

Creative symbiosis as ingenuity strategy in creative industries:

Insights from the perfume industry

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Résumé :

Research on organizational ingenuity highlights different constraints on and ingenuity strategies adopted by organizations. Although creative industries must overcome various constraints to enhance their creativity, scant research examines creative industries from an ingenuity perspective. The current article offers a case study in the perfume industry to analyze the different types of constraints that affect the creative process. Specifically, this study discusses the ingenuity strategies an entrepreneur can adopt to cope with a strongly constrained context, to create different and “more creative” perfumes. This strategy, or creative symbiosis, provides new insights into extant research on ingenuity.

Mots-clés : Creative industries, Constraint, Ingenuity, Perfume industry, Creative symbiosis

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1. INTRODUCTION

Organizational ingenuity (Lampel, Honig, & Drori, 2014b) implies that organizations find solutions to cope with constraints. Related research aims to uncover different types of organizational ingenuity in specific contexts. For example, creative industries can serve as think tanks for innovative practices in management and organizational settings and provide insights into business models (Svejenova, Planellas, & Vives, 2010), communities (Cohendet & Simon, 2007), and paradoxical management (Lampel, Lant, & Shamsie, 2000). Although these industries overcome constraints that prohibit creativity, scant research examines creative industries from an ingenuity perspective. Considering the importance of constraints in creative industries and the need to overcome them, the relationship between creative industries and organizational ingenuity constitutes a promising research stream. This article addresses the following research questions: What key constraints do creators face, and how do these constraints affect the creative process? To what extent does an ingenious strategy lead to liberating creativity in a constrained situation?

A case study in the perfume industry helps address these questions. The analysis first includes the different types of constraints that affect the creative process. The present research then focuses on the case of an entrepreneur who worked to liberate perfume creators from these constraints. To do so, the entrepreneur implemented a global ingenuity strategy. In line with Walker, Schlosser, and Deephouse's (2014) proposed typology, this strategy can reflect either an escape or a compliance strategy, depending on the adopted viewpoint. In turn, this strategy leads to the concept of creative symbiosis.

This article proceeds as follows: Section 2 provides a review of research on organizational ingenuity. Section 3 presents the methods; Section 4 analyzes constraints in the perfume industry and the entrepreneur's global ingenuity strategy. Section 5 contains a

discussion of the results and proposes the concept of creative symbiosis to describe the originality of the case.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Organizational ingenuity

The constraints–creativity relationship provides a fertile ground for research. Constraints have negative connotations and, according to creativity theorists, are the enemy of creativity and innovation (e.g., Amabile, 1988). This situation results in two opposing images of creators: (1) entrepreneurs pursuing creativity by breaking boundaries and rules and (2) institutionalized managers abiding by institutional and organizational constraints (Lampel et al., 2011). Many scholars challenge this understanding though, arguing that constraints can be sources of creativity and innovation: In response to constraints, actors develop sets of skills, tactics, and strategies that express “organizational ingenuity.” Ingenuity involves “the ability to create innovative solutions within structural constraints using limited resources and imaginative problem solving” (Lampel et al., 2014b, p. 465). Prior research explores organizational ingenuity across various settings and professions, including solar energy (Walker et al., 2014), R&D teams (Rosso, 2014), large organizations (Kannan-Narasimhan, 2014), engineering consulting firms (Lombardo & Kvålshaugen, 2014), entrepreneurs (Dolmans, Burg, Reymen, & Romme, 2014), and haute cuisine (Senf, Koch, & Wasko, 2014). Such research elucidates how organizations find creative solutions to problems and make improvements that change themselves or entire industries (Lampel et al., 2014b).

2.2. Ingenuity and nature of constraints

Constraints reflect “a state of being restricted, limited, or confined within prescribed bounds” (Rosso, 2014, p. 553). Research into organizational ingenuity highlights different forms of organizational constraints (Lampel et al., 2014b). For example, resource constraints (Dolmans et al., 2014; Kannan-Narasimhan, 2014) imply scarcity of financial or technical resources (Lampel, Benson, & Drori, 2014a) or the lack of operational/production capacity and human resources/know-how (Dolmans et al., 2014). Resource constraints make innovation difficult, whereas resource slack helps produce new methods and creative solutions but also can lead to conventional solutions. In some situations, ingenious solutions might not emerge without resource constraints (Lampel et al., 2014a, 2014b). Institutional constraints are “limitations or restrictions on the behavior of stakeholders” (Walker et al., 2014, p. 615). Ingenuity strategies in turn help produce creative solutions within institutional

constraints (Walker et al., 2014). Previous research presents stakeholders as relatively passive recipients of these constraints (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Mezias, 1990), but Walker et al. (2014), in a study of the solar energy industry, posit that institutional constraints lead to ingenuity strategies.

