

# **Client–Agency Briefing: Using Paradox Theory to Overcome Challenges Associated with Client Resource Deployment**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Agencies depend on client resources to fulfil their value proposition. An inadequate quantity or quality of client resources can negatively influence agency output. Advertising literature reports that agencies are frequently frustrated with deficiencies of information, expertise, and time. However, only a limited number of studies represent the client perspective on resourcing issues. Adopting a paradox perspective, this study explores the competing demands that confront clients when deploying resources during the briefing process. It advances strategies that simultaneously satisfy the requirements of agency and client, often with synergistic effect. Furthermore, the study proposes that these strategies trigger a ‘complementary resource’, increasing collaboration and trust, and positively influencing the quality of the client–agency relationship. In addition to contributing to theoretical understanding of resource allocation, the study recommends practical steps for improving the briefing process.

## **KEY WORDS**

Agency and client relationship; Qualitative data; Depth interviews

Output in knowledge-intensive business services is dependent on the resources of the customer as well as the service provider (Bettencourt et al., 2002). Customer resources are integrated with those of the service provider to co-create value (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012). In the context of advertising, client engagement in the creative process is a prerequisite, contributing a range of resources including expertise, information, time, and finance (Koslow, Sasser, and Riordan, 2006). However, research suggests that agencies struggle to access client resources (Heo and Sutherland, 2015). In these circumstances, agency performance may be compromised.

The most common cause of inadequate resource allocation is a lack of customer disposition or proficiency to provide the requisite resources (Waseem, Biggemann, and Garry, 2018). However, it is not just the absence of motivation or competence that hinders resource allocation, but also competing demands for resources. Time is a good example. Studies suggest that time pressure negatively affects idea generation (Amabile, Hadley, and Kramer, 2002). However, marketers face demands to meet increasingly demanding deadlines (Kratzer, Gemünden, and Lettl, 2008). This introduces a tension. Both propositions – adequate time for creativity and operating efficiently to deadlines – are individually incontestable, yet jointly incompatible (Poole and Van den Ven, 1989). How does the manager resolve this paradox? One solution is to choose one or other of the ‘poles’ of the tension. Given the locus of power in client–agency relationships (Ghaffari, Hackley, and Lee, 2019), this is most likely to mean the client succumbs to institutional pressure to limit the time available, even though this may detrimentally affect creativity. An alternative approach is to use paradoxical thinking to find a novel solution that simultaneously addresses both demands (Smith, 2014). This study uses paradox theory to explore how clients overcome resource deficiencies that threaten outcome quality. Drawing on interviews with clients, it

explores the constraints that clients face when allocating resources and reveals strategies to ‘accommodate’ conflicting requirements.

There is ample justification for the research. Client resource deficiencies can lead to diminished creativity, reduced advertising effectiveness, conflict, and relationship termination (Parekh, 2011). There is a need to learn more about resource allocation challenges and how to mitigate seemingly intractable problems. A paradox perspective is ideal for teasing out how clients can manage underlying tensions. Within the marketing literature, there are calls for research that explores customer resource deficiencies (Mustak, 2019). Paradox literature highlights the need for empirical research to counterbalance the predominance of conceptual studies (Schad, Lewis, and Smith, 2019). This study suggests that, by reframing the challenge from resource allocation to resource deployment (i.e. *how* rather than *what*), it is possible to ease problems associated with briefing. From a management perspective, the aim is to identify solutions that practitioners can implement to overcome entrenched problems, improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the briefing process.

The next section reviews the literature on client–agency resource allocation and on paradox theory, the theoretical framework for this study. A description of the research method is followed by the presentation of research findings. The study concludes with a discussion of the findings and implications for practitioners.

## **LITERATURE**

### **Client Resources**

Services, and in particular Service-Dominant logic, literature maintains that the service provider cannot create value unilaterally but does so in collaboration with the

customer through a process of resource integration (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). This is particularly true of client–agency relationships where the deployment of client resources is mandatory. Client–agency literature highlights five common resources that specifically relate to the briefing process: *information, knowledge, time, risk-taking, and creative freedom*.

