

## **Effectiveness of Teamwork towards Knowledge Creation: Understanding Exchange Relationships in Advertising Agencies**

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### **Abstract**

*The paper describes exchange relationships experiences of team leaders in advertising agencies related to switching of jobs and tasks from one brand to other. The study is subjectivist philosophical stance to understand the creation of knowledge. A small exploratory study collected information from eight managers working in different advertising agencies. The study found that dynamic advertising environment, industrial rivalry and satisfying client's demand, continually create innovative ads or other promotional campaigns. The most contributing factor turns out to be positive exchange relationships among team members. Effectives of team work increases innovation otherwise the advertising tasks cannot be performed on individual basis. Team members working closely for a long time decline their productivity as the close collaboration results in creating a comfort zone for members and their thought process is mutually aligned. Moreover, innovation and creativity is achieved when a person is free of mind and in a flexible environment.*

*Key words: knowledge creation, exchange relationship, switching jobs, team work, advertisement industry*

### **Introduction**

Knowledge creation is an activity which requires few basic components that includes an integration of personal mastery into social networks through exchange relationships among various employees motivated by exploration oriented approach under the supervision of knowledgeable leadership flourishes in the dynamic atmosphere. An exchange relationships concerned with a process of generating idea by a self-sufficient team further motivated as a result of job satisfaction and social networking through continuous learning under the umbrella of supportive environment directed by a democratic leadership. Knowledge creation has been strongly emphasized by (Faulconbridge, 2006) instead of merely knowledge transfer in sharing tacit knowledge across wide geographies of the globe. Knowledge creation and management is an

important facet for advertising firms as these are involved in creating effective ads through reconciling the intangible knowledge originated from individuals dispersed across scattered networks (Faulconbridge, 2006). Evidence suggest us that the effective management regarding globally scattered innovation requires collaboration among various social networks (Smedlund, 2009). An organization can continuously learn and innovate by utilizing information strategically, enacting environment and organizing the knowledge as well as expertise of employees (Choo, 1996). As stated by Nonaka, Kodama, Hirose, and Kohlbacher (2014) that knowledge triad relations are rooted in each level and chunk of an organization that results in a fractal organization which not only enhances creative routines but also promotes the synthesizing culture with the support of dialogue as well as practice through which innovative knowledge continuously develops. In the context of Pakistan, the results of study by Ahmad and Mahmood (2011) provide an important insights for marketing as well as advertising personals regarding vital role of creativity in an ads while introduction of new product or service. Evidences from prior research also suggests that promotion of new brands through innovative advertisements can capture share of mind or heart as compared with normal advertisements (Ahmad & Mahmood, 2011). The research seeks answer of following questions:

- ✓ How teams create innovation in advertising agencies?
- ✓ What is the role of exchange relationships in knowledge creation?

The study has been done to provide evident that with increase in no of years spent together the new knowledge creation decreases and stops if no new knowledge partner would be added. Research regarding social networks tells that creation of value with the help of knowledge is embedded in relations among individuals (Smedlund, 2009). So, it is necessary to have understanding regarding social network structures. Evidence tells us that three types of social network structures existed which includes centralized, distributed and decentralized that are important in each phase of innovation process (Smedlund, 2009). The success and failure of advertising agencies depends on non-provision of appropriate social network. The study fills the gap in the literature by exploring the exchange relationships in advertising agencies through lived experiences of teams leaders.

### **Literature Review**

Today knowledge is considered as one of crucial asset for organization to fulfill the need of creativity and integrity (Sambamurthy & Subramani, 2005). When this knowledge moves from one member to other team members it is known as knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing consists of distribution, transfer and diffusion of information (Wasko & Faraj, 2005). The term social capital defines relationship resources significant for individual progress in community social organization (Bolino, Turnley & Blood God, 2002). Social capital has been recognized as factor that adds value to social network process (lee, lee & Penning, 2001). The structure of network (flexibility, chain of command, connectivity and density) impacts the exchange of knowledge among team

members (Krackhardt, 1992). Knowledge transfer is a process through which one member of the team shares his experience with other team members (Argote & Ingram, 2000). The capability of sharing knowledge makes organization more productive as compare to organization which lacks in this capability. (Hansen, 2002). Sharing among team members brings fresh knowledge in team. This new knowledge plays significant role in improvement of individual as well as organizations. (Kotabe, Martin & Domoto, 2003).

