Article

Developing Creative Leadership in the Use of Digital Communication Tools: A Psychological Perspective

Yinan Wang 1,∗ and Yingchong Wang 2

1 School of Arts, Peking University, Beijing 100871, China
2 Department of Arts Administration, Education, and Policy, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH 43210, USA
∗ Correspondence: yinan_wang@pku.edu.cn

Abstract: Creative organizations have shifted their daily communication to the virtual environment in response to COVID-19. This study examines how media use affects the communication effectiveness between creative leaders and followers from a psychological perspective by reviewing the comprehensive literature on creative leadership, media use, and psychological distance. A mixed-method methodology is employed to investigate ten common media configurations. The findings indicate that configured digital communication tools create certain levels of psychological distance between leaders and followers. Thus, it is crucial for creative leaders to match the psychological distance of different media and construal orientations of creative tasks to cultivate followers’ creativity. Using reflective interviews with creative professionals, we determined the impact of psychological distance on creative leadership from three aspects: task performance, member feelings perception and technology selection. We also identified several situations that might hinder creativity. To conclude, this study proposes a “Cognitive Model of Media Use Strategy in Creative Leadership”, which aims to bridge the gap between creative leadership theory and media use theory from the organizational psychology perspective. This study confirms that psychological distance exists in the digital environment, thus expanding the application scenarios of “Construal Level Theory” as well as providing practical implications for media selection in creative leading processes.

Keywords: creative leadership; media use; psychological distance; digital communication tools; construal level theory

1. Introduction

As one of the essential abilities expected of a leader, communication occupies a large proportion of the work of organizational leadership [1]. In contrast to the diverse forms of leadership in offline environments, the effectiveness of communication is among the most critical attributes of leadership in online environments [2]. The evolving technological landscape has made digital communication an indispensable means of information exchange within organizations across all industries. In the creative industries, digital communication became particularly significant in workplaces when technological advancements were combined with COVID-19, a period where members of creative organizations were compelled to connect and collaborate via email, instant messaging, video conferencing, team collaboration apps, and social media. This might be convenient, but not always efficient. Therefore, how to effectively communicate in a digital environment and properly use digital communication tools has become a crucial topic in leadership research [3]. In the digital age, media use is a more complex issue for cultural and creative organizations that rely heavily on talent and creativity. To thrive in the market in the age of digital transformation, creative leaders must be people- and technology-focused, two typically distinct leadership styles [4].

Human creativity is a key element in the development of innovative knowledge and skills to tackle challenging issues, boost productivity, overcome prejudices, and, ultimately,
achieve sustainability. It should be noted that times when the knowledge industry is flourishing call for the recognition of creativity as a valuable renewable resource [5]. However, in the organizations’ operation, leaders often face the dilemma of “running out of ideas” due to various levels of expression ability and different environments. Therefore, how to foster inexhaustible organizational creativity through “creative leadership” has become an important topic in leadership and sustainability research. The extensive implementation of digital tools has transformed creative abilities, processes, and environments in cultural and creative organizations at the micro-level, in addition to bringing new industrial structures and competitive landscapes to the creative industry [6]. By erasing organizational boundaries, the prevalence of digital tools makes it easier for leaders to foster knowledge exchange, information flow, and member collaboration, thereby releasing organizational creativity to a greater extent [7]. Nevertheless, we should always be mindful that, as a positive extension of creative leadership in space and time, the improper use of digital tools may also hinder the production of creative leadership and damage the creativity of the organization and its members’ creative initiative.

Despite the increasing emphasis on creativity and leadership style, and the consensus that creative leaders should have strong “digital media literacy” and communication styles, there is still a paucity of research regarding the appropriate and effective use of digital communication tools. The existing literature focuses on the organizational and task challenges posed by the digital communication tools’ revolutionary information-transfer capabilities. However, it ignores the subtle psychological changes that occur at the individual level in digital communication environments, which can significantly impact the ultimate performance of creative tasks. To further demonstrate the relationship between creative leadership and digital communication, this study aims to connect existing research on creative leadership and media use from an organizational psychology perspective, as well as to investigate the potential for different digital communication environments to have psychological effects on members of creative organizations.

This article will begin by clarifying the key concepts in this research, followed by a critique of related theories, thus outlining a theoretical background. The theoretical background will serve as the basis for the formulation of research questions and hypotheses. The first research objective of this study is to find out whether the selection and use of communication media will affect the psychological feelings during leader–member communication through a questionnaire survey, and whether these feelings are potentially affected media ability. Next, this study will conduct in-depth interviews with creative members to determine how these differences in psychological perception affect creativity and feelings of members, and how creative leaders can develop their creative leadership through the appropriate use of digital communication tools. Lastly, based on the analysis in the investigation, a model designed to develop creative leadership in the use of digital communication tools will be proposed. This model is intended to bridge the current academic gap and provide guidelines for practitioners.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Leadership, Creative Leadership, and E-Leadership

There are hundreds of ways in which the concept of leadership can be defined [8]. While “leadership” is commonly described as a term that can be broadly used to cover any actions by those in charge, most leadership scholars use it to describe how they motivate, direct, coordinate, and empower their followers to achieve maximum effectiveness [9–12]. There is also an argument that leadership is a reciprocal relationship between leaders and followers, highlighting a flow of influence that goes both ways for the sake of mutual goals [13].

As with leadership, creativity is also defined in various ways. It has been described as the tendency to release an individual’s potential in order to generate new and valuable ideas, possibilities, alternatives, or anything tangible or intangible that may be employed to communicate, entertain, solve problems, or attain excellence [14–16]. Numerous manifesta-
tions of creativity can be found in education, events, trends, and in the process of personal cognitive and social or emotional interactions [17].

