



Exploring the Organizational Factors That Influence Creativity: A Study on Advertising Agencies of Pakistan

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Abstract

Present study aims to study the factors affecting creativity in the advertisements in Pakistan. KEYS encouragement of creativity, autonomy or freedom, resources, pressures, and organizational impediments to Creativity and Innovation assessment tool was used to identify factors affecting creativity. The findings show that though the top management in advertising agencies encourage their employees to be creative by offering financial rewards and verbal encouragement, but the clients they were working for, generally do not accept creative ideas to market their brand because of unwillingness to take risks and limitations in budgets. The findings of the study will help the branding agencies and brands to work together for creating an environment that fosters creativity in their organizations which can then be reflected in the advertisements.

Keyword: *Organizational Factors, Creativity, Advertising Agencies, KEYS To Creativity And Innovation Model*

Introduction and Rationale of the Study

The rise in the number of television channels, internet users along with the rise of consumerism has given Advertising in Pakistan is a booming business that is experiencing regular growth in the revenues. Brands are spending heavily on a TV advertisement to make the target customers buy their products (Gallup, 2014). Creative advertisements can help the brands in targeting the Pakistani customers more effectively by providing the customers with the advertisements that can grab the target market's attention and make them buy the product (Oldham & Cummings, 1996;

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Ang, Leong and Lee, 2007; Ahmad, & Mahmood, 2011).

Creative advertisements are more effective than conventional advertisements for brand recall, brand and advertisement attitude and purchase intent (Ahmad & Mahmood, 2011). Despite this, advertisement agencies of Pakistan are significantly engaged in plagiarism. Apart from a few advertisements, most of the advertisements in Pakistan offer the same ideas. There are various reasons for this behavior, including a less commission for advertising agencies to make creative ad concepts, lack of suitable human resources and high workload and turnover rate of employees, to name a few (Haleem, 2015). The problem faced by the professionals in advertising agencies is the elements of the organization negatively influencing the creative thinking of professionals in developing original advertisements. This problem affects advertising agencies significantly as their clients ask them to come up with creative ideas to market their products.

The research objective of the study is to explore the organizational factors that affect creativity potential in developing advertisements in the ad agencies of Pakistan. The research provides valuable insight for advertising agencies and brands to improve the level of creativity in advertisements of Pakistan. This study can help advertising agencies improve their return on investment. It can help the brands in improving their brand recall, brand engagement, positive brand attitude, brand purchase and improved brand sale. The findings of the research can also affect TV viewers positively, as viewers are exposed to TV commercials while watching their favorite program.

RQ 1. What are the organizational factors to explore the creativity in ad agencies of Pakistan?

Literature Review

Need for Advertising and Creativity

According to Oldham and Cummings (1996), creativity is products, ideas, or procedures satisfying two conditions. This includes being original or novel and being useful/ potentially relevant for an organization. Creativity refers to the generation of creative ideas; whereas, innovation is the implementation of those ideas (Heye, 2006). Organizational creativity is “the creation of a valuable, useful new product, service, idea, procedure, or process by individuals working together in a complex social system” (Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin, 1993). Creative advertising provides a solution to brands for breaking through the greater media clutter and building an impression. Many pieces of research have associated creative advertising with advertising effectiveness. Creative advertising helps recall a brand, recognize a brand, and find a brand attractive. These are all associations of creative advertising with advertising effectiveness (Moriarty et al., 2014). Creative advertising is also reported to provide positive effects of attention on memory that is again regarded as a measure for advertising effectiveness (Leather, McKechnie and Amirkhani, 1994).

Creative Advertising in Pakistan

Creative advertisements are more effective than conventional advertisements for Pakistani customers (Ahmad & Mahmood, 2011). A barrier for producing creative advertisements in Pakistan is that advertisement agencies are getting less return for the services. The ad agencies also experience low retention rates of employees, making it difficult to offer creative ideas that can pull

customers (Haleem, 2015). The low retention rate can be because of the low profitability of advertising agencies that makes it difficult for the advertising agencies to offer suitable pay, training and incentives to its employees. Thus, the workload for the ad agencies' employees and the unwillingness of the client to compensate for the services hinders creative advertising development in Pakistan.