Knowledge is often perceived as a personal asset and source of power therefore, members are not willing to share this personal asset with others. It is a challenge for leader to pursue and motivate team members to share knowledge (Currie & Kerring, 2003). The team members or network shares knowledge only when they trust each other. Interpersonal trust and confidence on team members is the key of team effectiveness (Naquin & Paulson, 2003) If they lack in trust creates doubts and ultimately results in competitive confusion (Powell, Koput & Smith-Doerr, 1996) because performance of team and their future willingness to share is dependent on interpersonal trust (Naquin & Paulson, 2003). Trust is base of social exchange, lack of trust guide team member to show resistance in exchange of knowledge (Blau, 1964).

Knowledge creating companies should be involved in creating and sharing new knowledge persistently through new process, services, and technologies (Nonaka, 1994). Advertising industry is also one of the knowledge-creating industries. The core of advertising firm is continuous creativity. It has been asserted that creativity can take place in those firms which provide encouraging social work network (Delbecq, 1985). Along with organizational support, appropriate evaluation of ideas and reward are also crucial for creativity (Martenson, 2000).

In knowledge-driven economy, intangible assets have gained prominent importance. Firm's performance is dependent on skills and know-how of employees (Teece, 1998). The creative potentiality in advertising depends upon the imagination of idea creators and team which executes the idea (Semino, 1997). Advertising is an imaginary world, people relates their identities with the content shown in ads, (Campos Pardillos, 1995). The Advertising field requires having in-depth awareness about target audience, current market trends, client's demand, viewer's perception, laws and regulations, competitor's strength and who so ever can be considered as a valuable source for producing relevant knowledge, (Michailova & Husted 2003).

Teams become creative if they have shared dedication for project. They have power to make certain decisions and provided with sufficient resources and if the project is challenging. (Martenson, 2000). On the other hand issues like politics, rigid structures, and conservatism should controlled to encourage team for creativity (Amabile, 1998).

T.M Amabile has highlighted eight categories, important for creative work environment which includes motivation, good supervision, balanced workload, team support, adequate resources, freedom, challenges task and organizational impediment. These categories

have both positive and negative influence over creative work environment (Amabile, 1998).

Unlike conventional factors of production, knowledge is an intangible resource; producer needs to utilize this resource in unique way to come up with innovative service or product. (Nonaka, Toyama & Nagata, 2000). Advertising firms largely rely interdependent tasks, to best serve client and survive in competitive advantage, it is important bring collective knowledge of all members of team. (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). It is a challenge for team to make the most of the diverse knowledge and create novel knowledge. The important facet of integrating knowledge is to show willingness bring together the knowledge created within and outside the teams (Leonard & Wellsprings, 1995). Team members are required to integrate new information in their understanding to cope up with the challenges they are facing. Thus, the work they do by utilizing their diverse skills, experience and knowledge, learning is inherent in that (Mohrman & Mohrman). Knowledge is alleged as set of collective beliefs, constructed through social interaction but how organizations view knowledge depends on their culture. (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Organizations have system that converts ideas in to innovative products and services through exploitation of knowledge. Teams fuse their knowledge shared by members through interactive system and develop cognitive maps. (Crossan, 1999). Ideas, innovation, and metaphors should be brought together in an interrelated way and integrated as a whole. This whole process of integration can be best practices through transformational leadership. (Bass, 1993). When employee has freedom to create and share and execute their new idea, they become productive. Transformational leadership is a style which offers this favorable environment for creation of new knowledge as well as sharing and exploitation (Sosik, 1997). The role of leader is very important for managing knowledge by providing followers with new vision and motivates them to achieve that vision at all organizational level to convert knowledge into competitive edge. Bass has argued that transformational leaders can motivate employees for extraordinary performance through influencing the followers and their behaviors. (Bass, 1985).

