional shared, *"I like to use the 4P writing formula (Promise, Paint, Prove, Push)... it provides the opportunity to craft text that sells."* This shows how a systematic approach can effectively guide the reader through a persuasive narrative.

3. Application of the AIDCA writing formula:

Similarly, the AIDCA formula is used for its structured persuasive power. *"The AIDCA writing formula (Attention, Interest, Desire, Conviction, Action) is excellently structured,"* another writer explained, demonstrating its effectiveness in creating compelling content.

4. Price anchoring in e-commerce:

In e-commerce, price anchoring is a key strategy. One interviewee mentioned, *"Price anchoring gave good results for e-commerce projects,"* highlighting how presenting price points in a certain way can influence buyer perception and decision-making.

5. Storytelling as an additional persuasive technique:

Storytelling is recognized for its unique persuasive appeal. *"Stories make things relatable, and emotions are like the secret sauce that drives decisions,"* a copywriter stated, emphasizing how storytelling can connect emotionally with the audience, enhancing the persuasive impact.

In addressing the effectiveness of various copywriting techniques, it becomes apparent that copywriters often tailor their approaches based on the specific situational nuances and requirements of each project. This nuanced understanding allows for the strategic and effective application of persuasion techniques.

1. Tailored persuasion approach based on topic and client needs:

A copywriter emphasized the importance of customization: *One copywriter highlighted the significance of adapting to specific project requirements: "This really depends on the project, the target audience, and what does the client want to achieve with the copy. I use all of them [techniques], depending on the project."* This reflects an understanding that effective persuasion is not one-size-fits-all but must be adapted to each unique context.

2. Reliance on scarcity and social proof with e-commerce material:

E-commerce content often leverages certain persuasion techniques: *"Specifically, for e-commerce projects, I consistently rely on techniques like scarcity and social proof,"* a writer mentioned, recognizing the impact these methods have on online consumer behavior.

3. Repetition in longer B2B forms:

In business-to-business (B2B) contexts, repetition is a key strategy. As highlighted by a copywriter, *"Repetition gave good results for some longer forms for B2B projects,"* showcasing its effectiveness in reinforcing messages in a professional setting.

4. Utilization of scarcity in call-to-action sections:

The strategic placement of certain techniques is critical. *"Scarcity is a powerful technique I include in the section with the call to action,"* shared another expert, illustrating how inducing a sense of urgency can effectively prompt action from the audience.

In exploring what copywriting techniques are most effective, it's clear that certain techniques have specific use cases and are particularly suited to specific scenarios or objectives. These techniques are chosen for their proven effectiveness in specific use cases. Here's an exploration based on the identified codes:

1. Reciprocity and guarantees for rationalizing purchases:

A copywriter expressed, *"Reciprocity and money-back guarantees assist individuals in rationalizing their shopping decisions."* This demonstrates how these techniques can help customers justify their purchase decisions, making them feel more secure and confident in their choices.

2. Authority and social proof as purchase triggers:

Another professional noted the power of these techniques: *"Social proof and authority can serve as effective triggers for encouraging purchases."* By showcasing endorsements or expertise, these methods effectively leverage the influence of others to instigate buying behavior.

3. Consistency for connection:

The role of consistency was emphasized as a means of building a relationship: *"I use consistency, because it's essential to establish a connection between the writer and the buyer."* This approach is about maintaining a coherent and reliable voice or message, fostering trust and rapport with the audience.

4. Impact of future pacing and liking on emotions:

Addressing emotional engagement, a writer mentioned, *"Future pacing and liking can have a profound impact on evoking emotions in people."* These techniques are strategically used to evoke specific feelings, making the message more relatable and emotionally resonant.

5. Efficacy of authority by providing evidence:

Authority is further strengthened when backed by evidence. *"Authority, in the part where I provide evidence that the product or service I'm writing about truly works,"* shared a copywriter, illustrating how evidence amplifies the credibility and persuasive power of the message.

6. Effectiveness of social proof via testimonials:

A copywriter remarked, *"I've used social proof effectively, especially when it comes to online products. Including customer testimonials and reviews prominently in the copy has significantly increased conversion rates."* This statement underscores the practical impact of incorporating testimonials in copywriting, demonstrating how firsthand customer experiences can powerfully persuade new customers by providing relatable and authentic endorsements.