Rosso (2014) distinguishes product and process constraints and separates their impacts on team creativity. Product constraints are “features and functionalities that are necessary for a successful solution,” such as product requirements, customer and market needs, business needs, and intellectual property (Rosso, 2014, p. 465). Process constraints, such as time, equipment, human resources, technology, manufacturing capability, and organizational structure, “stand in the way of creative problem solving in a given organizational context” (Rosso, 2014, p. 465). Finally, constraints can be internal to actors. Sagiv (2014) finds that authenticity (i.e., creator’s own sense of creative integrity) as an inner constraint strongly influences modern dance choreographers.

2.3. Ingenuity practices and strategies

Although institutional theory views individuals and firms as passive recipients of institutional constraints and conventions, some research shows that actors can overcome institutional constraints with strategic responses. Such responses involve different interactions, such as acquiescing, avoiding, defying, manipulating, or compromising (Oliver, 1991; Sutter, Webb, Kistruck, & Bailey, 2013). Building on these strategic responses, Walker et al. (2014) identify four ingenuity strategies, which can be summarized in three typologies: Actors can challenge, escape, or comply with institutional constraints.

2.3.1. Challenging the constraints

Walker et al. (2014) describe the establishment of multi-stakeholder collaborations to challenge institutional constraints in the solar energy industry. Collaborative actors resist and reject publicly institutionalized norms and try to alter the institutional constraints by mobilizing resources and lobbying to drive institutional change. These strategies also can exist within companies. In a study of two engineering consulting firms, Lombardo and Kvålshaugen (2014) examine how project teams overcome product constraints imposed by client specifications. In some cases, teams challenge and reject constraints to protest against unreasonable client specifications. Such challenges involve “shattering” actions, such as protesting, proposing, betraying, and sabotaging (Lombardo & Kvålshaugen, 2014).

2.3.2. Escaping from constraints

Walker et al. (2014) also argue that firms create ingenious solutions to adapt to institutional constraints. By recognizing the difficulties associated with challenging constraints, entrepreneurs can develop customized products and niche markets to survive. Ingenuity strategies in large organizations help reduce resource constraints (Kannan-Narasimhan, 2014). Faced with difficulties in acquiring resources for their early-stage, unproven products, innovators deploy two types of ingenuity: material and process. Material ingenuity involves creatively re-imagining the use of resources, to help innovators maximize managerial attention and gain legitimacy (Kannan-Narasimhan, 2014). Conversely, innovators minimize managerial attention and legitimacy by using creative processes to gain resources (process ingenuity), which involve “resources that other well established projects in the organization were competing for” (Kannan-Narasimhan, 2014, p. 489).

2.3.3. Complying with constraints

A complying strategy implies conforming with institutional constraints while “consciously and strategically complying in anticipation of self-serving benefits” (Walker et al. 2014, p. 627). For example, a solar energy start-up and a university together developed a new system to lower electricity bills by reducing power consumption from traditional energy sources automatically when solar power was available. The two actors complied with institutional constraints, provided resources, and jointly incurred short-term costs for long-term gain.

2.4. Ingenuity and creative industries

Creative industries (Caves, 2000) provide an apt setting in which to examine ingenuity. Interest in these industries continues to grow, because of their ability to provide responses to managing creativity while also working to overcome constraints, such as conventions (Becker, 1982), forces that prohibit creativity (Tschang, 2007), limited individual resources (Svejenova et al., 2010), and tensions between product differentiation and market innovation (Lampel et al., 2000). Consumers expect novelty but want this novelty to be accessible and familiar (Lampel et al., 2000). The opposing imperatives (Hirsch, 1972) of product differentiation and market innovation create tensions that can push companies to

engage in rationalization (Lampel et al., 2000), leading to incremental rather than radical innovation.