The provision of relevant and precise *information* by clients is essential for knowledge-intensive service firms (Locke and Latham, 2002). However, agencies frequently receive insufficient and untimely information, reducing the ability to generate creative ideas and to work efficiently (Lynch and West, 2017). The successful co-creation of value requires that clients possess the *knowledge* to understand what is required of them and the ability to perform to an appropriate level (Auh et al., 2007). However, agencies complain of poor decision-making by junior managers and limited access to experienced clients, which negatively affects outcomes (Verbeke et al., 2008). Creativity requires adequate *time* for idea generation. Levels of creativity are higher when time is unrestricted (Amabile, Hadley, and Kramer, 2002). However, creatives complain of insufficient time to immerse themselves in projects, limiting the ideation stage (Turnbull and Wheeler, 2017). Agencies maintain that many clients lack *risk orientation*, a preference for risk-taking that permits agencies to diverge from the norm. Risk-aversion is shown to reduce creativity (Wang et al., 2013). An important antecedent to creativity, through intrinsic motivation, is *freedom*. Conversely, excessive control reduces motivation and dilutes creativity (Shalley, Zhou, and Oldham, 2004). Agency creatives complain many clients are excessively prescriptive (Ghaffari, Hackley, and Lee, 2019).

Finally, in order to provide context for the research findings, this review introduces one further resource. Agencies complain of briefs that are poorly structured or incomplete (Neff, 2015). The theoretical construct of *cognitive capacity* was derived from the literature

as a result of an iterative process of moving from raw data to emerging categories to existing literature. A common demand is for managers to do more work, with fewer resources, in less time. This is evidenced by multiple tasks requiring simultaneous managerial attention. Reduced attention is allocated to each task, leading to reduced performance (Collins and Jackson, 2015).

### **Paradox Theory**

Competing and contradictory demands are inherent in organizations (Smith and Lewis, 2011). Examples include exploitation versus exploration, direction versus empowerment, and cooperation versus competition (Keegan et al., 2018). Contradictions create tension for individuals who are torn between the two ‘poles’ (Jarzabkowski, Lê, and Van de Ven, 2013). Tensions can be conceptualised in a variety of ways including dilemmas, dialectics, and paradoxes. A tension viewed as a dilemma can be resolved by assessing advantages and disadvantages and then choosing between the two demands (‘either/or’). However, in many instances, the competing demands are persistent, so this approach only brings temporary relief (Smith and Lewis, 2011). Furthermore, attending to one of the demands may exacerbate the other (Sundaramurthy and Lewis, 2003). A tension viewed through a dialectic lens proposes transformation through conflict. Thesis is challenged by antithesis leading to innovation (Cunha et al., 2019). In contrast, a paradox perspective perceives tensions as paradoxical because of the simultaneous and persistent presence of contradictory yet interrelated demands. In isolation, they are logical, but impossible to fulfil when juxtaposed (Smith and Lewis, 2011). Both poles are interdependent and both need to be achieved (‘both/and’).

There is no single approach to dealing with paradoxical tensions. However, approaches that offer longer-term relief are based on acceptance, adjustment, and attendance

to competing demands (Gao and Bansal, 2013). For example, contradictory demands from two actors might be addressed by intensive discussion to understand respective needs and to find adjustments to working practices that meet the needs of both. The most successful responses go beyond a ‘both/and’ approach and achieve synthesis (Putnam, Fairhurst, and Banghart, 2017).

A comparison of paradox theory with alternative perspectives reveals common traits. Hargrave and Van de Ven (2017) argue that, since paradox and dialectic perspectives both propose transcendence, the potential exists for an integrated approach to contradictions. An important feature of the acceptance-adjustment response is actors engaging in dialogue, questioning assumptions, and reaching consensus on a new approach. In this respect, comparisons can be made with Argyris’ (2002) double-loop learning, Bohm’s (1996) dialogic mindset, Senge’s (1990) team learning, and Scharmer’s (2016) Theory U which questions established patterns as part of a transformational process.

The purpose of this paper is to use paradox theory to examine the briefing process and resource allocation. There are two research questions:

RQ1: What tensions do clients identify in relation to resource allocation?

RQ2: What solutions might mitigate persistent resource deficiencies?

The negative effect resource deficiencies have on agency performance highlights the need for an investigation into how to manage tensions associated with resource deployment. Furthermore, Taylor (2017) calls for renewed interest in research that identifies the drivers of good client–agency relationships that lead to positive results.

