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**Importance of inter-department interaction in advertising agencies and its impact on  
creative  
outputs: case study on Asiatic MCL, Dhaka**

University of Tampere

School of Communication, Media and Theatre

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## **ABSTRACT**

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TARANA FARZANA: Importance of inter-department interaction in advertising agencies

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This master's thesis explores the factors that play crucial roles in advertising agency's workflow and creative processes. It conducts an empirical qualitative case study on Asiatic MCL, Dhaka. Review of the literature suggests that, the area of internal communications and interactions in organisations is not a novelty research. There had been a significant number of researches conducted on importance of organisational communications, but the numbers of studies specific to media firms or advertising agencies are limited. Most of the communication based researches are focused on manufacturing firms or corporations and on the other hand most of the media organisation researches are too focused on the creativity aspect. In other words, the importance of managing communication and interaction processes in media organisations is still relatively unexplored. And research is even narrower in the specific industry of advertising and in the context of Bangladesh.

This thesis expects to bring attention to this issue and wants to explore the roles of communication processes in advertising agency's creative processes and outputs. The case study illustrates the following issues: the communication and interaction processes among major departments, the influence of organisational structure in shaping communication channels, the influence of organisational culture on the internal communication style and the impact of inter-departmental communication on final outputs. Some key issues were raised by the study, such as perceived gaps between management and employees, lack of motivation within employees and flawed policies. A number of barriers to communication effectiveness were also identified, including high workload, timing of communication, lack of coordination of communication, lack of technology based management mechanisms, and employee cynicism. It also reveals some positive consequences of a change action undertaken by the management.

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Tampere, September 2016

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**List of Abbreviations:**

MCL: Marketing Communications Ltd.

Ad: Advertisement

TVC: Television Commercials

RDC: Radio Commercials

OOH: Out of Home

ATL: Above the line

BTL: Below the line

ED: Executive

Director AM: Account

Manager CD: Creative

Director

AVP: Assistant Vice Persistent

AD: Art Director

CW: Copywriter

MCO: Manager, Creative Operation

TCM: Traffic Control Manager (similar position to MCO)

TCD: Traffic Control Department

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# **1. Introduction**

# 1. Introduction

A sizable organisation comprises multiple specialised departments; interaction and clear communication flow among the different departments are crucial for a business to be successful. One of the major reasons for organisations' failure is the lack of coherence and proper communication systems among various departments (Gondal & Shahbaz 2012). Therefore, it is important for organisations to maintain effective interdepartmental communication.

Internal communication happens constantly within organisations and includes informal chat on the grapevine as well as managed communication (Welch & Jackson 2007). Internal communication in organisations has been the subject of significant debate in the literature. Co-operation and coherence can potentially be more difficult in creative organisations. Creative people are presumed to have "talent", i.e. natural ability linked to combinations of creative thinking skills and developed expertise (Lowe & Virta 2016). According to Amabile, talent is a natural resource that is difficult to manage (Amabile 1996).

Novel results often happen when individuals with different skills, talent, perspective and experiences interact, when they can break down the associative barrier between disciplines and area of knowledge (Simonton 2003, Bilton 2007). When the differences interact and even collide; new things emerge. Research suggests that it occurs more often in groups than in individual work (Amabile et al. 2005). A creative organisation in practice requires bridging individual, group and organisational levels as an interdependent dynamic. Factors influencing organisational creativity include structures, processes, work environment, culture and management practices because these either encourage or constrain the creative work that is instrumental for achieving results (Lowe & Virta 2016).

Advertising is a business based on creativity and strategy. Without creativity, advertisement would be simply asking the consumers to buy their products and without strategy, creativity would be art. The combination of creativity with strategy is called advertising (Richards 1990). It is a paid form of non-personal communication of information that is persuasive in nature and informs about products, services, ideas or experiences by identified sponsors through various media (Kotler et al 2008, Belch 2009). The designation of advertising agency refers to the service firms specialised in conceiving, developing and managing exhibition of commercial

messages via different media platforms. Chris Bilton refers advertising as a business where the core product is “creative thinking” on the behalf of the clients (Bilton 2012).

According to American census bureau, a full service ad agency is one that provides a comprehensive menu of services, including advertising, branding, direct marketing, sales promotion, package design, product placement, media planning and buying, event planning, public relations, market research services etc. (NAPCS Product List for NAICS 54181, 2011 ).

Advertising emphasises creativity as artistic skills; with a focus on complementary professional competences that together develop a shared output (Reid & Rotfeild 1976, Sasser & Koslow 2008). Typical agency clients include businesses (sole proprietorships, partnerships, LLC’s) and corporations, non-profit organisations and government agencies.

Two significant pillars of agency function are “Account Management” and “Creative”. A real tension is often observed between the Creative Team and the Account Management Team in ad agencies (Fletcher 2010, Williams 2010). Their perceptions of advertising can be very different; sometimes these differences lead to collisions. Amabile suggests that one of the key aspects of creative thinking in organisations is achieving the comfort in disagreeing with others and trying solutions that depart from the status quo (Adams 2005). Creativity and innovation theories suggest, what’s “new” most often originates from differences that collide (Amabile et al. 2005). For creativity to happen as a routine practice and environmental condition tolerance of diversity is not enough; the “interaction” of differences is a requirement (Lowe & Virta 2016). So, differences are not always bad, but it requires managerial processes to control the conflicts. It’s a manager’s task to keep the harmonised balance between the differences and ensuring productive outcome.

“Creative” and “Account Management” departments have to work together in order to satisfy the client's needs, because at the end of the day an ad agency is all about satisfying their clients. This industry is highly dependent on talents of many kinds that must work together in order to achieve successful result (Lowe & Virta 2016). Therefore the importance of the inter-department interaction and communication in ad agencies is vital.

In an international perspective, organizational communication is a flourishing field of research. Review of the literature suggests plenty of researches conducted on the area of organisational

communications (Dolphin 2005, Kalla 2006, Johansson 2007; Welch & Jackson 2007). Its breadth and diversity makes it impossible to review as a whole, according to Jones et al. (2004: 723). Within International Communication Association, ICA, organizational communication is the fourth largest group (July 2005). However, the number of studies specific to advertising sector is limited.

Most of the communication based researches are focused on manufacturing firms or corporations and on the other hand most of the media organisation researches are too focused on the creativity aspect. In other words, the importance of managing communication and interaction processes in advertising firms is still relatively unexplored. In fact this industry has received rather less attention in research, despite its economic significance worldwide (Pratt 2006).

The research is even narrower in this specific industry in the context of Bangladesh. This thesis expects to bring attention to this issue and wants to explore the roles of communication processes in advertising agency's creative processes and outputs.

This is a qualitative case study on a particular advertising firm called Asiatic Marketing Communications Limited, popularly known as Asiatic MCL. The firm is located in Dhaka, Bangladesh where the study has been initially conducted. It was born as East Asiatic in 1966, making it the oldest advertising agency of the country. Asiatic MCL is a partner to J. Walter Thompson Worldwide (JWT), world's best known marketing communications brand. Therefore, it follows the international JWT format for its internal structures and work processes.

A total of 150 agencies are registered in Bangladesh, while the maximum market share is dominated by the top nine advertising agencies of the country - Adcomm, Asiatic MCL, Bitopi, Unitrend, Grey, Interspeed, Popular, Madonna and Matra (Ahmed 2011). Considering the number of clients, market position, global awards & national recognitions and being the pioneer in the sector Asiatic MCL became the ideal choice for the research.

The aim of this study is to investigate the roles of different managers and staffs in the key departments of the agency, to analyse their perceptions, ways of communications, reasons of conflicts and mechanisms for smooth communication and for mediating conflicts. This is an exploratory study that discusses the importance of inter-department interaction in an ad agency and how it can affect the creative outputs.

Some key issues were raised by the study, such as perceived gaps between management and employees, lack of motivation within employees and flawed policies. A number of barriers to communication effectiveness were also identified, including high workload, timing of communication, lack of coordination of communication, lack of technology based management mechanisms, and employee cynicism. It also reveals some positive consequences of a change action undertaken by the management.

## **2. Personal motivation**

## **2. Personal motivation**

In early 2015, during my work period at Asiatic MCL, Dhaka, I noticed a gap of communication and interaction among the major operational departments, especially between the creative team and the account management team. This leads to conflicts of opinions.

There are formal channels of communication, but that is clearly not enough, especially in a creative organisation. Employees must feel free to use them and the channels shouldn't be clogged by routine paper flow that ties up time with "Programmed Trivia" and creates an air of neglect towards incoming messages because they're unlikely to have values. Equally important ideas stray out from the process because of the lack of open channels of communication. Even a feasible but half-baked notion must be communicated to those with the power to evaluate, authorize and implement (Steiner 1971).

A number of observations state the importance of open and free communication channels, both vertically and horizontally (Atwater & Waldman 2008). According to my personal observation at the agency, I felt that there are some gaps of interaction between two of the key departments (account management & creative) which have been consistently prevalent in the organisational settings; issues that are not talked about or accepted as normal. Gaps of communication that repeatedly causes confusions in the work process, trigger personal grudge and disrupts work environment. Neither the bureaucratic structure of the firm encourage open discussions with top management, and nor there is a formal protocol to report to the higher authorities.

These kinds of inter-departmental communication breakdowns can have a severe impact on the efficiency of an organisation and increase the stress level among employees, eventually leading to poor performance (Gondal & Shahbaz 2012). This phenomenon took my interest and after several discussions with my Supervisor, we agreed on the importance of investigating this problem. In addition to that, the agency was planning a structural change concerning the management of inter-departmental communications during the period, which motivated me to utilize the opportunity to observe the effects of the change.

I am especially interested in learning the roles of management in coordinating creative processes. Following issues took my attention:

- The role of management to ensure effective communication flow
- Inputs in communication process and lack thereof in outcomes
- Consistency of management effort in mediating the disputes among departments.

The goal of the research is to conduct an in depth exploratory study on the selected firm in order to understand the processes and investigate the roots of the problems by answering a series research questions.



## **3. Framework**

### 3. Framework:

I have analysed the internal work process of the agency and how the key departments interact. Figure 1 illustrates the framework of the study. The arrows represent the line of communication. “Output” refers to the final content or product that is purchased by clients. It can be a single content as a television advertisement or even a huge integrated campaign that includes many spheres of advertising platforms.

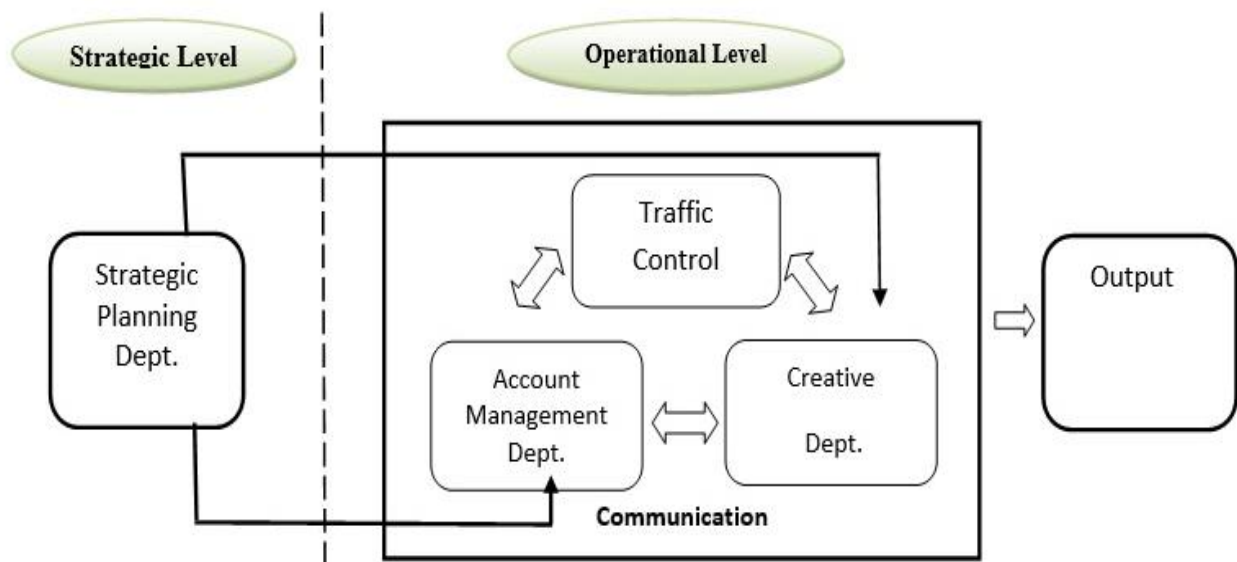


Figure-1 The framework (Author's own)

Concentration of the study is to analyse and investigate the management of creative processes within the agency and how the inter-departmental communication process effects the final outputs.

#### Assumptions:

Factors that are crucial regarding the work process of an advertising agency :

- Professional Identity

Advertising professionals often distinguish themselves as artists rather than advertising professionals (Berger 2004). However, inside the office boundaries, they cannot just be artists. Individuals working in advertising agencies are in a way restricted to certain professional expectations because it's not just a creative “think tank” but is a business that strives to satisfy its

clients. The freedom to be creative and to take risks is contained within hierarchical limits and strategic constraints (Bilton 2012).

Therefore instead of being just creative, the employees must perform up to the bar of their professional roles in the firm. Producing something creative is not enough; it must be marketable as well. “Because being creative isn’t the goal: for organisational interests, the focus is on achieving results that matter” (Lowe & Virta 2016).

- Functioning Communications

According to Drucker, communication is a relational, participative and reflexive process of two or more individuals interacting with each other. He suggested four fundamentals of functioning communication:

- Communication is perception
- Communication is expectation
- Communication makes demands
- Communication and information is opposite yet interdependent (Drucker 2007)

Management needs to know about employees to communicate effectively. Internal communication is very important especially in media firms such as advertising agencies. In order to sustain a functioning communication inside the organisation, managers need to learn about their employees - their interests, perceptions and differences and create a comfortable zone for them to have a shared experience. They need to know what they care about, i.e. what they expect to see & hear, how they perceive and how important that is to their work.

Communication always makes demands on recipients; to become somebody, to do something, to act accordingly or to believe something and so forth. Information plays a vital role in communication processes, however, communication may not always be dependent on information; indeed the most perfect communication may be purely a shared experience (Drucker 2007). Managers need to create a comfortable environment that allows employees to have a hesitation free communication practice for the shared outcomes. It must encourage free protocols of communications in the organisation, both horizontally and vertically.

- Human relations inside the organisation

Managers and employees of all levels need to maintain good relationships in order to ensure pleasant work environment. As specialists, they need to focus on their own task and their relationship with others regarding the tasks. Therefore their relationship is productive (Kingston 2008).

Creative thinking is less likely to occur from individual genius acts than from a blend of different types of thinking (Bilton 2012). Therefore personal relationship, free communication and teamwork are very important in advertising agencies, where “creative thinking” is the core product. For media companies in general, team work is especially very important, since media products are generally results of different units of production and the different units are run by different project managers and their teams. It is very important to keep up with the other complimentary units and all the team members.

- Managerial Hierarchy/ Control :

Organisations do two things to exercise control- that is to coordinate and to motivate its members. (1) It increases the number of managers it uses to monitor, evaluate and reward employees. (2) It increases the number of levels in its managerial hierarchy. Therefore it increases vertical differentiation and gives the organisation direct, face to face control over its members (Jones 2001).

Management of media companies is somehow very different and challenging compared to other business organisations. Since it largely relies on creative people, who tend to be hard to manage, who don't care much about the profitability and business perspectives, therefore media companies require more networked and flat structure with an open flow of communication rather than strict hierarchy (Drucker 2007) while at the same time it's important to keep in mind that boundaries and constraints are essential part of creative processes (Bilton 2012).

Figure 1 illustrates that, from the strategic level to the operational level of the agency, the three key units of production (strategic planning, creative and account) are tied together with multiple lines of communications during the entire process of developing the final outputs. While the “Traffic” unit is active only in the operational level bridging the creative and the account

division. Professional identity, interpersonal relationships, communication flow and the managerial control plays fundamental roles for the effective functionality of the agency. The next section will describe the theoretical base for the framework.

## **4. Theories**

## **4. Theory (s)**

This chapter discusses the theories that were taken under the consideration while developing the conceptual framework for the study. The essential goal of this thesis is, to investigate the inter-departmental communication processes inside the case firm and its impact on the final creative outputs. Therefore, keeping “communication” and “creativity” in focus, I have considered theories from the following areas:

### **4.1 Organisational creativity theories**

- Creativity & organisational creativity
- Creative organisation
- Boundary spanning in creative process

### **4.2 Organisational communication theories**

- Coordination & interaction
- Inter-departmental communication and organisational performance
- Conflict and communication

## **4.1 Organisational creativity theories**

### **4.1. a. Creativity and organisational creativity**

Creativity refers to the generation of something new, yet useful (Stein 1963; West, Kover & Caruana 2008). The novelty is related to innovativeness (Amabile 1988) and the usefulness is measured by its acceptance and value to the broader audience. In advertising, the creativity of an idea is judged on how positively others respond to it (Armbruster 1974; Till & Black 2005; West et al. 2008) as well as on artistic novelty (Reid & Rotfeld 1976)

According to Christina Oberg (2012), “creativity” is seen as a competence expected by organisational members. In addition to describing it as a competence, researchers often consider how an organisation constitutes the environment supporting the creativity of individuals (Oldham & Cummings 1996). Creativity in advertising can be explained from three different

perspectives – People, Place and Process- thus indicating that creativity has a personal skill, a contextual and a process dimension (Sasser & Koslow 2008).

Organisational contexts impose a special set of conditions on creativity. Group support, organisational encouragement, freedom and sufficient resources positively impact creativity (Amabile et al. 1996); Andriopoulos (2001) describes how an organisation may support the creativity of individuals in terms of organisational climate, organisational culture, resources, skills and structure.

Organisations are highly embedded with social contexts and media works tend to happen in complicated organisational surroundings. Social factors exert strong influence on the capability and the capacity for exercising creativity (Lowe & Virta 2016). Thus, from operational perspective, the concept of “Organisational Creativity” can be useful (Zhou & Styhre & Sundgren 2005, Shalley 2009, Mumford 2012) in ad agencies. This has been described as an “interactionist” or “Social- constructivist” approach and assumes that most people are capable of creativity in variable degrees if given the right tasks and under the right circumstances (Küng 2008).