4.4. Research question 3 analysis

Research question: Do they have any moral dilemmas or resistance when using these techniques?

When taking a look at the morality aspect of the copywriting business, there are many complex views that occurred during the interview. Almost all of the copywriters showed some kind of a morality principle. None of them were morally oblivious in regards to their profession. Their principles differentiated in subtleties, but it can be stated that they had many common generalities, morality-wise.

None of the copywriters have any moral dilemmas regarding the essence of the copywriting job, which is persuading people to make certain actions (usually buy a product or a service). Most of them never had any essential dilemmas in regards to this.

Some of the copywriters at some point (usually in the beginning of their career) had certain doubts, though. However, after having worked as copywriters for a meaningful period of time, they got to know the industry better, and adjusted their moral principles. One copywriter stated: *"Initially, it was very difficult for me to deal with the feeling of "persuading" people to make a purchase. I often had a moral dilemma, and during those moments, positive reviews from customers helped me the most."*

Over time, I came to realize that the most important thing is not to mislead readers or make unrealistic promises."

Regarding the question of manipulation, copywriters had different approaches. One copy-

writer stated: *“I have nothing against manipulation if it's for a good cause. My company manipulates me to make me a better worker, parents manipulate their children to make them better individuals, etc. I don't have a problem with manipulation if it leads to a positive outcome for the one being manipulated.”*

There was another view: *“There have been moments when I've wondered if I'm crossing the line between persuasion and manipulation. When that happens, I take a step back and evaluate. I make sure the message aligns with reality, and I'm not just pushing people into something they don't need. It's all about being honest and fair.”*

It can be concluded that some copywriters don't see themselves as manipulators, since the concept of manipulation has negative connotations within their morality field of perception. However, other copywriters don't see manipulation as necessarily a bad thing if it is done in the interest of the one who is being manipulated.

Regarding some other elements of the copywriter job, that can be defined as “part of the job”, many copywriters have defined boundaries and rules based on their moral values. These usually differ from person to person, but most of them are related to basic morality principles such as lying, cheating, gambling, or even murder.

For example, one copywriter said: *“I've consciously chosen not to engage in writing or supporting content that disseminates any form of war propaganda. Such texts often aim to categorize an entire nation as negative, which contradicts my principles.”*

One copywriter also stated: *“What I do have a moral issue with is so-called false advertising, which is strictly prohibited and represents a form of negative manipulation..”*

Other copywriters had different moral codes. For example: *“I've never been involved in the gaming industry, so morally, I'm clear.”*

Another copywriter mentioned the following: *“I realized that most of the copywriting work in gaming (gambling), finance, and health revolves around exploiting people's desperation and last bits of hope for monetary gain. It is disgusting, immoral, and directly hurts the buyer, their families, and therefore society as a whole.”*

Also, it was mentioned: *“I'll add that using techniques like scarcity (“only 6 left in stock, offer ends in 2 days, act now!”) unless the writing is actually true - is just basic lying.”*

There is another moral compass that copywriters have which is not about the industry that they would be working for, but rather about the quality of the offer, or the product that they are supposed to promote.

Here is an example: *“I know from the very beginning if I want to work with a client (if I*

believe in their product/service). I don't accept any offers if I'm not 100% sure about their offer.”. Another copywriter stated: “There are many projects I refused to work for because it was clearly a money grabber, and it made impossible promises. That's not how I usually roll.”

Generally, all of the interviewees have defined their moral codes in relation to the job that they do. With minor differences, most of them commonly conclude that lying, negative manipulation, and exaggeration are not acceptable, and they do not take part in such activities.

Table 3. Codes and concepts answering the research question 3

Codes	Concepts
Identification of potentially harmful content	Ethical boundaries in content choices
Refusal to participate in war propaganda	
Clear from morally questionable projects	
Emphasis on connecting genuine products with customers	
Targeting high-income audiences to mitigate ethical concerns	Target audience and ethical considerations
Early career moral dilemmas	
Avoidance of false advertising	Manipulation vs. positive Influence
Justification of manipulation for positive outcomes	
Refusal to work on money-grabbing projects	
Responsibility and accountability of consumers	Personal ethics and professional choices
Shift to genuine businesses and ethical practices	

Source: qualitative research

4.4.1. Concept analysis

Copywriters often face the challenge of determining which content aligns with their ethical boundaries in content choices. They may encounter projects involving potentially harmful or deceptive content and must decide whether to engage based on their personal ethics. This includes avoiding involvement in content that promotes misinformation or harmful stereotypes, such as war propaganda, ensuring that their work does not contribute to spreading negativity or division.