As creativity is combined with leadership, it focuses more on enabling creative potential to be unleashed under the influence of leaders: it highlights the role of facilitation in cultivating the creativity of others, guidance as a source of creative thinking, and the integration of multivariate heterogeneous creativity [18]. Since current work ethics and organizational cultures tend to encourage implicit work addiction, which adversely affects employee work–life balance and leads to excessive stress [19], creative leadership requires more attention and discussion to facilitate the effective management of organizations. In keeping with the research context, this paper focuses on the facilitation approach, which defines leadership as a process of social influence on followers and stakeholders [20]. Therefore, creative leadership refers to the facilitation process in which leaders give full play to the creativity of the organization and its members when planning business models, managing transformation, designing the work environment and dealing with team relations, as well as when applying creative methods in product and service innovation [21]. As creativity is often associated with the generation of new ideas and intelligence, with factors such as cognitive abilities and emotional activities often being involved, this study will place a greater emphasis on psychological perspectives when conceptualizing creative leadership.

The changing landscape of technological innovation has placed leadership and creative leadership in a new context, contributing to the development of e-leadership. Since its introduction, e-leadership has been defined in a variety of ways. In response to the impact of digital communications and digital networks, e-leadership is defined as a leading process involving social influence in both proximal and distal environments, leading to changes in behaviors, attitudes, feelings, thoughts, and performance as a result of advancements in information technology [22]. The definition was further refined through the emphasis on building trust in a virtual environment through accountability, smooth communication, and effective social interactions [10]. There are studies further specifying the differences between leaders in traditional contexts and those in virtual contexts, in terms of their roles, skills, and leadership styles. As opposed to traditional leaders, who exercise command and control over their followers and act alone as sole decision-makers [23], a digital leader plays the role of a leader in a relatively more non-hierarchical way. Rather than using disciplinary authority, they provide coaching and mentoring to guide the learning process and cultivate talent within the team [23,24]. Concerning leadership style, Eberl and Drews (2021) [11] suggest that, based on their review of the literature on digital leadership, e-leadership can be described as authentic, transformative, and transactional. An authentic leadership style motivates employees to innovate and enhances participative decision-making [25,26]. Transactional approaches allow for reward systems to encourage employees to be technologically savvy [27]. A transformational leader has a facilitative and empowering style and inspires followers to innovate [28,29]. According to the clarification of e-leadership roles and styles, it stands to reason that the expected skills of the e-leader are visionary, digitally savvy, collaborative, adaptable, and motivating [30–32]. These skills promote openness, flexibility, and innovation [30,31], as well as creating an environment conducive to participation and non-hierarchical communication.

2.2. The Interplay between Leadership and Creative Performance

In the leadership process, leadership behavior affects members' creative performance in several ways [33].

Firstly, intrinsic motivation is widely recognized as the key to enhancing creativity [34–37]. When creative individuals are engaged in the task for its own sake rather than for the external results or incentives associated with the task, intrinsic motivation is more likely to promote professional knowledge and creative thinking to generate new solutions [38]. Intrinsic motivation drives individuals to accept more challenging goals by increasing their risk-taking propensity and inhibits self-interest needs that would prevent them from embracing higher goals. Moreover, creative individuals with higher levels of intrinsic motivation demonstrate
greater mental flexibility and the capacity to deal with complexity. Consequently, individuals are more likely to explore new cognitive pathways that break free from the constraints of work routines and conventional thinking, leading to creative solutions [39–41].

Secondly, psychological empowerment, another critical source of creativity, is typically divided into four dimensions, namely competence, meaning, self-determination, and impact, and is closely related to intrinsic motivation and creative participation [42–45]. Psychological empowerment is regarded as a major mediator between structural empowerment and creativity [46]. In addition, psychological empowerment is also closely related to the extent of autonomy granted in workplaces. Due to the crucial role of autonomy in most creativity theories, close monitoring involving overly frequent work checks tends to reduce employees’ creativity and intrinsic motivation [38,47]. If this psychological effect is excluded; however, close monitoring could be interpreted as a leader having care and concern for employee performance, positively affecting creativity [48].

Thirdly, creative tasks are influenced by the operational environment and culture within an organization. As designers of the work environment, leaders make decisions regarding the allocation of resources, organizational structure, coordination mechanisms, business processes, and intangible contextual factors in creative tasks [33], as well as the culture of an organization [49]. The performance of creative individuals, accordingly, depends on the degree to which creativity is encouraged, tolerance for failure, resource allocation, goal setting [50], feedback, and motivation [51,52].

Fourth, when it comes to the interaction between leadership and creative performance, particularly in virtual environments, the level of self-direction and flexibility plays a significant role. In virtual communication, the medium can provide a basis for an environment capable of fostering both autonomy and disconnection between team members, and the psychological and emotional aspects of virtual communication have been understudied in the existing research [7].

2.3. Virtual Teams and Digital Communication

With the rise of information technology, organizations have undergone a significant transformation, resulting in the creation of virtual teams [53]. With the assistance of media technology, virtual teams have evolved into a widely accepted working style that extends beyond a cost-saving solution to overcome geographical distance and time constraints [54]. There has also been an increase in the number of virtual teams due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing measures led to an increase in the number of people working from home. EU statistics indicate that 12% of employed persons between the ages of 20 and 64 usually worked from home in 2020, while this figure remained constant at between 5 and 6% over the past decade [55]. The geographical separation of team members, assignment of responsibilities, multi-level coordination without face-to-face interaction, and varying levels of proficiency with digital tools can all pose challenges to leaders when managing virtual teams. Accordingly, they will need to utilize different digital tools to focus on team needs [56]. With its characteristic of transparency, digital media has been promoted in communication processes not only due to its potential to encourage novel ideas but also for its ability to collect feedback from a broad range of stakeholders [57]. The use of digital media in virtual teams can play a key role in leadership roles, as it allows for transparent and smooth communication between team members and even between members of various departments. Several studies have researched the different communication tools adopted in workplaces at present, and there are numerous tools, such as email, video conferences, and the intranet, included in the internal feedback system for better communication and performance [10]. The appropriate selection of communication tools contributes to managerial effectiveness [58].

Few studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of digital tools in the workplace. Hertel et al. (2017) [59] contend that the effectiveness of communication tools primarily depends on their richness and the nature of the task at hand. There is an explanation for this dependency based on “media richness theory.” In this theory, simpler media
are better suited to easier tasks, whereas more complex tasks call for more sophisticated communications tools. The next section will provide further insight into this theory and its connection to this research.