There are some specific issues related to creativity in an organisational context (Woodman, Sawyer & Griffin 1993). Organisational environment implies a certain degree of managerial authority, formalisation, and standardisation as a part of the enactment of a shared understanding, stability and trust among the key internal and external stakeholders (Smith 2006). Often creativity is seen as being driven by individuals with discomfort with too much control and structure, as a result; it’s believed that “Creativity” is hard to control by managerial structures. However, sets of mechanisms can provide organizations with the options to enrich their creative journey to the mountainside (Patterson 2011).

Some argue that creativity is best left to informal process (Burgelman 1983, Augsdorfer 2008) while others claim that organisational conditions (structural and social arrangements) can actively stimulate creative processes (Kanter 2000, Shalley & Gilson 2004).

#### **4.1. b. Creative organisation**

Creative organisations tolerate diversity, complexity and contradictions (Bilton 2012). Factors that are most likely to be influential in a creative organisation include : interaction patterns



among employees; the degree of trust among the team members, the design of incentive, appraisal and reward systems, political issues related to creative decision making, availability of resources and the history and culture of the organisation (Ford & Gloria 1995). According to Gary Steiner (1971), creative organisations are likely to have the following characteristics:

- It prefers open channels of communication and encourages ad hoc approaches: anonymous communications, blind votes etc. Comprises ad hoc devices: Brainstorming, idea units absolved of other responsibilities
- Follows objective and fact based approach: ideas evaluated by their merits, not by status of originator
- It has heterogeneous personnel policy that includes unusual types and allows eccentricity

It should facilitate environment that nurtures creative thinking and allows liberty to share ideas no matter how unreal it may seem (Steiner 1971). Creative organisations need to be flexible while controlling entrepreneurial risk, but provide the freedom to search for new knowledge through learning and experimentation. The original output will be the outcome of internal processes of communication (Patterson 2011).

According to Cameron Ford (1995) critical elements of a creative organisation are its domains (markets, industry associations etc.) the systems that interpret these domains, the system that acquires the needed knowledge and required skills for creative action.

#### **4.1. c. Boundary spanning in creative processes**

Some research addresses “boundary spanning” at group or team level. The term is conceptualized as an aggregated, team level phenomenon; therefore it is concerned with the team and the external environment that enables the team to meet its overall goals (Joshi et al. 2009).

Literature builds on an increasing recognition of the effect of interdependence between creative teams and other organisational units on organisational performance (Ancona & Caldwell 1992). Research suggests that the boundary spanning activities can be a crucial predictor of different organisational outcomes such as knowledge sharing, innovativeness, with the flow of communication or knowledge mediating between boundary spanning behaviour and performance (Joshi et al. 2009)

Since this thesis particularly focuses on inter-department interaction and communication, it will review the literature on team level boundary spanning activities inside organisations. Team level literature often describes boundary spanning activities in relation to the strategies used by teams for optimizing their performance (Ancona 1990). In this study I considered the application of boundary spanning theories inside organisational boundaries and we will take into account two crucial activities. *First*, creating a shared identity and common perspective among team members, and *second*, combining and integrating ideas across different fields (Andersen, Kragh & Lettl 2012).

Inclusion of team members from different background in a creative team can enhance team performance and increase levels of innovation (Ratcheva 2009). Differences in skills and experiences mean that members of different backgrounds have different understandings of the tasks to be performed; in order to stimulate the benefits that can arise from differences, managers must to work to integrate these different understandings (Bechky 2003). Facilitating interpersonal interaction among teams can increase knowledge integration because more and closer interaction breeds interpersonal trust, greater openness, and a willingness to engage in dialogue (Jarvenpaa & Leidner 1999).

## **4.2 Organisational communication theories:**

### **4.2. a. Interaction and Coordination**

In interaction, individuals complement each other and need to be coordinated. Co-ordination refers to how activities are organised and co-organised within a company (Öberg 2012).

Referring to the risk of conflict between various departments in an organisation, Konijnendijk (2002) shows that there are coordination issues to consider in the internal development of competence (cf. Biemans, MakovecBrenčič, & Malshe 2010) and Chen (2006) suggests that in creative processes, co-ordination may depend on how individuals choose to interact , however it's based on available resources, goals and rules as well that are formulated by the parties involved (Håkansson 1982, Nordhaug 1998; Ford, Gadde, Håkansson, & Snehota 2003).

“Coordination” can be interpreted as disciplined or routine practice while “interaction” on the other hand is more casual in nature, which involves closeness among the participants.

The literature on creativity suggests that, ties between individuals should be loose (Hargadon & Bechky 2006, Smith 2006) and creative processes are stimulated by differences of competences of individuals (Woodman et al. 1993).

Figure 2 illustrates that every individual’s contribution is important for the completion of the output. The jigsaw puzzle represents the unique skill sets, ideas or perceptions coming from different individuals participating in a creative process.

Each and every tile is essential in a jigsaw game to form the final picture. In the similar way when a creative output is developed, it includes all the unique inputs from the creative individuals. During the creative process the team tries out different ways of arranging the ideas skills or concepts that best serves the purpose and eventually leads to the final product.

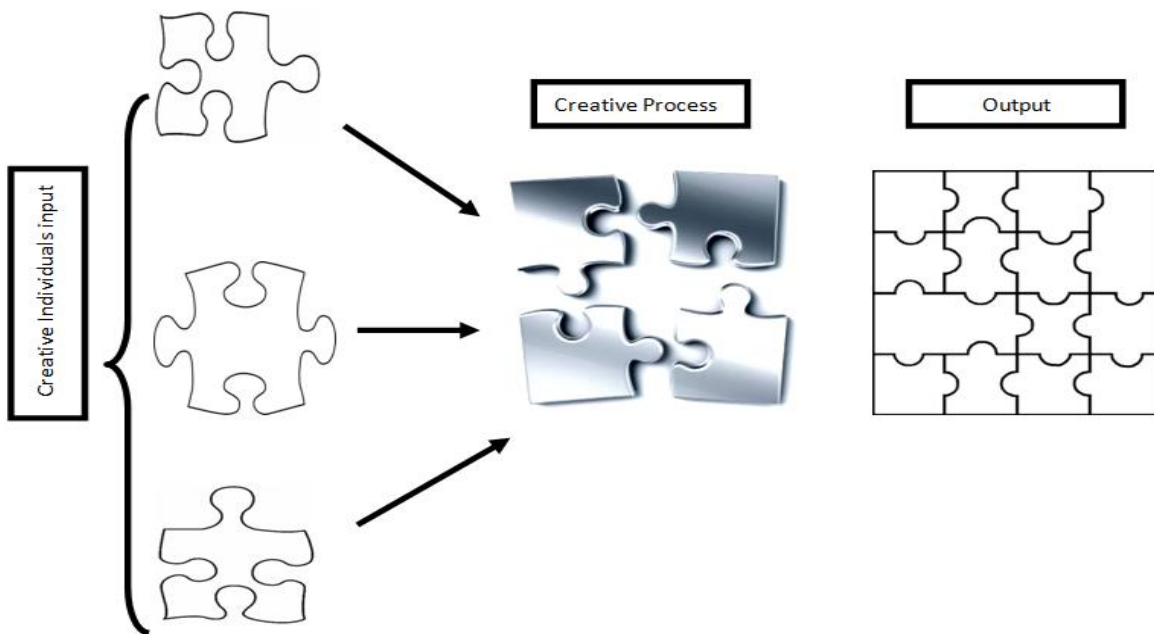


Fig 2: The final output resulting from shared work of different creative individuals with unique skills collaborating in inter-organisational level (Author’s own).

There are persistent and consistent differences in individual creativity (Steiner 1971) and every enterprise is composed of people with different skills and knowledge doing many different kinds

of work, it must be built on communication (Drucker 2001). Studies suggest that close interaction, communication and overlaps of competences can enhance learning in the organisation (Håkansson, Havila and Pederson 1999) and improve the quality of outputs (Håkansson & Waluszewski 2002, Granovetter 2005; Waluszewski, Hadjikhani & Baraldi 2009; Cameron, Moizer, & Pettinicchio 2010).

#### **4.2. b. Inter-departmental communication and organisational performance**

Organisational communication has been defined by various scholars. According to Bovee and Thill (2000) it's a process of exchanging knowledge and opinions in the organisation. Argenti (2003) suggests, it is "creating a positive atmosphere for all employees of organisation". Orsini (2000) describes it as the full range of ways that people communicate with each other within the organisation. According to Kalla (2005) it is as all formal and informal communication taking place internally at all levels of an organisation.

Internal communication inside an organisation is about developing and nurturing relationships among individuals and groups, working at different levels in different areas of specialisation (Frank & Brownell 1989). It is said to be a process that integrates different roles, to develop and embrace groups and organisations (Durgun 2006). The fundamental role of internal communication is to "build and nourish employee relations, establishing trust, providing timely and reliable information and thereby contributing to general motivation (Dolphin 2005)".

So, internal communication is all about exchanging, sharing and generating ideas and knowledge that leads to better understandings of relationships among groups and individuals which makes a positive working environment in the organisation. Inter-departmental communication" plays a vital role in an organisations success (Chaffee & Tierney 1985).

Lack of communication among departments occurs when everyone involved believes that they are too busy to inform, update and question others; they have their own goals and objectives to accomplish in a timely manner (Diamond 2000) and they consider communication as hindrance to their performance. It happens because withholding information can give certain power, advantages or even security, it happens because some people find it hard to express themselves as they are shy and it also happens because there are not enough channels or the right kinds of channels etc.

Research shows that communication has a direct relation with several organisational outcomes, such as employees commitment, performance, social responsibility behaviours and satisfaction; ineffective communication might lead to many negative workplace outcomes like anxiety, workplace frustration, low commitment job loss intent and absenteeism etc (Miller et al. 1990, Rodwell et al. 1998, Malmelin 2007, Bastien 1987) and as a consequence it leaves adverse effect on employees efficiency (Zhang & Agarwal 2009).

The purpose of internal communication is to nurture a common organisational goal among all the employees and make them feel that their contribution is absolutely crucial for the organisational outcomes, by enhancing collaboration among individuals and groups functioning in different inter-related departments. Without effective communication there is no efficiency of an organisation (Demirtas 2010). Employees working in a supportive environment results in enhanced employees' commitment and increased job satisfaction, contributing to the organisation's success (Tosun 2009).

#### **4.2. c. Conflict and communication:**

Conflict and communication are very dependent on each other in a strange way (Hawes & Smith 1973, Ruben 1978); many conflicts are originated from a lack of knowledge or information from both parties, regarding particular events holding their common interest. On the other hand, most conflict resolution approaches are very reliant on communication. Effective managers should make sure that conflict doesn't sabotage the free flow of communication necessary for creativity, good decision-making and implementation (Runde & Flanagan 2008).

Antagonistic relationships are defined in terms of inter-dependency and goal compatibility (Hawes & Smith 1973, Putnam & Pool 1987). Conflicting goals and interests lead to conflicting behaviour and this behaviour differ based on the amount, frequency and type of communication required for the task (Nicotera 1995). According to the assumption of Hawes & Smith (1973), conflict results from insufficient or ineffective communication, and then communication itself becomes the panacea for resolving or managing conflict. Organisational conflict is ubiquitous. Theory suggests several varieties of conflicts within an organisation - inter-personal, inter-departmental, power struggles of management level are few of the common types.

*Interpersonal Conflicts* - Some people don't mix-plain and simple. There doesn't have to be any prior incident, history or personal reasons for them to have disputes. People with diverse backgrounds, personalities and philosophies often come together at work place. Perhaps outside work they would not socialize or interact; if they weren't forced to deal with one another, they would be polite and friendly as acquaintances. But when forced to work together to achieve goals or to share workspace on a consistent basis, friction may arise (Feigenbaum 2016).

*Role Conflicts* - Some conflicts between employees are caused by circumstances related to their roles and duties, which have nothing to do with personalities. When it is unclear who is responsible for what area of a project or task, conflict can occur. It is imperative to spell out the roles and responsibilities of all the players clearly and agreed upon by everyone involved before the project is started (Sullivan 2016).

*Inter-group Conflicts* - Similar to role conflict, inter-group conflict usually occurs because of the roles and functions of teams and departments. Both are just trying to do their jobs, but somehow run up against each other (Feigenbaum 2016). The result is a tension through neither party's fault. This is considered a problematic conflict requiring resolution by mediation or managerial decision. When the conflict becomes part of the company culture, it becomes very destructive to the health of the organization and the employees.

According to modern theories on organizational conflict, organizations are left with a fairly limited set of choices: avoidance, smoothing, dominance or power intervention, confrontation and compromise (Feigenbaum 2016).

## **5. Research Design**

## **5. Research Design:**

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the research process including its methodology, participants, instruments, data collection and analysis procedure. The author has chosen Asiatic MCL, as the case firm, keeping the spotlight on its creative operations and inter-departmental interaction processes.

The rationale for selecting a particular firm for this qualitative case study is that, it provides the best opportunities to gather most relevant data from variety of sources (Strauss & Corbin 1990, Baxter & Jack 2008), and allows exploration and understanding of complex issues within specific contexts (Yin 2003, Zainal 2007). The aim is not to generalize, but to develop an understanding of the contextual phenomenon.

### **5.1 Research Question(s)**

It is a pre-requisite to develop an understanding about advertising industry and how the agencies function, when the research is focused on an advertising firm. A series of research questions as followed has been developed to construct the questionnaires, to conduct the interviews, to transcribe and to analyse.

- Who are the key players in the agency?
- How the role of creative team is described?
- How the role of account management team is described?
- What is the role of management in the success of an agency?
- What disputes occur among the two departments (Creative & Account)?
- What management mechanism is used to mediate inter- department conflicts?
- How is the communication flow managed in the agency?
- How does the internal communication affect the agency outputs?

In order to understand the importance of interaction processes in an ad agency's creative output, it is essential to know the players in the interaction and learn their roles. The above mentioned



questions were asked to analyse the circumstances, to investigate causes of the problems and to generate solutions by examining the real life events and considering different perspectives of managers and employees involved in the process.

## **5.2 Methodology**

The case study is considered as a robust research method particularly when a holistic, in-depth investigation is required (Zainal 2007) and qualitative data provides a rich and detailed picture about why people act in certain ways in certain organisational settings and how they feel about these actions. According to Yin (2003) the qualitative case study method serves best when the study wants to answer “How” and “Why” questions and cover contextual conditions relevant to the case phenomenon.

In the research of how inter-department interaction processes in an ad agency affect its creative outputs, the case study method with a qualitative approach seemed most suitable. This is an empirical study based on a case, which follows an exploratory approach. The method was chosen by the author because it provides the researcher with the opportunity to explore a real life phenomenon through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions, and their relationships and compare the experience with the theories (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, Yin 2003). This study investigates an organisation’s internal processes and managerial actions which involve high degree of human interactions and participations in the content creation and decision making process.

An ad agency named Asiatic MCL located in Dhaka, Bangladesh was chosen for the research. The reasons that influenced the choice were: 1. In terms of experience, it is the oldest ad agency of the country, 2. In terms of services, it has been offering variety of communication solutions to its wide range of clients, 3. In terms of structure, it follows the international JWT format with multiple fully functioning departments specialising in different roles, 3. In terms of employees, it has around 150 employees (Source: Human Resource Database, Asiatic MCL 2016). Moreover, a structural change concerning the management of departmental communications during the research period triggered the motivation to observe the implantation and the after-effects of the change.

### **5.3 Data Collection**

The case study method encourages various sources for data collection; this ensures that the issue is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood (Baxter & Jack 2008).

Data collection & investigation was performed through multiple visits to a renowned ad agency of Bangladesh. The company approved the access of information that is not publicly accessible and allowed intimate observations of firm level activities.

In-depth interviews along with focus group discussions and observations had been chosen as the primary data sources for this study. Other data sources include company's official website, press releases, newsletters, newspaper/magazine articles and internal documentations such as company archives, credentials and human resource records; financial documents such as annual reports or revenue files were not disclosed by the firm.

Individual interviews are said to be one of the best sources of information while trying to understand the character of actions taken place in highly embedded social contexts, such as organisations (Mantree 2008). Interviews are purposive conversations with the informants where the interviewer is the conductor and the observer of the process (Bertrand & Hughes 2005). The informants are experts in their particular area of knowledge and understanding and can provide insight on the nature of problems and give recommendations for solutions.

Focus group interviews are different from the individual interviews, not only logistically but also in underlying principles (Bertrand & Hughes 2005). Group dynamics work, so that respondents often become caught up in the discussion and stimulate other members to contribute, sometimes offering information that is very useful (Berger 1991). It can add different perspectives to the study, how people react in a group setting and one to one setting, how their feelings/opinions can be shaped by the experience of discussing the subject with others. For this study, the ideal size of the group varied from 4 to 5 members and chosen from a homogenous background (e.g. group of designers, group of account managers etc).

Observations are excellent supplement to other methods, particularly surveys and interviews. In a research context, observation is more than just looking rather its purposeful looking and

recording the results (Berger 1991). There are ways of observing organisations unobtrusively however it is challenging in the case of media firms. For this study, the researcher adopted the naturalistic observation technique, which involves studying the spontaneous behaviour of participants in natural surroundings; the researcher simply records what they see in whatever way they can (McLeod 2015). The observer decided in advance what types of activities or events she is interested in (creative processes, conflict situations etc.) and recorded the occurrences. All the other events were disregarded in order to stay focused on the research area. The researcher kept a daily log for the activities for two whole weeks prior conducting the interviews.

All the interviews and discussions were performed in Bengali (the official language of the country), and afterwards translated to English by the researcher. They were conducted face to face and tape recorded with the consent of the participants. The purpose of audio taping was to ease the process of transcription and it also allows the researcher to observe the stimulus factors during the interview session such as the body language & eye contact. Identity of all the participants remained confidential as promised.

## **5.4 Sampling Technique**

For this study, a purposive sampling technique was chosen by the researcher, which is popularly used in qualitative research projects. A core characteristic of non-probability sampling techniques is that samples are selected based on the subjective judgment of the researcher, rather than random selection (Lund 2012). Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling technique that sets criteria for representation of key attributes when planning the initial data collection and relies on researcher's judgment for selecting the units (e.g. people, cases/organisations, events) being studied (Hood 2007).

While selecting the sample, the following circumstances had been taken under consideration:

- ✓ The length of their work period in the particular organisation being studied
- ✓ Their respective positions in the firm and their roles in the creative processes & decision making
- ✓ Their availability and willingness to participate

The length of their work period, their position in the firm, the area of their expertise and their roles and responsibilities were prioritised while designing the sample, keeping in mind that the richness of their knowledge & experience and the differences in their perceptions & ways of thinking can add insightful dynamics to the research.

