

**An Investigation into *On-sourcing* of Advertising Creativity in an Emerging Economy:
The Case of the United Arab Emirates.**

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Abstract

In a globally competitive market many organisations increasingly have challenges sourcing, developing and maintaining the skills they need to compete effectively. This study examines the less researched aspect of outsourcing from an emerging economy to a developed country. We examine *why* and *how* firms outsource advertising creativity in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Based on the resource base view (RBV), using in-depth interviews with ‘elite’ senior advertising executives, we examine the reasons for outsourcing and the strategies used to access creative skills. The findings contribute both to theory and practice by providing new insights into *why* and *how* firms outsource to achieve competitive advantage in an emerging economy.

Keywords: outsourcing, on-sourcing, resource-based view, rare resource, emerging economy.

1. Introduction

In a globally competitive market many organisations increasingly have challenges sourcing, developing and maintaining the skills they need to compete effectively (e.g., Oshri, Sidhu & Kotlarsky, 2018; Vaiman, Collings & Scullion, 2017; Desyllas, Miozzo, Lee & Miles, 2018; Damanpour, Sanchez-Henriquez & Chiu, 2018). To gain access to talented resources an increasing number of firms outsource work overseas to emerging economies (Budhwar & Mellahi, 2016; Pereira & Malik, 2015; Thite, Budhwar & Wilkinson, 2014). While previous studies have focused on the advantages of outsourcing from developed economies to offshore locations in developing economies (Lewin & Couto, 2007; Oshri, Kotlarsky & Willcocks, 2015; Manning, 2008; Rodgers, Khan, Tarba & Nurgabdeshev, 2018), this study examines the less researched aspect of outsourcing from an emerging economy to a developed economy (Contractor, Kumar, Kundu & Pedersen, 2010; Demirbag & Glaister, 2010; Hätönen & Eriksson, 2009; Malik, Sinha, Pereira & Rowley, 2018; Rodgers, et al., 2018).

We focus on the advertising industry in an emerging economy – UAE, where many organisations outsource advertising creativity. The creative aspect of advertising is the novel and appropriate idea used within a marketing campaign (Turnbull & Wheeler, 2017; Hughes, Hughes, Yan & Sousa, 2018). Previous research highlights the benefits of outsourcing creativity domestically (Fam & Waller, 1999, 2008; Jansen van Rensburg, Venter & Strydom, 2010; Na & Marshall, 2001; Palihawadana & Barnes 2005; Turnbull, 2016), as this is a rare resource that can provide significant competitive advantage to firms (Baack, Wilson, van Dessel & Patti, 2016; Hurman, 2016). However, alternative strategies for outsourcing creativity are less well represented in the literature.

The article addresses the call to examine *why and how* firms decide to outsource (Ellram, Tate & Billington, 2008; Pereira & Malik, 2015; Mudambi & Venzin, 2010), contributing to

existing outsourcing literature in three ways. Firstly, *why* do firms decide to outsource work from an emerging economy in the advertising sector? Secondly, *how* do firms pursue this outsource work? Thirdly, we identify a novel onshore outsourcing approach namely ‘*on-sourcing*’ identified as a nascent form of onshore outsourcing. Thus, we contribute to the resource-based view (RBV) by exploring emergent strategies used by organisations to gain competitive advantage through outsourcing. The paper considers the outsourcing phenomenon using the RBV (Wernefelt, 1984, 2014; Espino-Rodrigues & Padron-Robaina, 2006) to gain a better understanding of the elements of outsourcing.

Outsourcing is seen as a strategic decision based on identifying the core competencies of the firm (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990) by considering the resources available to gain competitive advantage (Quinn & Hilmer, 1984). In some cases, firms are seen to fine slice elements of the value chain to achieve this advantage (Buckley, 2014).

In particular, we contribute to the literature by identifying an alternative form of onshore outsourcing. The conventional view of onshore outsourcing is based on the client firm (Firm A) contracting work to an external domestic supplier based in the same country (Firm Bi). This is distinct from offshore outsourcing whereby the client firm (Firm A) outsources to an offshore supplier (Firm C) (see Figure 1). This study identifies *on-sourcing* whereby the client firm (Firm A) outsources their work to an external domestic supplier (Firm Bi) and this work is subsequently undertaken offshore by the same supplier (Firm Bii), adding another dimension to the outsourcing relationship (see Figure 2). This can be distinguished from *subcontracting*, as a *subcontractor* is seen as “another term that can be used interchangeably with outsourcee” (Unal & Donthu, 2014, p. 1079). However, within the context of this study only one outsource provider is used. We utilise RBV to examine how *on-sourcing* is used strategically to increase competitive advantage (Barney, 1986; Grant, 1991).

INSERT FIGURE 1 & 2 HERE

The paper starts with a review of the literature on outsourcing. Next, the paper outlines the methodology employed for the study which was undertaken with senior advertising executives in the UAE. We address the context of the UAE and creativity within the methodology. The use of in-depth ‘elite’ interviews is discussed and an explanation of the approach to data analysis is provided. Following the presentation of key findings, the paper presents conclusions highlighting our key contributions to the outsourcing literature by addressing the following research question: *Why and how* do firms outsource work in an emerging economy in an advertising context?

2. Literature review

2.1 Outsourcing

There exists a myriad of definitions of outsourcing leading to debate and a need for a common understanding (see e.g., Barthelemy, 2001; Contractor, Kumar, Kundu & Pedersen, 2010; Espino-Rodríguez & Padrón-Robaina, 2006; Gilley & Rasheed, 2000). We adopt Osiri, Kotlarsky & Willcocks’s (2015, p. 8) definition, which states that outsourcing is “contracting with a third-party supplier for the management and completion of a certain amount of work, for a specified length of time”.