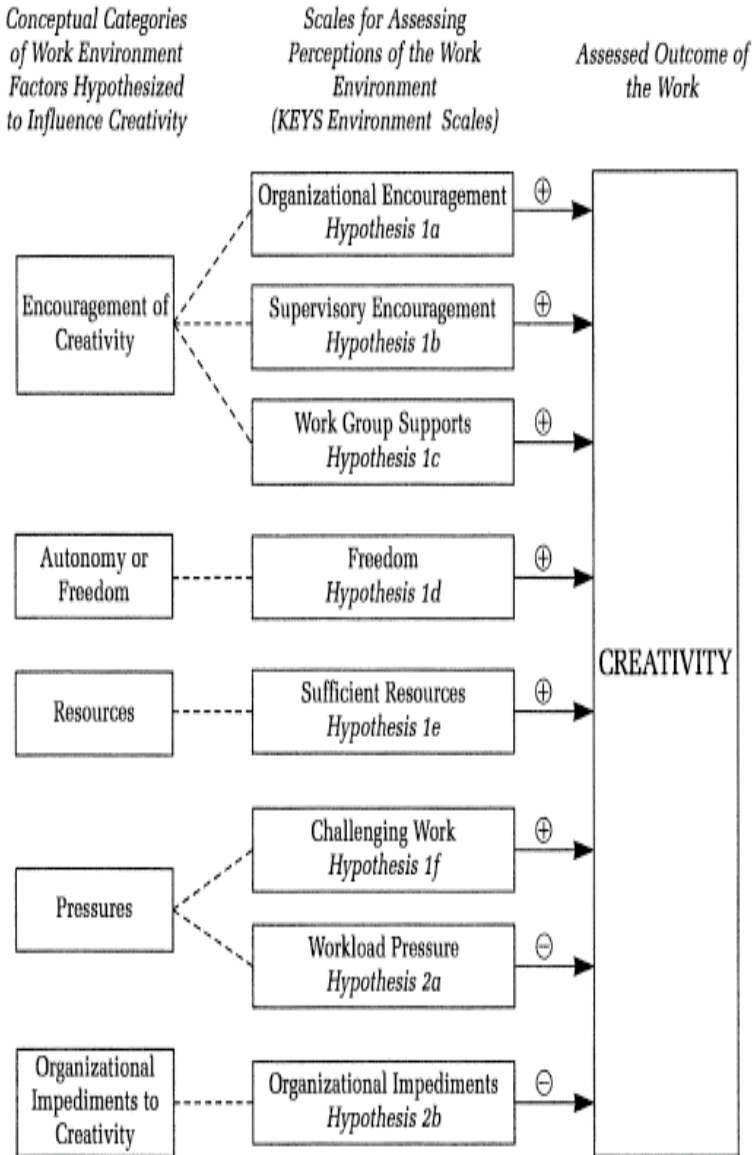
KEYS to Creativity and Innovation

The Amabile et al. (1996) model is used as a theoretical framework for this study. The model present factors that influence creativity in an organization. According to this model, the main conceptual categories that influence creativity include: "Encouragement of Creativity, Autonomy or Freedom, Resources, Pressures, and Organizational Impediments to Creativity" (Amabile et al., 1996). The theory is recognized as the main theory of individual and organizational creativity that served as the foundation for several other creativity theories (Hunter et al., 2007).

To examine the creativity of individuals and groups within the workplace "KEYS to Creativity and Innovation" model was developed by Amabile et al. in 1996 and this model is used to examine the organizational climate for creativity (Amabile et al., 1999). Technical and non-technical tasks can be measured with the help of the KEYS assessment model, as well as the right assessment tool for measuring creativity (Culpepper, 2010). Another motivation for using this model is that as the basis of our case; The categories in the model cover the main points of the topic. The structures in the model provide a credible overview of the topic, making it easier to conduct research by following a direction.