Thirteen key informant interviews were conducted for this research; while seven of the informants hold mid-level managerial positions and the rest of the interviewees perform content development level tasks. The length of the interviews varied from 90 minutes to 120 minutes. The interviews were held in the office premise ensuring full privacy of the interviewer and the interviewees.

Five focus group discussions were conducted with homogeneous groups of people (i.e. people with similar field of work or backgrounds). For example, a focus group either included five creative employees or five account managers, not both of them together. The average length of the group discussions were around 120 minutes. Few observation sessions were performed preceding the actual interviews in order to strengthen the research, where the researcher observed organisational processes and participated in events as an inactive member.

This is an exploratory case study that doesn't allow conclusions to be generalised, however it is useful in qualitative research where the results are not necessarily intended to be generalised but to develop deep understanding regarding a specific contexts (Bertrand & Hughes 2005).

## **5.5 Instrument Design**

Instruments for the data collection were developed following the general interview guide approach, which allows flexibility but still is more structured than the informal conversational interviews (Gall, Gall & Borg 2003). According to McNamara (2009), the strength of the general interview guide approach is the ability of the researcher; the approach ensures that the same general areas of information are collected from each interviewee, it provides more focus than the conversational approach, but still allows a degree of freedom and adaptability in getting information from the interviewees (Turner 2010).

The questionnaires for the interviews were semi-structured and open ended. It roughly followed a common set of questions in order to avoid biasness; however the order of questioning was more flexible keeping the participants' spontaneity in priority because all the respondents may not consistently answer the same questions the same way. One of the obvious issues with this type of interview is the lack of consistency in the way research questions are posed because researchers can interchange the way s/he poses them (McNamara 2009); on the other hand, its flexible and fluid structure organised around a set of open- ended questions that address key themes of the research, which allows the researcher to include emergent questions from the dialogue (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006).

The questions were carefully worded and delivered to the audiences. Additional questions for clarifications, elaborations and probing were included in the schedule as well. The questions were open ended allowing the participants to open up about their experiences and opinions.

## **5.6 Analysis Procedure**

The analysis strategy adopted for this study was a combination of inductive and deductive approach. The deductive approach aims at testing a theory, which usually begins with a set of assumptions and uses research questions to narrow down the scope of the study. On the other hand, the inductive approach is focused on exploring new phenomenon or looking at previously studied phenomena from a different perspective, and concerned with generating new knowledge emerging from the data (Gabriel 2013).

In this research a conceptual framework was developed on the basis of current research literature, assumptions and observations (Teddlie & Tashakkori 1998), which can be highly inductive but at the same time a set of research questions were also used which is a deductive strategy. At different phases of the research cycle, researchers are likely to use both inductive and deductive styles simultaneously (Teddlie & Tashakkori 1998, Wengraf 2001).

For this study, data transcripts included interview transcripts, observation field notes and other supplementary documents such as journals, websites, articles etc. The audio tapes were listened multiple times during the transcription process and the data transcripts were analysed carefully

with constant comparison with previously transcribed interviews. The participant's body language, eye contact, intonations and other non-verbal signals were taken under consideration while taking the notes during the interviews, discussions and observation sessions

The data transcripts were analysed following the "Coding manual for qualitative researchers (Saldana 2009)". The analysis process started with developing main themes and allocating codes to the emerged themes. The first order coding was conducted separately for each unique source of information (interview transcripts, report etc.); at this stage the process can range from a single word to a full sentence or even an entire page of texts (Saldana 2009). The second order coding process seeks patterns and narrows down the data and compares with the theories (Saldana 2009). At this stage, the cross sourcing approach by Hatch (2002) was taken in order to look for patterns and seek connections among the codes. Patterns can be categorised by:

- ✓ Similarities (things happen the same way)
- ✓ Differences (they happen in different ways)
- ✓ Frequency (they happen often or seldom)
- ✓ Sequence (they happen in certain order)
- ✓ Correspondence (they happen in relation to other activities or events)
- ✓ Causation (one appears to cause another) (Hatch 2002, p. 155)

The second order codes led to emerging sub-themes and empirical findings.

## **6. Case**

## **6. Case**

### **6.1 Overview of the advertising industry worldwide**

Advertising is a complex and substantial industry with great economic significance worldwide. Broadly speaking, since the 1980s, most advertising agencies have leaned towards a common structure. In the past, each individual agency offered a variety of different marketing services under a single roof; however, there has been a dramatic change in the landscape over the past 30 years (adbrands.net 2016). Large agencies turned their more specialised in-house departments as separate agencies in their own right. Media planning and buying departments were the pioneers to become standalone units in the mid-1980s.

Now the industry consists of different types of companies specializing in different related areas; combining all those companies the industry takes shape. Some of the most important members of advertising industry are: Holding companies (conglomerates), advertising agencies, media agencies, marketing firms, PR firms etc.

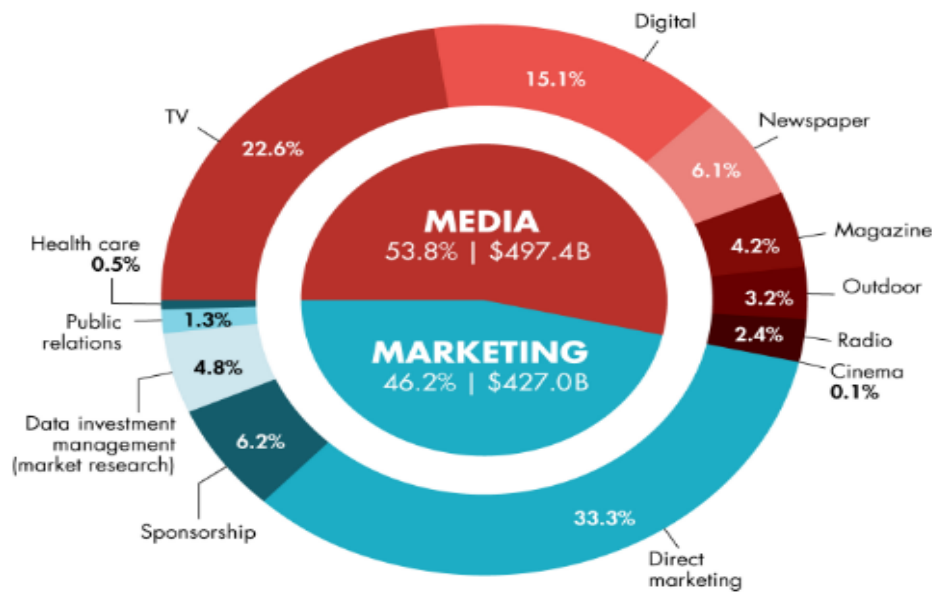
While the number of individual agencies offering different services increased as a result of post-80s "unbundling", ownership of those same agencies concentrated dramatically. Massive consolidation within the industry led to the creation at the top end of the market of a small group of major international holding companies, each of whom controls a large number of separate agencies. There are still independent owner-operated agencies, but in fewer numbers than ever before, and most are very small comparing to the group-owned brands (adbrands.net 2016).

This thesis concentrates only on the area of advertising agencies; therefore we will avoid details and briefly describe the general industry structure.

The media and marketing expenditure on advertisement worldwide was estimated total \$924.4 billion in 2015 by Group M. (groupm.com). GroupM forecasts that the spending will reach \$965 billion by the end of 2016, exceeding 2015's spending by 4.4% (Johnson 2015).



Global Expenditure on Advertising in 2015:



Pie 1: Global Advertising Expenditure (Source: WPPs Group M (groupm.com 2016))

The mighty industry is dominated by only few holding companies. Table 1 illustrates the industry leaders and their global revenue from 2014. Currently the top 3 largest advertising conglomerates are: WPP, Omnicom and Publicis (adbrands.net 2016).

Holding Company	Revenue (2014)	Key Brands				
		Creative	Media	Digital	Marketing	Other
WPP (U.K)	\$ 19.0 Bil	Y&R, JWT, Grey, Ogily & Mather	Mediacom, Mindshare, Maxus	24/7 Real Media, Xaxis	Wunderman	Kantar, Millward Brown
Omnicom (U.S.A)	\$ 15.3 Bil	BBDO, DDB, TBWA	OMD, PHD, Novus	Organic, Tribal, Critical Mass	Rapp, Proximity	Interbrand
Publicis (France)	\$ 9.6 Bil	Leo Burnett, Shaatchi & Shaatchi	ZenithOptimedia, Mediavest	Digitas, Razorfi	ARC	MSL & L
Interpublic (U.S.A)	\$ 7.5 Bil	McCann-Erickson, Lowe, Mullen	Initiative, UM, Pan media	R/Ga, Cadream	MRM, DraftFCB	-
Dentsu (Japan)	\$ 6.0 Bil	Dentsu, McGarry Bowen	Dentsu	360, Steak	-	-

Table 1: Top Holding Companies (Source: adage.coverleaf.com 2015)

In the advertising industry worldwide, there are roughly 3 layers in its structure:



Holding companies control the large international agencies and the large agencies acquire the local regional based firms. However there are also independent local firms that are not affiliated with any global networks.

In our case, Asiatic MCL was a regional based local firm of Bangladesh which is now an affiliate of the large international company named JWT, while JWT also has a parent holding company, which is WPP.

### ***Holding Companies:***

Sitting at the top of the industry pyramid, are a small number of holding companies. The top five major groups are: WPP, Omnicom, Publicis, Interpublic and Dentsu- each of whom controls a huge number of different agency brands spread all over the globe (See table- 1). Generally these companies don't involve themselves too much into day to day marketing operations, but works with its subsidiary businesses to encourage intra-group synergy and to develop strategy.

### ***Large international companies:***

*Advertising Agencies:* Traditionally, advertising agencies come up with the core idea for a marketing campaign and then create a series of advertisements which address that idea across different media. They tend to specialise in what is called above-the-line marketing: ads which address a mass market through the four major media of television, print, radio and outdoor (posters, billboards). However, the surge of digital marketing (formerly considered below-the-line), has changed the nature of the traditional advertising agency. Increasingly these companies are being pushed by their clients to provide excellence in digital marketing as well as the more established mass market media (adbrands.net).

*Media Agencies:* Media agencies serve the process of delivering the message created by an advertising agency via the media. There are, broadly speaking, two aspects to this: Media Planning & Buying. Media planning involves deciding where (on which TV or digital channels, in which newspapers etc) the advertisement should be placed in order to achieve the best impact on its intended audience (adbrands.net). Media buying is the process of negotiating with individual media owners (such as broadcasters or publishers) over availability and price.

Although some advertising agencies (standalone full-service ones) still offer media services in-house, most have spun out their media departments as an entirely separate business with its own global network operating alongside the main creative agency. In simple terms, this means that clients pay separately for the creation of advertising and for the booking of media space (adbrands.net). As a result of the consolidation process, this part of the market is now dominated by global networks, such as Mindshare, Carat or Starcom, Mediavest.

*Marketing Services:* This is the term generally understood to denote anything other than advertising in the major media, and is often described as below-the-line marketing. It comes in many different forms, each of which demands a more specialised, often more technically complex, set of skills. These include direct marketing, sales promotion, interactive marketing, public relations, and so on. In simple terms, direct marketing involves any form of advertising which communicates with its target audience one-to-one, for example through individually targeted direct mail (adbrands.net).

### **6.1.1 Basic advertising agency functions**

Ad agency professional in different departments (e.g. copywriting, graphic design, account management) tend to express different opinion about advertising creativity (Ensor, Cottam, & Band 2001). Creativity is apparent not just in copywriting or art direction but also in innovative use of media and alternative approaches to planning, research and business ideas. The rigid distinction between the creatives in one hand and the “uncreative” manager on the other hand is an illusion (Puttnam 2006). The truth is all agency professionals- not just art directors or writers are premier members of “The Creative Class” coined by Richard Florida (Florida 2012).

According to Chris Bilton, advertising agencies are based on creativity while at the same time being a multi-billion dollar industry it must have clearly defined lines of corporate responsibility and control connecting employees, managers, directors and other stakeholders. The majority of agencies still follow the typical divisional structure consisting client servicing (aka. account management), creative department and a planning department.

Creative processes are typically structured within clearly defined roles and relationships in advertising agencies. The commercial realities are never eradicated from the creative process; they are simply met by separate group of people known as account executives. The stereotypical division between the “creatives” and “suits” exists in the advertising agency’s separation of creative and managerial roles (Bilton 2012).

Account management acts as the managerial liaison between the agency and the clients. Along with their team the account manager acts as both the salesperson for the agency and as the client's representative within the agency (Fletcher 2010). Playing managerial roles in creative processes can be difficult and demanding; without effective management it is very unlikely to unlock true creativity.

The creative department simply creates the contents. Departmentalisation of creativity is necessary in order to unleash real creativity in a routine basis. Creative department generally comprises several key members - creative directors, art directors, copywriters, graphic designers, visual artists, web developers etc. In most agencies visual designers, writers or directors are termed as creative staffs. While some agencies such as Crispin Porter and Bogusky use titles like “content developer” and “content managers” instead of creatives and account managers (Williams 2010).

In late 1960s, two UK advertising agencies BoaseMassimi Pollitt (BMP) and J. Walter Thompson (now JWT) started the strategic planning division. In BMP saw the planner’s role more as a strategist working with the account manager and the creative department on creative strategy while JWT gave much broader role to the planner including target segmentation, media strategy, brand positioning as well as creative strategy. Modern advertising account planning began to take shape in UK in 1970’s and later in US in 1980’s (Kelly & Jugenheimer 2010).

Traffic department is a relatively new department in advertising agencies and still considered as a luxury that small agencies cannot afford or do not essentially need. The need of a traffic manager arises when the number of clients increases significantly and the larger the agency becomes (Sidhu 2011). Traffic managers work closely with members of the account management and creative teams to ensure that work flows efficiently through the agency from the initial brief to the point where it is released to the media. They are responsible for managing the flow of work to ensure that ads are completed on time for publication or broadcast, they also ensure that ads are completed within budget (Linton 2016).

### **6.1.2 Basic advertising agency terminologies**

In order to understand the creative work process of an advertising firm, it is essential to learn about the specific agency terms. Here are some terms that are frequently used in advertising and the interpretations are different in this particular field.

#### ***Account:***

In Advertising “account” simply refers to the client- a particular product of a particular brand, which the agency is responsible to promote (Fletcher 2010). Of course, an agency takes care of multiple brands simultaneously and that is why it has multiple account management executives who are in charge of their own respective brands.

#### ***Brief:***

A brief originates from the clients end, it’s a formal document that describes the problem and how the client wants the agency to solve them. It can be a new product that requires a launching campaign, it can be a product that needs to boost its sales, and it can be a new addition to an existing product in the market that needs promotion and so on. In a brief the client describes their product, their problem, and specifies how they want the agency to solve it. Of course it can be plain and simple, asking the agency to offer them suitable solutions.

#### ***De-brief:***

Account management team receives the client brief and they re-write the brief for the internal parties. This process is called the de-briefing or more simply put de-coding the clients brief into

the agency language. The primary job of an account management executive is to read the brief carefully, discuss with the clients, try to understand their needs and then de-brief to the creative and the strategic planning team. It is very common that the client is unsure about what kind of communications solutions they are asking for, because they don't know what's the best way, and that is exactly why they came to an advertising firm.

### ***Brainstorming:***

This is not simply a session of sitting together and trying to think. Asiatic MCL uses the techniques based on brainstorming experiences with JWT, Leo Burnett, and other world-class creative organisations. The leader usually has a checklist before it begins:

- ✓ Set a time frame for the session (depending on the case, typically from 30 min to 2 hours).
- ✓ Describe the problem to the participants, and what are they trying to accomplish. Typically, they use a white board and write down the points so that everybody can see.
- ✓ Invite a mix of contributors, participants. Split large groups into teams to compete.
- ✓ Capture all ideas as they flow.
- ✓ Evaluate the ideas, selecting the best and assigning the next steps.

Usually, multiple brainstorming sessions are required for each project. The first brainstorming is generally commanded by the Strategic Planning director.

And after coming up with the “Big Idea” there's another brainstorming session which is led by the Team leader (creative), who leads the brainstorming session with the creative team (visualisers, art directors, copywriters). In this stage, ideas for slogans and taglines are generated and the specific tasks are distributed among the members. Art team and copy team work in mutual coordination. At this point specific

### ***Big Idea:***

As it was mentioned earlier, the Big Ideas are generated through the first brainstorming session that is led by the Strategic planning director. These are advertising ideas that vividly connect with the target audiences in order to create a sustainable competitive advantage for a brand (Nyilasy G, & Reid L. N 2009).

After the De-brief, strategic planning department runs a background research on that particular brand, product and its target audiences, this research also includes analysing the competing products and their promotional strategies. Therefore the purpose is to come up with a new route of ideas that will help the product to stand out and connect to the consumers.

- ✓ Big ideas are strategically and creatively big
- ✓ They must create appeal (execution)
- ✓ They must sell (strategy)
- ✓ Should be easy to remember and simple

***Pitch:***

A pitch is an official presentation performed by the agency to the client. The major difference between the pitch and the other presentations is that a “Pitch” is presented to a new client for a new account. This means that there will be other advertising agencies preparing their pitch for the same client. Companies request advertising pitches to multiple agencies so that they can select the most suitable proposal from a number of advertising agencies.

A crucial part of “Pitch” involves the market research, consumer profile and detail about their product preferences, and the agency explains how its advertising message aligns with the product factors that are rated important by the consumers.

It is important that the agency describes its credentials and state why the firm can meet the campaign requirements. The pitch must state the objectives for the campaign and describe how it will deliver its intended results. According to the World Federation of Advertisers, a successful pitch should demonstrate that an agency can use the marketing budget effectively to create greater value for a brand (Hearst newspaper 2016).

## **6.2 The case firm – Asiatic Marketing Communications Ltd.**

*“We are storytellers. We all have our little stories, each brand has a story, and each person that we’ve touched with our communication is part of our story! Welcome to our story.”*– Asiatic MCL website.

Asiatic group is one of the leading marketing communication firms of Bangladesh. It has been operating in the corporate business environment over the last four decades. Renowned media figures Aly Zaker, Sara Zaker and Asaduzzman Noor are the key executives at Asiatic group and they are also very renowned actors, business people and media personalities of Bangladesh.