## **METHOD**

## Data Collection and Analysis

The author adopted a qualitative approach because of the flexibility it affords exploratory research (Bryman, 2016). Interviews were semi-structured and lasted an average of 50 minutes. The interview guide covered the five key resource deficiencies identified in the literature. The author asked participants to respond to agency complaints concerning resource deficiencies. This acted as a catalyst for the identification of tensions. Next, participants were asked to respond to these conflicting demands. After exploring each of the five resources, the author asked if there were other tensions in the briefing process that had been overlooked. Participants identified a sixth resource, introduced in the literature review as *cognitive capacity*. Once this resource emerged, it was added to the interview guide.

The author collected data between July 2018 and July 2019. From a database of 3,000 marketers, 200 senior managers were contacted and asked to participate. Besides filtering for seniority, the sampling frame was limited to organizations with a revenue above \$30 million, since they were most likely to interact regularly with advertising agencies. A total of 31 clients agreed to participate. Of those, 20 (65 percent) had more than 10 years' experience in marketing.

The author imported transcripts into NVivo 12 for coding. While specific resources from the literature acted as orientation points, the purpose of the research was to build theory. The identification of tensions and management strategies was inductive and followed an iterative process of coding, categorising, and comparison with theoretical constructs. The following example shows the analytical process for one resource.

Coding led to the creation of nodes for the following: significance of the brief; mental demands; temporal demands; multitasking; task priorities; task avoidance; and outcome quality. Analysis showed that respondents were torn between allocating sufficient time to

write a well-constructed brief and maximising the number of completed tasks. A search of the literature suggested that *cognitive capacity* was an appropriate construct to describe this resource; Phillips (2008) proposes that excessive demands on managers reduces cognitive capacity and task performance. Codes that emerged for coping with the tension included task focus, skimping, improvisation, assumptions, and co-crafting. As implied, some were guilty of deferring the brief to the last moment, while others isolated themselves to write the brief at the expense of other tasks. A few, however, said they opted for a jointly-developed brief with the agency, seeking to satisfy both demands. Coding nodes for this theme included alignment, clarity, efficiency, strategic partner, and extension of team. The synergistic effect was the alignment around a single interpretation resulting from a jointly-developed brief. Finally, the paradox approach triggered a complementary resource; clients said the invitation to co-create the brief signalled a partnership and enhanced relationship quality.

## **FINDINGS AND DEVELOPMENT OF PROPOSITIONS**

Findings are orientated around the six resources and abstracted into a model (figure 1) and a set of theoretical propositions (P1a and P1b to P6a and P6b). Indicative respondent quotes relating to tensions, responses, synergies, and complementary resources are included (table 1).

### **Information**

I accept that, when there is insufficient information, the agency is paralysed. It has every right to hit the ‘pause button’ and refuse to do more until it gets the insights it needs, but the belief that the more information you put in the brief, the better the output, is not the case. (Client 6)

This exemplifies the paradox relating to the provision of information. On the one hand, copious information means the agency has all available contextual information and avoids flawed assumptions. However, restricting information means the creative team can easily isolate the essence of the brief and avoid being overwhelmed. A paradox approach attempts to optimise the benefits of both poles of the tension. Several respondents said they responded to the problem by using a briefing template, but one that was jointly developed with the agency to ensure it reflected agency requirements. They said a template was a useful checklist, encouraging them to focus on key issues. It imposed discipline and ensured consistency. It also reduced the tendency for information to trickle through to the agency. Furthermore, the involvement of the agency in shaping the template ‘triggered’ a second, complementary resource, namely the relational resource. Several clients said that asking agencies for their input into the construction of the template signalled respect and engendered goodwill.

**P1a.** *A co-crafted briefing template ensures the systematic and timely provision of relevant information that meets the needs of the agency.*

**P1b.** *The invitation from client to agency to co-craft a briefing template demonstrates respect for the agency and enhances relationship value.*

## **Knowledge**

I can't be involved with the agency on a day-to-day basis. I have to delegate and it's only right for my team to own projects and learn on the job. Inevitably, they will make mistakes. I appreciate this can be frustrating for the agency. (Client 25)

This reveals the underlying tension related to expertise. The participation of knowledgeable marketers leads to higher quality briefing. On the other hand, clients

acknowledged the need to delegate to junior marketers who would only learn by taking ownership of projects. The obvious solution is for the senior client to monitor the work of the junior, checking the brief before it goes to the agency. However, the more novel solution was for the agency to take responsibility for training junior managers. The advantage is that it relieves senior managers of some of this burden while simultaneously ensuring that junior managers develop expertise tailored to the needs of the agency. There are synergies too. First, training sessions at the agency afford the opportunity to develop a relationship with junior marketers who, one day, will be senior decision-makers. Second, junior clients develop a better understanding of agency process, leading to more realistic expectations. Finally, the client regards the agency's contribution as a manifestation of goodwill, enhancing the relationship between the two firms.