Motivation is not the only factor that is important for knowledge creation and sharing. Individuals are considered as prime movers of tacit knowledge. (Nonaka, 1994). New knowledge takes place when team combines and exchange the knowledge with other members. Knowledge is considered as power and it results in resistance to share knowledge. Therefore, employees should get intrinsic as well extrinsic rewards to perform up to exception (Davenport, 2002)

Organizations use different reward systems to persuade employees for share their knowledge with other members of the team. This sharing of knowledge can be in any form, tacit or explicit, verbal or conceptual. It is asserted by Nonaka that source of tacit knowledge is apprenticeship, observation and socialization. Thus, working together with creative people can provide best result in terms of new knowledge creation and sharing. (Davenport, 2002). Organizational reward system has several aspects that mold employee

behavior in a expected way for example: challenging goals, appreciations, perceived fairness in rewards, and the activities that enhance self-efficacy. (Bartol & Locke, 2000). Amabile suggest that there is positive relationship between the extrinsic motivation and creativity. Therefore different form of extrinsic motivation should be combined with intrinsic motivation and designed in way that enhances individual's creativity (Amabile, 1993). Individual are well informed about the value of their unique knowledge. If organization fails to design appropriate reward system, employees switch to other organization. When they switch to other organizations it means they could work with competitors (Bartol, 2002).

Employee and employers are in a continuum of exchange relationships. This relationship is based on social and economic terms (Molten, 2000). For formal interaction terms and conditions are discussed and agreed in advance. Whereas, in social exchange contribute beyond their job descriptions.

**Research Methodology:** The qualitative research explores the effectiveness of teams and their relationships in the process of knowledge creation because. The research philosophy is a subjectivist ontological stance because the reality of knowledge creation in advertising agencies and the reality of team effectiveness is not a fixed reality like in objectivism. Our epistemological stance is interpretivist because it attempts to provide objective accounts of social reality which cannot be achieved using only rationalist methodologies.

Research design for this study was based on grounded theory methodology established guidelines (see: Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Glaser (1992) noted that grounded theory is useful for research related to human behavior in organizations, groups, and other social configurations. As we are focusing on effectiveness of teamwork in a knowledge sector so grounded theory suits our research objectives by allowing to make a framework of knowledge creation in advertising agencies and developing propositions about the effectiveness of teamwork. An added intricacy is two schools of thought: Straussian school (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Corbin and Strauss, 2008) and Glasserian school (Glaser, 1978) which significantly differ in their analysis techniques such as coding methods and paradigm development. This research adopted Straussian school for data analysis.

Interviews were selected as data collection method. For conducting interviews an interview guide was developed however questions were not set in a specific order, rather they were structured in a way that developed the conversation (Burgess, 1988). The average interview time was around one hour. We conducted eight semi-structured in depth interviews in which seven were conducted at respondent's place either offices or home and one was conducted on skype as the respondent was in Karachi. Rest of the seven interviews were conducted in Lahore. In this study non probability purposive sampling technique has been used to recruit participants for interviews in order to fulfill the specific purpose of the study.

**Data Analysis: Data Immersion:** Grounded theory methodology provides comprehensive guidelines for analyzing the qualitative data. The first step in analysis is immersion in the data which refers to transcription of interviews, a thorough reading of the transcription and necessary editing to achieve accuracy. Data analysis process takes place parallel to the data collection until saturation of concepts and categories is reached. Transcription and reading process also helped to jot down some initial ideas to establish an initial coding scheme as suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Open coding in the current research was conducted by examining the data (defined here as the interview transcripts and researcher's post interview notes) for similarities and differences to identify discrete categories and subcategories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Next to open coding, a rather complex and higher level of coding is axial coding. Various concepts emerged in the open coding were integrated in multiple categories during the axial coding process. Paradigm model was completed by asking questions and employing constant comparison technique (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Merriam and Associates, 2002) during the analysis process. Selective coding was done by relating all major categories to the core category through the device of the paradigm model.

## **Findings**

The study has developed relationship between knowledge creation and exchange relationships in team members of advertising agencies. Core categories have been linked to each other through paradigm model by constant comparison method. Following are the tables showing the categories resulting from open, axial and selective coding. Four core categories effectiveness of teamwork, leadership knowing, knowledge creation and exchange relationships are linked together to form a paradigm model.