3. Theoretical Background

3.1. Media Use

Many theories have been proposed to understand media use and, in this research, the Media Richness Theory (MRT) will be adopted and discussed as the theoretical foundation for the development of this study. MRT posits that different media have distinct abilities to convey information, manifested in four dimensions: rapid feedback, multiple information cues, natural language, and personal focus. Thus, the descending order from rich media to poor media is as follows: face-to-face, telephone, letters, written documents, and digital documents. According to MRT, task performance will be enhanced when the task demand matches the media richness. Information-rich media are better suited to ambiguous tasks because team members must negotiate to reach a consensus on the multiple possible interpretations of the available information. In contrast, less information-rich media are better suited to tasks with less certainty and specific information [60].

MRT classifies media according to their richness; however, the rise of new media exposes its flaws as it can no longer encompass all dimensions of media changes. This has led to its evaluation system being questioned. Based on the MRT, Dennis and Valacich (1999) [61] proposed their Media Synchronicity Theory (MST) to fill the theoretical flaws. They expanded the four dimensions into five media abilities: the immediacy of feedback, parallelism, symbol variety, reproducibility, and rehearsability. They demonstrated that face-to-face communication was not always the richest medium of communication, but, rather, the choice of the optimal medium or set of media depended on which of these five dimensions was most important in a given situation. In addition, they claimed that classifying media based on their richness was pointless because media consumption demonstrated these media competencies. The key to effective media use was to align their abilities with the fundamental communication processes required to perform tasks [62].

3.2. Construal Level and Psychological Distance

According to Construal Level Theory (CLT), an individual’s response to an objective object depends on his mental construal. The level of an individual’s construal of a cognitive object is related to his psychological distance from the object. Psychological distance is the actor’s subjective perception of the mental distance between himself and the event. It is primarily composed of four dimensions: temporal distance, social distance, spatial distance, and hypothetical distance [63]. Studies have shown potential regarding the automatic and regular relationship between psychological distance and construal level [64,65]. At a greater psychological distance, people tend to construct cognitive objects with a higher level of construal, using abstract, simple, and essential mental representations. At a closer distance, they tend to build objects with a lower level of construal, using specific, complex, and elaborate mental representations [66]. The manipulation of psychological distance affects people’s level of construal regarding events or objects, and the mindset priming of construal level, in turn, affects people’s judgment and evaluation of distance, suggesting a bidirectional causal link between psychological distance and construal level [66,67].

3.3. Psychological Distance, Creative Leadership, and Digital Communication

The section on the interplay between leadership and creative performance noted that theories of creative leadership generally identify the factors that may affect the development of creativity. In addition, existing theories on leadership in a digital environment, or E-Leadership, do not consider creativity and the psychological implications of the virtual environment that a single theory cannot cover regarding how creative leaders use digital communication tools. In terms of media use theory (MRT/MST), this concerns the communication effectiveness of the media itself. To strengthen the link between e-leadership
theories and media use theory, psychological theories are applied to this research to stitch the two theories together and fill the gap in discussions of psychological factors. This is where the concept of psychological distance comes into play.

As demonstrated by Benedicktus (2008) [68] and Edwards et al. (2009) [69], in their studies on online consumers, the concept of psychological distance can be applied in virtual environments, and can affect people’s perception, motivation, and behavioral intentions; thus, it is a suitable psychological theory for this study. Psychological distance can be influenced by temporal distance, social distance, spatial distance, and hypothetical distance [70], as previously discussed. Therefore, the characteristics of digital communication tools such as temporal distance, namely the immediacy of feedback, social distance, namely parallelism, and symbolic diversity, i.e., the degree of information abstraction, may also impact psychological distance accordingly. This assumption will serve as the basis for the development of this research.

4. Research Questions and Hypotheses

Previous studies have proved that psychological distance exists in the digital environment at different levels, and these differences in psychological feelings may affect communication between leaders and members. Thus, the concept of psychological distance is introduced to further measure the psychological perception of media users. According to the review of the relevant literature in the previous chapter, the concept of psychological distance can integrate complex digital environments from multiple dimensions and has scientific quantification criteria. Therefore, the first research question is proposed:

RQ1: Does the use of digital communication tools create different levels of psychological distance between creative leaders and followers during communication?

A thorny point about RQ1 is that “media convergence” results in a decline in media specificity, further blurring the boundaries between media. This uncertainty makes it challenging for researchers to evaluate the attributes or variables associated with media capacities. For example, the media abilities of an instant messaging application vary depending on whether it supports text, messages, or documents. MST responds that the communication ability of a medium depends on how it is configured and utilized, and that the optimal medium may be a combination of multiple media [62]. Thus, this paper focuses on media configuration rather than a single medium in order to analyze and interpret the experimental results more precisely. By emphasizing a medium’s behavioral state and context instead of its specificity, media configuration helps to maintain the media’s actual communication ability at a relatively certain level.

Based on the preceding information, this paper infers that there may be an internal correlation between media abilities and psychological distance. Furthermore, the actual communication capacity of media configuration may determine the psychological distance between users and cognitive objects. To better understand the formation of psychological distance level in RQ1, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). The lower the immediacy of feedback, the farther the temporal distance, and the farther the perception of psychological distance.

Hypothesis 2 (H2). The lower the symbol variety, the more abstract the information, and the farther the perception of psychological distance.

Hypothesis 3 (H3). The greater the parallelism, the farther the social distance, and the farther the perception of psychological distance.

In particular, it should be noted that rehearsability and reprocessability may also have an effect on psychological distance because they alter the degree of information summarization and time distance. However, the increase in rehearsability and reprocessability will almost certainly be accompanied by a reduction in the immediateness of feedback. Voice-mail is the only exception, with a low immediacy of feedback and low rehearsability, and
this is losing popularity in China. Given that rehearsability and reprocessability cannot be independently manipulated and evaluated, this paper will examine them as collaborative variables of feedback immediacy.

According to MST, communication performance is enhanced when media abilities and communication tasks are matched. Nonetheless, in previous research, the concept of “task” as a whole was too vague to determine the optimal medium [61]. On this basis, Dennis et al. (2008) [62] introduced two fundamental communication processes: conveyance and convergence. The optimal media configuration depends on which media ability is most essential for a given process, or whether the media ability meets the functional requirements of the communication task. For members of creative projects, creativity mainly depends on individuals’ subjective perceptions rather than on the objective transmission or convergence of information. MST fails to determine whether one medium is more conducive to creativity than another when both can meet the communication task’s requirements. In addition, due to the peculiarity and complexity of creative tasks, MST fails to demonstrate whether, in certain circumstances, when media abilities are matched to the communication process, they hinder the production of creativity.