**P2a.** *Agencies who contribute to the learning process of junior clients will reap the future benefits of a more effective participator and resource integrator.*

**P2b.** *Agencies who invest in the relationship by contributing to the learning process of junior clients will increase client gratitude, mutual understanding, and dependence.*

## **Time**

It isn't how it used to be. I say to my boss "If you want a good job, I need six months. If you want a reasonable job, I need three months." He says, "You've got three weeks." This is what we have to deal with now. (Client 16)

While all clients acknowledged the need for a minimum allocation of time to avoid compromising creativity they also highlighted ever-tighter deadlines. Some responded by restricting the time allocated to projects, accepting that creativity might be sub-optimal. Others recognised the damaging effect time restrictions could have on creativity and on

agency morale. A solution that accommodated both poles of the tension was to invite the agency into the client's strategic planning process so that it was informed, in advance, of forthcoming projects. Not only did this facilitate agency resource planning, it also provided an opportunity for the agency to mull over a project prior to formal briefing, extending the 'incubation period'. The solution is synergistic in that it delivers more time than the agency would have had under normal circumstances. Furthermore, clients believed that the inclusion of the agency in the strategic planning process demonstrated trust. The agency was treated as a partner rather than a vendor.

**P3a.** *The integration of the agency into the client's strategic planning process increases the time available for information incubation and idea generation, enhancing performance.*

**P3b.** *The integration of the agency into the client's strategic planning process enhances trust and goodwill.*

### **Risk orientation**

Marketers are less inclined to be brave these days. We might say to the agency "Yeah, do some left-field stuff" but in reality, we aren't going there. There is a lot of conservative pressure within the organization. (Client 7)

While clients said they hired external agencies to access originality, they are restrained by internal stakeholders, brand guidelines, and performance metrics. Some managed this tension by asking the agency to explore boundary-breaking ideas alongside safe routes. They appreciated that suppressing radical thinking would condition the agency to take a safety-first approach, which could harm a brand's development. Radical ideas might not be progressed immediately, but several clients said agency innovation had prompted a

reassessment of brand positioning. Furthermore, clients recognised that scope to explore innovative solutions had a positive effect on agency enthusiasm.

**P4a.** *Sanctioning the agency to embrace incremental and radical thinking simultaneously will lead to a range of ideas that meets present and future orientations of the brand.*

**P4b.** *Sanctioning the agency to embrace incremental and radical thinking simultaneously increases the agency's intrinsic motivation and enhances the client–agency relationship.*

## **Freedom**

You need to give them some slack or else they won't come up with the best ideas. I have to remind myself to focus on the problem not the solution. If I step into their territory and start being prescriptive, what am I paying them for? (Client 28)

Respondents depicted a paradox of conceding freedom to the agency to be creative while at the same time grappling with the need to provide sufficient direction to ensure the outcome met expectations first time. A response to the paradox was to integrate both 'poles' of the tension. Once briefed, there would be a series of 'tissue' meetings to ensure client–agency interpretation was, and remained, aligned. The creative process was a cycle of moving between freedom and control. The client might even attend the agency's brainstorming session, collaborating in idea generation and reining in solutions that were likely to be unacceptable. Clients said that greater freedom was a demonstration of trust in the agency, enhancing motivation and performance.

**P5a.** *A process of oscillation between periods of control and freedom during idea generation simultaneously fulfils the client's goals and the agency's desire for autonomy.*

**P5b.** *A process of oscillation between control and freedom demonstrates trust which enhances agency motivation and performance.*

### **Cognitive capacity**

We're all guilty of cutting corners, not because of laziness but because of a false impression that we're being efficient. Everyone has so many tasks to complete that the brief is pretty much left to the last minute...It's perceived as onerous and so, as is often the way, you do the easier things first. (Client 11)

Clients grappled with the paradox of devoting quality time to writing a brief versus the necessity of tackling a multitude of tasks. One solution was to invite the agency to co-produce the brief. A jointly developed brief is synergistic. Not only is it less onerous for the client, it saves time in the long run by minimising the need for post-briefing clarification. Several respondents also said they were not always able to articulate what they wanted at the start of a project and welcomed the involvement of the agency to help crystallize their thoughts. Furthermore, clients said collaboration highlighted the agency's role as a strategic partner.