Figure 1: KEYS to Creativity and Innovation

Conceptual Model Underlying Assessment of Perceptions of the Work Environment for Creativity^a



Methodology

The findings from the critical literature review suggest that there are many studies conducted to determine the factors affecting creativity in organizations around the world. However, the researcher could not find published studies on factors affecting creativity in advertising agencies of Pakistan. This makes it important to conduct first-hand research to identify the factors affecting creativity potential in ad agencies of Pakistan.

Qualitative research is conducted to explore the variable of the research study. The type of research will help identify the factors affecting creativity in advertising agencies of Pakistan from a practical viewpoint. The deductive approach is used to study the factors affecting creativity in advertising agencies of Pakistan. This approach contributes to the emergence of new theories and generalizations. It aims to explore the meaning of human attachment to events. The approach helps in understanding the problem in a deeper manner using a qualitative type of data. Deductive reasoning offers a more flexible approach to research where the researcher is a part of the research process. The findings of the research do not have to be generalized for this approach (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). The approach used for research is constructivism, which accepts reality as a construct of the human mind. This means that reality is perceived to be subjective. The study is exploratory in nature, as this approach will help in better exploration of the new phenomena that can be tested for a more extensive study. Such an approach helps in identifying key issues and key variables for the research topic.

The target population of the study consisted of professionals in the creative department of the advertising agencies of Pakistan. Everything from print ads, broadcast ads, websites, and guerrilla campaigns are conceived in this department. As the department is directly involved in developing creative content for the brands, it is the right subject to fulfill the research objective. The sampling technique used for the research study is a non-probability sampling. This is because the researcher is bounded by time, money and workforce. The Snowball sampling technique is used where the researcher asked the relevant professional to identify other potential subjects who also meets the criteria of the research. The sample size for the research is 30 interviews.

As the research aims at exploring the variables of the study, semi-structured interviews are conducted to find the independent variables. A direct, face-to-face interaction between the researcher and the respondent added a human dimension to impersonal data and helped in identifying factors affecting the subject. The interview guide consists of questions relating to the organization's encouragement of creativity, the client's encouragement of creativity, freedom, resources and pressure affecting creativity in ad agencies of Pakistan.

Thirty people from different ad agencies were contacted for interviews. The ad agencies contacted include Synergy Advertising, Adcom, M&C Saatchi, Interlink Advertising, Channel 7 and Xdynamix Communications in Islamabad. The company Synergy Advertising works for brands including Witribe, Fauji Foundation, ABC Diapers, and Askari Bank, etc. Another agency that was contacted includes M&C Saatchi, which mainly works

USAID and Khushaali Bank. The ad agency Adcom works for Telenor, Samsung and Omere. The clients of Interlink advertising include PEPCO, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited, askari bank and others. Channel 7 clients include the Poverty Alleviation Fund, Air University, and Air Weapon, etc. Another agency contacted includes Xdynamix Communications, whose clients include Telenor, Airblue, Mobilink, and USAID.

The interviews were transcribed to identify themes and patterns in the data. The written script made it easier to identify themes than reviewing the audio script. To summarize the content identified through primary data collection, a directed content analyses approach is used. The reason for using this approach is the availability of relevant theories to guide the research. As relevant theory and prior research exist about a phenomenon that is being studied, descriptive content analyses are a suitable method to study the factors affecting creativity in advertising. A directed approach to content analysis validates or extends the theoretical framework relevant to the study. The findings from a directed content analysis offered supporting evidence for an existing theory (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). NVivo software was used to manage data. The software helped the researcher in categorizing segments of text to particular themes which further helped in coding the data making it easier to analyze the data.