When the psychological distance corresponds to the construal level of task requirements, communication is the most effective and leadership performance is the best [71]. Therefore, it can be inferred that the optimal media configuration is dependent not only on the ability matching but also on the cognitive matching between the psychological distance of media configuration and the construal orientation of communication tasks. Given that creative tasks are highly dependent on the mental activities of creative individuals and that psychological distance has been proven to be closely associated with creativity, the significance of cognitive matching to media use may be more considerable than expected but is easily overlooked. Therefore, the research questions are as follows:

RQ2: Does psychological distance influence the performance of creative tasks during communication?
RQ3: Does psychological distance influence the awareness of emotions and feelings among creative members during communication?
RQ4: Is psychological distance a factor that influences a leader’s willingness to adopt a particular communication technology?

5. Research Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both survey analysis and in-depth interviews, as well as applying both deductive and inductive thinking. The quantitative analysis, conducted through online questionnaires, aimed to measure the psychological distance of ten media configurations between leaders and followers and the relationship between media abilities and psychological distance. The interview section primarily focused on summarizing three themes regarding strategies creative leaders could use to effectively promote the creativity of their members. The results from the survey analysis will serve as a basis to obtain a broad understanding and develop discussions on the psychological distance between leaders and followers maintained by different media platforms. In addition, the interview design will be based on the results from the first-step survey analysis. The interviews will be conducted to further narrow down and verify the discussions on psychological distance in the context of creative industries. Such a hybrid approach can be effective at achieving a balance between lowering the uncertainty associated with subjective sensations and maintaining an openness to everyday experiences, according to research on creative leadership. We argue that technology is neither a spontaneous, deterministic force nor a passive, neutral instrument in the hands of humans. The impact of technology on communication is contingent on the “coproduce” of humans and machines; therefore, research on media use should not be limited to objective descriptions and evaluations of media capabilities but should also incorporate human experiences of technology use and an understanding of its affordances. This was the purpose of conducting this study with members of creative organizations using a mixed-methods approach.
5.1. Survey Analysis

To answer the first research question and verify H1, H2, and H3 in this paper, “the configuration of media determines the psychological distance between users and cognitive objects, and media abilities exert a positive or negative influence on the psychological distance,” the following experiment was designed.

Through online questionnaires, creative individuals were invited and asked to rate the ten most common media configurations on a scale from 1 to 7 based on their experience of using digital communication tools in their daily work, where one stands for “close, concrete, complex, partial, detailed, superficial, and irregular,” and seven stands for “distant, abstract, simple, holistic, core, essential, and structured.” The ten most common media configurations are as follows:

1. Instant messaging (text, private); 2. Instant messaging (voice message, private); 3. Instant messaging (text, group); 4. E-mail (text, private); 5. E-mail (text, group); 6. One-to-one voice call; 7. One-to-one video call; 8. Voice conference; 9. Video conference; 10. Face-to-face communication.

Option 10 was set to verify that the subjects understood what “far” and “close” meant. According to the psychological distance theory, face-to-face communication has minimal temporal, social, spatial, and hypothetical distance. Its psychological distance should undoubtedly be the smallest compared to the media configuration based on digital communication tools. The remaining nine options tested the manipulative effects of the immediacy of feedback, symbol variety, and parallelism on psychological distance by changing a media ability in a media configuration.

5.2. Interviews

Through qualitative interviews, this paper seeks a preliminary answer to from the second to fourth research questions. Due to the particularity and complexity of creation, respondents’ interpretations of the given task description might significantly differ, leading to the inability to scientifically determine the task’s construal orientation. Qualitative interviews were designed to examine the impact of digital communication tools on creative leadership from the perspective of psychological distance to identify the appropriate application of digital communication tools when leading creative tasks. Six members from cultural and creative organizations participated in the interview, and they were tasked with describing critical incidents in the process of communicating with creative leaders. One is the effective communication that they believe fosters creativity, while the other is the particularly ineffective communication. The interview focuses on the impact of media use on communication effectiveness rather than communication skills, media usage habits, or personal preferences.

6. Results

6.1. Psychological Distance Associated with Common Media Configurations

The data from the results of the survey analysis were collected through online questionnaires, 147 of which were returned. To ensure the validity of the survey, respondents were initially asked, “Are you currently working for a creative organization or doing creative work?” and “Is it important to be creative in your daily work?” If the response was “no”, the survey would end immediately. In addition, samples with excessively random responses, such as selecting 1 or 7 for all questions, were also eliminated. A total of 106 valid questionnaires were screened. The Cronbach α for the ten psychological distance measures was 0.713 > 0.7, which is an acceptable value.

According to Figure 1, option 10: “face-to-face communication,” received the lowest mean and median scores among the ten media configurations, 2.68 and 1.5, respectively. Option 5: “E-mail (text, group)” obtained the highest mean and median scores of the ten media configurations, 4.79 and 5, respectively. The paired t-test of the two media configurations revealed statistically significant variations in the perception of psychological distance between the two alternatives (M₅ = 4.79 ± 1.79, M₁₀ = 2.68 ± 2.12, T = 6.714,
"Face-to-face communication" should have the lowest perceived psychological distance of all communication media, according to the theoretical hypothesis and everyday life experience. E-mail (group mail) had the highest temporal, spatial, and social distance of all the options, while other digital communication tools fell in the middle. As indicated by the results, the majority of respondents properly comprehended the meanings of 1 and 7 in the evaluation system; hence, the data were preliminarily verified as valid.