Research on ingenuity in the context of creative industries underscores the specific role of individual constraints (Sagiv, 2014). In a similar vein, creators' quest for "creative freedom" (Svejenova et al., 2010) is a strong constraint and must be balanced with other constraints. Creators can influence the standards on which they are evaluated too. Senf et al. (2014) explore the interplay of creative freedom and the institutional frame in German haute cuisine: The institutional frame is plastic, because of the lack of consistent and clear standards for evaluation by key critics and book guides. Organizational ingenuity for creators thus means "to balance the contradictory expectations of the institutional frame and interpret and respond to them in a way that increases the creative freedom for future development" (Senf et al. 2014, p. 191). Considering the range of constraints and ingenuity strategies in creative industries, this study investigates the impact of key constraints on the creative process and the extent to which an ingenious strategy leads to liberating creation.

3. METHODS: A CASE STUDY OF A PERFUME COMPANY

The perfume industry provides a compelling field for addressing these issues. Because creative processes are relatively simple, usually involving a limited number of actors, the constraints and their effects on the creative process are easy to identify. In addition, the creative processes in this specific industry are constrained, mainly by the industrial organization, which features costly releases of perfumes, mass-market orientation, and retail networks. This situation led to a bifurcation between niche and mainstream perfumes in the early 2000s (Kubartz, 2011), involving product differentiation. The strength of constraints in the mainstream industry also prompted a decline of creative perfumes (Ellena, 2011).

3.1. Research setting: the perfume industry

Until the twentieth century, perfume making was an artisanal activity: Perfumers created perfumes for their clients using raw materials procured from specialized manufacturers. Independent perfume shops, along with large department stores, provided the main distribution circuits. Experienced, well-trained vendors offered counsel to their clients and gauged their individual tastes and styles, which helped these providers sell powerful or atypical fragrances. With this distribution circuit, brands launched an average of one new perfume every five years.

Beginning in the 1970s, marketing techniques entered the perfume industry, accompanied by self-service distribution. Specialized, European retailers, such as Douglas and Sephora, grew into large, international retail chains, helping push small, independent perfume stores out of the market. International groups, such as L'Oréal, LVMH, Procter & Gamble, and Coty, remain the key players in the global perfume industry, introducing and distributing several hundred new perfumes every year under different brands. These large companies largely outsource perfume production to companies that specialize in the creation of fragrances. In general, fragrance companies employ several perfume creators (noses), who work alone or with two or three colleagues on perfume creation projects for different brands. Working on different creation projects puts the noses in competition with the perfumers at other fragrance companies, as well as with their colleagues in their own companies. Finally, the brands invest heavily in global advertising campaigns, especially for product launches. The relatively minimal amount spent on perfume creation represents only 2%–4% of the total cost of product; marketing expenditures represent more than 30% for industry leaders. The increased number and high costs of product launches, combined with short product life cycles, force brands to seek very high turnover shortly after product launches to achieve rapid returns on their investments.

The situation evolved even further recently, with the emergence of niche perfume brands. These brands offer perfumes that appear more creative and promote the names of the perfume creator, unlike the mainstream brands. The relative success of such approaches invokes interest from major groups, some of which have tried to imitate these companies by employing their own perfumers or launching highly selective, high-priced perfumes, usually as limited editions, that adopt some niche strategy.

This study focuses on the specific case of an entrepreneur in the niche perfume industry: Editions de Parfums Frédéric Malle (hereafter, EPFM). This company's positioning relies on a denunciation of the wider industry situation. According to Frédéric Malle, the

founder of EPFM, “The creative machine became jammed and brands limited their risks by marketing perfumes based on a multitude of flower scents, with many extracts and relatively short life spans. Today, customers are no longer offered perfumes which suit them, but just products to create an event.” (F. Malle, interview by the authors)

3.2. Data collection

The data collection relied on two main methods. First, documental research provided a description of the industry, its main features, and characteristics. Second, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured, open-ended interviews. These interviews involved both members of the company and other industry actors. The semi-structured interviews allowed phenomena to emerge, rather than just providing simple confirmation of prior views (Eisenhardt, 1989). The effects of constraints on the creative process are subtle, so to gain a clearer understanding of the concepts that the interviewees raised, the interviews were complemented with visits and direct observation in shops and perfumers’ laboratories.

Data collection began in 2008 and entailed examining the perfume sector and understanding how the industry was organized in general. Information gathered from data sources included books about the perfume industry and perfumers, market studies, general and specialized press articles and interviews, and specialized perfume industry websites or company websites. Further information came from several store visits to major specialized perfume retail chains in France. The analysis focused on existing organizations and industry contexts, as well as development processes for new fragrances. This exploratory phase thus addressed the generic topic of creation processes in the perfume industry and helped identify the different constraints involved.