Outsourcing is not a new phenomenon; companies have been using different types of outsourcing for decades (see Kedia & Lahiri, 2007; Quinn & Hilmer, 1994; Tate & Bals, 2017). Academic interest in the topic is evident over the last couple of decades with some of the common examples of outsourcing being: activities in the field of information technology; call centers; HR services and marketing activities (Gilley, Greer & Rasheed, 2004; Lahiri,

2016; Malik, Sinha, Pereira & Rowley, 2018; Manning, Larsen & Bharati, 2015; Patel, Budhwar, Witzemann & Katou, 2018; Unal & Donthu, 2014).

The literature suggests that sourcing decisions are mainly influenced by cost and talent (Driffield, Pereira & Temouri, 2018; Lewin et al., 2009). Cost reduction is seen to be a key driver to outsourcing decisions to an emerging economy (Lewin & Couto, 2007; Maskell, Pedersen, Petersen & Dick-Nielsen, 2007; Manning, 2008; Mukherjee, Lahiri, Ash & Gaur, 2018; Musteen, 2016; Rodgers, et al., 2018). However, less is known in the literature regarding outsourcing from an emerging economy to a developed country, where cost reduction is not a priority in the decision to outsource (Munjal, Requejo & Kundu, 2018).

Talent and access to knowledge is also noted as an important factor in the decision to outsource (Ellram, Tate & Billington, 2008; Kull, Mena & Korschun, 2016; Manning et al., 2015; Pereira & Malik, 2015; Villasalero, 2018; Wang & Sengupta, 2016) and provides a rationale for a professional service such as creativity to be outsourced by a firm.

2.2 Resource-based view

Wernerfelt's (1984) framework of RBV provides a means to analyse the resource position of a firm. Within the context of marketing, Wernerfelt (2014) argues the resulting RBV has helped to shape much of the marketing field. Taking a resource base approach provides a lens to explore intangible resources (Barney & Hesterly, 2012), to explain strategic decisions to outsource within a marketing context (Kozlenkova, Samaha & Palmatier, 2014).

Marketing encompasses firms' activities that include: product, price, place and promotion with promotional activities such as advertising often seen as a specialism (Fill & Turnbull, 2016). As such, marketing activities can be fine-sliced by firms to consider which

aspects of marketing are outsourced as part of the value chain (Contractor, 2013; Linares-Navarro, Pedersen & Pla-Barber, 2014). Creativity is one part of the value chain that firms choose to outsource to gain competitive advantage (Fam & Waller, 1999, 2000, 2008; Henke, 1995; Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2010; Na, Marshall & Son, 1999; Palihawadana & Barnes, 2005).

The resource-based perspective provides a lens to explore *why* and *how* firms outsource to access specialised resources in an emerging economy. Allowing the firm to concentrate on their core competencies (Quinn & Hilmer, 1994). The decision to outsource to reduce cost is particularly prevalent in a developed country, achieved by outsourcing to an emerging economy (Driffield, Pereira & Temouri, 2018). However, outsourcing to a developed country is less well researched (Munjal, Requjo & Kundu, 2018). Additionally, access to scarce resources (Villasalero, 2018) such as creativity, provide an opportunity to gain understanding, regarding the strategic advantage of outsourcing in an emerging economy.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Context of the study

Our research interest in advertising in an emerging economy provides an unusual context (Symon & Pritchard, 2015) to explore strategies to outsource. The UAE has developed a strong advertising industry over the last three decades. The growth in advertising expenditures and emergence of Pan-Arab media has seen the number of advertising agencies increase in the UAE (Melewar, Turnbull & Balabanis, 2000). The government of the UAE has encouraged the growth of the advertising industry in the country by establishing Dubai Media City (DMC), a media ecosystem to help attract global agency networks (Dubai Media City, 2017). Established in 2001, DMC operates as a free

zone and hosts over 2,000 media and communication businesses, including a number of large global agency networks such as Dentsu Aegis, Havas, Interpublic Group, OMD, Publicis Groupe and WPP. Additionally, the UAE has also established Dubai Creative Clusters Authority (DCCA) to oversee DMC and another ten industry-specific clusters with the objective of developing the talent pool and providing support to the clusters (Arab Media Outlook, 2016). The mandate of DCCA is, to attract, retain and grow creative businesses in Dubai. The vision is for Dubai to be the regional and international destination for start-ups as well as established industry, to nurture talent creative from across the world (DCCA, 2017).

3.2. Data Collection

The researchers were interested in understanding outsourcing creativity in the UAE against the context of the growing interest to develop this industry sector. Accordingly, interviews were used to collect data as they allowed for individual viewpoints to be examined in depth (Walsh & Deery, 2006) and permitted any issues that arose during the interview to be included (Arksey & Knight, 1999). Interviews were conducted in English and lasted up to 90 minutes and were undertaken face-to-face in the UAE and via Skype and telephone. An interview guide (see Table 1) was used in the study to ensure that each participant was asked the same topic areas and increases reliability (Patton, 2002).