1. Identification of potentially harmful content:

In situations where projects may conflict with personal ethics, copywriters must make crucial decisions. *"In the case of other industries, where I've identified potential scams, I chose not to engage in collaboration."* This quote exemplifies the importance of ethical discernment in avoiding deceptive content.

2. Refusal to participate in war propaganda:

Ethical considerations lead some copywriters to avoid contributing to harmful narratives. *"I consciously chose not to engage in writing or supporting content that disseminates war propaganda,"* illustrating a commitment to ethical writing practices and avoiding divisive content.

3. Clear from morally questionable projects:

Many copywriters consciously avoid projects that could pose ethical conflicts. *"I've never been involved in the gaming industry, so morally, I'm clear,"* reflecting a proactive approach to maintaining moral integrity.

4. Emphasis on connecting genuine products with customers:

Honesty and authenticity in matching products with the right audience are key. *"I'm not deceiving anyone as the texts I write reflect the actual product and service,"* focusing on the genuine value offered to consumers.

When considering ethical dilemmas, copywriters often take into account the financial status and characteristics of their target audience. For instance, working on projects aimed at high-income individuals may present fewer moral concerns for some copywriters, as they believe the impact on such audiences is negligible. This approach reflects how audience demographics can influence a copywriter's decision-making process regarding ethical concerns.

1. Targeting high-income audiences to mitigate ethical concerns:

The audience's financial status can influence a copywriter's ethical perspective. *"I don't grapple with moral dilemmas for my target audience of individuals with incomes exceeding \$300,000 monthly,"* indicating a nuanced approach to ethical decision-making based on audience characteristics.

2. Early career moral dilemmas:

Reflecting on their early career, one copywriter shared, *"Dealing with the feeling of 'persuading' people to make a purchase was difficult initially."* This highlights the moral introspection and growth that often occurs in the field.

The fine line between manipulation and a positive influence is a key ethical consideration in copywriting. Some professionals justify the use of manipulative techniques if they lead to positive outcomes, equating it with motivational strategies used in various aspects of life. This perspective highlights the moral ambiguity in persuasive writing, where the intention and result of the manipulation play a crucial role in justifying its use.

1. Avoidance of false advertising:

Maintaining honesty in advertising is crucial for many copywriters. *"I have a moral issue with so-called false advertising, which is strictly prohibited,"* highlighting the importance of integrity and truthfulness in persuasive writing.

2. Justification of manipulation for positive outcomes:

The moral complexity of manipulation in persuasive writing is evident in statements like, *"I don't have a problem with manipulation if it leads to a positive outcome for the one being manipulated."* Here, the distinction between harmful manipulation and positive influence is explored, suggesting a more flexible ethical perspective.

3. Refusal to work on money-grabbing projects:

Avoiding projects that exploit or make unrealistic claims is a common ethical stance. *"I refused many projects that were clearly money grabbers with impossible promises,"* showcasing a commitment to ethical standards.

Personal ethics and professional choices significantly influence the types of projects that copywriters choose to work on. Many are guided by their moral principles, opting out of projects that conflict with their values, such as those involving scams, false advertising, or exploitation. This approach emphasizes the importance of aligning professional work with

personal ethics, ensuring that their contributions are both professionally fulfilling and morally sound.

1. Responsibility and accountability of consumers:

The role of consumers in decision-making is also a key consideration. "*Consumers should be responsible and accountable for their actions,*" suggesting a view of shared responsibility in the buying process.

2. Shift to genuine businesses and ethical practices:

"*I focus on genuine businesses and people, helping to sell their products,*" a statement illustrating a conscious choice to align with businesses that mirror a copywriter's ethical standards.

4.5. Research limitations

This research, while providing valuable insights into the practices and ethical considerations of copywriters, has several limitations that need to be acknowledged.