This study conducted three paired t-tests of the results according to the media’s varied abilities (Table 1). The first set of results revealed that the psychological distance perception of instant messaging was significantly lower than that of E-mail in both personal and group contexts when text-based communication was used. Except for the immediacy of feedback, MST found no significant differences between the two media configurations in terms of their media abilities. Therefore, enhancing the immediacy of feedback had a considerable negative influence on psychological distance, and H1 was tentatively verified. There was only a tiny difference between “one-to-one voice call” and “instant messaging(voice),” even though both increased instant feedback and decreased psychological distance perception, which could be attributed to their similar media abilities. Given the impact of people’s mindset priming regarding construal level on their judgment of psychological distance, the decline in information abstraction may indirectly reduce the perception of psychological distance, even when the increase in symbol variety does not directly lead to a change in psychological distance. However, as demonstrated by the second group of results, the difference in symbol variety had no significant effect on the change in the psychological distance; therefore, H2 was not verified. Moreover, the results indicated that when the behavioral state of communication changed from “text” to “voice”, with richer symbols, or from “voice” to “video”, there was a slight increase in the respondents’ psychological distance, which opposed the theoretical hypothesis.

Figure 1. Psychological Distance of 10 Media Configurations. Note: Figure 1 shows the psychological distance level of ten common media configurations, in which the blue line compares the average results and the orange line compares the median results.
Table 1. Media Ability and Psychological Distance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Pairing (Mean ± Standard Deviation)</th>
<th>Difference (1–2)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pairing 1</td>
<td>Pairing 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group H1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Instant messaging (private) vs.</td>
<td>3.29 ± 1.72</td>
<td>4.45 ± 1.72</td>
<td>−1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E-mail (private)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>One-to-one voice call vs.</td>
<td>3.12 ± 1.92</td>
<td>3.41 ± 1.68</td>
<td>−0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Instant messaging (voice) vs.</td>
<td>3.71 ± 1.64</td>
<td>4.79 ± 1.79</td>
<td>−1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Instant messaging (group) vs.</td>
<td>3.29 ± 1.72</td>
<td>3.41 ± 1.68</td>
<td>−0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E-mail (group)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group H2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Instant messaging (text) vs.</td>
<td>3.29 ± 1.72</td>
<td>3.41 ± 1.68</td>
<td>−0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Instant messaging (voice)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>One-to-one voice call vs.</td>
<td>3.12 ± 1.92</td>
<td>3.32 ± 1.97</td>
<td>−0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>One-to-one video call</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Voice conference vs.</td>
<td>3.59 ± 1.40</td>
<td>3.75 ± 1.63</td>
<td>−0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Video conference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group H3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Instant messaging (private) vs.</td>
<td>3.29 ± 1.72</td>
<td>3.71 ± 1.64</td>
<td>−0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Instant messaging (group)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E-mail (private)</td>
<td>4.45 ± 1.72</td>
<td>4.79 ± 1.79</td>
<td>−0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E-mail (group)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>One-to-one voice call vs.</td>
<td>3.12 ± 1.92</td>
<td>3.59 ± 1.40</td>
<td>−0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Voice conference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>One-to-one video call vs.</td>
<td>3.32 ± 1.97</td>
<td>3.75 ± 1.63</td>
<td>−0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Video conference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; Note: Through paired t-test, this table compares whether there is a significant difference in psychological distance level between different media configurations when one of the media capabilities changes while the other capabilities remain stable. The results are presented in three groups to verify the three hypotheses proposed in this paper.

The third group of results demonstrated that, in terms of parallelism, if the state of communication behavior remained unchanged when the media configuration was changed from private to group, respondents experienced a considerable improvement in psychological distance. Thus, it was established that parallelism has a significant positive effect on psychological distance.

In summary, the results of the survey of ten common communication tools addressed the first research question. It was found that different configurations of digital communication tools resulted in different levels of psychological distance. Group messages showed a higher level of psychological distance than private chats, and emails displayed higher levels than phone calls, as a result of the “immediate feedback” increasing the temporal distance and parallelism increasing the social distance. Both of these changes in media capacity significantly affected psychological distance. In comparison, the change in symbolic diversity did not appear to have a significant effect, a factor that is not associated with the four dimensions of psychological distance, as indicated in previous studies.
In light of this finding, a more detailed investigation of the creative communication tasks commonly found in creative organizations was conducted to evaluate the impact of psychological distance on the communication of creative tasks.

6.2. Task Performance: Habitual Responses or Encouragement-Oriented Autonomy

In a digital environment, knowledge and information are more easily acquired and shared. The wide circulation of information within organizations leads to the decentralization of power, suggesting greater autonomy for team members [72]. Moreover, with the digital transformation of organizations, members can participate in decision-making processes in real-time and have a voice at all levels, hinting at higher participation [7]. Greater autonomy and participation increase team members’ sense of responsibility for their work, boosting psychological empowerment and increasing creativity. Leaders are expected to be more inclusive, promote two-way communication and interaction, solicit and consider members’ opinions in daily decisions, and have less control over employees’ behavior [73].

“Some of the best ideas tend to come from small talk on WeChat rather than formal project meetings. Chat on WeChat is usually relaxed, and the memes and mini-videos are always inspiring. If someone in the group is not part of the project team, some fresh outside perspectives can be brought into the creative project. These ideas are generated because the leader gets along with us. In an assertive, demanding, and high-pressure environment, it is unlikely that we would chat in a WeChat group with a leader, but without a leader to guide us, we usually do not talk about work in our free time.” (Ms. Qu, 29, Account Manager)

The interview and respondents’ psychological perception of distance in instant messaging indicate that instant messaging falls between low-distance media and high-distance media. In this intermediate state, users’ perceptions of psychological distance from instant messaging are more flexible than the medium’s abilities. In an ideal circumstance, the use of instant messaging as a digital communication tool offers appropriate psychological distance, which solves problems that require insight by stimulating abstract thinking and creativity [74]. Furthermore, by providing a more relaxed and open environment than face-to-face communication, instant messaging allows for creative organizations to benefit from the debate and ‘hybridization’ between different viewpoints, expertise, and backgrounds [33].

Unfortunately, this ideal balance is easily disturbed. While digital tools provide organization members with autonomy, they also increase psychological distance and isolate drive members [7]. Despite higher creative motivation, members are less willing to compromise due to their higher levels of engagement and ownership, suggesting the difficulty of management intervention. However, without the guidance of a leader, spontaneous group chats that appear to be active are usually trivial, detailed, and fragmented, rendering them ineffective for productive creative production. In this regard, “slack management” is simply a leader’s helpless choice or an excuse for inaction. Facing the sense of losing control, some anxious creative leaders may adopt a more demanding management style. Despite providing a free and open communication environment, digitalization’s convenience suggests a strong sense of urgency. Leaders can ask participants to report progress or even share their screens whenever and wherever they want, while members must respond quickly or be perceived as disengaged. As a result, members may feel surveilled and mistrustful.