The guide allowed the researchers to examine outsourcing practices in the UAE without precluding the participant's opportunity for sense making their experience of outsourcing creativity (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2013). A 'native categories' technique was employed, allowing participants to answer questions using categories they deemed appropriate within the topic area and helping to avoid suggesting themes to participants (Buckley & Chapman, 1997; Gioia et al., 2013; Harris, 2000; Turnbull & Wheeler, 2017). This narrative style of interview technique allowed for a richer exploration of how advertisers

outsource their creative work, aiding identification of emergent forms of outsourcing. The interviews were structured around Spradley's (1979) guide which included questions which examined descriptive, structural, contrast and evaluative aspects of the investigation. Such a technique has been used effectively in studies which have examined challenges in a range of contextual settings (Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016). Following Spradley (1979), the researchers asked questions to explore how decisions were made to outsource creativity in the UAE.

Insert Table 1 here

3.3 The sample

The study draws on the content of 13 in-depth interviews with senior advertising executives in the UAE. Our sample reflects an 'elite' or 'expert' group of individuals, described by Harvey (2011, p. 433) as "those who occupy senior management and Board level positions within organisations...these people have significant decision-making influence within and outside of the firm" which is particularly apposite for exploring outsourcing within the advertising sector. Previous studies have utilised a similar sample size of experts (Ellram, Tate & Billington, 2008; Thompson-Whiteside, Turnbull & Howe-Walsh, 2018). Accessing an 'elite sample' is acknowledged to be problematic (Mikecz, 2012), thus a smaller sample is not uncommon, especially if it helps to get an in-depth picture of the scene.

A profile of the sample for the study is provided in table 2. Participants were selected from both advertisers, the brand owners who contract the creative work (category A) and advertising agencies who are contracted to develop the creative work (category B) to provide a broader view of outsourcing. All participants had direct experience of outsourcing (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981).

The sample proved to be difficult to access, hence a snowball sample technique was used to recruit participants for the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Gioia et al., 2013). While using a convenience sample of this type is not without criticism, as it does not provide the foundation for generalizable results (Heckathorn & Cameron, 2017), this strategy enabled access to professionals with the relevant experience. Participants were identified by other senior advertising professionals in the UAE and were recruited using an email introduction to the study, together with an information sheet and consent form to meet university ethical obligations of informed consent. As acknowledged above, the small sample limits the ability to generalise the findings, however the sample size is appropriate for such an exploratory study with a population that is difficult to access (Brewerton & Millward, 2001).

Insert Table 2 here

3.4 Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim to retain the richness of the data for further analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The researchers then adopted a six-phase approach of thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87). Firstly, the researchers read and re-read the transcripts to familiarise themselves with the data, noting initial ideas: talent, reputation, culture, networks, location, etc. This led to initial codes developed by the researchers along the themes of talented workforce, quality of work, reputation and global environment. The third stage involved collating the codes into potential themes. At the next stage, the researchers reviewed the themes to generate a thematic map (see Figure 3).

Insert Figure 3 here

The penultimate stage involved further ongoing analysis to refine the themes (see Figures 4 & 5). Finally, a selection of extracts was identified relating to the original research questions: *why* and *how* do firms decide to outsource work in an emerging economy in the advertising context?

Insert Figures 4 and 5 here

Additionally, the researchers followed two techniques to evaluate the quality of the interpretations from the data. First, *peer debriefing* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was undertaken whereby each researcher independently analysed the data and referred the analysis to a neutral third party (an independent academic) for further review and critique of the analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Second, *member check* was utilised where the participants were requested to check the transcript for accuracy (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, we have not attributed verbatim quotations to participants in line with ethical obligations for this elite group to aid anonymity and confidentiality of the interviewees.

4. Findings and Discussion

This study contributes to existing outsourcing literature in the following ways: Firstly, *why* do firms decide to outsource work from an emerging economy in the advertising sector? Secondly, *how* do firms pursue this outsource work? Thirdly, we identify a novel onshore outsourcing approach namely '*on-sourcing*' identified as a nascent form of onshore outsourcing. The findings are summarised in table 4.

Insert Table 4 here

Two key themes emerged from the data, *talented workforce* and *global environment*. The first theme related to the lack of creative expertise - talent overseas: the

cost of talent and local talent. Using the talented workforce theme enables examination of *why* firms decide to outsource work in an emerging economy in an advertising context.

The second theme of global environment related to culture, UAE location and global network. Using the global environment theme enables examination of *how* firms outsource work in an emerging economy.

4.1 Talented workforce

There was a clear sense, from both the advertisers (category A) and the agencies (category B), that the main reason for outsourcing creativity was the lack of in-house expertise which supports the outsourcing literature (e.g., Manning et al., 2015). In particular, there was seen to be a need to access creative skill which reflects findings from previous studies in the advertising domain (Fam & Waller, 2008; Henke, 1995; Palihawadana & Barnes, 2005). This aligns with the resource-based approach to outsource organisational activities to improve competitive advantage (Espino-Rodrigues & Padron-Robaina, 2006).

The need to access creative skill was acknowledged to enable competitive advantage (Wernerfelt, 2014). Advertisers who had capability within the firm were seen to use this when they had projects that required less creative skill, such as brochures or leaflets. However, when there was a need to develop advertising, the company used both onshore and offshore outsourcing to gain access to the skills needed (Oshiri et al., 2015). Arguably, creatives are an example of 'rare' resource not readily available nor easy to imitate in the UAE (Peteraf & Barney, 2003).

It was clear from discussions with category A that it was the nature of the work that determined whether creative work was outsourced or not. Work requiring less creative expertise or where templates had been made available by global lead agencies did not need to be outsourced. In contrast, new advertising campaigns for new product launches in the

market were seen to need creative expertise.- This provides an example of differing sourcing practices for the work required (Malik et al., 2018).

