



Edcom December Meeting 10 December 2024

Date: 10 December 2024

Time: 13h30-18h00

Venue: WPP Brussels

Secretariat Updates:

Projects Update

- Graduation Competition: 19 students are registered. The first judging round is scheduled for 20–21 January 2025, with the final round and winners announced by the end of January.
- AdVenture Competition: 25 students are currently registered. The competition progresses with judging from late February to March, culminating in the final pitch to the client in The Hague on April 25th, 2025.

Membership Overview

The network comprises 37 members across 16 countries, with strong representation in the UK, Belgium, Greece, France, and the Netherlands.

Recent additions in 2024 include institutions from the UK, Romania, and Austria.

However, regional gaps persist, particularly in Northern, Eastern, and Southern Europe, and recent departures highlight the need for strategic recruitment.

Next Steps

Members are requested to support network growth by inviting their institutional partners to join – **AIM – one new partner per existing partner!**

Member Presentation: Best Innovative Practice: DEI in Advertising by Hyunsun Yoon.

H.Y. reflects on three brand campaigns that sparked significant controversy and were later used as teaching materials:

- H&M: A situation involving an image on their website that led to public backlash. H&M's response involved appointing a diversity ambassador and introducing training programs within their HR department. H.Y. comments positively on these actions, highlighting them as constructive steps.
- Jo Malone's adverts: A black actor was replaced by a Chinese actor by a local agency without the knowledge of the brand or the actor. This act is described as unethical and served as a case study for academic discussion.
- Dolce&Gabbana Shanghai brand show video: This campaign, targeting Chinese consumers, featured a Chinese model struggling to use chopsticks in a way deemed offensive. The video's subtitles included nuanced words referring to male body parts, alongside decorative elements in the background. The campaign caused significant backlash in China, leading to canceled events and e-commerce partnerships.

H.Y. explains how these examples reflect different types of promotional content—website images, localized international campaigns, and nation-specific videos—and their implications. She emphasises the importance of framing discussions to address accountability and cultural context. She also touches on challenges in publishing academic work on these issues, particularly regarding debates over terms like "racism." The overarching theme is understanding advertising in the era of accountability, where creativity must respect cultural nuances and audience interpretations.

H.Y. explains polysemy as a concept involving multiple meanings. She emphasizes that a word or image can have more than one interpretation, and in the context of advertising, this multiple meaning can be intended or unintentional. By saying "polysemy," she highlights that a single piece of content (whether it's a word, image, or idea) can resonate in different ways with different audiences depending on their cultural background, social context, or individual perspective. This creates a dynamic where advertising content can provoke various reactions, but it also poses a risk if the different meanings are misunderstood or cause unintended offense.

Keynote: AI in Marketing: A Creative Renaissance or Standardisation? Preparing the Next Generation for the Future by David Grunewald.

D.G., founder of Pluginto.ai, has 28 years of experience in advertising, primarily in Brussels. After stepping away from the industry, he trained at MIT on strategy and the impact of AI on work.

He discusses how AI, particularly tools like ChatGPT, is revolutionizing marketing, highlighting examples like a Vodafone ad made entirely with AI, which reduced production time and costs. While AI presents risks, such as potential misuse in education, D.G. emphasizes that AI is not here to replace human intelligence but to collaborate with it, enhancing productivity and creativity.

He emphasises that what is available to the public today is as powerful as the tools used by NASA engineers or military strategists. The key issue, he points out, is not whether AI can replace human intelligence, but how we use it effectively. The distinction is between work developed by AI and work done with AI—collaborating with AI can lead to new innovations. D.G. can provide valuable insights and starting points for further brain exercise. D.G. explains how AI is transforming agencies, automating tasks like competitive analysis, and freeing up professionals to focus on creative and strategic thinking. He compares AI to having multiple assistants, boosting productivity.