- a. **Positive Exchange Relationships:** All the respondents in the study were of the view that exchange relationships play vital role in creating innovation in advertising agencies. According of participants, for a dynamic environment like advertising, the utmost need for surviving in the industry and satisfying client's demands is to continually create innovative ads or other promotional campaigns. For this purpose the most contributing factor turns out to be positive exchange relationships among team members. According to the participants:
  - ✓ In our industry collective effort is important if one person is related to creative department is enable to strike any new idea than other members of the team should share some idea for new idea generation. However, for this one need to have positive intentions not just for the sake of giving idea but having commitment that his help to the team would ultimately benefit the company and him.
  - ✓ In ad agencies one person's success is entire team's success and one person's failure is of entire team's failure, we don't blame each other. The nature of our job is collaborative and interdependent, therefore, everybody is equally involved in it.

*So a collaborative, integrated network that strengthens exchange relationships is in knowledge creation.*

- b. Effectiveness of Teamwork: Each one of our participant agreed that effectiveness of team work increases innovation otherwise the advertising tasks cannot be performed on individual basis as stated the respondents:

“In our field you are dependent on others (team). Like sometimes I come with a wild and crazy idea, (thinking has no boundaries). But it is not always possible for a designer to translate my idea as I want to see it. In that case we look for person who can give a shape to new idea”.

*So your relation depends on your work. More you produce; more people will be attracted to you”.*

- c. Decrease in Team Effectiveness with time: A contradicting views were presented by some participants as they were of the view that if the teams work closely for a longer period of time then there are chances of productivity beginning to drop as the close collaboration results in creating a comfort zone for the members. In such scenario their thought process, with a passage of time, becomes aligned with each other and new ideas generation gets stagnant.

The stagnation of ideas is outcome of thinking on the same line again and again therefore, long term relationships fail to produce creativity. If you are working with a same brand for two years, you know their likes and dislikes, as a result you go to a comfort zone because you know what lines they like, what colors they will prefer. When you add a new person in team, he wants to experiment, because he doesn't know the history of that brand. Though he doesn't have any historical evidence, he is braver to do experiment.

Hence to keep a sustainable creative environment there is a need to shift team members from one team to another. So the swapping and switching is the key to be creative in dynamic advertising environments in order to be more innovative company.

- d. **Leadership Knowing:** The enabling, practical and dynamic attitude of team leaders in advertising agencies has been termed as leadership knowing the metaphor of leadership knowing coined in this study refers to the ability of team leaders to be aware of creativity requirements of the industry, goals of the company and intrinsic and extrinsic financial or moral support of the employees. If any team leader in advertising agency is not aware of these things then he would not be able to compel his team members towards creating innovation in the dynamic advertising industry. All the combined factors cumulatively affect knowledge creation in a company. Some of the findings drawn from the participants' views were:
- ✓ All the innovation and creation depends on the right strategies adopted by the leader otherwise employees without the proper direction cannot achieve any goals.
  - ✓ Almost all the studied companies are having a decentralized environment where bosses delegate authority and employees are independent to take actions for their tasks.
  - ✓ Leader should have the capacity to utilize all the resources in order to get things done and manage creative human resource that is the core competitive strength of any advertising company.
  - ✓ Our work is more dependent on people and people management is a challenging task as everybody has different mindset, varying degree of motivations and interests.
- e. **Knowledge Creation (Innovation and creativity):** According to the participants innovation and creativity can only be achieved when a person is free of mind and in a flexible environment. They were of the views that:
- ✓ Creativity is a relative termed a process along a continuum from less to high and takes a lot of time to produce. For this purpose we do not limit ideas even when the client has defined his requirements. In order to be creative we think on a broad horizon and encourage open ended ideas with a free mind.
  - ✓ To ensure a creative knowledge creating environment flexible timings and hierarchy needs to be adopted in ad agencies.
  - ✓ The flexible working condition make a person relaxed minded and even leave the job or do work at home with his convenience.
- f. Other factors like environment and organizational context also affect the team effectiveness and exchange relationships.