Firstly, the sample size and selection criteria pose a limitation. The study involved interviews with 10 active copywriters, all of whom were required to be currently writing marketing material. While this selection criterion ensures a focus on relevant experience, the relatively small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, all participants hail from countries in former Yugoslavia, which introduces a geographical and cultural homogeneity. This may limit the applicability of the findings to copywriters from different regions or backgrounds.

The scope of the research was another limitation. The study primarily focused on persuasive techniques, the general approach to copywriting projects, and the moral considerations of the profession. However, it did not delve deeply into aspects such as specific research methods used by copywriters, the detailed structure of various types of copy (e.g., landing pages, product descriptions, whitepapers), or evolving trends in copywriting formats. This means that the research may not fully capture the breadth and diversity of practices in the field.

The methodology of data collection could also influence the study's outcomes. Interviews were conducted online and followed a structured questionnaire. While this method ensures consistency in data collection, it may restrict the depth and spontaneity of responses compared to more open-ended or face-to-face interactions.

Regarding subjectivity, efforts were made to minimize bias. The interviewer's lack of personal acquaintance with the participants and absence from the copywriting field helped maintain objectivity. However, the interpretation of qualitative data inherently carries a

degree of subjectivity, and the absence of specific measures to counteract this in the analysis process is a limitation.

The use of QDA Miner Lite for data analysis, being a free version, might have had certain constraints in terms of advanced analytical features. This could impact the depth and breadth of data analysis, potentially affecting the richness of the findings.

In terms of the rapidly evolving nature of copywriting, especially in digital realms, it is recognized that certain foundational aspects based on human psychology may remain consistent over time. However, changes in consumer behavior, such as decreasing attention spans and preferences for non-written content, could impact the relevance of these findings in the future.

Overall, while this study provides significant insights into the current practices and ethical considerations of copywriters, these limitations suggest caution in generalizing the findings to a broader population of copywriters or assuming their long-term applicability without further research. Future studies might expand the geographical and cultural diversity of participants, explore a broader range of copywriting practices, and employ a mixed-methods approach to mitigate some of these limitations.

4.6. Managerial implications

In light of the findings from this research on copywriting practices and ethics, the following suggestions are offered to managers, particularly those overseeing marketing, content creation, and copywriting teams. These recommendations aim to enhance the effectiveness, ethical standards, and overall management of copywriting activities within organizations:

1. **Continuous training and development:** Given the rapidly evolving nature of copywriting, especially in digital contexts, it is crucial for managers to invest in ongoing training and development for their teams. This could include workshops on the latest digital tools, SEO practices, consumer psychology, and ethical standards in copywriting.
2. **Encouraging ethical practices:** Managers should foster an environment where ethical considerations are paramount. This involves setting clear guidelines on what constitutes ethical copywriting within the organization and ensuring that these standards are consistently upheld. Encouraging open discussions about ethical dilemmas and providing support in resolving them can also be beneficial.
3. **Promoting collaboration and idea sharing:** Facilitate regular brainstorming sessions and collaborative opportunities within your team. Encouraging copywriters to share ideas, challenges, and insights can lead to more innovative and effective copy, as well as help in overcoming creative blocks.

4. Adopting flexible workflows: Recognize that copywriting is a creative process that can vary significantly among individuals. Adopting flexible workflows and allowing copywriters to develop their own processes within certain guidelines can lead to more effective and satisfying work.
5. Utilizing technology and AI tools: Stay informed about emerging technologies and AI tools that can aid the copywriting process. Implementing these tools can enhance efficiency and creativity, but it's important to balance their use with human insight and creativity.
6. Monitoring industry trends: Managers should keep in touch with current trends and changes in the copywriting field. This knowledge can inform strategic decisions and help anticipate shifts in consumer preferences and digital marketing practices.
7. Consumer feedback integration: Encourage the team to integrate consumer feedback into the copywriting process. Understanding how audiences perceive and react to different types of content can inform future strategies and help in tailoring messages more effectively.
8. Recognizing and addressing moral dilemmas: Be proactive in recognizing potential moral dilemmas that copywriters may face, especially in sensitive industries. Providing guidance and a platform for discussing these issues can help in maintaining a morally sound approach to copywriting.
9. Evaluating copywriting effectiveness: Implement systems to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the copy produced, not just in terms of sales and conversion rates, but also in how well it aligns with the brand's values and ethical standards.