It was founded as East Asiatic (now Asiatic), which was one of the pioneers in the field with the firms like Bitopi, and Interspan. They entered the market almost simultaneously in the year 1967 (before independence), when the practice of advertising was too narrow (bangladeshtalks.com 2011). Their clients included giant multinational companies like and British American Tobacco and Lever Brothers Ltd. (now Unilever) which came with wide ranges of products. It has evolved from an advertising agency to a multi-dimensional communications company providing proactive, pragmatic and total communication solutions to a multitude of local, regional and international clients over the years (bangladeshtalks.com 2011). Asiatic 3Sixty is an affiliate of Asiatic, J. Walter Thompson, one of the top global advertising agencies of the world with more than 200 offices in over 90countries (www.jwt.com).

Asiatic group serves with communication solutions that travel beyond the borders of advertising only. It includes broader services such as social communication, events, public relations, corporate relations, direct marketing, formative research and media planning, marketing planning etc. For this reason the firm was renamed as Asiatic 3Sixty that has separate wings specialising in different services. This particular study focuses on advertisement agencies only therefore my case study has been conducted on Asiatic MCL only.

Asiatic MCL solely works with marketing communications, while there are separate agencies that specialize in other areas such as PR, digital solutions, market research, and productions etc. under the umbrella of Asiatic 3Sixty.



### 6.2.1 Brand image and prestige

Asiatic MCL is not only a market leader by its monetary means, but it also has a strong brand image among its clients and general audiences.

It is the only Bangladeshi agency to win two top global awards- one for Nokia in 2009 (Best Market Development Team) and the other is for HSBC in 2010 (Fame Gold Award for Most Innovating Marketing Campaign). The agency's award list also includes 28 Grand Prix and Gold in CommAwards for 8 best brands out of 10 (source-Asiatic credential report 2015).

Besides being admired for its excellence in the area of brand and marketing communications, the agency's chairman and the directors hold a special place of esteem in general audiences mind, because of their dominant contribution in the film and television industry of Bangladesh.

Aly Zaker (Chairman, CEO and Managing Director), Sara Zaker (Deputy Managing Director) and IreshZaker (Executive Director) are not only the senior management of Asiatic MCL but are also renowned actors and media personalities of the country. Aly Zaker received multiple national awards including "Ekushe Padak" the second highest civilian award of Bangladesh, Sara Zaker has also received various national awards for theatre, film and TV performances and she has also received "SrijanShamman" award from India. Here is a brief list of their notable works that gained national and international acclaims (source: Imdb.com):

<b>Sara Zaker</b>	<b>Films</b>	<b>IMDb Rating (Internet Movie Database)</b>	<b>Release place</b>	<b>Year</b>
1.	EmilerGoendaBahini	8.0/10	Bangladesh	1980
2.	NodirNaamModhumoti (Aka. The River Called Modhumoti)	8.2/10	Bangladesh	1996
3.	Shilalipi	-	Bangladesh	2004
4.	Ontorjatra (Aka. Homeland)	7.1/10	Bangladesh UK	2005

<b>Aly Zaker</b>	<b>Films</b>	<b>IMDb Rating (Internet Movie Database)</b>	<b>Release place</b>	<b>Year</b>
1.	NodirNaamModhumoti (Aka. The River Called Modhumoti)	8.2/10	Bangladesh	1996
2.	Lalsalu	-	Bangladesh	2001
3.	Flashback	8.7/10	Bangladesh	2011
	<b>Notable TV work</b>			
1.	AjRobibar (7 episodes)	9.2/10	Bangladesh	1999
2.	Bohubrihi	8.0/10	Bangladesh	1988-1989

<b>Iresh Zaker</b>	<b>Films</b>	<b>IMDb Rating (Internet Movie Database)</b>	<b>Release place</b>	<b>Year</b>
1.	Chorabali	7.5/10	Bangladesh	2012
2.	KajolerDinratri	7.2/10	Bangladesh	2013
3.	ChuyeDile Mon	8.0/10	Bangladesh	2015
4.	Zero Degree	-	Bangladesh	2015

### **6.2.2 Client base, market position and competitors**

Asiatic MCL has a wide range of clients from versatile areas including- corporations, NGOs/ social organisations, non-profit organisations, and government agencies.

Currently the agency holds approximately 45 clients where only 4 clients are fully local and the rest are international brands (source: human resources records 2016).

The agency has been maintaining long term relationships with plenty of high profile international brands including – Nokia (two decades), UNICEF (two decades), Pepsi (four decades), BATB (three decades), Sunsilk (three decades) and Lux (over four decades). It also has long lasting relationships with its local brands, e.g. SMC for two decades (source: Asiatic credential report 2016).

Its other prominent international clients include; Microsoft, Ford, Hero, Shell, Nestle, USAID, HSBC, 7up, Mirinda and Mountain Dew. The local giants such as Pran and Finlays have also been its satisfied clients for years.

The agency usually handles approximately 80 projects per month, which clearly suggest that the work pressure is intensive. These projects vary in their length, complexity, strategic needs and platforms. For example, only one billboard demand from a client is considered as one project, while at the same time an integrated multiplatform marketing campaign demand from another client is also considered as one single project.

Fees used to be based on a percentage of media spend, but in the last three decades the media landscape has changed because of rapid expansion and fragmentation of the industry (adbrands.net 2016). Clients are now moving away from the old school payment system of 15% agency commission and leaning towards negotiated fees. The clients of usually pay in two ways: A continuous payment contract and project based contracts.

*Continuous contracts:* Usually negotiated between the client and the agency for long term purpose. Usually such contracts are as long as one year or at-least few months, where the client agrees to provide all their projects in that particular time frame to the particular agency. These contracts are extendable and are generally prolonged if the clients are happy with the results. Sometimes there is a fee based on a percentage of media spend, but this is largely dying. Sometimes there is an amount of money put aside for time and costs and the Agency manages this time and cost to serve the client (Goodwin 2013).

*Project based contracts:* Often used in smaller agencies or for agencies that do one specific part of the mix, e.g. agency for digital services only or for traditional media services only. However, instead of being a large agency Asiatic MCL also has some clients on this basis. Normally these clients have a scope of work; that comes with an estimate to do that one set job. This estimate is usually based on the people, hours of their work, and their hourly rate. The profit the agency makes comes entirely from the gap between the hourly rates of what they pay people vs. charge out (Goodwin 2013).

Asiatic MCL operates in a densely competitive market, the biggest competitors include: Mediacom, Bitopi Leo Burnett, Ogily& Mather, TBWA-Benchmark, Grey, Unitrend, Interspeed, Adcomm and Madonna (source: Asiatic 3sixty credential report 2016).

### 6.2.3 Internal structure & organisational hierarchy

*Internal structure:* Figure 3 shows both functional units and the support units such as HR & finance; however the focus of the study is on the front end of the company only.

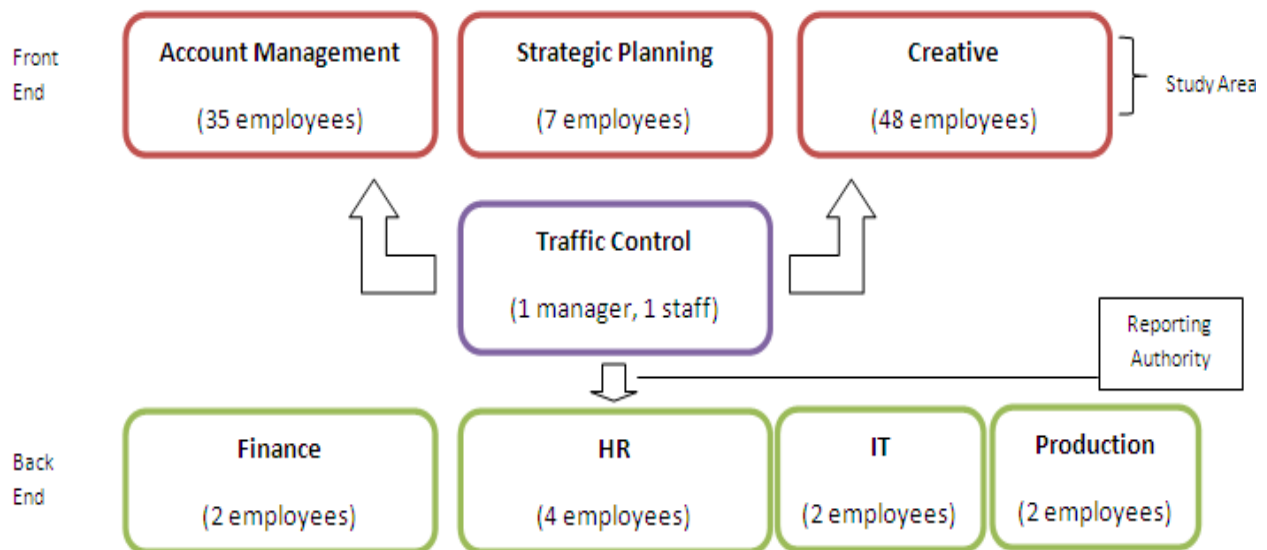


Figure 3: Company structure (Source: Asiatic MCL human resources records 2016)

The account management department deals with clients and coordinates the work of the agency's creative teams. Asiatic MCL has three layers of account management: account directors, associate account directors, and account executives. The department runs by the expertise of 35

account executives, where 10 of them are women. Account directors, report to the agency's top management team, supervise the work of account executives and take responsibility for a group of accounts.

The strategic planning department performs market analysis and research, based on the needs and preferences of the target audiences for a product or service, in order to offer the best solutions to the clients. In smaller agencies, account management executives usually takes care of the strategic planning tasks, while Asiatic MCL appoints specialists in developing advertising and marketing strategies. The department is led by a strategic planning director; with a total work force of 7 executives (2 of them are female).

The creative department transforms strategic ideas into creative contents. The department is led by a creative director and consists of total 48 employees including 8 female staffs working in different positions of art and copy. There are mainly two broad categories in this department: art and copy, where art unit takes care of all the visuals and the copy unit takes care of the texts. Art unit is led by art directors and the copy unit is supervised by associate creative directors. The creative director manages multiple teams working on different accounts.

In March 2015, a small scale department was created in the agency with the purpose of smooth communication management in the creative operations process. The department is led by a creative operations manager (better known as traffic control manager) along with an assistant.

*Organisational hierarchy:*The organisational hierarchy of Asiatic MCL is illustrated in figure 4 with more details. The agency follows a bureaucracy with cross-departmental project teams (project teams include members from different departments) with very strong departmental structure and sense of hierarchy.

In this type of organisations, senior management team cannot handle all the issues that require interdepartmental perspectives and therefore they create a number of project teams and task forces involving the lower level employees of the organisation. The members of the teams tend to see their primary loyalty to their departmental head rather than to the team to which they belong (which aligns with Gareth Morgan's model 2 of organisations 1989).

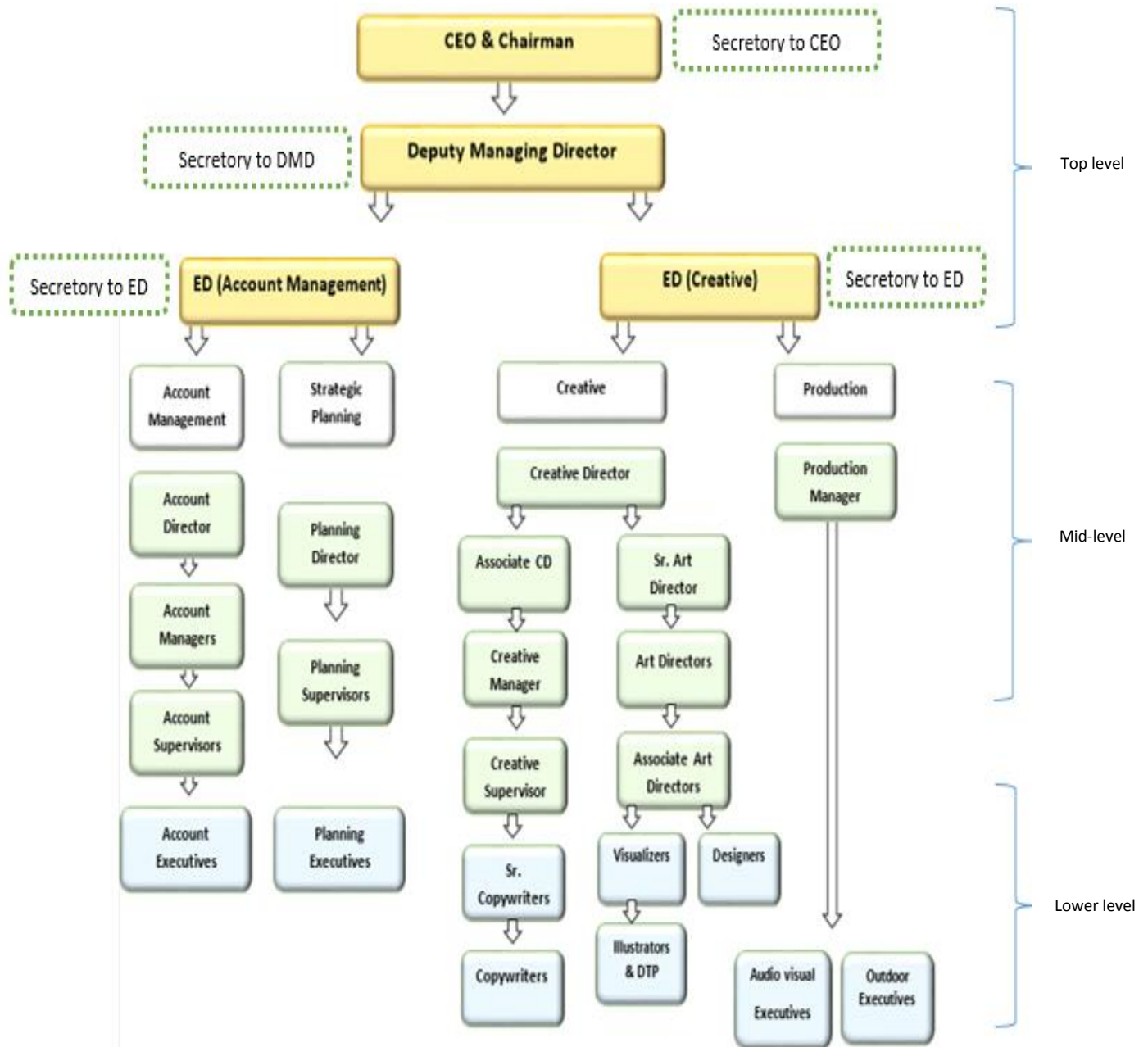


Figure 4: Organisational hierarchy in Asiatic MCL (source: Internal documents)

As we can see in figure 4, Asiatic has a pyramid like structure with few managers at each level. It has roughly five layers in its hierarchy: CEO, managing director, executive directors, department heads, managers, supervisors and executives. However in everyday operations the involvement of the top level management is significantly low, it is usually the executive directors who are the voice of the agency's senior management taking care of the daily operations.

It is very rare for the employees to actually see the CEO and the managing director in the office, because they manage multiple firms (specialising in different areas) under the umbrella of Asiatic 3sixty while Asiatic MCL is merely one of them. The firm apparently has quite old fashioned organisational structure including multiple layers of management with high degree of command and control; which is the antithesis of expected contemporary creative organisation structures. This schema suggests a lot of opportunity for internal clashes, politics and difficulties in communication.

It has 3 major operational departments (creative, account management & strategic planning) for its creative operations ran under two executive directors. Asiatic MCL is one of the very few agencies in Bangladesh that has a strategic planning department, which makes the structure of the agency slightly different from its competitor firms. The presence of the department also signifies the agency's inclination on strategic approach over the creative approach.

The chart includes minor departments such as production, which takes the responsibility of small-scale internal productions and audiovisual works. All the mainstream works are usually performed by the account management, the creative and the strategic planning departments. Although the creative operations are conducted by cross departmental teams (teams include members from different departments) with separate team leaders, the members of the teams hold themselves accountable to their respective department heads. They participate in the meetings as representatives of their departments, they report back to their departmental superiors, and they are aware of that the promotion is largely a departmental affair.

# 7. Findings



## **7. Findings**

In the findings chapter first we discuss how the creative process has been done before the introduction of the traffic control department, because understanding the process is important to recognize the communication gaps and conflict reasons. Then we will discuss the management's action regarding the communication gaps and how the new department has changed the situation.

The chapter is broadly divided in three major parts- the processes, the disputes & conflicts between departments and the causes of those disputes.

### **7.1 Creative work process in Asiatic MCL (before traffic dept.)**

According to the planning director of Asiatic MCL, advertising agencies usually receive client requests in four ways: 1. Brief of existing accounts, 2. Feedback on progressing jobs, 3. Pitch, and, 4. New Account.

In most of the above mentioned cases similar workflow pattern is followed in this agency, in the case of new account and pitch there are some extra steps added in the flow chart. Figure 5 illustrates the graphical presentation of Asiatic MCL's creative operations process:

#### ***Stage 1: Brief- De-brief***

The process begins with a brief, which enters the agency through the account management team. The account manager emails the de-briefed document to the creative team & strategic planning team along with deadlines and requirements. Account management negotiates the deadline with clients by consulting respective creative team for better creative solutions.

The first de-briefing session takes place with the participation of planning and respective creative team and is presented by the account management team. The team consists of roughly 8 to 12 people from different departments. After the de-brief session, all of the responsible members conducts their own homework. For example, the strategic planning team runs the background check of the client's brand, its competitors, its market position, and its target customers and so on while the creative team works on developing the communication message that can relate the consumers and to the product.