D.G. describes how, in the past, there was a gap between the ideation of an idea (whether by architects, marketers, or car designers) and the process of crafting it to see results. This time gap has now been shortened, with technology allowing almost instant visualisation of ideas. This enables rapid iterations, where one can quickly assess whether the idea is good enough and refine it further. The speaker views this as a fantastic opportunity for creative renaissance, where tools like AI can generate incredibly realistic images, enabling designers to create complex 3D models or visuals for TV, broadcasts, new factories, and even car designs. This marks a significant shift in how ideas are brought to life, making it possible to explore and explain complicated concepts more effectively. David addresses how AI is reshaping the marketing industry, not just in content production but also in strategic tasks like brand analysis and competition observation. AI tools can now quickly analyse data and translate it into human-readable language, saving time for strategists.

As a professor, D.G.'s mission is to prepare students for a future driven by AI, acknowledging the resistance from some academics who see AI as a mere tool for spelling or translation. While it is true that we should not rely solely on AI content, he emphasises that students graduating in a few years will need to be augmented professionals, as the competition will be based on how effectively they can manage these tools. He reflects on how the internet, especially Google, had already transformed research, and now AI is pushing us into a new era where searching and summarising are no longer the main challenges. For instance, students who use ChatGPT for revision are able to better understand and master the topics, leading to improved assignment results. He also points out the importance of evolving how students will

be assessed, focusing on critical thinking and collaboration with machines to find new solutions.

Students who master AI will be more competitive in the job market, and D.G. highlights tools like Google's NotebookLM, which allows for effective document management, detailed analysis, and content summarization. He concludes that mastering AI tools will be crucial for future success in marketing and other industries.

Clusters

The Board encouraged members to explore ways to expand edcom's reach and impact. Discussions were organized around seven key themes: Education, Industry, Research, Alumni, and Ad Net Zero —with one or two leads for each theme.

To facilitate this, small breakout groups were formed. This collaborative format ensured active participation, with members contributing valuable insights and strategies to shape edcom's future initiatives.

Education

Lead: Betty Tsakarestou— How to better link member universities

Lead: Joep Peeters — Short-term initiatives- strategic direction

B.T. focused on strategies for organic connection and city branding. She proposed collaborative approaches like guest lectures, online participation, and module-based work. Key ideas included "low-key" interactions, flipping the classroom format, and engaging in mutual project development. Examples highlighted were connected classrooms in The Hague and Athens, fostering shared learning experiences through city branding projects.

J.P. and B.T. discuss ongoing initiatives within the network, mainly focusing on BIPs. They acknowledge that while there are great projects running, members are not necessarily aware of them. To address this, four teams have been formed, which should be open to all members for participation:

AI Hackathon: they hope to accelerate progress to make it work by May 2025.

Issue and Crisis Mngement: partners are already interested, they are looking for one more partner.

Athlete Branding and Fan Engagement: partners are already interested, and they are looking for one more partner.

DEI in advertising and communication: a team has just been formed.

They also highlight the need for an effective communication strategy to inform members about these initiatives. Whether it is through WhatsApp groups, emails, or newsletters, the goal is to find the best way to communicate these opportunities.

Industry

Lead: Richard Robinson— How to make new industry connections

R.R. discusses three main areas where the industry can provide support:

Sponsorship: The goal is to better define the concept of sponsorship. The idea is to offer real benefits to brands looking to get involved, such as the opportunity to engage with universities, assist in lectures, and better manage their brands on campuses. The aim is to establish long-term partnerships rather than short-term ones to avoid the need to train new people each time, fostering continuity in relationships.

Edcom Insights Factory: This initiative seeks to connect research work with brands by encouraging students to participate in research projects submitted by brands. Students would be rewarded for engaging with these briefs, although the reward does not necessarily have to be financial. The idea is to create a platform where students can contribute to brand-driven research across Europe.

Annual Edcom Skills Report: This project aims to collaborate with brands to identify the most important skills needed in the industry. By surveying and interviewing 100 brands annually, the report would analyse the knowledge, skills, and mindsets that the industry requires from students. This report would gain global recognition, similar to major industry reports, and generate widespread attention.

Alumni

Lead: Arnoud Versluis- Plan to launch Edcom LinkedIn alumni group.