Conceptualization and Operationalization of Constructs

The main concepts used to assess the factors affecting creativity, based on literature includes:

Organizational Encouragement

The term also includes management's push to generate new ideas, management's willingness to take risks, and management's implementation of a fair and supportive system to evaluate the ideas. Employees are likely to feel encouraged to creatively think if their ideas are evaluated fairly and respectfully instead of harsh criticism (Amabile et al., 1998; Zhou and George 2001).

Supervisory Encouragement

According to Hennessey and Amabile (2010), the manager plays a key role in achieving organizational objectives. They are responsible for ensuring open interactions between managers and subordinates (Amabile & Khaire, 2008). Managerial encouragement towards creative thinking is a very important determinant of organizational creativity, according to Amabile et al. (1996), Constructive feedback by the manager can also encourage subordinates to improve their innovative performance (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). The employees are likely to be more motivated to creatively think if their supervisors are role models for them, making it important for supervisors to set the right example (Gong et al., 2012).

Work Group Supports

This dimension deals with the social aspects of workgroups. If the employees perceived their workgroup to be supporting, they are likely to demonstrate creative thinking at work (Amabile et al., 1996). The brainstorming sessions between two or more people working together enhance individual creative self-efficacy, enabling them to be creative in the work (Tierney & Farmer, 2011). The team members should also trust each other and manage conflict effectively to work productively (Amabile et al., 1996).

Freedom

The research by Amabile and Grysiewicz, (1989) supports the relationship between freedom and creativity as having a choice on how to do the work for achieving goals encourages employees to be creative in achieving results for work. According to Csikszentmihalyi, (1999), creativity requires non-routine work environments that enable individuals to overcome mental hurdles and encourage creative thinking.

Sufficient Resources

Common resources include time, budget, material, money, human resources and information. According to Andriopoulos (2001), sufficient time is an important resource for promoting creativity at the workplace as it enables the employees to think creatively and explore various perspectives instead of sticking with the traditional methods. Another important consideration is to issue the right amount of resources. Allocating more resources can create wastage, whereas the insufficient amount of resources can dampen creativity (Amabile, 1998).

Another important resource is the budget of the organization to support the creative process. If this is not achieved, employees may spend their creativity on acquiring additional resources instead of allocating their energy on being creative (Amabile, 1988). Human resources is also a very important resource to develop creative ideas as input from multiple individuals is required to pursue creative activities (Mumford, Feldman, Hein, & Nagao, 2001). Lastly, another resource for creativity development is information exchange in the workplace, as more information helps in developing trust among employees at the workplace.

Information sets the direction for employees on the areas to think to enable the employees to be creative at their work (Gong, Cheung, Wang, & Huang, 2012).

Pressures

Pressure is one of the factors that affect creativity in the Amabile creativity model. Even though extreme pressure tends to hurt creativity, a small degree of pressure can create motivation and challenge for people to work hard (Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1987; Amabile, 1988). It can be divided as either 'excessive workload' or 'challenge'. The excessive workload can negatively affect creativity, especially if employees feel the work and pressure is imposed on them as a tool to control them. On the other hand, if pressure is creating a challenge for employees, employees can be motivated to offer creative solutions to meet the challenge (Amabile, 1996). Employees may feel unsure about their capabilities at first when the challenge is assigned to them; However, with time, passion, growth sparks and creativity, an employee will be able to achieve individual goals assigned by the manager (Amabile, 1998).

Organizational Impediments to Creativity and Innovation

The management can obstruct creativity in the organization by taking control of the decision making and control of the information flow. For the employees to demonstrate highly creative behavior, expertise and creative skills must be accompanied by intrinsic motivation (Amabile, 1988). Other factors that negatively influence creativity include internal political problems, destructive internal competition, harsh criticism of new ideas, avoidance of risk, and an overemphasis on the status quo (Amabile, & Gryskiewicz, 1989).