4.7. Suggestions for future research

Given the limitations identified in this study, several avenues for future research emerge, offering opportunities to build upon and expand the current understanding of copywriting practices and ethics. The following suggestions are proposed for subsequent investigations in this field:

1. Broader geographical scope: Future studies should consider including copywriters from a more diverse range of geographical locations beyond the former Yugoslavian countries. This would enhance the generalizability of the findings and provide insights into how cultural and regional differences impact copywriting practices and ethical considerations.
2. Larger and more varied sample: Increasing the sample size and including copywriters with diverse backgrounds, specializations, and experience levels would provide a more

comprehensive view of the industry. It would be particularly valuable to compare the experiences of freelance copywriters with those employed in agencies or in-house roles.

3. In-depth exploration of copywriting formats: Research should delve into the specific structures and strategies employed in different types of copywriting, such as landing pages, product descriptions, email campaigns, and whitepapers. Understanding the nuances and requirements of each format could provide a more detailed picture of the copywriting process.
4. Longitudinal studies: To capture the evolving nature of copywriting, longitudinal research could be conducted. This would track changes in copywriting practices over time, especially in response to technological advancements and shifting consumer behaviors.
5. Face-to-face interviews and mixed methods: Incorporating face-to-face interviews or using a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative and quantitative data could yield deeper insights. This approach would allow for a richer, more nuanced understanding of copywriters' perspectives and strategies.
6. Investigation into consumer reactions: Research could also focus on the consumer side, exploring how different persuasive techniques in copywriting are received and interpreted by audiences. This would help in understanding the effectiveness and impact of various copywriting strategies from the consumer's viewpoint.
7. Ethical boundaries and industry standards: Further exploration into the ethical dilemmas faced by copywriters and the industry standards for ethical copywriting practices would be beneficial. This could include studies on how copywriters navigate moral gray areas and the role of professional ethics in guiding their decisions.
8. Impact of digital tools and AI: As digital tools and AI become increasingly prevalent in copywriting, research into their impact on the creative process, efficiency, and content quality would provide valuable insights. This includes exploring both the benefits and potential challenges associated with their use.

CONCLUSION

Copywriting is a mix of art and structure. The disciplinarian segment of copywriting tends to create formal boundaries and limitations for the creative waves that are being released by the copywriter. In that process, tides of creativity that are constantly hitting the secure structure of rules create contours and shapes, which become engraved into that structure presenting the final product after the waves disappear.

Copywriters believe in structure. Most of them have a clear set of rules and procedures that they obey during their every project. We saw that one of those rules which are almost always obeyed is the rule of research. The research is a fundamental part of every copywriting project which comes before any persuasive techniques, big ideas, or other forms of creative work. Researching the target audience, and the product is absolutely crucial, and no professional copywriter has the luxury of skipping this step. By doing the research, the copywriter sets clear structure which will serve as a mold that will determine the boundaries and shape of their creative clay, after which the final product will be obtained.

Majority of the copywriters that took part in the research consider creativity to be detrimental for any kind of proper copywriting endeavor. The same goes for the persuasive techniques. In the thesis, there are several persuasive techniques mentioned, which copywriters are using. Some of these techniques are used more often, and some less often, but all of them are part of the opus of tools that a copywriter uses.

Regarding the writing process, copywriters often lack a deep comprehension of it, reducing it to merely "writing." They view writing as purely a creative pursuit, one that eludes their capacity for objective observation or the ability to clearly explain their creative pathways and sentence construction techniques. This view accentuates the intensely personal and frequently indescribable essence of creativity, portraying writing more as an act driven by emotion and intuition than a clear methodology. Typically, they put it as "connecting the dots" or "piecing together bits of a puzzle."

Another significant aspect which this thesis dealt with is the morality aspect. Copywriters have moral challenges when choosing a project to work on, or the way that they will write certain material. As freelancers, many copywriters are being offered sketchy projects, with potentially harmful products to promote. Also, the question of manipulation arises, as copywriters have powerful techniques in their hands, which they could potentially use to influence people to make wrong decisions. Some of the copywriters have additional moral conditions, and they choose not to work on promoting products such as gambling, cigarettes, or alcohol.

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