**P6a.** *A collaborative process of co-crafting the brief reduces task overload for the client and ensures interpretations are aligned.*

**P6b.** *A collaborative process of co-crafting the brief positions the agency as a strategic partner and increases relationship strength.*

FIGURE 1.  
Management of Tensions for Synergistic and Complementary Resources

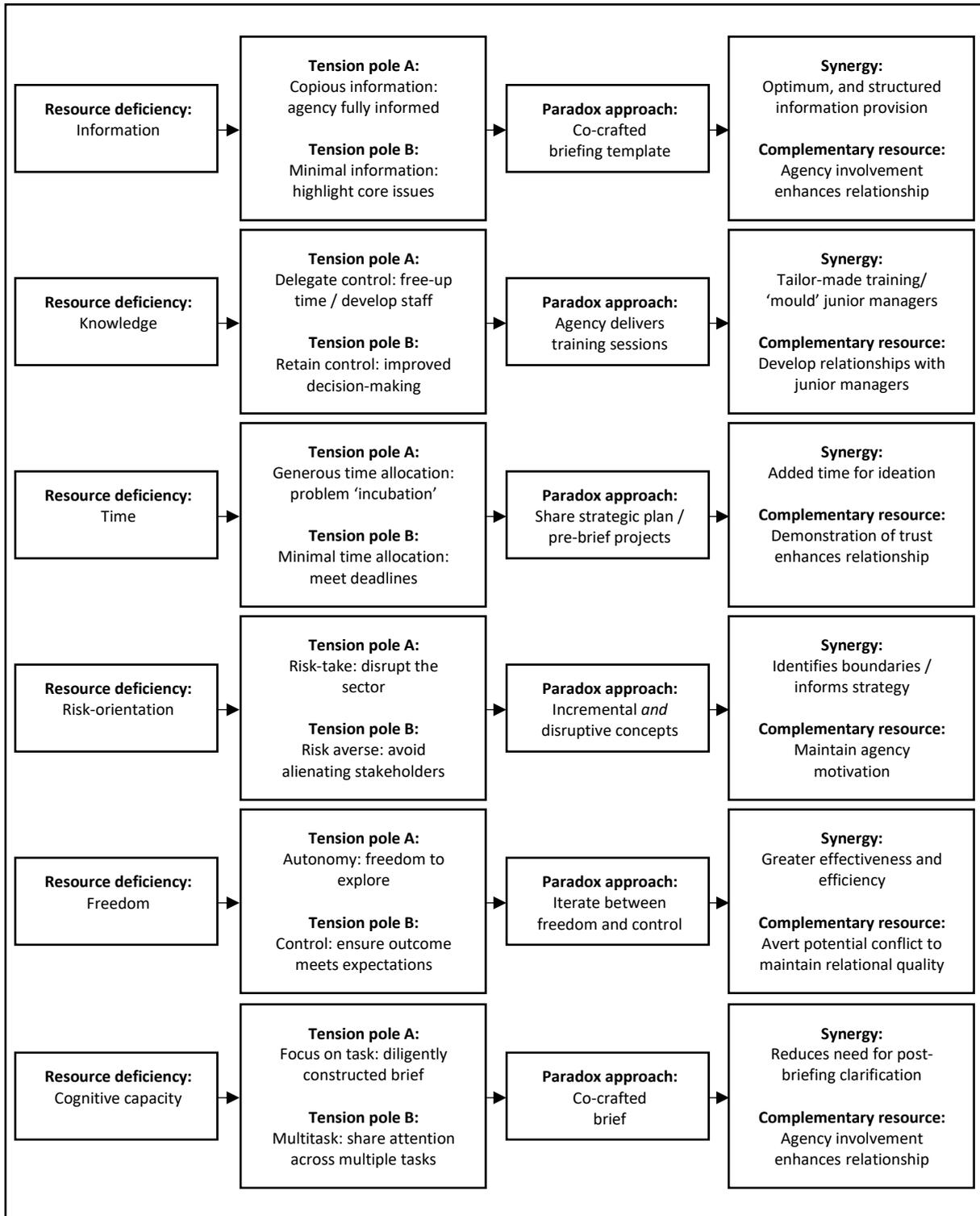


TABLE 1.  
Indicative Respondent Quotes

Resource	Paradoxical tension (Pole A and B)	Response	Synergy	Complementary resource
Information	<p>Of course you want to be diligent. Agencies shouldn't have to work from a patchy brief. (Client 1)</p> <p>Too much information clouds key issues. It starts to look like 'War and Peace'. (Client 16)</p>	<p>The template forces you to think about what's relevant. It structures your thinking. (Client 22)</p>	<p>We developed the initial template but then asked the agency for input. We asked them what a good brief looks like. (Client 21)</p>	<p>Asking the agency what it needs from you to do its job is a sign of respect. It creates goodwill. (Client 27)</p>
Knowledge	<p>The agency would like me to be involved in every decision. They want me to approve everything. (Client 15)</p> <p>Left to their own devices, junior marketers can step out of line. Then they backtrack and that's not good for the relationship. (Client 20)</p>	<p>Junior managers spend a day a month with the agency learning how to write a brief and how to evaluate creative work. (Client 3)</p>	<p>If agencies are involved in training, it means they are more likely to get what they want from us. (Client 7)</p>	<p>We really appreciate what they do for our team... We've come to rely on them. (Client 9)</p>
Time	<p>The digital sphere is operating at super speed. Clients get used to it and demand it from all their agencies. (Client 6)</p> <p>I appreciate that rushing will inhibit the quality of the work. I'm not happy with that but I'm under pressure too. (Client 2)</p>	<p>We are already working with them on next year's plans. We can tell them in advance about 80 percent of next year's workload. (Client 4)</p>	<p>When we get to the formal briefing, it won't be the first time we've talked about the project. (Client 27)</p>	<p>You share your vision with the agency. They feel closer to it and get excited. It's more relational. (Client 1)</p>