Alumni Engagement is crucial for building future industry connections. A LinkedIn alumni group could help foster these connections. Additionally, appointing a student from each program could enhance communication and participation.

Research:

Lead: Paul Duxbury — Edcom Vodcast: how to create impact with Industry

Lead: Paul Springer — How to share doctoral research programmes.

Participants:

Michal Stransky, Tomas Bata Uni, Czech Republic

Dagmar Weberova, Tomas Bata Uni, Czech Republic

Mada Moraru, university of Bucharest, Romania.

Participants identify three distinct themes for future work:

- D.W.: Gen Z, bridges between education - how to work with them- strategies for engagement on-going career trajectories
- M.S.: Persuasion and reaching Gen Z.
- M.M.: Changing communications labour market, jobs, approaches.

These themes are integral to their research, and they plan to integrate student insights and focus groups as part of the process (R.R. spoke about the Edcom Insights Factory, which envisions connecting research initiatives with active student participation. It aims to engage students by allowing them to opt into research projects proposed by brands, creating a collaborative platform that bridges academic insights and industry needs).

edcom's research community is Keen on deep-dives into key themes: The AI creative, Gen Z and changing comms labour market, creative freelance careers, the publication of chapters, (seeking the best publishing outlets) And edcom call for papers to share online 'new knowledge'.

P.S.: AI, HEIs & coms education

Call for Papers: P.S. suggests creating an edcom call for papers at least once a year to gather new knowledge from staff and contribute to the publication, emphasising that such efforts are effective and draw attention. They had previously done it with the thesis competition winners, but he also wants to highlight staff research and the research done by students, providing profiles for both.

M.M. emphasised the importance of involving students in the development of an article for publication, utilising methods such as focus groups and surveys, which are seen as a key source of primary evidence. To achieve this, both quantitative and qualitative expertise would be required. This initiative would increase edcom's visibility.

P.D., T.H., M.V.G dealt with the question of where to take the edcom podcast from its pilot into its first season:

- Content Strategy: The first season of the edcom vodcast should leverage both video and audio formats to maximise reach and accessibility, considering an audio-only version for broader accessibility, while retaining video content for LinkedIn impact. Using tools like Notebook LM for creation and ensuring the Podcast addresses a clear problem are key. Topics could include reverse learning (younger generations teaching industry professionals) and themes like "From Research to Reality," focusing on bridging gaps between academia and professional practice. AI tools can support creation and translation to engage a broader audience.
- Production and Presentation: A less formal, engaging format is recommended, with a brief, catchy 10-second intro to captivate audiences. The vodcast should emphasise research-focused content over teaching priorities to ensure industry relevance and appeal to a professional audience.
- Promotion and Participation: Publicity should center on LinkedIn to boost visibility through likes and shares. Contributions from experts and assignments for members to generate content can enrich the vodcast, positioning edcom as a valuable platform for both students and academics. Ensuring students and academics see edcom as a valuable platform will drive meaningful participation and long-term success.

Ad Net Zero

Leads: Rosie Hand, Kirstie Riedl— How to collaborate with Ad Net Zero Europe.

R.H., K.R. and V.M.R provide three ideas for AdNetZero:

- **Educational Videos:** Develop five 15-minute videos focusing on AdNet Zero's five-action framework. These videos will blend theoretical insights with practical applications, aiming to inspire sustainable advertising practices among students. The content will be developed between January and August, ready for students to use from September to December.
- **Integration into AdVenture Competition:** Incorporate the AdNet Zero framework into the AdVenture student competition, especially focusing on Action 5 (Sustainable Behaviour). This will address feedback about the need for more sustainability in student projects, fostering both awareness and practical application.
- **Partnership and Showcase Sessions:** Deepen the partnership between edcom and AdNet Zero by inviting students to attend AdNet Zero Europe's showcase sessions. These sessions feature agencies sharing how they apply the framework, offering students valuable insights into practical implementations.

K.R. concludes by suggesting that it would be beneficial if the leads could follow up on these ideas and provide an update during the April meeting on the progress made in implementing them.