The need for advertisers (category A) to access good creative skill was seen to be an inherent aspect of the outsourcing decision and there was recognition of the need for creatives in the agencies to have the creative ability and skill to provide this resource, *'they (creatives) are very important factors in an agency'* (A). The quality of people within the UAE market however was seen to be problematic as noted by both participant groups and many professionals spoke about the shortage of talent and senior employees with experience in the market being a key concern. This was felt to be a barrier for the creative industries in the UAE market, *'there seems to be a shortage of decent talent that have had either experience on a global account or experience in this market on a global account....most people who are out here have been out here for 2-5 years'* (B). Sourcing local talent in the Middle East has previously been identified as a continuing challenge (Budhwar & Mellahi, 2016; Forstenlechner et al., 2012).

Attracting good quality people to Dubai was seen to be a problematic, *'it's still quite difficult to attract talent to come out to Dubai, for various reasons...I've always been amazed at how difficult it is'* (B). A number of explanations were offered for the lack of talent in the market, such as *'it's very expensive to bring talent out here and then also from the talent side, if you're a global creative or global media or advertising agency in the States, in Europe, wherever, then you're going to be earning a decent amount of money, so why do you need to come to a place that's hot or that's got a smaller range of clients'* (B). The range of clients and the lack of opportunity to work on creative development for global accounts in particular was seen to be an inhibiting factor for many in category B, *'there isn't the client base to attract the top creative talent'* (B). With few brands driving their global work out of Dubai and preferring to manage their advertising out of their headquarters market, all participants

commented this was seen as unlikely to change, *'we have a global structure for our brand, so the brand is run centrally'* (A).

Cultural and infrastructure limitations were also discussed by both categories of the respondents. There was the sense that the creative environment in the UAE made it difficult to attract quality employees to work in the country, especially creative talent. Having a culturally diverse population meant that using creative techniques such as humour, which is commonly used in European advertising markets, was not always appropriate for the Middle East. Such limitations on creative techniques were seen by category B to impact the ability to recruit global creative talent, *'the region demands a certain approach. Here, there are so many different approaches that get nipped before they even start. You are limited in what you can do and say'* (B).

The influence to outsource aspects of advertising reflect the strategic decision to seek an external provider with specific expertise in advertising, highlighting the relevance of RBV, where access to specialist resources is utilised as a means to gain competitive advantage (Wernerfelt, 2014). Where there is a need to utilise advertising expertise, the strategic decision is to outsource the work (Kull, Mena & Korschun 2016; Manning, 2015; Pereira & Malik, 2015; Villasalero, 2018; Wang & Sengupta, 2016).

The issue of experienced creative people in the market was seen to be a continuing challenge for advertisers and agencies, *'it's key to have a team working with you that is consistent'* (A). Additionally, for advertisers, choosing an advertising agency in Dubai was compared to brand franchising, with Dubai agencies seen to be offering inferior products. This meant that for advertisers hiring an agency in Dubai, which was part of a larger global network of offices, they did not expect the same quality of employees as they would in the same networks of European offices.

There was also the sense that even if agency employees were good quality when they arrived in the Dubai office, the lack of continuous professional development and training opportunities meant that the employee did not progress their careers. Highlighting the importance of managing talent and suggesting that developing local talent are both strategically significant (Budhwar & Mellahi, 2016), '*it's about the quality of people that you have in these agencies...the Middle East is about branding... if you walk into a Louis Vuitton store in London you get a brand that's consistent all the way through, here it's a franchise. The Brands are franchises, they're not the actual brand. The consistency of their brand in terms of how they recruit and train these people and the consistency of peoples' careers is non-existent*' (B).

4.2 Global environment

How creative advertising work was outsourced was discussed and the research participants spoke about the different outsourcing models that are used by advertisers in the UAE. Participants talked about *onshore outsourcing* to local UAE agencies and *offshore outsourcing* to agencies overseas which reflect outsourcing models already identified in the literature (Kedia & Lahiri, 2007; Oshiri et al., 2015; Quinn & Hilmer, 1994; Tate & Bals, 2017). Additionally, the participants discussed a novel form of onshore outsourcing that has not previously been identified, namely *on-sourcing* whereby the outsourced provider undertakes the work in an offshore location (see Figure 2).

The use of *onshore outsourcing* to local UAE agencies was discussed by all respondents, where creative work was outsourced to advertising agencies in the UAE. There was an acute awareness of the importance of developing creative work in Dubai to help the local economy and growing the industry, '*more and more, much more so than Europe, clients are stipulating that whatever work is done has to be based out of Dubai*' (B). Some

organisations were including this within their outsourcing agreements, however it was noted that this term was not always upheld after agreements were signed. If creative expertise was needed and could not be accessed in the UAE, creativity was in some cases *on-sourced* to other offices to undertake the creative work. Although, there is recognition within RBV of the need to access knowledge for competitive advantage (Ellram, Tate & Billington, 2008; Kull, Mena & Korschun, 2016; Candi, Roberts, Marion & Barczak, 2018), we have less understanding of how firms source the skills needed.

On-sourcing was seen to provide advertisers with access to resources in other countries mediated through agencies in the UAE. Participants spoke about the creative development work as, '*technically being filled out here [UAE] and a lot of the strategic work and the vision and the client relationship and servicing is done out of here but then their guys who are the production leads, who are the designers, who are the actual executors of things, might sit within these global agency networks elsewhere*' (B). This type of onshore outsourcing was seen to be used to provide access to creative skill and expertise in other countries, '*fundamentally you are so networked into these agencies*' (A).