The study’s qualitative part focused on the selected company and lasted two years (2010–2012). Because EPFM resides at the margin of the mainstream and maintains a differentiating discourse, the company claims to make things differently to offer “more creative” perfumes. The company benefits from substantial media exposure and a public reputation for being creative through its work with eminent perfumers. In addition, EPFM had existed for eight years at the beginning of the study and employed approximately 15 people. Four interviews were conducted with the founder of the company, and separate interviews involved seven staff members and other interested parties. The semi-structured interviews were conducted by two researchers and lasted approximately two hours each. (Interviews with shop managers outside France, each conducted by one researcher, lasted approximately 45 minutes.) The interviews concentrated on the curriculum, responsibilities, and specificities of

the company in terms of the creation process, distribution, and customer interactions, as well as its differences from the general industry. The goals of the interviews were to identify specific processes within the company, compared with the industry. The interviews also aimed to identify constraints in the creative process and the extent to which the company managed them. Direct observations took place through visits to five shops, three in France and two abroad, together with an observation of a client “consultation” (the term the company uses to describe the process of proposing the most appropriate perfumes to clients). Observations also took place in visits to two noses in their workplace and two fragrance companies. Table 1 provides an overview of the data collection.

Table 1 : Data collection overview.

	Objective	Methods
<p>Phase 1 (General industry) April 2008– December 2009</p>	<p>General understanding of the perfume industry</p>	<p>Interviews with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 creative director in the perfume industry - 1 perfumer - Frédéric Malle (founder) (1 interview)
		<p>Documentary study: 2 books, 1 research report, 2 conferences reports, newspaper articles.</p>
<p>Phase 2 (EPFM) January 2010–March 2012</p>	<p>Detailed understanding of the perfume industry, including the development process of new fragrances, distribution systems, and trends in the industry</p> <p>Study of the case company: vision, history, fragrance development process, processes</p> <p>Understanding the mechanisms that influence the rules of the industry and the creative process</p>	<p>Interviews with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 brand manager from a mainstream company - 1 assistant product manager perfume of a major brand - 2 perfumers, having worked both for the mainstream industry players and for Malle - Frédéric Malle - Les Editions de Parfums Frédéric Malle staff members, including the commercial director of exports, trainer, former and current managing directors, and 2 shop managers - 2 partner shop managers, distributing Frédéric Malle perfumes in Italy and Spain
		<p>Visits (direct observation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 company shops: 2 in France, 1 in Spain, 1 in Italy - 2 of the 3 major fragrance companies' Paris offices - The working place of 2 perfumers who worked for both major industry players and Frédéric Malle
		<p>Documentary study (total, including pre-research phase): 5 books, 1 research report issue, 3 conferences reports, 5 market studies, newspaper articles, 11 websites (official companies websites in the perfume industry, amateur websites dedicated to the perfume industry)</p>

3.3. Data analysis

The data analysis sought to shed light on the development process for new fragrances and any constraints involved. The gathered information should provide a clear sense of the processes and challenges along the way. Additional efforts were made to adopt the intellectual position of the actors, in a Weberian sense, to capture the constraints. This empathetic position was nourished by the interviews conducted from this point of view. The interviews with EPFM staff served two functions: First, the company had developed a precise vision of the constraints in the mainstream industry, and the interviews helped clarify their effects. Second, the analysis highlighted the company's differences from the mainstream industry.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Constraints on the creative process of perfume creation

The perfume market is segmented by customer type, and products target specific consumer profiles. As a result, brands seek to design products that will be accepted overall by the market, guided by tools that attempt to identify demand and consumer tastes, such as perfume classification, analysis of international markets, trend books, focus groups, and market testing (Ellena, 2011).

Brands in the perfume industry carefully manage their budgets and set financial constraints on the launches of new fragrances. Budget cycles, consumption seasonality, and costs associated with marketing and advertising generate key restrictions for the creation process. With several hundred product launches per year, perfumes remain available for sale only as long as they are successful. The objective is to create a product that generates maximal net revenue but still corresponds to the brand's general image and positioning. The frequency of new perfume product launches depends on both financial objectives and competitors' moves.