Results and Findings***Creativity***

Respondents were asked to define creativity in advertising. Popular themes identified in the interview includes offering unique ideas (different ideas than the traditional way of advertising a product), promoting the product in a way that encourages target customers to buy the product, solving a problem with given resources effectively, and an idea that creates excitement and makes an impact. Every respondent in the ad agency said that creativity is very important for them. This is because clients want to work with ad agencies who offer creative ideas.

Organization Encouragement of Creativity

As organizational encouragement of creativity improves the level of creativity in organizations, questions were asked to understand whether the culture in ad agencies support creative thinking in ad agencies of Pakistan. All respondents said that their organization encourages creativity. That is because the clients demand creativity. Other activities such as internal newspapers and newsletters encourage employees to introduce creative content as they want. The employees are also praised/ acknowledged and criticized for the quality of the work they provide by top management, which encourages the employees to keep giving their best. To summarize, it can be said that ad agencies encourage creativity by asking employees to come up with creative ideas, through a regular brainstorming session, by acknowledging and praising employees, and by giving rewards in terms of promotion and increased salary for their performance.

Clients' Encouragement to Creativity

Respondents were asked how clients affected creativity. They answered that as we are working for clients and the final approval for ad campaign lies in the hands of the client. The client plays a primary role in creativity. Some clients even give a reference to international ads for agencies to be wild with creative thinking. The client initially tells the agencies to come up with creative ideas and they even approve the ideas, but once they start hearing the costs associated with campaigns, they tell the ad agencies that they don't have that budget to support the campaign. This wastes the time and effort of ad agencies and clients.

Work Group Supports

Respondents were asked "whether they make a good team?" at the organization they are working at. The majority of the respondents believed "they make a good team." According to respondents, there is a clash between the client service and the creative department because when the creative department's ideas get rejected by the client servicing department before being presented to the client. There are situations where team members in ad agencies are fighting to defend their ideas. Conflict does affect the level of creativity, but it also contributes positively as team members can see the other perspective.

Availability of Resources

Implementing creative ideas requires substantial resources. The common resources include time, budget, material, money, human resource and information. Questions were asked regarding how the availability of resources affects the level of creativity ad agencies of Pakistan. Most of the respondents reported budget by the clients for the project as a problem in implementing a creative idea.

However, during the execution stage, they cannot afford the huge expenses of the ad and settle for mediocre and typical advertising.