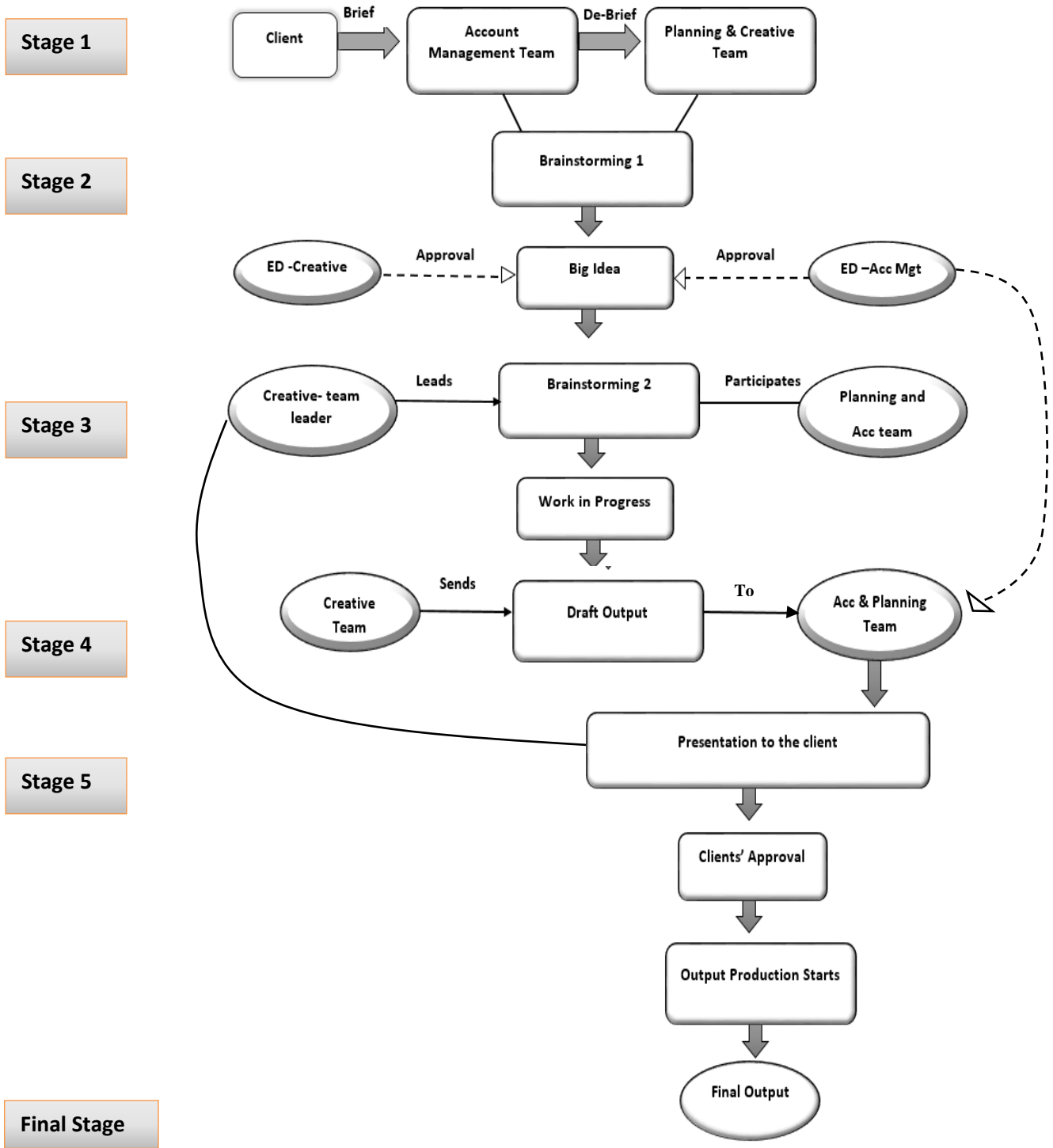
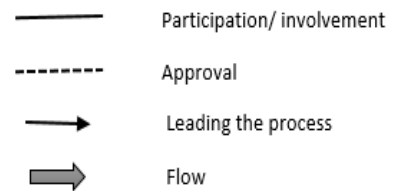


Figure 5: Creative Process in Asiatic MCL(Author's own)



### ***Stage 2: Coming up with the “Big Idea”***

Creativity in advertising manifests itself in the big idea; it is a way of translating the strategy into fresh & attention grabbing ways of communication (Nyilasy G, & Reid L. N 2009). During the first brainstorming session, all the team members share their work. Combining all the information and ideas, the “Big Idea” emerges; which is the creative route of the communication message. Account team sends the big idea to the executive directors (ED) for approval.

### ***Stage 3: Brainstorming, task distribution and work in progress***

After being approved by the EDs, the second brainstorming session takes place. The creative leader takes the lead in this session. The team members share their ideas during the session (concepts, scripts, tag lines, slogans etc.). Generally, account executives responsible for the particular account is also present in this and the planning team members also occasionally participate depending on the strategic contribution required for the project.

At this stage, the big idea becomes more and more specific. Therefore the creative team starts distributing tasks among the specialised creatives. Art team and copy team work in mutual coordination.

### ***Stage 4: Sending the draft output***

Creative teamsendsthe work outlets (layout/logo/ television or radio commercial’s script) to the creative team leader first. The team leader forwards the work to the account team. And then the both team sits down and discuss the outlets.

The account manager reviews the draft and gives feedback to the creatives, if something needs to be modified. And when the account manager is satisfied with the output, s/he sends it to the planning department. In this stage, the strategic planning team prepares a presentation for the client including all the strategic approaches for the campaign along with the draft output samples (visuals, audio, print, motion etc.), which is first presented internally to the ED (account management) for approval.

### ***Stage 5: Presentation to the client***

After being approved by the EDs, the team goes to the client's office for the formal presentation; the team typically includes the key executive for that account (the creative team leader, and the planning director) and is led by the account team leader.

### ***Final Stage: Preparing the final outputs***

Next level of work that is developing the output starts once the client gives approval to the creative works (written approval by client is necessary). And if the client rejects the output, the team proceeds with other "big ideas" they had or the whole process may start from the scratch depending on the client's preferences.

Account team (copywriter, visualiser/ art director) signs the layout to release output; account team leader handles the entire signing process. DTP (desktop publishing artist) proceeds to release the output and hands them over to the creative director, which is then forwarded to the account management.

Advertising agencies balance a plethora of projects simultaneously; therefore it is highly possible that the same group of people working in stage 4 for one particular brand is working in stage 2 for another brand at the same time. That means the agency runs under tight deadlines and schedules. The detail description of stage 3 is presented in the next page with a graphical illustration.

Figure 6 is a more elaborate explanation of stage 3 in the whole creative process. It is important to break down this process in order to understand further chapters about the disputes and conflicts. Lines represent the chain of actions and the dotted lines represent supervision.

As we can see in figure 6, after the "big idea" has emerged, the creative director and art director organise their teams who will be working on the particular project. The teams are formed based on the expertise required for the project, the availability of the members and sometimes multiple skilled workers from other departments are insisted on participating. There is no particular key member of a team, since the balance and the composition of every team are different based on their needs (Bilton 2012).

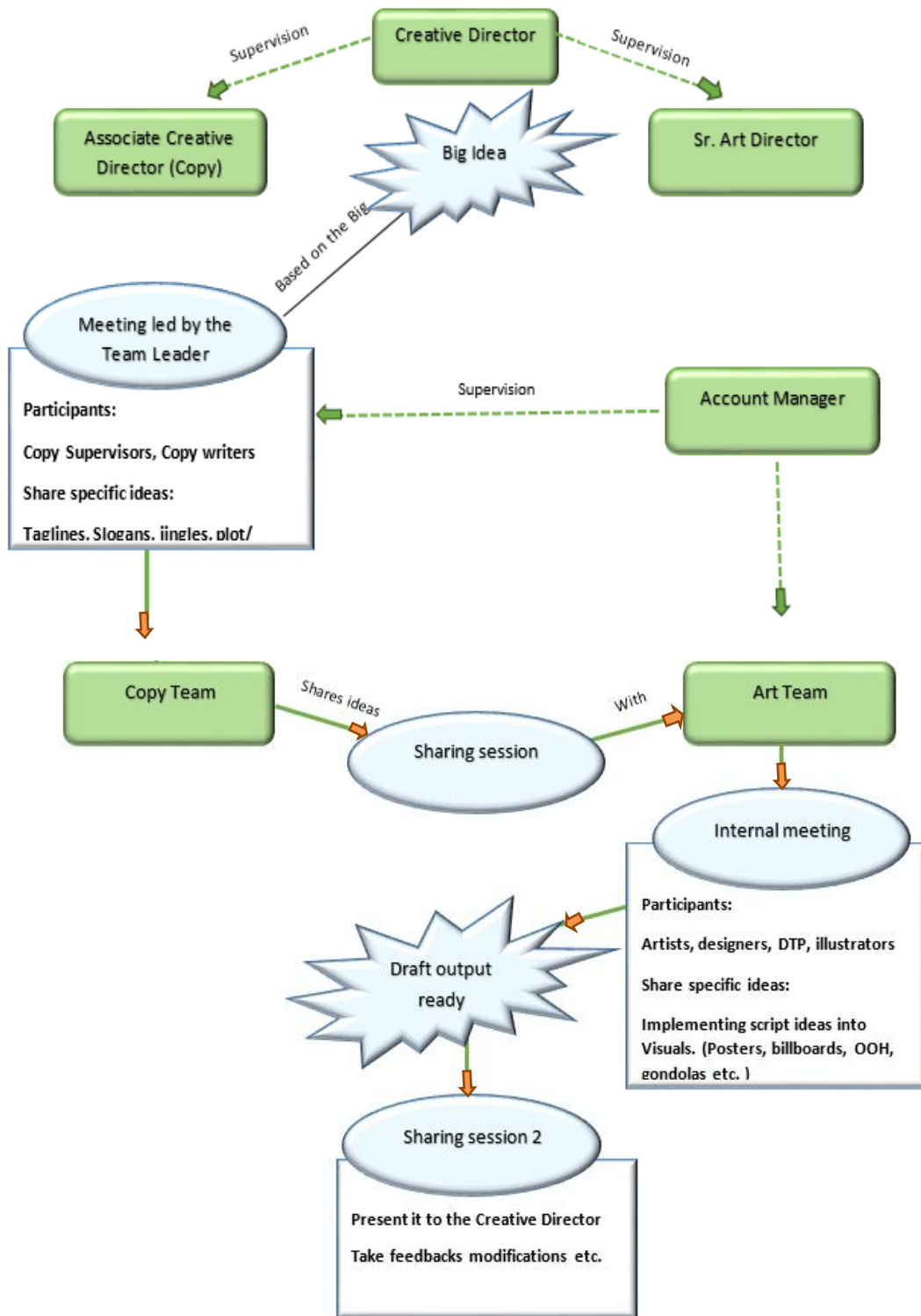


Figure 6: Work in Progress within the project team during stage 3 of the whole process (Author's own)

In a creative company, it is very likely to find people with multiple talents and skills, even a major share of the account executives are usually equipped with skills such as film making, music or painting etc. Especially an agency like Asiatic MCL where the CEO and managing directors are the nationally acclaimed artists and respective public figure of the country, the atmosphere of the firm attracts many artistic people with versatile skills.

So, this is why usually the creative process here is not strictly framed in a rigid practice, yes it has a systematic pattern but it also encourages insights from other perspectives, sometimes a copywriter can supervise a TVC (television commercial) shoot because of his/her expertise on the field, or a designer can contribute to the market research about a motorbike campaign because of his knowledge & obsession with motorbikes, even though their job doesn't entitle them to do that.

The creative director, the account director and the planning director decides on the formation of teams. When the teams are formed, the work starts usually with the copywriters. The copywriters come up with texts such as slogans, taglines, jingle lyrics, or scripts for TVC etc. and then the texts are forwarded to the art team, designers, visualisers or the production team (depending on the media platform of the campaign). The draft outputs are generally restricted to the scripts and designs, all the actual commercial shooting and campaign activations begin after the client has approved the idea. Most of the times the solutions are multiplatform, after the texts are ready, the designers develop the visuals for the print platforms, photographers starts shooting, account executives decides on directors, models or the artists for the radio and TV commercials. All these activities go on simultaneously.

At this stage, the project team corresponds very closely to each other and this stage involves high demand of frequent communication. Time is a major factor in advertising agencies; hence it is very important that the right person gets the right message on time. And this is the stage that triggers most of the common disputes and conflicts within and among the major operational departments.

Figure 7 illustrates the primary zone that triggers the most common types of conflicts and disputes in the work process.

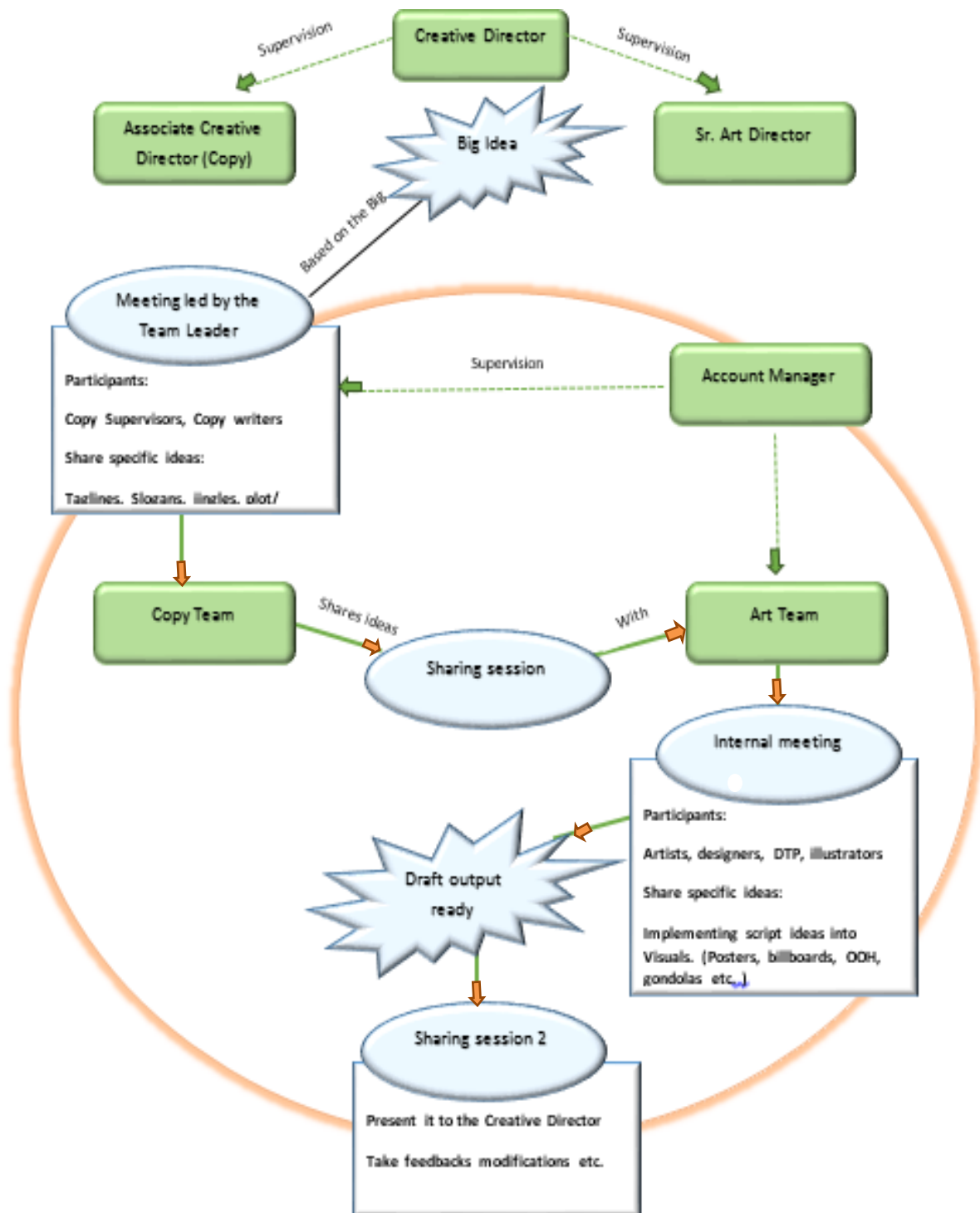


Figure 7: The Conflict Zone (Author's own)

The actual content production process is typically conducted by the lower level work force loosely supervised by the mid-level management.

Although the whole creative process in Asiatic MCL is quite systematically designed, the culture of the agency supports a free work environment with less emphasis on an authoritative chain of command. Loose supervision and a high degree of freedom are very popular management policy in creative organisations; creative staffs enjoy their own way of doing things without someone hovering by the shoulder all the time. However, as it was mentioned earlier, this stage involves a lot of frequent communication among the departments, especially between the account management and the creative department.

It is important to remember that the account management and creative departments are two independent departments who work closely with each other, there has never been any authoritative body (until march 2015) to supervise the communication flow or to mediate the conflicts. From the establishment of the agency, the communication process has always been maintained by the employees themselves with their interpersonal relationships, personal motivations and proactive attitudes.

Five of the mid-level managers claimed that the absence of a liaison body between the creative and the account executives is a pressing problem that has been prevalent in this agency for a long time and has been overlooked by the management.

*“I have worked in smaller agencies where co-ordination body didn’t exist, and nor it was felt necessary, but it is certainly required in a large agency like Asiatic, where we relentlessly handle almost hundreds of projects per month!!”* - said senior account executive.

It is quite common in many Asian cultures for employees not to talk about the problems with their higher authorities, and in addition to that, the organisational settings and the relationship between the employer and the employee also doesn’t encourage the open discussion (Morgan 1989). It’s not any different in Asiatic MCL. In an organisational and cultural context like this, often a stylised pattern of interaction develops (see figure 5 and 6).



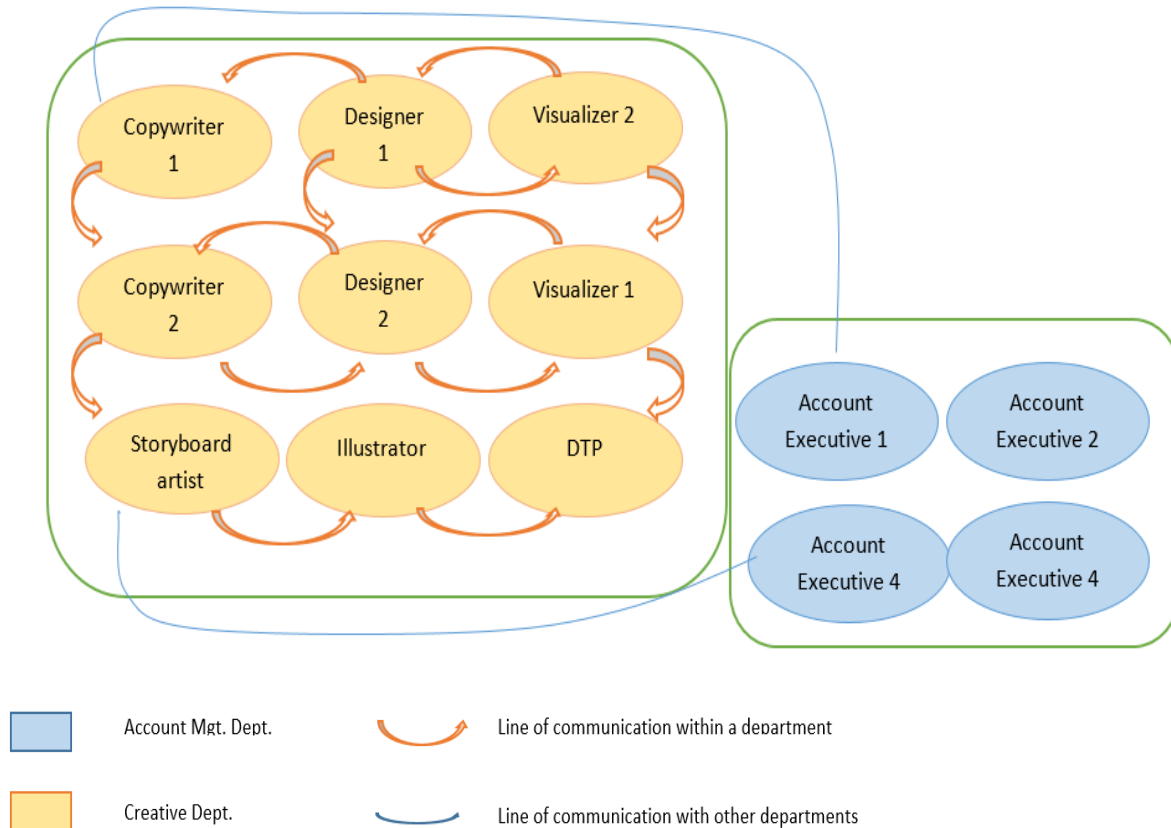


Figure 8: Intra & interdepartmental collaborations in individual projects (original idea adopted from Oberg 2012)

Figure 8 represents the ad hoc based collaboration process that is practiced in the agency, especially during the creation of draft outputs and the final contents. As we can see in the figure that there are many overlaps of informal communication lines within the creative department.