In particular, *on-sourcing* was used by large global agency networks with local agency offices in the UAE, for example, '*someone like a BBDO or a Leo Burnett or whoever, they've got offices here, but what they call their higher-grade talent sits elsewhere, so in the UK, in the US and they go back to those markets*' (B). This represents a hybrid form of onshore outsourcing, discreet from those previously recognised in the literature (Oshiri et al., 2015).

While *offshore outsourcing* was discussed by advertisers and agencies in cases where creative work was outsourced to advertising agencies in other countries (John, Guynes & Cline, 2014; Demirbag & Glaister, 2010; Malik et al., 2018; Williams & Durst, 2018), *on-*

sourcing appears to be a new strategy used by firms. The use of *on-sourcing* of creative work was seen to have implications for the UAE advertising industry and in particular the limitations this has on developing creative skills in the UAE market. One participant spoke specifically about the longer-term impact of this on recruiting UAE nationals to work in the advertising industry and the development of the industry sector more generally. This reflects the need to develop human resources in the Middle East to encourage wider participation of the national workforce (Budhwar & Mellahi, 2016).

5. Conclusions, limitations and future research

The study examined *why* and *how* do firms decide to outsource work in an emerging economy in an advertising context? The findings contribute both to theory and practice. First, the study offers insights into how firms outsource in the research context. In addition to previous models of outsourcing such as onshore outsourcing and offshore/nearshore outsourcing (Oshiri, et al., 2015), we identify a nascent form of onshore outsourcing is being used, namely *on-sourcing*. This original contribution to the outsourcing literature provides a new agenda for future research. More importantly, identification of this novel form of outsourcing provides an opportunity for early sense-making of the phenomenon (Corley & Gioia, 2011). Using the lens of RBV, we identify creativity as a rare resource with the potential for advertising creativity to provide firms with a competitive advantage. The challenges associated with accessing this rare resource in an emerging economy such as the UAE is identified and strategies for both government and industry are suggested.

We identify *on-sourcing* as a new outsourcing strategy (see Figure 2) and offer this for further examination and qualification. Based on our findings, we propose a definition of *on-sourcing* as “the act of outsourcing to an external domestic supplier based in the same

country, where the work is subsequently undertaken offshore by the same supplier”.

Exploring *how* firms have outsourced in this emerging economy has revealed an alternative approach to onshore outsourcing. This opens new avenues for research and opportunities for discussion. *On-sourcing*, is clearly being adopted as an outsourcing strategy to access specialist skills and expertise not available in the country. The study identifies how firms are fine slicing marketing activities within the value chain and outsourcing advertising creative work (Buckley, 2014; Contractor, 2013; Linares-Navarro, Pedersen, & Pla-Barber, 2014). This aligns with recent studies that have identified the potential value creation opportunities of outsourcing (Mukherjee et al., 2018).

This study has highlighted how an emerging economy utilises outsourcing strategies to access rare resources. The strategy to gain competitive advantage through on-sourcing could equally apply to other emerging economies without the skills and talent in country. The current study focused on advertising creativity however, the application of on-sourcing could be applied to other aspects of the marketing and the value chain more widely.

The findings suggest that *on-sourcing* is used in this emerging economy where a skills shortage exists, aligning with recent research that notes firms from emerging markets are outsourcing specialised and knowledge intensive services offshore (Munjal et al., 2018). Finding creative talent with the ability to develop advertising that is creative and will provide competitive advantage is important for firms in this market and appears to be driving the decision to *on-source*. However, this strategy is not without its risks. Given the unstable political and economic nature of some emerging economies, it may be prudent for governments to ensure they have secured access to this rare resource. This may require that in-country expertise is encouraged and home-grown.

A strategic decision to develop greater alignment of graduates with the skills seen to be in short supply must be explored in order to source and develop national talent (Budhwar

& Mellahi, 2016). Employing national talent rather than expatriates requires a longer-term strategy that engages the private sector to invest in attracting and developing the national workforce. Combining resources from both private and government sector funding through joint ventures to establish in country capability in the creative industries would provide a longer term strategic vision to develop local talent. Other emerging economies should also be aware of talent planning opportunities for rare resources as part of a broader governmental strategy.

This study draws attention to the current conceptualisation of RBV as a firm-based resource (Wernerfelt, 2014) (see Table 3), we contribute to the literature by identifying the issue of risk, specifically the loss of country specific talent. Our study suggests that in emerging economies, a more productive way of viewing RBV maybe to conceptualise rare resources as a national resource that should be developed by government bodies, rather than left to market forces. The findings identify that despite initiatives to develop the advertising infrastructure such as Dubai Media City, the UAE market is yet to become an established global creative hub. Therefore, additional government intervention to target generating creative talent is required. The strategy to address talent shortages is equally applicable to other emerging economies who need to ensure the skills and knowledge are accessible to support the development of business.

Insert Table 3 here

The study provides additional insights for the advertising industry in the UAE market and within emerging economies. Using the resource-based perspective, it is clear that a rare resource such as creativity can provide competitive advantage to firms (Baack, Wilson Van Dessel & Patti, 2016; Hurman, 2016).

While the study provides insight into a hybrid outsourcing model that operates in the UAE, the small 'elite' sample size does not allow for generalisations to be made to other

emerging economies and hence a larger scale study to include other countries would provide greater external validity. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design of the study does not allow for longer term patterns of outsourcing to be examined and therefore a longitudinal study in the future would be desirable to investigate the changes that occur over time. A number of opportunities for future research arise from this study. Future research could examine *on-sourcing* in other domains. For example, it would be interesting to examine other domains such as human resources management. It would also be of interest to consider how other emerging economies access rare marketing resources.