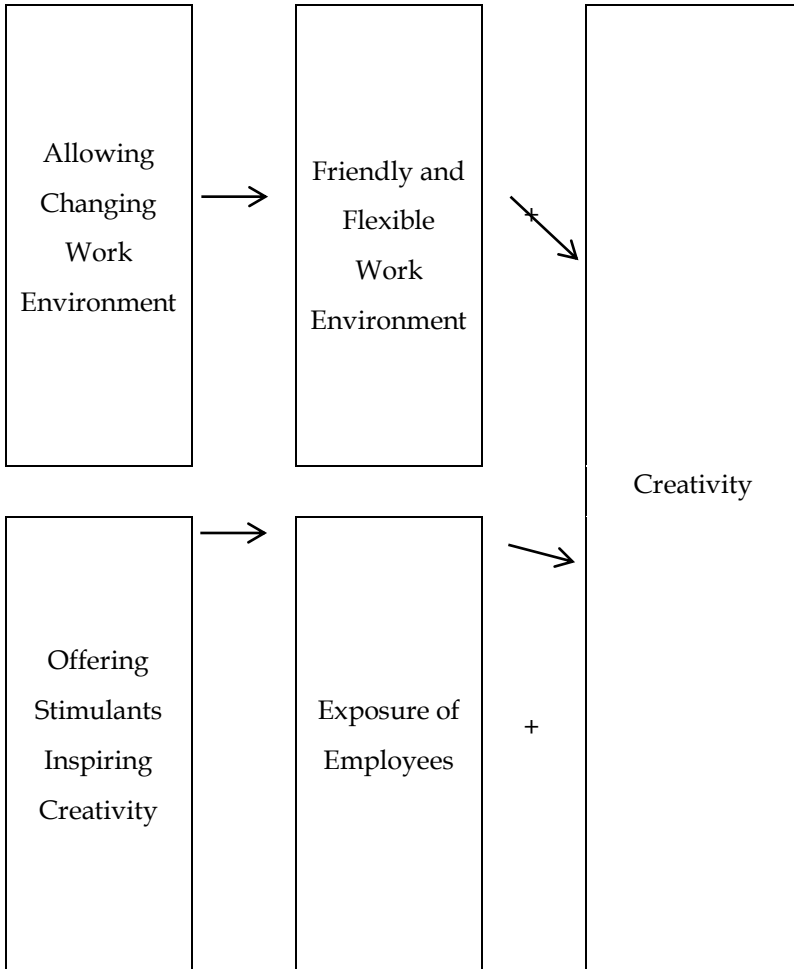
Pressure at Work

The pressure is one of the factors that can affect creativity negatively and positively. Respondents reported that time pressure is a problem that affects the quality of the work they provide. Respondents also reported that many clients have unrealistic expectations for ad agencies in the deadline they provide them to work. Employees need to put late hours to complete their work.

Other factors affecting Creativity in Ad Agencies of Pakistan

The highest reported factor (five times reported in an interview) affecting creativity included a friendly environment. By a friendly environment, the respondents wanted an environment where employees can discuss freely and openly. Similarly, a lack of knowledge regarding the target audience (market insight) was also reported as an important variable by five respondents. Respondents also reported less stress at work, willingness to improve themselves and increase in training and courses to enhance skills as important factors (each factor reported by three different respondents) that will positively contribute to creativity in ad agencies of Pakistan. They mentioned that stimulants in an environment including music, laugh and food reduces stress and helps the employees work comfortably and creatively in ad agencies. Workplace security also contributes to encouraging creativity as having no fear of losing a job in case a person fails in getting the creative idea successful, the employee will be willing to take the risk. Hard work and quality of brainstorming sessions were also reported by respondents in encouraging creativity.