The number of the executives doesn't signify anything; the figure is just a demonstration of the process, the account executives were free to choose their preferred creative staffs in their emergencies (e.g. last minute requests from client- for changing the color or size of a logo).

During the developments of draft contents, it is highly required by the employees to continuously collaborate and communicate with each other that don't essentially entail the presence of any team leader or superiors.

*“As an organisation Asiatic MCL has strict structure and line of commands, paradoxically the culture of the company also claims to encourage freedom and loose supervision” – said senior creative executive.*

Chris Bilton suggests that creativity is not promised to achieve through the removal of constraints but it also depends on the measure of control (Bilton 2012). In the next section, we'll discuss how this ad hoc process with low supervision can intrigue conflicts in this agency. Conflicts can disturb the harmony of the work process and makes the work atmosphere uncomfortable. No company's functionality can remain healthy with suppressed complaints, conflicts and disputes (Morgan 1989).

*“An organisational context with high frequency of even minor conflicts leaves us few choices of resolutions – avoidance, compromise and largely depending on time to washing away difficulties.”* – said an account executive.

A major share of employees pointed out a number of reasons that trigger conflicts in the agency and that has remained unnoticed by the management. The next section (7.2) will discuss this in detail.

## **7.2 Most common types of conflicts & disputes(before traffic dept.)**

Most scholars treated conflict as a pathological manifestation of breakdowns in communication or the ego trips of unreconstructed managers (Morgan 1989). This sentence clearly highlights the importance of “communication” and “management” as crucial factors in organisational conflicts. Often times an employee has to rely on someone else's co-operation, input or output to get their job done. This section explores the most common types of problems that hamper the work process and environment (especially caused by lack of proper communication body).

### **7.2.1 Mismanagement of available human resources**

As it was mentioned earlier that the actual content creation process is conducted on an ad hoc basis (opposed to the tightly controlled process of fulfilling the brief with multiple decision gates), which requires lots of informal interactions among the team members. Since there is no boss in the scenario and no one accountable for the proper communication flow, the majority of conflicts arise at this stage.

All the executives are responsible for their own respective brands; however the creative executives do plenty of ad hoc tasks that are not necessarily listed in their regular brands. Many entry level employees such as junior copywriters start off their work with translations, proof

readings and other menial tasks that are remotely related to any actual creative work. And these are the employees who usually perform the small tasks from a variety of brands besides having their own particular brand.

*“Creative people in advertising work under intense psychological pressure”* Winston Fletcher (2010).

*“Working till 10 pm for several days in a row is not just the way of agency life, it’s just an overused excuse to cover up bad management”* said a senior creative executive.

Figure 9 illustrates the mismanagement of human resources in the work in progress state (of the creative process). The blue line represents the line of informal communication between two departments. In the figure, we can see that “Copywriter 2” and “Designer 1” are already working on 3 different projects, and the account executives are bringing new tasks for them while they are already struggling to meet the deadlines for the current projects.

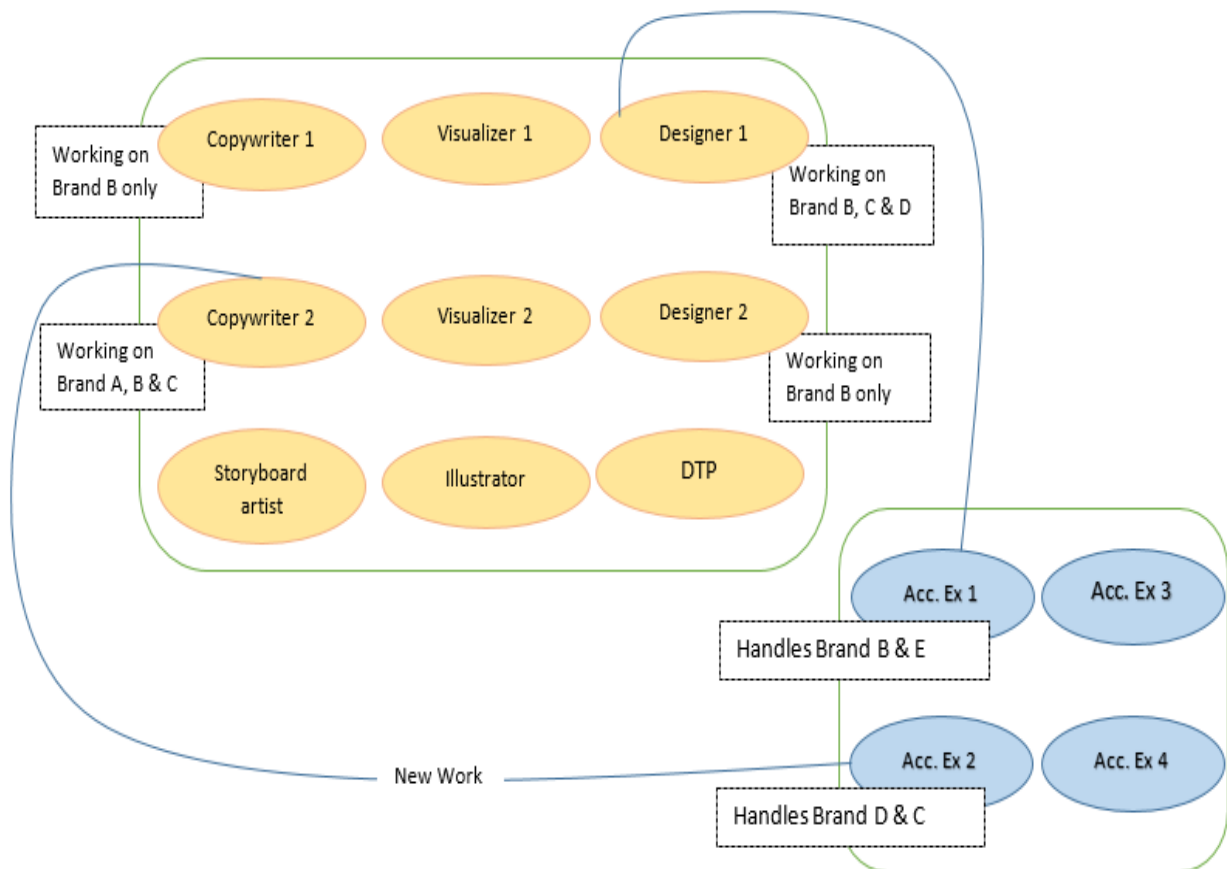


Figure 9: Mismanagement of available human resources (Author’s own)

Yes, the creatives and the account executives are entitled with their own brands, but their brands are not mutually exclusive. The account executives are going to the creative staffs with their assigned brands, but they don't know how many other brands the creative staff is handling at the moment, and neither are they aware of which creative staff is idle. So what happens is, many staffs juggle with four projects until 9 pm at night, while many others are working on one project or in some cases doing nothing. In addition to all these, the account staffs are not in power to set orders on the creative staffs. So, all the egocentric problems begin.

*"I don't understand why the agency keeps taking projects that can't be delivered unless we work 12 hours a day and keep sleeping bags under our desks?"* said a creative executive.

*"Creative people care too much about their contents and usually take criticisms badly, and adding the stress of extra work and limited time tend to make them egotistical and hot-tempered"* said an account manager.

### **7.2.2 The Blame Game**

Asiatic MCL operates in tight schedules with numerous projects, where minor mistakes can happen. With the existing communication problems, in a bureaucratic structure with strict command and control, a propensity of refusing to take responsibilities of mistakes exists among the departments. According to David Ogilvy, the advertising creatives live with fear; will they have the big idea before Tuesday morning? Will the client buy it? Will it sell the product? He adds that the account executives and senior management also live with perpetual fear—mostly of their clients (Ogilvy 1983).

*"In my 6 year long experience here at Asiatic MCL, I haven't witnessed any major failure or mistakes; however, there's a constant fear among us, because even a slight mistake at any stage of the process creates major panic in work environment, which produced a tendency of blaming one another for the small mistakes."* said an account director.

The "blame game" is a rhetorical term used in this study to explain one of the common problems in this particular agency's' creative work functions. It is typical in this agency for every department (mainly in lower level) to blame one another for any kind of failures (failing to meet deadlines, failing to meet the goal, being rejected in pitch etc.). Figure 10 illustrates the scenario.

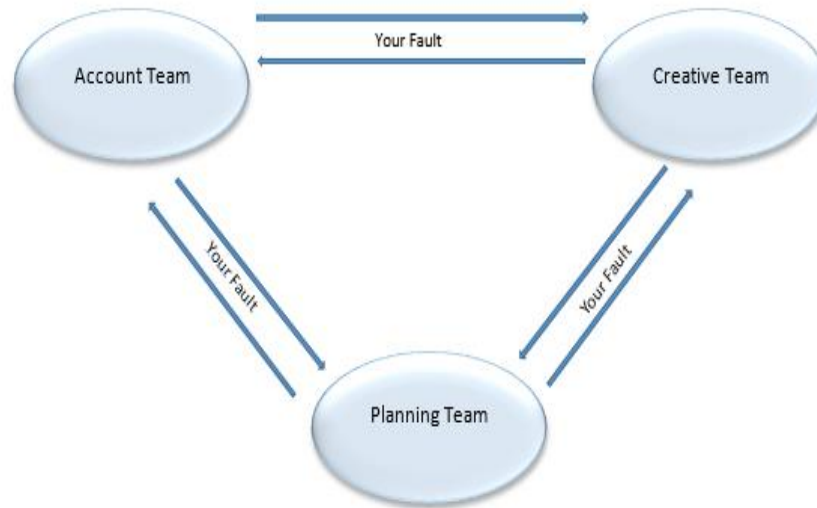


Figure 10: how the departments blame one another (Author's own)

The top level management rarely gets involved in these situations and there has never been any mediating body to resolve such cases until March 2015. It has always been a matter of mutual resolutions. Most of the frequent interactions take place between the creative and the account management departments, since not all the content creation process requires a participation of the strategic planning department. It's only required in situations such as- launching new product, or new offer, re-launching existing products, re-positioning brands, boosting sales for a product etc.

There are plenty of long tail contents with no need of new strategic solutions; therefore they are typically conducted by the account executives and the creatives. For example, billboards and print ads with the same theme of its television ads etc. So the circumstances make the planning department stand in a much neutral area in the matter of conflicts. Table 2 explains the common types of excuses every department use to get away.

<b>Creative</b>	<b>Account Mgt.</b>	<b>Planning</b>
I got the wrong brief from the account executive	I got a poor background research from the planning department	The first de-brief was flawed therefore the background research was flawed as well.

Account executive didn't send me all the necessary files and info	Planning executives didn't give me the info	That info was not required for this campaign
Account executives asked for an "out of the box" idea	Creative executives gave us unrealistic ideas	This project didn't require strategic involvement

Table 2: Common excuses in the blame game

**7.2.3 Deadline fiasco**

There is never enough time in the advertising world. Account managers try to sell as many campaigns as they can, clients are demanding and the deadlines are always extremely tight. It is often very challenging for the agencies to keep up with the requested deadlines.

*“We set our own target to finish the projects based on their priorities and deadlines, but we are often interrupted by multiple impromptu requests from the account executives. And that puts us in very difficult situations”* – said a creative supervisor.

Although Asiatic MCL has their practice of setting an internal deadline prior to the actual deadline, it is still super stressful for the employees (especially the creatives) to fulfill the tasks in time. Often it gets to the point where creatives are working nights to try and meet tight deadlines. It is unhealthy for an organisation to develop a culture where it becomes normal for the employees to work until 9 pm on weekdays and even working on weekends (with no pay) and strain their health, relationships and family lives.

*“I honestly don't think deadline pressures are caused or affected by the communication flow or interaction levels among the colleagues; it's simply how this industry works. But I do believe that it would be managed well if there was a co-ordinator”* said a senior planning executive

**7.2.4 No food No mood**

This problem might seem remotely related to the interactions among the departments; however the origin of this problem lies there and causes major consequences. This severely affects the mood of the employees, their quality of work and their satisfaction at workplace. According to

all the participants of the research, working after the office hours till the night is a common scenario in Asiatic MCL, they also added that the situation is same for all the other agencies they have worked for.

Sleeping in and starting late is typical in the agency, although two days of late entries will penalise the salary of one working day while working the whole night won't add a single penny to your pocket, said a key account executive.

*“We all hate to put unpaid labour in the office after 8 pm, but if I quit today the next day the company will find someone better than me, and I will be unemployed for an uncertain period!”* – said an account manager.

*“The agency clearly has some flawed policies, working fifty hours or more a week (only in weekdays) will add a lousy leave for the employee, not even a holiday. Working ourselves to death on a regular basis for more than 45 hours a week has become so normal for us that leaving the office on the right time has become frowned upon”*Said an account executive.

Although Asiatic MCL doesn't pay any additional remuneration for the extra hours of work, it has a policy of arranging snacks for the creatives, who will be working till or after 8pm. The account managers/ executives are responsible for arranging food for the creatives working for their account.

The process of arranging food was not as simple as it sounds, this issue caused major problems frequently that affected relationships, created ego problems, and increased tension in the workplace. The management is not involved in this process; the duty of arranging food is a solely assigned to the account managers. They are instructed to submit the receipts to the finance department the next day in order to get the reimbursements. That means that it is always expected from them to have extra cash that is plenty enough to buy food for around ten people.

The clients usually agree to sponsor the food expenses, because the creatives are over working on their demand. But not all the clients can sponsor food from expensive restaurants. So, if the creatives are working for high profile brands such as Coca-Cola or Sunsilk they can order from expensive food chains, but if they are working for start up local brands then they have to make peace with cheap snacks. It seems unfair to many creatives who are putting the same effort and hours in the office as their respective colleagues; but they are getting a cheap shamucha (Bengali

snack) for extra 4 hours of work, while their colleagues are enjoying a large meal from their favourite restaurants.

This practice not only kills their motivation but also insults their effort. They start questioning their self-worth in the company. It makes them look less important than their co-workers holding similar positions. On the other hand, the creatives who get the perks because of working for the rich clients start to demand too much and their requirements make the account managers work more challenging. They tend to demand food from their personal favourite restaurants. If three different staffs demand food from three different restaurants located in three different areas, it clearly complicates the food arrangement process.

*“During the extra hours I feel more like a waiter than an account executive”* - said a senior account executive.

*“This is clearly management’s indifference to employee’s wellbeing and satisfaction, nobody’s asking for a buffet, but if the office canteen was open till night it could solve this problem”* Said an account executive.

### **7.3 What caused these conflicts & disputes?**

Unresolved work issues often result in hopelessness, job dissatisfaction and general unhappiness. If left un-dealt with these issues can lead to suppressed resentment, withdrawal and even resignation; causing deeper problems such as absenteeism, high employee turnover, and company culture deficits (Farrell 2014). In case of Asiatic MCL the data suggests that the employees love the warm culture of the agency, at the same time they have also been experiencing general unhappiness regarding certain practices for example, unresolved conflict issues, unappreciated effort and unpaid late hours.

*“We learned to act okay about the indifference of management regarding conflict issues, yes it develops suppressed grudge among many of us, but we’re in the lowest layer of the eco-system, what can we do about it?”* - said a creative executive.



In order to resolve the disputes or minimise the consequences, it's very important to investigate the causes of the problems. This section explores the causes that triggered most of the common types of inter- departmental and other disputes.

### **7.3.1 Lack of a proper co-ordinating body**

Lack of coordination and communication creates gaps in the acquisition and distribution of information. It causes delay, ambiguity and eventually complicates the work protocol. . If there is a lack of coordination, there is a risk that responsibility will become dispersed and tasks will be left unclaimed.

Asiatic MCL is a huge agency with high profile clients and numerous projects. Due to the mass number of projects, account managers need to communicate the needs of the client to the creatives very frequently because the clients are always changing their requirements. This makes the job very challenging for the account executives. The higher the number of projects gets the more it becomes challenging. Most of the disputes that we discussed are interdependency based; these types of conflicts can be resolved by clarifying roles and responsibilities while ensuring that each employee is held accountable to their tasks.

### **7.3.2 Lack of tech based management mechanism**

In this century of technological blessings being one of the best ad agencies in the country, Asiatic MCL has managed to use limited technological support for its creative operations management.

The size of its IT department clearly suggests that the company is neglecting the importance of technological backings when it comes to management. Its IT department has only 2 functioning members who not only take care of Asiatic MCL but also of two other sister concerns named Radio Shadhin and Forethought PR.

There is no common intranet or web-based shared software for the internal work and communication process. The information exchange and communication process relies on emails and some rare use of Google drive shared with the team members. And the use of phone calls and personal visits is extremely important during the content creation process. Here are the problems that occur because of having no common shared intranet:

### **7.3.2 a. Role ambiguity**

Project teams consist of different members from different departments. And after every brainstorming sessions or meetings, some information is intended to share with the group. Yes, during the meetings the conductor uses a white board in order to visualise the discussions and the participants take notes during the meeting, but that is not enough. In order for the accuracy and clarity of work, there is always need of more detailed information afterwards.