The brand's marketing department defines the concept, in terms of the perfume's target group, description, color, and image, determined on the basis of customer tests, competitor benchmarks, and so on. The product launch date, which the brand sets early in the process, becomes a major constraint and determines the work schedules of all actors. At this stage, the company also reserves media space for advertising and publicity, along with the desired shelf space at major retailers and distributors. This time constraint must be respected by the perfumer: All creative steps and customer tests, as well as alterations, must take place within this time frame. Another major constraint comes from the defined budget, which influences the possible choice of ingredients to use in creating the perfume.

The brand's product manager launches a competition among different fragrance creation companies that employ noses by providing them with so-called briefs. These briefs usually consist of a story, including a history, image, ambiance, specific environment, films, and even poems. Product management uses this story to define what the perfume's scent should represent for customers. Various brands send out several hundred briefs annually. Creators must ensure that the fragrance adheres to the established brief and customer targets. Usually, a group of up to three noses works together on one project, sometimes across national borders.

During the creation of any new perfume, a series of qualitative and quantitative customer tests helps determine and assess different elements of the future product, which can reduce the risk of a new product launch. Perfume descriptions usually rely on standardized terms, such as "modern," "rich," "elegant," "mysterious," "female," and "flowered." In consumer tests, the firm then evaluates various parameters that define perfume quality. If these parameters are not satisfactory, the perfume may be abandoned. If satisfactory, the perfume undergoes blind tests in major markets with representative consumer panels that match the target market. Depending on the result, the noses may need to rework the fragrance. The next phase of consumer testing involves the so-called sniff-and-use test: A group of customers tests and evaluates the perfume over a longer period, generally one month.

Finally, the full mix test takes place a few months before product launch. This test measures coherence among the fragrances, the packaging, and the advertising messages. Even at this stage, two or three options remain for the final fragrance, to further reduce the risk of product launch. On attaining satisfactory results in these different test phases, the firm launches selected perfumes on different markets, along with vast media coverage and special product promotions in the major distribution circuits.

4.2. A creative process under constraint

Constraints in the perfume industry include resource constraints (Dolmans et al., 2014; Kannan-Narasimhan, 2014; Lampel et al., 2014b), product and process constraints (Rosso, 2014), and individual constraints (Sagiv, 2014), any of which can affect the nature of the perfumes proposed.

4.2.1. Resource constraints

Noses in the industry must account for budget constraints in choosing raw materials. Thus, financial constraints might limit the use of high-priced ingredients, such as natural extracts, which in turn reduces the range of proposals that perfumers can make.

A large part of the budget was allocated to communication. It was no longer possible to make perfumes like we used to in the past. (Frédéric Malle)

Marketing campaigns are scheduled far in advance, which sets a time frame. During the creation process, the product earns no revenues, so a shorter process is preferable in terms of financial objectives. This shorter time also influences the proposals the noses can make.

Creation requires time which cannot be compressed. To create something new, a long time is needed. When I have to release something within three months, I use an old idea that's been floating around the back of my head for a few years. (A perfumer)

4.2.2. Product constraints

The brand requirements aim to create perfumes that will sell quickly to a large number of consumers. The difficulty in expressing perfumes with words leads to imprecise briefs, with limited frameworks. Nevertheless, these briefs also influence the creative process.

The concept often comes from the brand or sociocultural studies which track emerging conceptual and profiles of target man or woman. Caricaturing [presents a] man or woman one never meets, because they are absolutely perfect in all reports, beautiful, rich, and intelligent! This is the worst case. The perfumer tries to think of a woman who inspires. But when you have ten times the profile or the same story, it quickly becomes problematic and there is a uniform designs, accentuated by consumer tests. (Former creative director in a fragrance company)

4.2.3. Process constraints

The organizational process of perfume creation also is a source of constraint. Competition between fragrance companies, briefs as an origin of the creative process, the

importance of tests, and the way perfumes sell through retail networks all have consequences on the types of perfumes proposed.

We have the keys to have perfumes tried out. We have internal teams that know the tips to complete the testing the best way possible. It does not mean that the perfume is a good one. A perfume might test well but might not be a good perfume or might not be a commercial success. (A perfumer)

What mattered now was to be able to sell the product at Sephora, which meant listing fees, shelf positioning, etc. (Frédéric Malle)

4.2.4. Individual constraints

Perfumers also have their own viewpoints about the quality of perfumes. If these creative firms restrain their field of creation to meet the different constraints, they can partially overcome certain constraints, such as briefs.