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Table 1: Key Interview Questions and Sources of Literature.

1. Why do firms choose to outsource their advertising creativity?	Barney, 1986; Wernerfelt, 1984, 2014
2. What do firms outsource?	Fam & Waller, 1999; Henke, 1995

3. Where do firms outsource?	Oshiri, Kotlarsky & Willcocks, 2015; Lewin & Couto, 2007; Rodgers, Khan, Tarba & Nurgabdeshev, 2018.
4. How is the outsourcing undertaken?	Kedia & Lahiri, 2007; Oshiri, Kotlarsky & Willcocks, 2015; Tate & Bals, 2017.
5. When do firms choose to outsource or keep in house?	Ellram, Tate & Billington, 2008; Kull, Mema & Korschun, 2016.

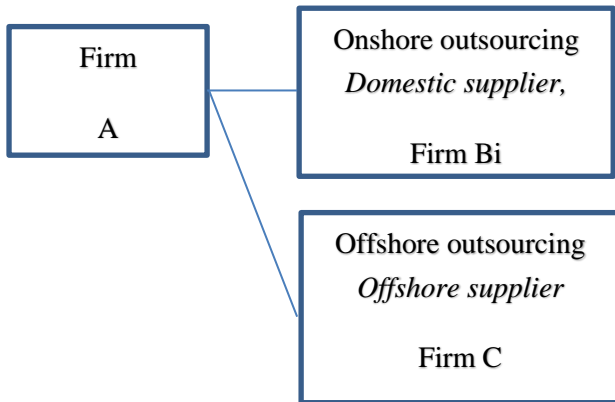
Source: adapted from literature

Table 2: Sample Profile.

Gender	Advertising role in organisation/agency	Office location	Creative Industries role Category A
Male	Middle East Brand Manager	United Arab Emirates	Advertiser
Female	Middle East Marketing Manager	United Arab Emirates	Advertiser
Male	Commercial Vice-President	United Arab Emirates	Advertiser
Female	Middle East Marketing Manager	United Arab Emirates	Advertiser
Male	Vice-President Advertising	United Arab Emirates	Advertiser
Male	Middle East Communications Director	United Arab Emirates	Advertiser
Male	Executive Vice-President	United Arab Emirates	Advertiser
Gender	Advertising role in organisation/agency	Office location	Creative Industries role Category B
Female	Global Media Director	United Arab Emirates	Advertising agency, independent
Male	Chief Operating Officer (CEO)	United Arab Emirates	Advertising agency, global network
Male	Chief Operating Officer (CEO)	United Arab Emirates	Advertising agency, independent
Male	Managing Director	United Arab Emirates	Advertising agency, regional network
Male	Global Media Director	United Arab Emirates	Advertising agency, global network
Male	Chief Operating Officer (CEO)	United Arab Emirates	Advertising agency, independent

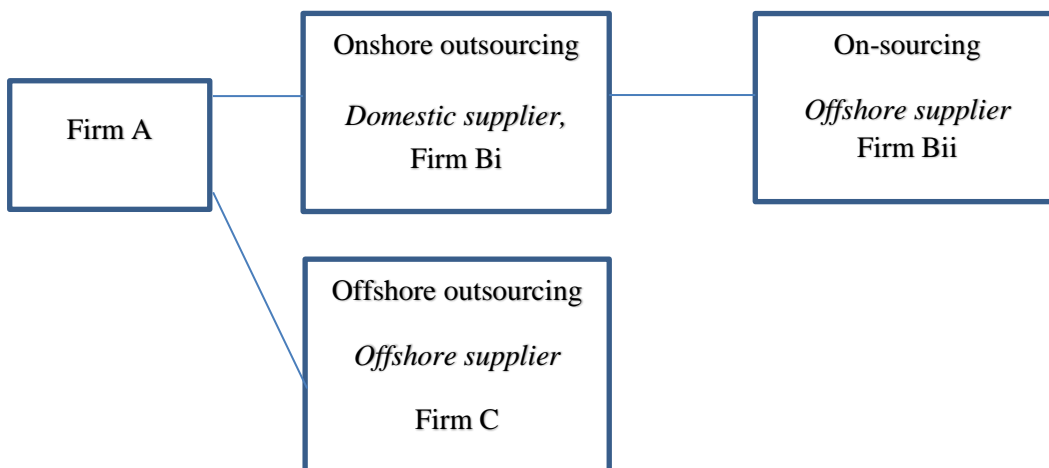
Source: Interview respondents.

Figure 1: Outsourcing Model.