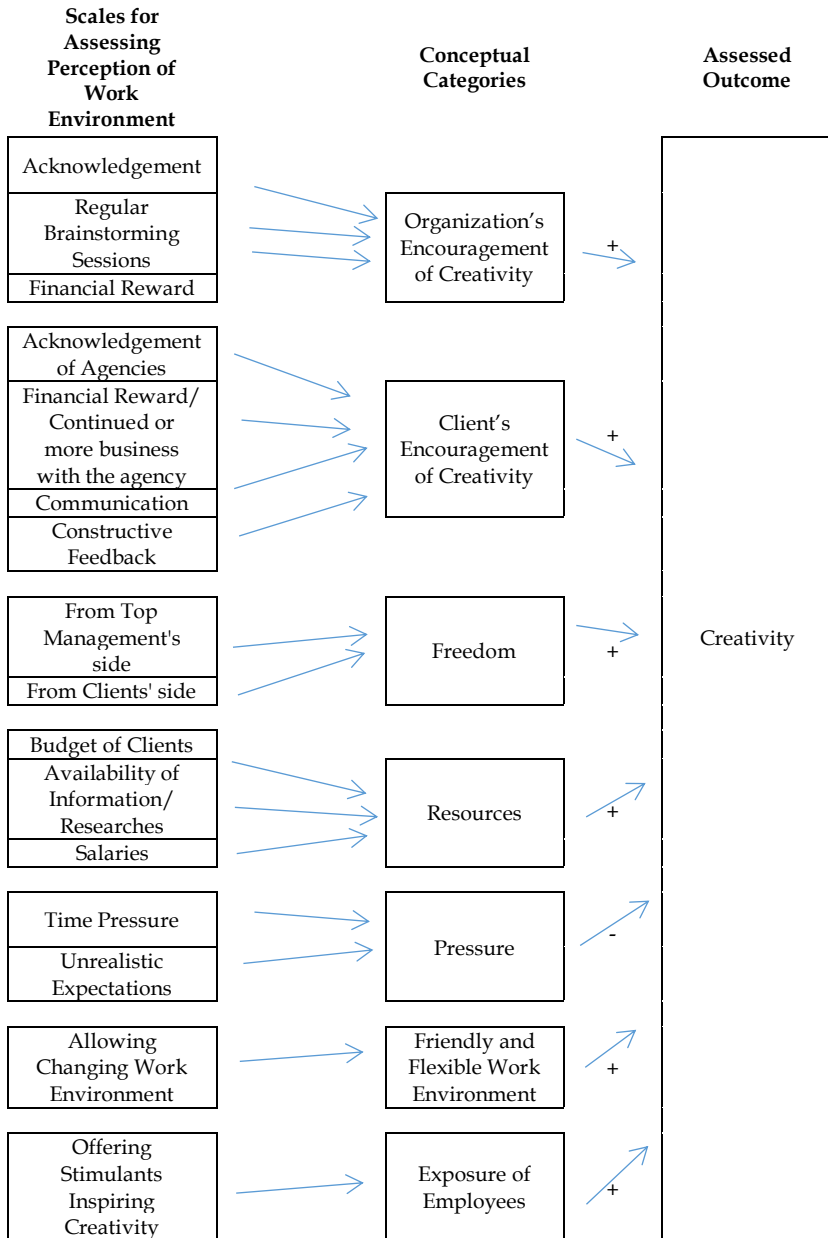
Figure 2 shows other factors affecting creativity in an advertising



agency that were not present in the KEYS model. These were identified through qualitative research.

Considering the KEYS model and new findings from qualitative research, the proposed model of research is presented as Figure 3

Figure 3: Proposed Model of Creativity



In figure 3, the conceptual categories of the schematic diagram are the main independent variables affecting the dependable variable

creativity. The relationship of conceptual categories with the assessed outcome is showed with the arrows next to these variables. The relationship is either positive or negative. Except for pressure, every other variable affects creativity in the organization positively.

Preposition from Proposed Model:

Preposition 1. Organizational encouragement of creativity positively affects the level of creativity in ad agencies.

Preposition 2. Agencies' client encouragement of creativity positively affects the level of creativity in ad agencies.

Preposition 3. Employees having freedom or control over their work and ideas positively affects the level of creativity in ad agencies.

Preposition 4. Availability of resources positively affects the level of creativity in ad agencies.

Preposition 5. Pressure negatively affects the level of creativity in ad agencies.

Preposition 6. Flexible and friendly work environment positively affects the level of creativity in ad agencies.

Preposition 7. Exposure of employees positively affects the level of creativity in ad agencies.

Conclusion

The main insights from the empirical research were that top management in advertising agencies encourages creativity by offering financial rewards and verbal encouragement that are supporting the arguments of Amabile et al., 1998; Zhou and George 2001. Barriers affecting the level of creativity include ad agencies' limited research to understand the market, time pressure and

limited exposure of employees for creative inspiration. These findings also support the arguments of Amabile & Grysiewicz, 1987; Amabile, 1988; Haleem, 2015 The respondents also reported that a friendly and flexible environment also helps them in being creative.

Limitations

Even though the research offered valuable insight for advertising practitioners, the research is limited and large-scale survey targeting multiple advertising agencies in Pakistan of different sizes and from different cities of Pakistan is required to validate the results of the survey.

Recommendation

The clients' point of view regarding the factors affecting creativity also offers an area for future research. The analyses from this study as well as the proposed future studies can help in improving the organizational climate at advertising agencies which can further help the brands in giving the message that appeals to the target market enabling their customers to buy the product.

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Journal of Media Studies 35(1)

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