The detailed account of the emerging themes from the interview data is tabulated below:

Table.1 Categories resulting from coding

<b>Core category</b>	<b>Leadership Knowing</b>	
Middle level Category	Democratic leadership	Futuristic approach
Lower Level category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Loose hierarchy</li> <li>-Lesser hierarchal controls</li> <li>-Empowered decision making</li> <li>-futuristic approachLeader is not the boss</li> <li>-participative management</li> <li>-right to contradict</li> <li>-decentralization of authorities</li> <li>-task decentralization</li> <li>Full capacity utilization</li> <li>-Emotions of team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Tapping on future needs</li> <li>-Developing competitive advantage</li> <li>-Adaptability to dynamic environment</li> <li>-Sustainable development if ideas</li> </ul>

Table.2 Categories resulting from straussian coding

<b>Core category</b>	<b>Effectiveness of teamwork</b>
Middle level Category	Team work
Lower level category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Interdependent tasks</li> <li>-Mistake at one step can ruin whole project</li> <li>- Team learning</li> <li>-Team potential</li> <li>-calculated risk</li> <li>-Collaboration</li> </ul>

	- team based performance
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Table.3 Categories resulting from Straussian coding

<b>Core category</b>	<b>Exchange Relationships</b>		
Middle level Category	Supportive Environment	Self-sufficiency	Resource sharing
Lower level category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Open Forum</li> <li>-Voting for ideas</li> <li>-Flexible timings</li> <li>- confidence building</li> <li>- Empowerment</li> <li>-Freedom of expression</li> <li>-Work from home</li> <li>-Empathy</li> <li>-Fun activities</li> <li>-International tours</li> <li>-Room for errors</li> <li>-Personality grooming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Multi talented team</li> <li>-command on assigned task</li> <li>-variety of expertise</li> <li>-strong interpersonal skills</li> <li>-Skill development</li> <li>- Task specialization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Resource allocation</li> <li>-Financial autonomy for departments</li> <li>-sharing capabilities to develop synergy</li> <li>- Shared context</li> <li>-Need based Mobilization of resources</li> </ul>

Table 4: Categories resulting from straussian coding

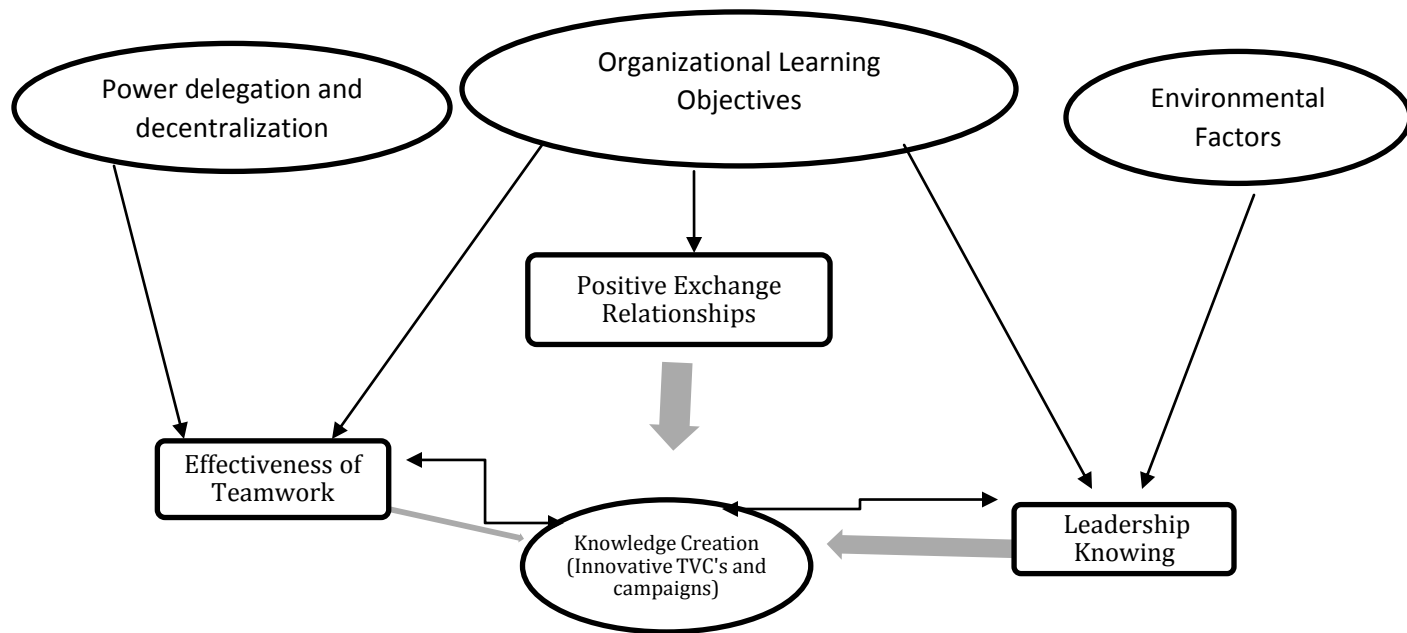
<b>Higher category</b>	<b>Knowledge Creation (Innovation and Creativity in Advertisements)</b>				
<b>Middle Category</b>	Professionalism	Ensuring Creativity	Job Satisfaction	Continuous Learning	Idea Generation