We receive 200 briefs every year. We reply using a certain number of creations which are presented to several players, as we cannot create 200 perfumes every year.... Creating a perfume requires time and consideration. We replied with products that were variations on other perfumes. Creation was not tailored to the brief. (A perfumer)

4.3. A global ingenuity strategy

Frédéric Malle formerly was a professional in the perfume industry who worked for some major brands. He realized that the dominant functioning of the industry and its creative processes were too constraining though. Thus Malle concluded that the system generated frustration for both noses and consumers but could not generate creative products—that is, products different from the majority of products brought to market. He therefore decided to create a new brand of creative perfumes, which involved changing the conditions in which perfumers create perfumes.

Malle sought out the leading noses—people working for the major fragrance creation companies and creating perfumes for the most prestigious brands—and gave them *carte blanche*, in terms of both time and budget. Their names feature prominently on the bottles of the perfumes they create, but otherwise, these noses are not paid for this work. Instead, they agree to create perfumes for EPFM, which provides an opportunity to express their own sense of creative integrity. The noses also appreciate Malle's vision and competence in perfume

creation. The fragrance creation companies permit their perfumers to work on these projects, because the firms ultimately hope to benefit from the resulting exposure.

However, to sell perfumes that do not align with mainstream consumer tastes, EPFM also needed stores whose vendors could counsel the clients, which meant developing a network of stores. Malle rejects the use of advertising and devotes resources instead to vendor training. Thus, EPFM currently relies on four owned stores in France and the United States, as well as a network of selected partner stores in 22 countries that sell the perfumes under a distribution agreement.

4.3.1. Resource constraints

A key aspect of EPFM's model is suppressing resource constraints. Perfumers can work without time delay; a perfume launches when ready. Noses also can use any raw materials they want, which is possible because EPFM does not depend on costly promotion campaigns. Therefore, perfume prices have no promotion costs to amortize and can bear higher raw material costs.

Each perfumer is free to use the most innovative technologies and the rarest raw materials the industry offers.... This freedom drives the artist to construct a scent without conventional boundaries and to refine his or her idea and formula to the most precise detail. (Frédéric Malle)

I appreciate working with big corporations as much as I do with Frédéric. It is completely different. Because of the price of the product and the mass production, [EPFM] enables us to use very expensive raw materials. Which brings completely different olfactory forms, which we could not create without money. We are as creative as we would be otherwise but the range of possibilities is wider. (Perfumer)

The idea was to create a perfume making the most out of all of this without price or time limits. It was pure adventure. For Carnal flower we had a lot of money [and] thus no limits, fantastic new raw material, which was an absolute tuberose. (Perfumer)

There are no real limits in the process of development: we stop when we are ready and Frédéric presents the products in his stores. We do not talk about [delays] that are necessary in the creation process. [EPFM] makes us go beyond our own capabilities, which is highly important because sometimes we are stuck in the progress of our work. Hence someone coming and revolutionizing our formula makes us create something new. It is another way of working, which is highly valuable. (Perfumer)

4.3.2. Product constraints

The creative process at EPFM includes no briefs. The definition of the concepts to be developed comes from the desire of the perfumer or from conversations between the perfumer and Frédéric Malle.

The perfumer creates the perfume he has always dreamed of offering without restraints. Formulas are extremely personal and would not have been created in a vaster distribution because of their cost. It is a way to impose a perfumer's vision, style and desire instead of following the imagined taste of a wider audience. (Frédéric Malle)

We do not try to meet the market's pre-established taste but stay in a true aesthetic vision. (Shop manager)

Perfumes are created by perfumers working in complete freedom with no marketing specifications. (Shop manager)

4.3.3. Process constraints

The creative process at EPFM involves just the perfumer and Frédéric Malle, whereas in the wider industry, processes often involve many people with different viewpoints. This process in turn has an influence on perfume creation.

Niche perfumery is not the opposite of perfumery within large groups. Beautiful things happen even in the latter. The only difference is that I can do things with Frédéric Malle that I couldn't do elsewhere, due to prices and to the fact that I am dealing with a single person. (Perfumer)

Moreover, EPFM has its own stores and can control the methods used to sell perfumes. This element is important for the creative process, as a means to cope with different constraints, because the selling tactics help more creative perfumes find an audience.

We spend a lot of time with customers: from 25 to 30 minutes on average. We try and give a consultation. There are no forced sales, no add-on sales. This is also part of the company code.... Frédéric Malle's philosophy is to strive to find a perfume that is the reflection of one's personality. (Shop manager)

5. DISCUSSION

This paper focuses on two research questions. The first is geared toward understanding the impact of different types of constraints on the creative process in the specific case of creative industries. The second strives to determine the extent to which an ingenious strategy leads to liberating forms of creation, even in a constrained context.