Risk orientation	<p>I understand it must be demotivating for creatives if a client is unprepared to take risks. (Client 9)</p> <p>It's difficult to get internal sign-off if it's too wacky. I need to be certain I can rationalise it to my boss. (Client 14)</p>	<p>I've told the agency that 70 percent of the ideas need to be bang on brief, 20 percent can make me feel uncomfortable, and the final 10 percent can be 'out there'. (Client 25)</p>	<p>I encourage the agency to be proactive and come up with ideas outside a brief. We might not be able to develop them now, but we might come back to them. (Client 30)</p>	<p>If you show you welcome proaction, it can be morale-boosting. It keeps the creatives engaged. (Client 19)</p>
Freedom	<p>We need a different perspective, from people who aren't bogged down by self-imposed brand constraints. (Client 2)</p> <p>I need to be part of the creative journey so we get it right first time. (Client 13)</p>	<p>Tissue meetings are about sense-checking; making sure we are aligned. I don't like the 'big reveal' after three weeks of radio silence. (Client 8)</p>	<p>If we go on the creative journey together, we wash out tensions as they arise. It avoids bad feeling further down the line. (Client 13)</p>	<p>Loosening the reins is a demonstration of trust. (Client 11)</p>
Cognitive capacity	<p>The brief is the most important of tasks. Isolating what matters takes time but saves time in the long run. (Client 29)</p> <p>Marketers have so many tasks to complete. Writing a brief is just one small part of my world. I am guilty of leaving it until the last minute. (Client 7)</p>	<p>I gave them direction, but beyond that, the process of putting flesh on the bones was a conversation with them. They drafted the brief during the meeting. (Client 16)</p>	<p>I don't always know what I want upfront. The agency can tease that out. The beauty is that nine times out of 10 it means we are aligned to a single interpretation. (Client 2)</p>	<p>A collaborative approach is good for the relationship. They feel like they are an integral part of building brand vision. (Client 19)</p>

## DISCUSSION

Given the influence clients have on the creative outcome, it is concerning that the briefing stage suffers from resource inadequacies which invariably lead to negative consequences. The aim of this study was to reveal tensions that confront clients when allocating resources and how to manage contradictory demands. This is imperative if clients are to receive the creativity they demand.