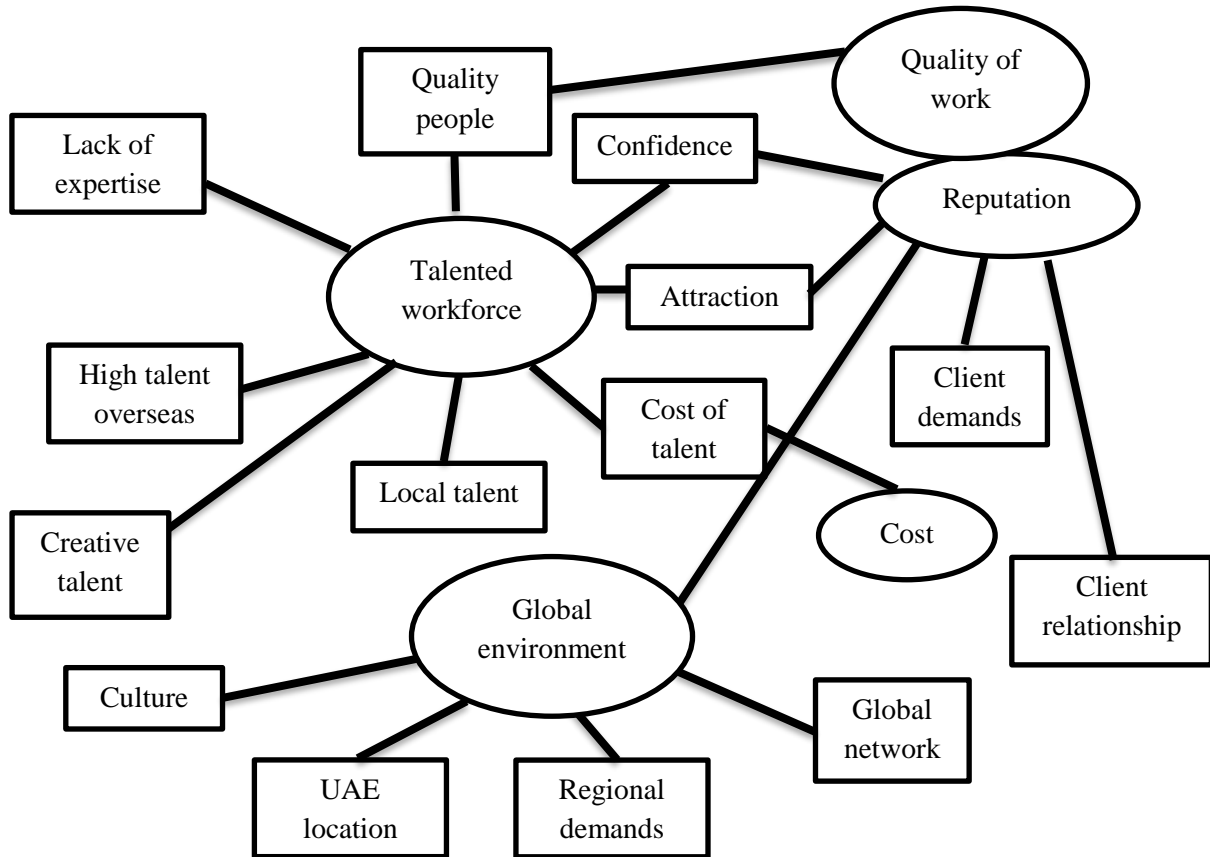
Source: adapted from Oshiri et al. (2015, p. 32)

Figure 2: Outsourcing Model (including hybrid 'on-sourcing').



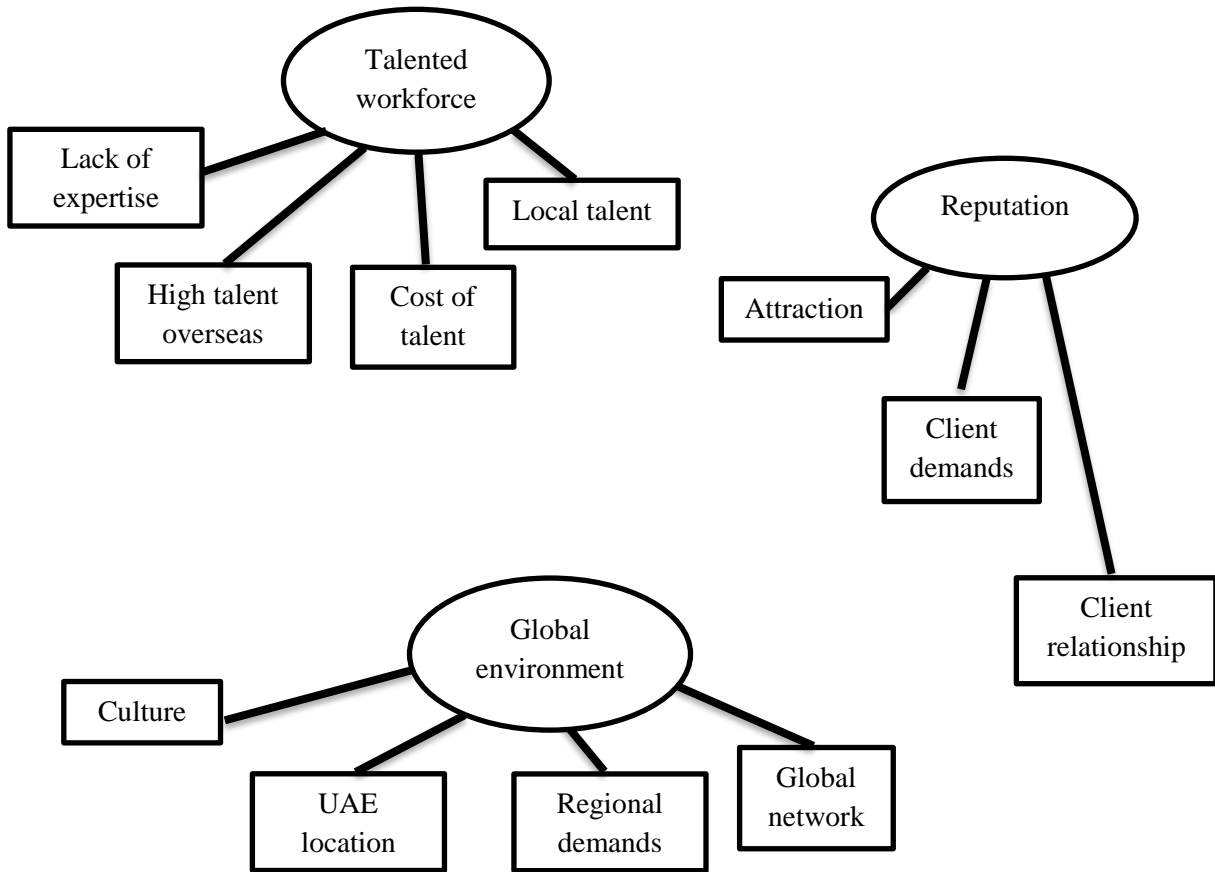
Source: adapted from Oshiri et al. (2015, p. 32)

Figure 3: Initial Thematic Map (developed from data).