“I completely understand that leaders want to be kept up to date with the progress, but frequent urging greatly interferes with my idea... It might be fine to put WeChat messages on hold, but if it is a sudden phone call or video call from a leader, I will be very nervous and anxious because I probably have not been ready for it. I would appreciate being told when and what it is about in advance.” (Ms. Liu, 32, Account Director)

Previous research indicates that synchronous communication tools are better suited to managing complex and interdependent tasks [75]. In creative tasks that require the
full negotiation of details, such as “brainstorming,” synchronous communication tools with low psychological distance (e.g., video conferencing) are a “cognitive matching” for communication tools. However, such close connections frequently prevent people from different professional backgrounds from responding to others’ ideas or generating new ideas at their own pace. Constant urgency forces people to make decisions without adequate knowledge or sufficient time for reflection and analysis. This is more likely to lead to habitual responses than novel ideas [7]. This finding provides an illuminating insight, which is that “the optimal media configuration” in digital communication may also contain the risk of compromising creativity generation. Therefore, creative leaders are advised to be extra cautious when employing the digital communication tools to which they have become accustomed, even if they are already considered the most preferred option.

To summarize, these findings addressed the second research question. Concerning creative task performance, a psychological distance that is too close can leave participants without the ability to think at their own pace, which results in habitual responses rather than innovative and constructive ideas. However, too far a psychological distance can lead to dispersion and isolation among members. Therefore, creating a free communication environment requires a media configuration with appropriate psychological distance, to maintain an appropriate balance between autonomy and discipline in creative workplaces. To optimize the ultimate task performance, creative leaders should decide whether to lean on a media configuration with more habitual responses or encouragement-oriented autonomy.

6.3. Member Feelings Perception: Interpersonal Affinity or Detachment

While excellent creative individuals are, in most cases, more intrinsically motivated, creative leaders are required to provide motivation. Motivating team members’ continued and active participation is an essential skill for a leader in the digital age [73]. Studies have implied that an organization’s digitalization may alienate employee relations and weaken social ties [76], which can be bad news for the effectiveness of using digital communication tools to motivate employees. In this interview, however, multiple interviewees expressed divergent opinions. Most were born after 1990 and raised in a digital and internet environment, were accustomed to communicating and connecting through digital means and are known as “digital natives.” The key events they described implied that, when used properly, digital tools could be more effective than face-to-face communication.

“I prefer to be affirmed by leaders on WeChat, and I have been encouraged every time I look back at the chat records... When criticized by leaders, however, face-to-face communication tends to be mixed with emotions, which is less peaceful and objective than through WeChat.” (Mr. Luo, 30, Creative Planner)

“I rarely get the chance to communicate with my leader in person, but he always praises my little ideas on WeChat, which may be forgotten in the face-to-face communication later... He sent a group email after a project to compliment me on my work, and I was very proud of it.” (Mrs. Li, 33, Graphic Designer)

Motivation is one of the most common communication tasks between leaders and followers. It has diverse and complex contexts and no unified construal orientation [71]. According to the psychological distance theory, the changes in psychological distance generated by changes in media configuration may have motivational impacts. This finding addressed the third research question, regarding the emotional feelings of creative professionals. In terms of motivation, a greater psychological distance leads to a formal and ritualistic feeling, whereas a close psychological distance is associated with an affinity and a sense of being cared for. When advancing work progress, creativity is sparked by an appropriate level of autonomy. Too far a psychological distance may lead to the individual feeling unappreciated, whereas too close a psychological distance may leave the employee feeling under surveillance. To better attend to members’ emotions and feelings during task performance to achieve mutual goals, leaders should take the resulting level of affinity into consideration when constructing a media configuration for their teams and tasks.
6.4. Technology Selection: Initiating Appropriate Construal Level

Communication is primarily about accurately conveying information; leaders are expected to set the appropriate tone for communication and provide precise and reliable information. Scholars have described “digital communication skills” for leaders in a digital environment as “the ability to communicate through information and communication technology in a clear, organized way, avoiding mistakes and misunderstandings, and not exaggerating or downplaying the performance of others” [10]. As a critical communication task in the creation process, the creative leader must accurately communicate the project’s content, purpose, and strategic plan to the team members. Vague task descriptions tend to impede creativity and reduce intrinsic motivation. Today’s leaders can quickly and easily prepare multimedia project briefs using a variety of office software. Compared to verbal communication, written briefs are superior at identifying essential information, providing an overview of a task, and inserting reference pictures or videos to aid comprehension.

“A multimedia brief in written form is necessary at key points in a creative project, as it ensures that the group is working towards a common goal. But that’s not enough. We have to make phone calls or meet in person, so information in creative projects is frequently cumbersome. When put into written language, some of the details in the briefs that might facilitate understanding are lost, while the key information retained can be interpreted in more than 1860 ways. For example, everyone may have their interpretation of the grand, tech-savvy style of the picture.” (Ms. Zhuang, 30, Designer)

“In complex projects, producing project briefs requires a high level of written communication from leaders. Too much colloquialism may get members caught up in information and thus lose sight of key goals. However, written skills are unlikely to be improved in a short time.” (Ms. Zhang, 31, Animator)

The communication in task briefing consists of two different construal orientations: the high-level orientations of focusing on the task’s goals, concepts, and structural arrangements, and the low-level orientations of reaching an agreed understanding of the details [77]. In response to the two construal orientations in the communication task, respondents utilized a mixed strategy of media with a high psychological distance (digital text) and media with a low psychological distance (voice mail) while developing briefs for creative assignments. In sum, digital communication tools with varying levels of psychological distance play different roles in promoting communication clarity and minimizing misunderstandings. This finding addresses the fourth research question. A clear, unambiguous, and actionable creative challenge is the first step. Furthermore, for project briefings, leaders often opt for a combination of email (or a written BRIEF below the document) and in-person meetings (or phone calls), as a far-psychological distance requires higher literacy, whereas a close-psychological distance requires lower literacy, which is more suitable for understanding details and reaching a consensus. Creative leaders are expected to take the different levels of construal level into consideration to set up a proper media configuration and achieve smooth communication.