However, because of the absence of a common intranet or a sharing platform, there are many incidents of missing information, not sharing information with the whole group, confusions and misunderstandings. For example, after debriefing, there is a list of tasks every department need to do, and they need to have the documents in order to do their job.

It is very typical that the executives don't know where they can find particular information about that particular project. Especially the junior executives suffer from many challenges regarding access to information. For them, information sharing is often restricted to the meetings only, and after that, the executives have to seek for it personally. And they often don't know who to ask, where to go? So, they waste time on asking their departmental bosses, and the bosses ask the other department to share the info with that particular member and so on. So, it complicates and prolongs the process.

On the other hand, information holders in lower/new positions suffer from a number of confusions, for example, a new executive may have some info but s/he doesn't know where to share them? Whether the information is valuable? Since nobody asked for them, should they send them to all? Do the creatives need this information at all? Does the planning unit need the information? Etc.

As it was mentioned before, the team leaders hold relatively less power and authority over its team compared to the departmental heads. The participants consider themselves as the representatives of their departments and they tend to report back to the departmental heads on the project updates or other issues. So, a role ambiguity clearly persists.

*“My first few months was a blur, often I didn’t know what to do, when I tried something myself I was stopped, when I waited for commands I was told to be proactive. It seemed that everything I do was wrong”* - said a strategic planning executive.

### **7.3.2 b. Scope for excuses**

Because of not having a common portal of communication, it is very easy for the free riders to create excuses about their own negligence. It has been mentioned by a number of key executives that it is very common especially among some creative staffs to keep their phones turned off, and be away from the office premise.

Therefore in times of urgent changes in plan or schedule (which is very typical in advertising), they are unavailable. And they usually give the following reasons as excuses:

- The content was due tomorrow morning, I was prepared to deliver it tomorrow.
- My phone was out of charge, I did not get the message.
- I did not check the emails, I was busy.

*“It is frustrating when certain power holders consistently use technical failures as excuses for being unreachable, and when asked they show negative attitudes”* - said an account director.

On the other hand, four of the key creative executives said, that the account executives keep piling up tasks for creatives before they could finish the current work. Many of their requests are very impromptu and could wait until the next day. Some of them also mentioned that they feel very uncomfortable about the account executives hovering over their shoulder constantly; they feel like they are being shadowed all the time.

*“I understand their concern, but hovering over my shoulder won’t accelerate my work, rather it makes me very uncomfortable”* - said a senior creative executive.

*“I feel so self-conscious when the account executives sit next to my chair, just to see what I do. I might want to take a break and go for a smoke or maybe I just want to think for a while before starting to write but then I see them looking at me, waiting for actions”* said a creative executive.

### **7.3.2 c. Time lapses and misunderstandings**

It has been a common practice for some of the executives (some holding very important positions) to be late in the office. Many decisions have to wait until they arrive at the office, and they are not accountable to anyone for being late.

Two participants blatantly said that they cannot wake up early in the morning so they are late, and one key executive also pointed out that him/her being late is justified, because s/he earned the position that allows this habit.

*“Arriving late doesn’t mean that I am working less, nobody talks about my countless nights with long working hours in the office, while me being late in the morning is an issue”* said a senior creative manager.

### **7.3.2 d. Chances of stealing credits**

Stealing credits or to be more specific, stealing ideas can be very common in creative industries. Whether it’s a concept or a complete script for a TV commercial, the ownership must be credited to the idea generator. But quite often ideas get stolen in creative agencies.

And by stolen I mean publishing without crediting the actual owner, publishing it in somebody else's name, publishing it under company name without acknowledging the originator of the idea etc. Your idea can be stolen in different ways , it not necessarily have to be published, it can be an idea for a campaign that you share with your workplace friend, and the next day s/he raises the idea as his/her own in an official meeting. Unless the idea is totally different from yours, s/he conducted a theft. S/he’s not stealing from the company. S/he is stealing the benefit you expected from your good idea in terms of recognition and reward.

During the study, five employees from different positions have mentioned that it happened in Asiatic MCL as well, and the other agencies they have worked for previously. Shockingly two of participants said that often the ideas are credited to their bosses and the bosses don’t do anything about it and the subordinates never really talk about it.

*“I have never talked to my boss or the superiors about such incidents, the authoritative command doesn’t really give the subordinates enough comfort or confidence to talk about something so sensitive”*- said a creative executive.

In 1988 film “Working Girl”, Melanie Griffith plays a secretary whose idea gets stolen by her boss and she proves the merger was her idea and then her boss ends up getting dramatically fired. However, not all boss credit stealing situations are resolved as easily or as theatrically as in Hollywood films. And in reality, nothing really happens in Asiatic MCL either.

*“It’s unfortunate that this practice exists not only in this particular firm but also in two other firms I have worked before, I witnessed my colleague from my previous agency being fired when he confronted the boss”*said a creative executive.

Since the balance of power is tipped in favour of the superior, for the victims it is often a difficult situation to deal with. The managers often control the fate of subordinates through performance appraisals, work assignments, and promotion opportunities; so the subordinates often don’t want talk about it either.

If the idea is on paper and predates the event where the colleague or the boss shared it as his/her own, the victim can actually prove his point. A common idea sharing platform or intranet can help the staffs to prove their ideas as their own, and can help them to handle the situations better or simply reduce the practice of idea theft.

### **7.3.3 Other passive causes**

#### **7.3.3 a. Lack of rewards and recognition**

This doesn’t have any direct connection to the communication problems or to the final outputs; however in long run such practice can have bad impact on the health of the agency and eventually the contents they produce. The problem is directly chained with the previous section and has been pointed out by some of the participants of the study. The employees have said that this agency has an absence of intrinsic rewards, and none of them talked about monetary rewards

or recognitions. Studies have shown that the monetary rewards are not the only factor influencing work; there are other factors that are equally instrumental (Herzberg 2003).

*“It means a lot when your superior recognises your effort, says good job, and sincerely mean it, it matters more than the salary at the end of the month”* – a key creative executive.

Employees from all three departments have confessed that they are often not given enough credit for their work. Some said that they don't see it as theft since organisational role entitles the bosses to present a work that might be completely prepared by a subordinate.

*“I think everybody in their position is just doing their jobs, but it hurts when your boss owns up the credits for the ideas that I came up with”* – said another key creative executive.

Motivator-Hygiene theory (a.k.a. the two-factor theory) by Frederick Herzberg, disputes the idea that money and benefits motivate employees. This theory draws many parallels to Maslow's hierarchy of needs and provides substantial evidence that workers cannot be satisfied by having only their hygiene factors met (i.e. security, salary, working conditions). He concluded that hygiene factors are needed to ensure an employee is not dissatisfied (Gallant 2013). But motivation factors are needed to motivate an employee to higher performance and higher satisfaction level.

The participants say it has become an open secret that your work might be published under somebody else name and everybody is just expected to suppress their grudge and act like nothing unfair is happening. It affects the employee's self-worth, satisfaction level and triggers disputes.

### **7.3.3 b. Lack of professional development scope**

This problem has a remote and passive influence on inter-departmental interactions and relationships. Creatives and the account executives have difficulties in communication and negotiations for many reasons

A significant number of both creative and account staffs said, one crucial reason is that they don't want to see things from others perspectives and circumstances. And it happened because of

the gap in human relationships. The organisational setting and work conditions don't cut them much slack to actually know each other beyond organisational ties. And they realised it when Asiatic MCL arranged an internal game contest called "Art of War" that took place in a beautiful remote area away from the city.

That contest gave them an amazing opportunity to work with each other regardless their departments, skills or talents; they all were just contestants. That event positively changed many relationships, created new bonds and taught them to learn other person's perspectives. But ironically events like that happens only once in five or more years in this company.

*"Art of War gave me an amazing opportunity to discover new sides of my colleagues and gave birth to new bonds with them that certainly strengthened our work culture"* said an account executive.

*"My dislikes dramatically turned into friendships when I was forced to work in the playful teams we had in Art or War"* said a creative executive.

The workers admit that they love the workplace environment, relationship with the colleagues and bosses and the job itself; they feel a special bond with the agency. However sometimes they feel that the learning scope is so limited here, management needs to focus more on the professional learning scopes for the employees from different levels. Especially some staffs with functional roles in creative department see their jobs as dead-end jobs, where they are doing uncreative jobs sitting in so called creative positions for a long time. The trainings workshops or contests can not only improve relationships and knowledge but also increase the job satisfaction.

*"In nine years I experienced only one picnic and two major workshops"* said an account manager.

### **7.3.3 c. Lack of recreational events**

*"The work of an advertising agency is warmly and immediately human"* – Leo Burnett

Creative agencies are known for providing social environments for their creatives to thrive in. Creative agencies help to build strong friendships with colleagues through different activities. Some agencies are known for their parties to get their employees together. Others are known for

their competitive cricket team. Creative people crave for such environment, and this is one strong magnet that brings many creatives back to the ad agencies from highly paid uptight corporate jobs.

Some agencies follow a conservative hardworking ideology while others have a rather relaxed way of operating. Creatives in advertising agencies are expected to come up with great ideas under lots of pressure on a regular basis which can lead to potential creative blocks. And the workers at Asiatic MCL think that the firm is too much inclined towards money making and less concentrated on recreational activities.

Company trips and parties can rejuvenate the minds, and triggered motivation and bring people together. With the physical setting away from the place of work, the acceptable patterns of behaviour are also far removed from the daily norms. At these events, the subordinates can feel free to ask questions, give opinions or raise objections that would be unspeakable under ordinary conditions (Morgan 1989).

Many employees referred to “Art of War” contest as a memorable event that not only helped them to grow their professional knowledge but has also strengthened the relationships between colleagues, superior and subordinates.

#### **7.4 Introduction of the traffic control department and its after effects**

The first part of the findings explored the problems that the firm has been experiencing; where most of them were caused by interdepartmental communication gaps. In response to all the above mentioned problems, the management of Asiatic MCL took an action in order to reduce the communication and interaction based problems that have been hampering the work flow and the atmosphere of the workplace. The more the company grew and acquired more clients the importance of a coordinating liaison between the major operating departments become vividly necessary.

In March 2015 a new unit had been established in the agency, led by a traffic control manager with an assistant. The primary motive for the establishment of the new unit was to ensure that advertisement production progresses efficiently through its different stages and completes on



time. Other goals included- alleviating some of the consistent communication based interpersonal conflicts and creating a place of accountability.

This section explores the after effects of the new unit; it discusses the changes it has brought to the agency work functions, and in the communication protocols among the departments.

### 7.4.1 A transparent body

The traffic control management is an independent unit; she is not a subordinate to the account directors or the creative directors or the executive directors. Human resource management is the only boss to the traffic manager, which makes the position transparent and unbiased.

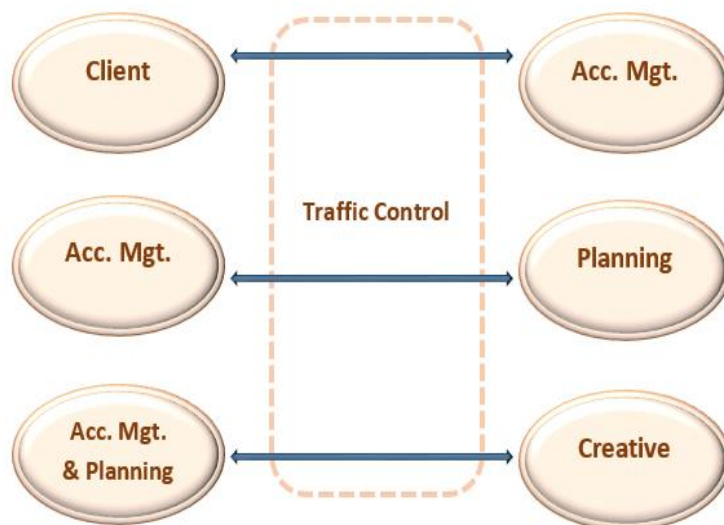


Figure: 11: Mid-line supervision in communication flow(Author's own)

The figure shows the active presence of the traffic control manager in every line of interaction.

*“Now there is less confusion, misunderstandings and tendency of accusing one another in incidents of failures, because now there's a place of accountability”* said an account manager.

She monitors the progress of ad productions through different departments and external suppliers. All the interactions among the departments are supervised by the traffic manager; this brings more transparency, accountability and responsibility at workplace.

### **7.4.2 More control and harmony at work**

*“At the end of the day an ad agency is an organisation; it must establish control. The new unit is trying to bring more balance at work by redefining communication channels in the agency”* said an account director.

Managerial control can be achieved by using alternative communication channels and through monitoring performance through indirect means rather than direct surveillance (Morgan 1989). The traffic control manager works closely with members of the account management and creative teams to manage communication ensure co-ordination and monitor the work flow from the initial brief to the point where it is released to the media.

So, this person is fully aware of every detail about the different project teams, the members, their responsibilities their work deadlines etc. It rules out the question of blaming each other when problems arise, because the team members know that there is one person who knows what actually happened. It helps to avoid disputes and also to resolve the conflict situation.

### **7.4.3 Reduced work load on the account management**

*“Now I can concentrate solely on my clients and my accounts, because the traffic unit has taken over some of the responsibilities that caused me enough stress- for example- arranging food and transportation for the overtime creatives, following them around every once in a while to remind them about the deadlines and changes”* said an account executive.

The traffic manager has significantly reduced the work pressure of account managers. She discusses the scope of work, schedules and budgets with account management team to prepare a framework for planning workflows. When the creative teams develop their proposals for advertisements, she assesses the production requirements and identifies external service providers, such as photographers, video production companies and printing firms, who will be providing material for the campaigns.

### 7.4.4 More planned and organised workflow

Scheduling is a critical part of the traffic manager’s role. She is present in every de-brief sessions and sometimes in the brainstorming sessions too. After the de-brief sessions she arranges separate meetings with the account managers in order to discuss the timeline and the budget for the campaigns. She plays a major role during the team assignments, allocating roles and managing the communication flow. She also arranges meetings with the creative directors to discuss their needs of external support, such as film-makers, artists etc. She manages a work calendar, in order to keep track on the progress of different projects in the agency.

*“Scheduling project plans is crucial part of my job, the goal is to keep the bottleneck rush free and finish the projects in time”* said the traffic manager.

Calendar	Day	Week	Month	Details: Low Medium High			
May 2015 Su Mo Tu We Th Fr Sa 26 27 28 29 30 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 1 2 3 4 5 6	May - June 2015 Search Calendar						
	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
May 17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
					12:00pm 7 up bangla copy		
May 24 - 30	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	1:00pm ekhanei.com Boo 1:30pm HONDA press pre		10:00am ekhanei.com mee				
May 31 - Jun 6	31	Jun 1	2	3	4	5	6
	8:00am Honda- city press 8:00am Shell office brand 1:00pm social booklet fee	2:00pm SMC everyday tiss 3:30pm Quaker output by					8:00am UNICEF Pict

Table 3: A demonstration of a work calendar (source: internal)

The work calendar includes the details of each project teams and its members. She knows the progress of the different projects; she can predict the possibilities of deadline failures and has the power to take actions to prevent the late submissions. The communication among the departments became easier and conflict situations are handled well after the establishment of the traffic department.

### 7.4.5 More managed human resources / work distribution

After the enactment of the traffic control department, the account managers don't have to monitor the progress of the creatives frequently. And creatives also don't feel being shadowed by the account executives all the time. If the account team needs any ad hoc creative need, they don't go to the creatives they think can offer the best solution to the problem, instead, they go to the traffic manager.

The traffic manager knows exactly who is doing what, so there is no excuse for escaping work for the free riders and also the account managers are not in liberty anymore to choose the creatives for extra works. This eradicates the imbalance in work distribution.

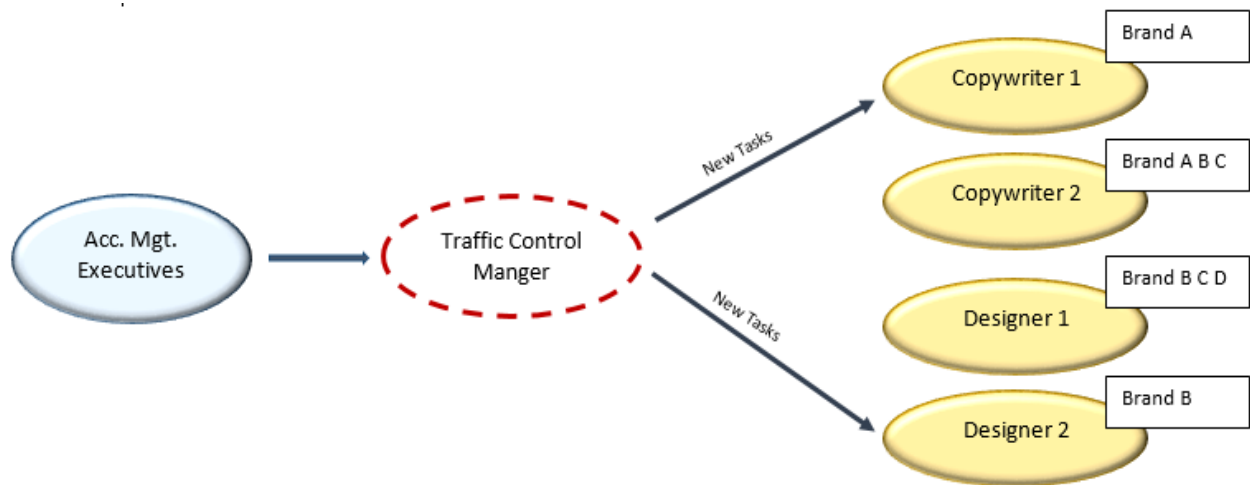


Figure 12: Traffic control manager acting as liaison in allocation of new task (Author's own)

*“Recently I have been witnessing some balanced distribution of task, and now I receive less last minute demands from the account managers”* said a creative executive.

*“At least now I feel like I have a voice, before agreeing with the account executives I can simply ask them to go to the traffic manager first, and I believe she would make fair decision”* said a creative executive.

The traffic managers can allocate new tasks to the workers who are less occupied at the moment. This excludes the unnecessary caustic bargains regarding extra work between the creatives and the account executives.

#### **7.4.6 Less food drama**

Arranging food for the creatives is no longer a responsibility of the account executives after the traffic department became active. The creatives can no longer be highly selective and stubborn about their food choices. The traffic manager arranges the same food for all the creatives working extra hours regardless the clients they are working for. This practice has reduced the complexity in the process and the ego problems caused by the differences in food.