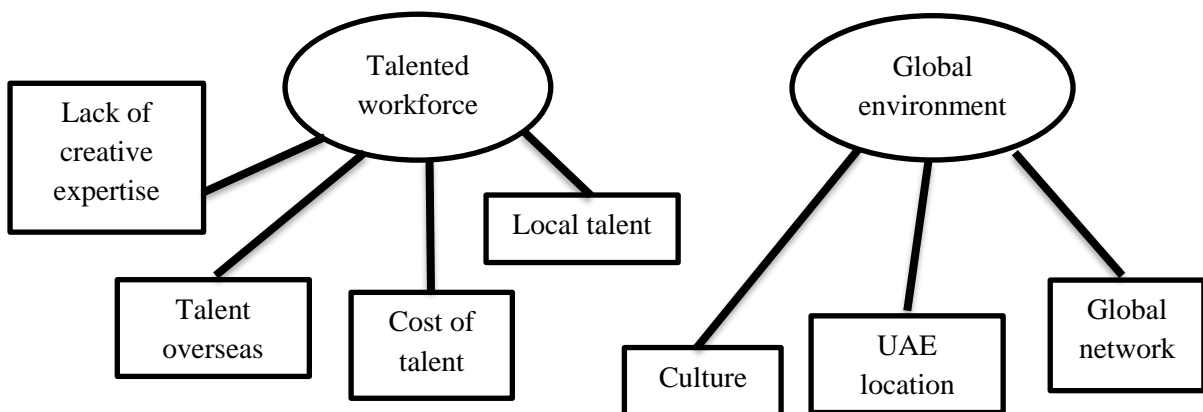
Source: Interview data

Figure 4: Developed Thematic Map (highlighting three main themes).



Source: Interview data

Figure 5: Final Thematic Map (highlighting two main themes).



Source: Interview data

Table 3: Resource Based View of On-sourcing. Source: adapted from Espino-Rodriguez & Padron-Robaina, 2006.

	RBV	On-sourcing
Unit of analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources and capabilities 	Access to talent
Behavioural assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited rationality 	Bounded by location
Analysis for outsourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific resources Skills and capabilities Experience of suppliers 	Access to rare resources Partnership with outsourcer
Criterion of outsourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observe the creation of value 	Creates value
Desired effect on the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competitive advantage Strategic decision Development of capabilities across organisational boundaries 	Access to rare resource Strategic decision Development of capabilities across global boundaries
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of critical skills and capabilities Service provider's lack of necessary capabilities 	Loss of country specific talent Lack of understanding of local context

Table 4: Summary findings

Key Themes	Rationale	Examples
Talented workforce Why	Lack of specific knowledge in-house related to creativity. Access to creative skill. Creative talent.	<i>'Delivering work that does a job'</i> [offers competitive advantage] (B) <i>'If you'd had handed it over to someone here [UAE] to execute, I don't think it would have been anywhere near as good'.</i> (B) <i>'We would never have an agency here (UAE).'</i> (A) <i>'Are they smart, intelligent enough to filter out what is essentially bad creative.'</i> (A)

		<p><i>'Because the Emirates isn't really regarded as being cutting edge in terms of the agency world to attract the world class talent, invariably they finish up working in London and New York.'</i> (B)</p> <p><i>'there seems to be a shortage of decent talent that have had either experience on a global account or experience in this market on a global account....most people who are out here have been out here for 2-5 years'.</i> (B)</p> <p><i>'It depends on the scale'</i> (A)</p> <p><i>'Partly it's an inferiority complex, but also, they feel they are going to get a better treatment, a better class of work in the UK or America than they'll get here'.</i> (B)</p> <p><i>'Five thousand Dirham for this? No, I give you fifteen, halas [enough]'</i>(B)</p> <p><i>'No confidence in what's here'</i> (B)</p>
<p>Global Environment</p> <p>How</p>	<p>Process</p> <p><i>Onshore outsourcing</i></p> <p><i>Offshore outsourcing</i></p> <p><i>On-sourcing</i></p>	<p><i>'A lot of their creative execution or production is being done elsewhere'.</i> (B)</p> <p><i>'Part of our global agency'</i> (A)</p> <p><i>'You don't get to choose which activity and advertising agency you'll work with it's a global advertising agency'</i>(A)</p> <p><i>'The only 2 places (globally) are London and America.'</i> (A)</p> <p><i>'In many of the markets, where the same company that has the distribution rights, also have their own agency, so they have to use that agency.'</i>(A)</p> <p><i>'More and more, much more so than Europe, clients are stipulating that whatever work is done has to be based out of Dubai'</i>(B)</p> <p><i>'We are looking at a promotions agency in a specific agency (for outsourcing)'</i> (A)</p> <p><i>'This is one of the advantages of being part of the global network'</i> (A)</p>

Source: Summary findings from interview data