7. Discussion and Conclusions

As previously stated, the goal of this study was to evaluate how digital communication tools could be utilized to develop creative leadership from the perspective of psychological distance. After being configured and utilized, it was hypothesized that digital media generated a relatively certain psychological distance between users and cognitive objects that were proportional to their media abilities. Four findings emerge from this study:

(1) Various psychological distances are associated with different configurations of digital communication tools, and media capacity is considered to be an important factor in explaining the differences.

(2) The higher the immediacy of media feedback, the closer the perception of psychological distance.

(3) The higher the parallelism of media, the farther the perception of psychological distance.
(4) The change in symbol variety had a negligible effect on the perception of psychological distance and appeared to contradict the theoretical hypothesis.

Since "voice mail" is the only exception to the mediums in this experimental environment, reprocessability and rehearsability were chosen as covariables of the immediacy of feedback.

Overall, respondents’ perception of psychological distance in ten common media configurations exhibited significant patterns. Face-to-face communication, excluding the influence of personal social skills, was the media configuration with the closest psychological distance, consistent with our theoretical hypothesis and daily life experience. The middle level was real-time media (e.g., voice calls and video calls) and synchronous communication tools (e.g., instant messaging). The former contained slightly lower levels of psychological distance than the latter, but only by a small margin. Of the ten common media configurations, the one with the furthest perception of psychological distance was the asynchronous communication tool, represented by E-mail. As the parallelism increased (group E-mail), the psychological distance was further extended.

Interviews were implemented to establish a connection between media use and creative leadership. This study examined three everyday communication tasks in creative leadership based on interviews with creative individuals: task briefing, effective motivation, and environment creation. The results indicated that creative leaders could narrow and widen the psychological distance between themselves and the information that they deliver and their members by changing the configuration and use of communication media to promote members’ creativity and enhance their creative leadership in online communication. Regarding task briefing, media with a high psychological distance and media with a low psychological distance cannot be separated. The two should be juxtaposed because they correspond to the macro-goals and strategic arrangement of high construal orientation, and the consistent understanding and implementation details of low construal orientation. In terms of effective motivation, media with a high psychological distance and low psychological distance may have different effects on followers. The former is more ritualistic and more likely to impress members, while the latter is more intimate and makes members feel more noticed and valued. For creative leaders, the alternate use of these two media could be a constant source of inspiration for followers. When creating a creative environment, digital communication tools can help to widen the psychological distance between leaders and followers, giving members greater autonomy and participation. An appropriate psychological distance also encourages abstract thinking and fosters a free discussion atmosphere, which requires creative leaders to adopt a more relaxed leadership style in a digital environment. However, this ideal is unstable because of the flexibility of media abilities. Excessive laxity can lead to an isolated and disorganized organizational environment, while excessive rigor can stifle creativity by making members destroy and habituate to problems. As a result of the research findings, psychological distance is observed in the digital communication between creative leaders and followers, and influenced by different digital mediums. Further, creative leadership is affected by psychological distance in three ways: the performance of creative tasks, the emotional feelings of creative members, and the technical adoption of creative leaders.

This research demonstrates its significance by making contributions to theory development and the provision of practical implications. Regarding theory development, this research addressed the gap between creativity theory and media use theory from the perspective of organizational psychology. This study integrated two vast yet disparate types of literature that focus on the same question, i.e., how creative leaders can effectively cultivate their followers’ creativity through digital communication tools. This is also the most significant contribution of this study. For this reason, this paper introduced a social cognitive framework dealing with psychological distance: construal level theory [66]. Based on the literature review on creative leadership and media use, a proposition was drawn as to why certain media use strategies by creative leaders are more effective. This was followed by an introduction to the theoretical and practical contributions of this paper.
to illustrate how this research advances the existing knowledge in creative leadership and media use theory.

According to MST, a communication performance is improved when the process of conveyance and convergence is matched with the required media capabilities [62]. Through interviews with members of creative organizations, it was found that, in some cases, this improvement in communication performance is mediated by the psychological distance. When configured and used, a medium's ability determines not only its actual ability to communicate but also the psychological distance of the user. Once the psychological distance is “cognitive matching” with the construal orientation of communication tasks, there will be an improvement in the effectiveness of communication between creative leaders and creative individuals, followed by an improvement in the creativity of individuals and the creative leadership of leaders. Nevertheless, cognitive matching is not a sufficient or necessary condition for the improvement of creative leadership. For tasks with a clear construal orientation (e.g., goal communication), leaders can effectively develop their creative leadership by choosing a cognitively matched media configuration. However, for communication tasks with a variable construal orientation (e.g., staff motivation), leaders can influence the construal level of information receivers by changing the media configuration, and thus bring about different communication effects. Moreover, even if there is a cognitive match, there may be situations that block creativity. For example, screen-sharing and constant calling might be an effective way to communicate yet imply long periods of psychosocial proximity, frequently leaving followers feeling urgent and under surveillance.

Secondly, the study confirms the existence of psychological distance in digital communication and broadens the scope of the theory in the context of creative leadership. Berson et al. (2015) [71] identified the significant impact that psychological distance between leaders and followers has on employee motivation. However, in terms of the influencing factors of psychological distance, Berson was more concerned with leadership behaviors, such as organizational power and norms of dialogue. In contrast, this paper excluded leaders’ personal communication skills and advanced the study from the perspective of media use. In addition, this paper further confirmed the existence of the psychological distance in the digital environment and extended the study scenario of Benedicktus (2008) [68] and Edwards et al. (2009) [69] from the online shopping environment of merchants and consumers to the daily work communication between leaders and followers.