5.1. Constraints in creative industries and their impact on creative processes

The perfume industry, which is largely representative of other creative industries, offers a case in which multiple constraints—product and process, institutional, and resource constraints, for example—affect the creative process. Within the specifications provided, noses can express their individual creativity, yet many proposals get rejected during the process after failing the consumer tests. Anticipating the difficulty of passing the tests for certain perfumes, noses also tend to censure themselves, limiting the creativity of the perfumes proposed. Whereas Sagiv (2014) sheds light on the importance of individual constraints, such as the quest for authenticity or creative freedom, this case highlights a situation in which the individual constraints of creators stem from their anticipation of external constraints. In contrast with Sagiv's (2014) description, in this case study, creators compromise their own perceptions of quality or creativity. This result is consistent with Becker's (1982) view on creative activities. The creative process is not too constrained, and the creativity of creators is not at stake. Rather, creative people just know that some of their proposals will fail. This process indicates the systemic dimension of creativity. The ability of a company to propose a wide range of creations does not depend solely on the creativity of creators. This distinction between the noses' creativity and the inability of the industry to propose a wide range of different perfumes led to the creation of EPFM.

5.2 Creativity-oriented compliance

Frédéric Malle is an ingenious entrepreneur. As a perfume professional, he worked in a constrained framework, with no ability to propose specific, atypical perfumes. In response, he founded a company to address this specific problem. The constraints Malle now must overcome are primarily resource constraints: He has no means to hire perfumers, and his small target market does not allow him to turn fragrance companies into competitors. He also faces institutional constraints, because the distribution and promotion system of the perfume industry does not allow him to launch the kind of perfumes he desires. Although he claims EPFM's distance from the mainstream industry, the company uses creators from this industry. In this sense, EPFM depends on the established industry and the perfumers' employment at large perfume and fragrance creation companies, using both the noses and the resources of

these companies for development and production. Thus, EPFM's business model relies on the mainstream industry, and Malle has no real interest in challenging the institutional constraints.

Walker et al. (2014) identify three types of ingenuity strategies to overcome constraints: challenge, escape, and comply. Research on ingenuity mostly involves examples of the first and second strategies. Malle's strategy is first an escape strategy, representing either material or process ingenuity (Kannan-Narasimhan, 2014). By treating noses as resources, Malle creatively re-imagines the use of these resources, allowing the noses to escape constraints. Noses tend to be underused in the mainstream industry and, as a result, cannot unveil their full creative potential.

Malle's strategy also involves compliance. As an entrepreneur, Malle manages a system with limited ability to create. The purpose of his company is not to challenge the mainstream industry system: Noses continue to work for fragrance companies and develop global perfumes in the same ways. Malle's business model also does not escape the system; rather, the model relies on the resources available through the system (e.g., noses, resources of the companies that hire them) to build solutions. Malle's ingenious compliance strategy is oriented toward creativity because the noses retain freedom in their creative processes (Svejenova et al., 2010).

5.3. Constraints as opportunities

This case provides new insights into the controversial question of whether constraints are a source of creativity (Lampel 2014b) or not (Amabile, 1988). In this case, constraints limit the creative freedom of noses but also provide an opportunity for entrepreneurs. Thus, constraints for some actors create opportunities for others, which in turn provide more freedom to the former actors. These results lead to the proposed concept of creative symbiosis.