The account managers used to be very stressed about the food issue because it caused disputes almost every week. Some creatives with bigger clients used to stay long after the office hours just so that they can order delicious foods. On the contrary, creatives working for smaller clients raised questions about the low quality and quantity of the food they were being served. All these complexities became obsolete when the food choices are uniform now. It clearly made the account executives job easier, although most of the creatives are not happy about this change.

*“When the office staff asked me to take one piece of cake and a banana, I thought it was a joke”*  
- said a creative staff.

*“The food served after the office hours is certainly not enough, and the quality is questionable but the manager is trying to improve the situation”* – said an account executive.

#### **7.5 How do the employees feel about the changes?**

Most of the participants of the research reported that the frequency of interaction based disputes has reduced after the management took the initiative of the traffic department. Account managers admitted that the silent tension between them and the creatives is appreciably less. The workload has also become more manageable for them.

*“Creative people are not rational, neither are the clients. It’s already stressful enough for us to handle the unreasonable demands from the clients and on top of that when the creatives play their attitude game it becomes too much to absorb”* – said an associate account director.

Few account executives stated that the space of unpleasant negotiations with the creatives has been transformed into a more comfortable zone. The creatives feel that they are not being pushed

by the account executives anymore. And they think that the unfair work distribution doesn't happen much; even if it does, they can talk about it to someone in charge.

Some participants of the study suspected the endurance of the department, they pointed out the newness of the traffic unit in the country's existing industry structure. Some criticised the fact that, it is run by only one manager which can lead to biases. However, the higher and mid-level managers expressed positive feelings about this change.

## **8. Conclusions**

## **8. Conclusion and discussions**

The purpose of this study is to describe and discuss the importance of inter-departmental interaction in agency operations and how can it affect the creative outputs. This study draws attention to the differences in perceptions of different role players in the agency, and how these differences create tension in communication and interaction processes. It provides special emphasis on co-ordination, specialisation, knowledge gap, formalisation and control, while the communication and interaction during creative process are kept under the limelight.

As illustrated in this thesis, the agency had been experiencing a pressing need of a co-ordinating body for the two key departments in the creative processes as their number of clients and projects grew significantly. The first part of the findings explored the ways of interaction among the departments when there was no traffic control manager. It described the creative processes and inter-departmental collaboration procedures in the investigated firm. It is interesting to know that the agency had been running its entire life until 2015 without a traffic department and still had been holding a strong position in the industry both financially and prestige wise.

In order to coordinate the efforts of an entire organisation, a systematic integration of a process is required that creates accountability within the organisation. Implementing this type of process allows interdepartmental coordination throughout the organisation. Establishing this place of accountability is essential for managing employee actions and for mediating conflict situations.

Accountability for the tasks helps to ensure that team effort is well coordinated and labour is fairly distributed & managed. It not necessarily means that the workers should be monitored 24x7 under strict surveillance; it simply means that there is a coordination body that is aware all the actions and work updates. So that there is no scope for blaming each other, free riding or over working.

It's important to mention that besides Asiatic MCL there is only one other agency in the country that has a traffic department, which is called "Grey" (source: internal). Even the international agency branches such as Bitopi Leo Barnett and Ogilvy & Mather functions without a traffic department. Generally, account management plays the co-ordination and traffic management roles in most of the other agencies in the country. So, we can say that ad traffic department is relatively new in this country context, and Asiatic MCL is one of the pioneers for practicing it.



As we discussed, before the arrival of traffic department the creative operations were conducted in an adhocratic style. Although the organisation follows a systematic pattern for its work processes, it relied more on the spontaneous collaboration among the functioning departments. It allowed enhanced flexibility, correspondence and freedom.

The introduction of traffic control department re-defined some roles, enhanced specialisation and implemented more control. While the creative operations are still conducted the same way as it was done before, the significant change is established in the communication protocol and the collaboration style among the departments. It created a place of accountability in the agency, not that the office environment became rigid.

The study investigated the common types of situations that trigger conflicts and disputes in the firm. Many of them arise during the content development process and are caused by flawed communication channel and interaction gaps. Active participation of traffic management during the different stages of content completion brings transparency in the process and clears the clot in the information sharing and communication route.

The results also suggest that not all the major disputes are influenced by the interaction gaps and communication breaks within the departments. Some problems are caused by company policies and the industry culture. The research could not imply any direct effect of inter-departmental interaction on the creative outputs. However, it suggests that a new communication liaison between the departments does slightly alter the creative processes and the way of collaborations. And this slight alteration has increased the efficiency of the whole creative operations process in the agency.

## **8.1 Managerial Implications**

This study provides important lessons for the media managers who are involved in creating and delivering creative solutions in advertising sector. A gap between the top level management and the lower level workforce is revealed by this research. More than four participants in the research have pointed out that the intimacy with the CEO and the top management is very distant compared to one other ad agency they have worked before named “Grey” (which is the biggest competitor of Asiatic MCL). The personal involvement of the CEO matters a lot, especially when the CEO and the directors are renowned media personalities of the country. They are

already idolized by the employees even before they started working for the firm. So, their tiny involvement in the process brings big difference, perhaps not instantly in numeric figures but in the employee's motivation and effort to quality work.

In addition to that, the firm can benefit from adopting more advanced management tools; such as web based shared software for managing communication & information and tracking internal work progress.

Despite all the emphasis on electronic communication these days, the most frequent and important means of workplace communication is still face-to-face. The media managers can use emotion to amplify communication. Clarke and Crossland define this as the emotional channel of the leader's voice. There are two components to this channel: 1) the communicator's ability to genuinely and appropriately share his/her emotions, (many business leaders find this uncomfortable) and 2) connecting with constituent's emotion. Storytelling is an important tool for leaders who want to connect on an emotional level (Clarke & Crossland 2002).

Top managers can participate in interactive meetings with lower level staffs where they can share their stories with young employees, so that the staffs can relate the stories as inspiration to their own dreams and goals. The top managers can show interest in the personal achievements (beyond the office matters) of the lower level staffs. For example they can congratulate on a wedding or a new baby or a new professional degree etc. The employees will feel good for being noticed by the top managers; sometimes just calling by the name of a lower level staff can lift their spirit drastically because in most cases the top level managers don't know the names or the faces of the lower level staffs. These practices can increase a feeling of shared identity among the employees. In the case of Asiatic MCL, expressing and communicating emotion is not such a problem for the top managers; based on their professional expertise in the field of performing arts, which is all about expressing emotions.

Other than that trainings for the managers on interpersonal communication skills can be arranged including topics such as: measuring the quality of personal communications, identifying barriers of good communications, developing behaviours to enhance working relationships, understanding the importance of non-verbal communication etc. (Harrison 2013). The management can perform simple surveys on employees to check how the subordinates rate their

manager's communication skills and understand how well they understand and relate to the organization's goals and values. This will not only make the subordinates feel valuable but will also give the managers broader insights.

## **8.2 Limitations and further research scope**

It is often suggested that the scope of the findings of qualitative investigations is restricted. When participation observation is used or unstructured interviews are done in small number of individuals in a certain organisation or locality, it is almost impossible to how the findings can be generalized (Bryman & Bell 2015). Then again, the aim of case studies is not to produce knowledge that could be generalised to other contexts in the conventional meaning (Stake 1995).

In this particular case study, the researcher had worked in the organisation prior conducting the study, as much it helped the researcher to get access to the agency (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008), it is likely that it may have also affected the participants responses based on their relationship with the researcher as well.

In addition to that, the empirical example in this study was constrained to one case study only. It represents a specific view of different role players and the creative processes in advertising agencies. A singular case and the small number of participants limit the generalisation of the findings (cf. Hirschman 1986). The anonymity of the participants, adds slight ambiguity in the research.

For further research, more cases from advertising sector can be included to investigate the different ways of managing communication processes, the differences in structures, the creative processes, and the inter-departmental collaboration styles in different agencies. There could be comparison studies of advertising agencies with other media production firms, extended with diverse cases. It could also be interesting to analyse the differences of management approaches regarding internal communications and creative operations in small scale ad firms and large fully fledged firms. The ongoing development and changes in the advertising sector of Bangladesh can also be of interest for further research.

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## **10. Appendices**



## 10.1 Questionnaire category 1

### Key Informant Interview/ Focus Group Discussion (category 1): Topical outlines – Strategic Planning Department

**Purpose:** To understand the roles and responsibilities of Strategic Planning and their perceptions about the agency work processes.

**Participants:** KII: 1 Manager, FGD: 4 executives of the planning/ account team from Asiatic MCL

#### Welcome and Introduction (5 minutes)

Thank you for joining us today for this focus group discussion. We appreciate the time you are spending here today.

This discussion is part of an Academic thesis. During the next 90 minutes we would like to talk about your experiences as a Copywriter/ art director/ designer. Today we would like to talk about how you manage and facilitate briefs, idea generation and brainstorming sessions, agency work load distributions etc. We would like to learn about your successes and also what challenges you face. There are no right and wrong answers today. We just want to learn more about your own experiences.

We want your honest feedback. Your individual responses will be confidential (no one at Asiatic MCL will know what information you personally provide), and your answers will not have a direct bearing on the activities and processes of Asiatic MCL.

#	Question	Note/Probing/Follow up
Q1	Why did you become a Strategic planner/ Account manager? What do you like most about your job?	Allow each participant to answer as a means of establishing trust and bringing all participants into the discussion
Q2	How would you describe your organisation's work	

	culture?	
Q3	Can you tell me how and where exactly the creative process begins?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From which point of the agency the process begins?</li> </ul>
Q4	Have you ever worked in other ad agencies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the working process same there?</li> </ul>
Q5	Let's begin by talking about " <b>Brief</b> " sessions. Can you describe what happens during "Brief" sessions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many people from different departments participate?</li> <li>• What activities are conducted? Or instructed during or after the brief?</li> <li>• What is your role and responsibility during the brief?</li> </ul>
Q6	Now let's talk about the " <b>Deadlines</b> ". Who sets the deadline?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How often does the Deadline change?</li> <li>• What are the most common causes of the changes?</li> <li>• Do you receive same deadlines from multiple brands?</li> <li>• Is your opinion taken under consideration while setting the Deadlines?</li> <li>• Do you feel stressed to finish your work under the deadlines?</li> </ul>
Q7	Now let's talk about the " <b>Co-operation</b> " among	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you use any common</li> </ul>

	different teams? How co-operative do you think other departments are with you?	platform (e.g. Google Drive) to ensure transparency and ease of communication?
Q8	Do you feel that some departments are more challenging to work with than others?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What makes them more difficult to manage than the other departments?</li> <li>• Can you give me some examples?</li> </ul>
Q9	Let's talk about <b>Communication Flow</b> . Does the agency have any management mechanism in order to keep the communication flow smooth?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there someone, who's responsible for maintaining the communication flow and improve the productivity?</li> <li>• How co-operative do you think that person is?</li> </ul>
Q10	Let's move our focus to <b>Creative Judgment</b> . Do you usually agree with the creative judgments you receive from the clients end?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How often do you feel that your creative outputs are being under estimated or overlooked?</li> </ul>
Q11	Let's talk about <b>Work Attitudes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you ever sense any sort of attitude from other departments while working on the same project?</li> <li>• Can you give me some examples?</li> </ul> <p>How does that affect your work?</p>

Q12	I guess that was all from me, do you have anything else to share?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any suggestions that can help improve the processes and the quality of work?</li> <li>• Any observations about the agency, from your experiences?</li> </ul>
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## 10.2 Questionnaire category 2

### Key Informant Interview/Focus Group Discussion (category 2): Topical outlines– Creative Team (Art + Copywriters)

**Purpose:** To understand the roles and responsibilities of copywriters and their perceptions about the agency work processes.

**Participants:** KII: 1, FGD: 4 Members of the Copywriting team from Asiatic MCL

**Duration:** 90 minutes

The “Creative” component will involve separate focus groups: Art team (designers), and Copywriters. It is possible to integrate these into other planned FGDs

#### Welcome and Introduction (5 minutes)

Thank you for joining us today for this focus group discussion. We appreciate the time you are spending here today.

This discussion is part of an Academic thesis. During the next 90 minutes we would like to talk about your experiences as a Copywriter/ art director/ designer. Today we would like to talk about how you manage and facilitate briefs, idea generation and brainstorming sessions, agency work load distributions etc. We would like to learn about your successes and also what challenges you face. There are no right and wrong answers today. We just want to learn more about your own experiences.

We want your honest feedback. Your individual responses will be confidential (no one at Asiatic MCL will know what information you personally provide), and your answers will not have a direct bearing on the activities and processes of Asiatic MCL.

#	Question	Note/Probing/Follow up
Q1	Why did you become a Designer/ copywriter? What do you like most about being a Designer/ copywriter?	Allow each participant to answer as a means of establishing trust and bringing all participants into the discussion
Q2	How would you describe your organisation's work culture?	
Q3	Can you tell me how and where exactly the creative process begins?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From which point of the agency the process begins?</li> </ul>
Q4	Have you ever worked in other ad agencies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the working process same there?</li> </ul>
Q5	Let's begin by talking about " <b>Brief</b> " sessions. Can you describe what happens during "Brief" sessions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many people from different departments participate?</li> <li>• What activities are conducted? Or instructed during or after the brief?</li> <li>• What is your role and responsibility during the brief?</li> </ul>
Q6	Now let's talk about the " <b>Deadlines</b> ". Who sets the deadline?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How often does the Deadline change?</li> <li>• What are the most common causes of the changes?</li> <li>• Do you receive same</li> </ul>

		<p>deadlines from multiple brands?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is your opinion taken under consideration while setting the Deadlines?</li> <li>• Do you feel stressed to finish your work under the deadlines?</li> </ul>
Q7	Now let's talk about the <b>“Co-operation”</b> among different teams? How co-operative do you think other departments are with you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you use any common platform (e.g. Google Drive) to ensure transparency and ease of communication?</li> </ul>
Q8	Let's talk about <b>Communication Flow</b> . Does the agency have any management mechanism in order to keep the communication flow smooth?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there someone, who's responsible for maintaining the communication flow and improve the productivity?</li> <li>• How co-operative do you think that person is?</li> </ul>
Q9	Let's move our focus to <b>Creative Judgment</b> . Do you usually agree with the creative judgments you receive from the clients end?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How often do you feel that your creative outputs are being under estimated or overlooked?</li> </ul>
Q10	Let's talk about <b>Work Attitudes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you ever sense any sort of attitude from other departments while working on the same</li> </ul>

		<p>project?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you give me some examples?</li> </ul> <p>How does that affect your work?</p>
Q11	How would you describe your work load and efficiency to finish the projects on time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you feel the deadlines are reasonable?</li> <li>• Do you feel its stressful to finish multiple projects with tight deadlines?</li> </ul>
Q11	Have you ever been to any trainings or workshops arranged by the agency?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How often do they arrange these training programs?</li> <li>• Do you think they are helpful for developing skills?</li> <li>• Do you think it motivates the employees to perform their best?</li> <li>• What else does the agency do in order to motivate the employees?</li> </ul>
Q12	I guess that was all from me, do you have anything else to share?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any suggestions that can help improve the processes and the quality of work?</li> <li>• Any observations about the agency, from your experiences?</li> </ul>

### 10.3 Questionnaire category 3

#### Key Informant Interview (Category 3): Topical outlines – Traffic Control Manager

**Purpose:** To understand the roles and responsibilities of Traffic Control department and their perceptions about the agency work processes.

**Participants:** Manager of the traffic Control department from Asiatic MCL

**Duration:** 90 minutes

Thank you for joining us today for this focus group discussion. We appreciate the time you are spending here today.

This discussion is part of an Academic thesis. During the next 90 minutes we would like to talk about your experiences as a Copywriter/ art director/ designer. Today we would like to talk about how you manage and facilitate briefs, idea generation and brainstorming sessions, agency work load distributions etc. We would like to learn about your successes and also what challenges you face. There are no right and wrong answers today. We just want to learn more about your own experiences.

We want your honest feedback. Your individual responses will be confidential (no one at Asiatic MCL will know what information you personally provide), and your answers will not have a direct bearing on the activities and processes of Asiatic MCL.

#	Question	Note/Probing/Follow up
Q1	Why did you become an Advertising executive? What do you like most about your job?	Allow each participant to answer as a means of establishing trust and bringing all participants into the discussion
Q2	How would you describe the work culture in your agency?	
Q3	Can you tell me how and where exactly the creative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From which point of the</li> </ul>



	process begins?	agency the process begins?
Q4	Have you ever worked in other ad agencies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the working process same there?</li> </ul>
Q5	Let's begin by talking about " <b>Brief</b> " sessions. Can you describe what happens during "Brief" sessions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many people from different departments participate?</li> <li>• What activities are conducted? Or instructed during or after the brief?</li> <li>• What is your role and responsibility during the brief?</li> </ul>
Q6	Now let's talk about the " <b>Deadlines</b> ". Who sets the deadline?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How often does the Deadline change?</li> <li>• What are the most common causes of the changes?</li> <li>• Do you receive same deadlines from multiple brands?</li> <li>• Is your opinion taken under consideration while setting the Deadlines?</li> <li>• Do you feel stressed to finish your work under the deadlines?</li> </ul>
Q7	Now let's talk about the " <b>Co-operation</b> " among different teams? How co-operative do you think other departments are with you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you use any common platform (e.g. Google Drive) to ensure</li> </ul>

		transparency and ease of communication?
Q8	Let's talk about <b>Communication Flow</b> . Does the agency have any management mechanism in order to keep the communication flow smooth?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there someone, who's responsible for maintaining the communication flow and improve the productivity?</li> <li>• How co-operative do you think that person is?</li> </ul>
Q9	Now can you tell me a little bit about your department? How long have you been working as traffic manager here?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many workers do you have in your department?</li> <li>• Before that did you serve the same role in other agencies?</li> <li>• Before you joined was there any traffic department in Asiatic MCL?</li> </ul>
Q10	Let's move our focus to <b>Creative Judgment</b> . Do you usually agree with the creative judgments you receive from the clients end?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How often do you feel that your creative outputs are being under estimated or overlooked?</li> </ul>
Q11	Let's talk about <b>Work Attitudes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you ever sense any sort of attitude from other departments while working on the same project?</li> <li>• Can you give me some examples?</li> </ul>

		How does that affect your work?
Q12	Do you feel that some departments are more difficult to manage than others?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What makes them more difficult to manage than the other departments?</li> <li>• Can you give me some examples?</li> </ul>
Q13	I guess that was all from me, do you have anything else to share?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any suggestions that can help improve the processes and the quality of work?</li> <li>• Any observations about the agency, from your experiences?</li> </ul>