This study contributes to several literature streams, the first being client–agency relationship literature. Agency theory proposes that principal (client) and agent (agency) influence the performance outcomes of each other (Ross, Anderson, and Weitz, 1997), for example, through resource allocation. However, there has been a steady stream of studies highlighting agency dissatisfaction with client resource deployment (Heo and Sutherland, 2015; MacDougall, 1984; O’Connor et al., 2016). Given the level of frustration with the briefing process, there is a need for research that explores how to address the problem. Furthermore, while studies have explored the client perspective in relation to issues such as conflict and proactivity (e.g. Beverland, Farrelly, and Woodhatch, 2007; Gambetti et al., 2016), the client viewpoint in relation to the briefing process appears under-represented. The second literature stream is resource integration. This paper contributes to the limited number of studies addressing customer resource allocation (Mustak, 2019). The third stream is the literature on paradox theory, responding to the call for empirical studies that focus on the lived experiences of those struggling with resource-related tensions (Schad, Lewis, and Smith, 2019).

This study adopts a paradox perspective to examine client–agency briefing and reveal the competing demands that clients face when allocating resources. Paradox theory concerns itself with finding responses to accommodate contradictory demands. This paper suggests

how contradictions can be managed so that the resource demands of both relationship partners are addressed, avoiding the dissatisfaction or conflict that often emerges from selecting one or other ‘pole’ of the tension. Furthermore, careful management not only fosters ambidexterity but also achieves a synergy that is absent from an ‘either/or’ choice (Hegarty, 2014). In addition, the study proposes that a paradox approach can activate a second, complementary resource in addition to the synergistic deployment of the original resource. Clients suggested that ‘paradox solutions’ benefitted the relationship by enhancing trust and motivation, and treating the agency like a strategic partner (cf. Haytko, 2004). A strong relationship not only implies cooperation but also assists the agency in pursuit of legitimization (Nyilasy, Kreshel, and Reid, 2012).

Although Figure 1 displays each resource individually and as a separate path, they are interconnected. Resource integration does not just imply interaction between actors (client and agency) but also between resources. Resource properties and the interaction between resources enable creativity to emerge. Resources such as *freedom* and *risk-orientation* reinforce each other (cf. Madhavaram and Hunt, 2008; Peters et al., 2014).

Not all managers have the skills or time to manage competing demands, nor work in an organization sympathetic to agency needs. Furthermore, there will be times when context demands that managers choose between, rather than accommodate, both poles of a tension.

Finally, a note of caution. The premise of this paper is that resource deficiency is inherently destructive. However, there is some evidence to suggest that limiting resources can have a positive effect, for example, in the case of time. Baer and Oldham (2006) report a curvilinear relationship between time pressure and creativity. Providing it is not excessive, time pressure may focus minds and lead to creative excellence.

## **MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Clients may not immediately see how to manage tensions related to resource allocation. Agencies can take the lead. Rather than bemoaning the lack of resources, they can recommend strategies, such as those proposed by this study, that provide the agency with what it needs to fulfil its creative proposition. However, there will be occasions when there is limited scope for a paradox approach. In constrained circumstances, agencies must decide whether to accept the commission and attempt to compensate for client resource limitations or else decline it.

Novel, synergistic solutions lend themselves to long-term relationships rather than one-off transactional exchanges, because there is a requirement for openness and trust. Furthermore, reframing tensions, as described in this study, requires a capability for integrative thinking and sensitivity towards the needs of the agency. Some clients will regard resource scarcity as an inevitability that the agency has to tolerate, rather than a challenge that the client has to overcome.

## **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

Future studies could seek agency reactions to the six strategies uncovered in this study. To what extent do agencies regard these strategies as potential solutions to longstanding briefing problems? Or is there an element of opportunism, asking agencies to do what clients should be doing for themselves? Second, the research method was qualitative because of the study's exploratory nature and the desire to allow tensions to emerge inductively. Future research in this area could take a quantitative approach and seek to identify the prevalence of a paradox approach to resource deployment. If anecdotal evidence is to be believed, it is unlikely to be widespread. Third, future research could explore how, and to what extent, each of the six resources are interconnected, reinforce each other, and influence the creative outcome. Finally, clients acknowledged negative consequences to some

of the strategies. For example, some commented that a briefing template might stifle the briefing process because it encourages excessive brevity and a 'cut and paste' mentality. Are there other unintended negative consequences?

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