As for practical implications, this research provides some insight into how leaders can improve creative leadership and performance through the use of the proper digital communication tools. This study provides a preliminary response to the discussions on how leaders can be both “people-oriented and technology-oriented” by seeking a balance between two distinct management styles outlined at the beginning of the research [4]. In the digital age, a creative leader’s proficiency in the use of technology media does not simply refer to a quick grasp of new technologies, i.e., knowledge-level understanding, or to exercising their personal charisma in a digital environment. It requires a deep understanding of the psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of technology media use, as well as the ability to skillfully integrate them into one’s leadership goals.

Based on these findings, this study proposed a Cognitive Model of Media Use Strategy in Creative Leadership (Figure 2) to articulate the relationship between creative tasks and media configuration. The proposed model integrates the theoretical context and all the research findings of this paper. Specifically, Figure 2 demonstrates the psychological influence that various digital communication tools may have on the performance of tasks and members’ feeling of belong to a creative organization. Most importantly, this model suggests technical strategies that creative leaders could use when selecting the most appropriate digital communication tools to enhance the creative performance of team members. The research results of this paper have significant implications for the adaptation of organizational communication strategies to the evolution of digital technologies. For creative organizations, the digital communication environment should be carefully designed to
prevent organizations from falling into “the mire of poor communication” and “the desert of inspiration”.

Figure 2. Cognitive Model of Media Use Strategy in Creative Leadership.

8. Limitation

A limitation of this study is that it was conducted in a Chinese context, and cultural differences may lead to diverse psychological perceptions of the communication medium and coping methods. People in Western countries, for example, prefer to use non-customized images (self-portrait photos) as their social media avatars, but Chinese users tend to use customized images, such as pets, celebrities, and landscapes [78]. In this study, the change in symbolic diversity did not result in a significant change in psychological distance, contradicting our research hypothesis; rather, while respondents generally perceived face-to-face communication as the closest form of communication in terms of psychological distance, there was a slight increase in the level of psychological distance in the relatively richer digital media. Given this phenomenon, we hypothesize that exposure to personal space or voices in the digital communication environment enhances the insecurity of “shy” Chinese people, hence increasing their psychological distance.

In addition, it is essential to note that, despite the fact that this study combed the vast literature of creative leadership, the body of language on the concept of “creative leadership” remains fragmented and ambiguous [17]. We surveyed members of the media, advertising, and film industries more frequently in the process of data collection, but
creative leadership is not limited to cultural and arts organizations. Those employed in cultural, and arts organizations may make few creative contributions to their work, despite their perception that they are performing “creative work”.

Lastly, the survey was conducted among respondents born after 1985, who are “digital natives” and perceive media differently from older generations, and it is not entirely certain whether digital demand management is applicable to older generations. Research on the digital demand from older generations should be carried out in the future.

9. Future Study

In future research, we intend to investigate jobs that require creativity in a more comprehensive manner, going beyond creative organizations and the three creative tasks of briefing, motivation, and designing creative environments. We look forward to seeing if people will have different attitudes toward communication preferences after the pandemic or keep some of their habits. In addition, as the current findings rely on respondents’ memories and experiences, we must observe and record the real reactions of creative organization members in various media settings to determine whether these findings are applicable to the field.

The psychological analysis of the implementation of different leadership styles in the virtual environment is another future research area. For instance, an approachable, open leadership style may significantly reduce the psychological distance between leaders and followers, enabling them to overcome the limitations imposed by mass emails, whereas members of organizations that have been under a harsh leadership style for a long time may be more intimidated by media with a lower psychological distance. Although we attempted to exclude leaders’ personal talents from the current study, we were unable to identify whether transformational, transactional, or authentic leadership styles would alter followers’ perceptions of the communication medium. Consequently, the impact of these various leadership styles on the use of digital media will be an essential topic of future study.

More research will focus on constructing a more comprehensive model of creative leadership’s media use from an organizational psychology perspective, incorporating additional key influences to enable leaders to manipulate psychological distance and develop personal media use strategies to achieve management objectives with greater skill. In addition, we will pay close attention to the psychological distance created by creative leaders when communicating with external audiences on social media, as well as how this psychological distance manifests with new technologies, such as VR technology, an enterprise-customized collaboration platform, and encrypted messaging applications.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, Y.W. (Yinan Wang) and Y.W. (Yingchong Wang); Data curation, Y.W. (Yinan Wang); Formal analysis, Y.W. (Yinan Wang) and Y.W. (Yingchong Wang); Methodology, Y.W. (Yinan Wang) and Y.W. (Yingchong Wang); Writing—original draft, Y.W. (Yinan Wang); Writing—review and editing, Y.W. (Yingchong Wang). All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study did not require ethical approval due to no identifiable information linked to interviewee was collected.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all the subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are openly available in [Zenodo] at [https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6993422], reference number [6993422].

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.
References


41. Ryan, R.M.; Deci, E.L. Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. Am. Psychol. 2000, 55, 68. [CrossRef]
47. Amabile, T.M.; Schatzel, E.A.; Moneta, G.B.; Kramer, S.J. Leader behaviors and the work environment for creativity: Perceived leader support. Leadersh. Q. 2004, 15, 5–32. [CrossRef]
50. Shalley, C.E.; Gilson, L.L. What leaders need to know: A review of social and contextual factors that can foster or hinder creativity. Acad. Manag. J. 1995, 38, 55–67. [CrossRef]
57. Kraft, M.H.G. How to lead with digital media effectively? A literature-based analysis of media in a E-leadership context. J. Econ. Dev. Environ. People 2019, 8, 42. [CrossRef]
64. Amit, E.; Algolm, D.; Trope, Y. Distance-dependent processing of pictures and words. J. Exp. Psychol. Gen. 2009, 138, 400. [CrossRef]


67. Liberman, N.; Trope, Y. The psychology of transcending the here and now. Science 2008, 322, 1201–1205. [CrossRef]

68. Benedickus, R.L. Psychological Distance Perceptions and Trust Beliefs for Internet Only and Hybrid Retailers: Implications for Marketers; The Florida State University: Tallahassee, FL, USA, 2008.


76. van Wart, M.; Roman, A.; Wang, X.; Liu, C. Integrating ICT adoption issues into (e-) leadership theory. Telemat. Inform. 2017, 34, 527–537. [CrossRef]

77. Basadur, M. Leading others to think innovatively together: Creative leadership. Leadersh. Q. 2004, 15, 103–121. [CrossRef]