<b>Lower Category</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Keeping personal biases aside</li> <li>-Client oriented approach</li> <li>-Research on ideas</li> <li>-Research on target market</li> <li>-Less confrontation among teams</li> <li>-Enactment of environment</li> <li>-Adaptation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Swapping Jobs</li> <li>-Gang organization</li> <li>-Self managing teams</li> <li>- integrated close networks</li> <li>-Breaking stagnancy by bringing new people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- People leave job because of managers</li> <li>-Intrinsic rewards</li> <li>-Extrinsic motivation</li> <li>-Meeting financial needs is practical approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-upgrading knowledge and skills</li> <li>-Discarding run of the mill ideas by observation</li> <li>-adding new member provides new direction</li> <li>-Out of the box approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Brain storming</li> <li>- Mapping</li> <li>-Idea can come from any level</li> <li>- sub conscious mind speaks</li> <li>-idea can emerge from any thing</li> <li>-Open ended idea generation</li> </ul>
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### Paradigm Model

The following figure shows the resultant model describing the knowledge creation process in advertising agencies where effective teamwork and positive exchange relationships influence each other. Effective teams result in creating a strong exchange relationships that helps in creating new innovative ideas for TVCs and other advertising activities. However leadership in any organization seemed very crucial where team leader plays a vital role in directing team members towards a knowledge creating environment. This enabling attitude of team leaders in advertising agencies has been termed as leadership knowing the metaphor of leadership knowing coined in this study refers to the ability of team leaders to be aware of creativity requirements of the industry, goals of the company and intrinsic and extrinsic financial or moral support of the employees. If any team leader in advertising agency is not aware of these things then he would not be able to compel his team members towards creating innovation in the dynamic advertising industry. All the combined factors cumulatively affect knowledge creation in a company.

**Fig. Factors Affecting Knowledge Creation**



**Conclusion:** This study conducted a deep analysis of how effectiveness of teamwork leads to knowledge creation. We have developed a framework suggesting the factors contributing to knowledge creation in advertising companies. As the nature of work in advertising sector is highly dynamic so the most important challenge is to maintain a sustainable creative environment with positive exchange relationships. This study has elaborated exchange relationships by shedding light on the day to day experiences of team leaders in advertising agencies. The following propositions have been resulted from the analysis:

- a. Proposition 1: *Team effectiveness decreases with the increase in number of years of teams members working in close collaboration.*
- b. Proposition 2: *Positive exchange relationships contribute in knowledge creation of advertising agencies.*
- c. Proposition 3: *Leadership knowing leads to create a sustainable creative environment.*

**Limitations of the study:** As the study was conducted on a small scale the insights cannot be generalized to a larger population. The results of the study are highly context dependent. Due to the time constraints and other access issues the

sample size remained at eight that may be increased in further study in order to make it more extensive and derive exhaustive explanations of the exchange relationships in advertising agencies.

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