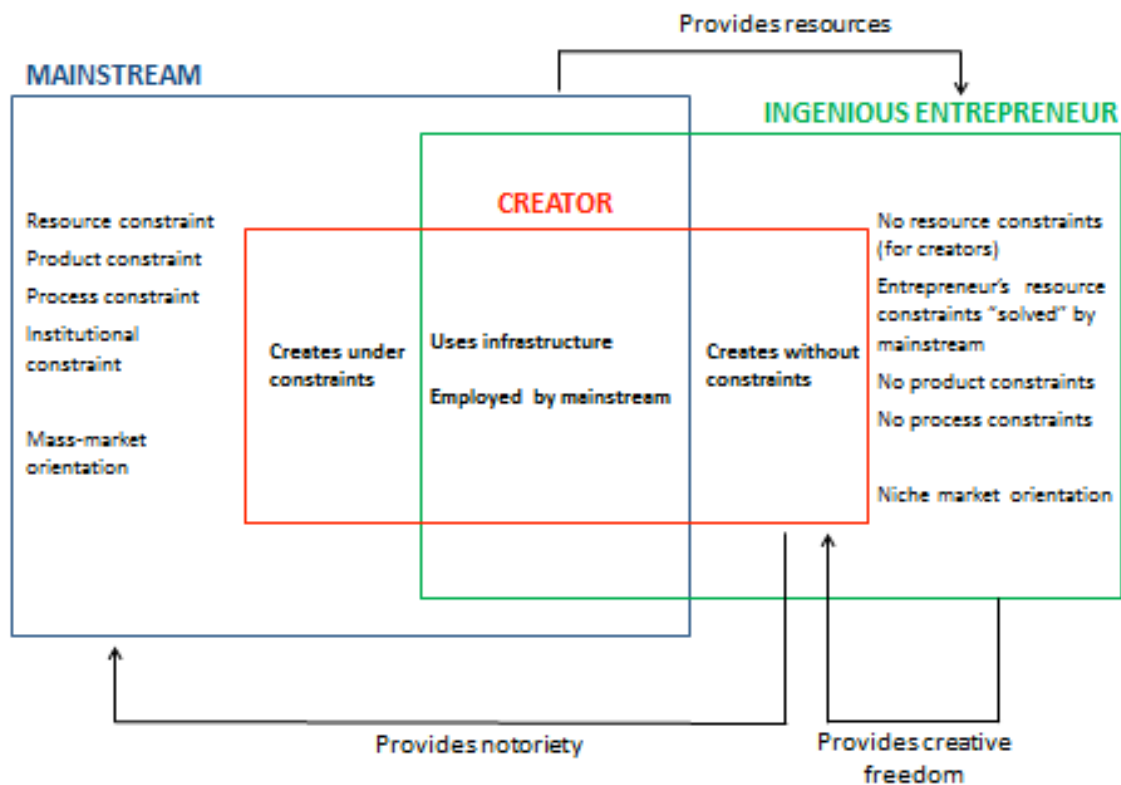
5.4. Creative symbiosis

The relationship between EPFM and the fragrance companies of the mainstream industry relies on mutual dependency. For EPFM, dependence on the mainstream industry's resources offers a means to minimize costs and attain profitability in a niche market, because the company does not pay for perfume development. The fragrance companies accept this situation, which both sustains the motivation of perfumers and benefits to the notoriety of "their" perfumers.

The mutual advantages that these two organisms—the mainstream industry and the case company—gain leads to creative symbiosis. According to the *American Heritage*

Dictionary of the English Language, a symbiosis in biological fields is “a close, prolonged association between two or more different organisms of different species that may, but does not necessarily, benefit each member.” By extension, symbiosis implies a relationship marked by some mutual benefit or dependence. Thus, “creative symbiosis” refers to interactions between two organizations, whose association is advantageous to both and results in less constrained creative processes (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The creative symbiosis



6. CONCLUSION

Creative industries provide a fruitful field for investigating organizational ingenuity, because they are loci of creativity that face different constraints. The current study focused on a situation marked by many constraints that can prohibit the industry from proposing new atypical products. The underlying purpose was to shed light on the different types of constraints and their impacts on creative processes. By focusing on the case of a company founded expressly with an objective to return freedom to creators, this study strived to understand the types of ingenious strategies that can be implemented in such a constrained environment.

This research also provides insights into the relationship between creation and constraints in creative industries. In particular, this study distinguished between the individual creativity of an entrepreneur and the creativity of the global industry. The ability of the

industry to release perfumes cannot rely solely on the creativity of noses, because constraints limit their ability to make viable proposals.

Furthermore, this research identified a specific, ingenious strategy that allows perfumers to escape from constraints. From an entrepreneur's perspective, this strategy entails compliance; the ingenious entrepreneur's strategy relies on the mainstream industry. The concept of creative symbiosis accounts for this unique situation.

Creative industries are of interest, because they provide insights into how organizations manage creativity. This article elucidates how a creative firm can be ingenious, even in a constrained context.

Finally, this article opens up several avenues for further research. First, research could extend this work by exploring additional effects of various constraints on the creative process. Second, researchers could address whether creative symbiosis exists in other creative industries. Third, additional research might consider ingenious strategies in other industries.

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