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Authors	Yousry, Mustafa
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## Chapter 12

# A Survey Study of Design Teamwork in the Context of Professional Photography Studios

*Mustafa Yousry Matbouly*

Effat University, Saudi Arabia

### Abstract

Little has been written about teamwork within design organizations. This chapter contributes to knowledge by examining and evaluating the role of teamwork within professional photography studios. Several photography studios were contacted electronically and asked to take part in the research. A questionnaire survey was used to collect the data and answer each research question. The author used both qualitative and quantitative analysis methodologies to interpret the gathered data. The main research findings suggested that in some cases, no clearly defined teamwork model has been adopted. However, the attitudes and opinions of the designers (i.e., photographers, art directors, and stylists) are very promising for improving such a model. It was also clear that designers within professional photography studios may face the same issues of teamwork as within any other business organization, i.e., differences in working practices are evident and contribute to some degree to the performance of each studio.

*Keywords:* Design; teamwork; photographic studios; photographers; art directors; stylists

### 1. Introduction

This chapter aims to evaluate the nature and role of teamwork within professional photography studios, contributing to the academic understanding of

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and Interiors, 159–169

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teamwork in the design process. It explores the existence of teamwork in these settings and justifies the application of teamwork models from the designers' perspective. The research seeks to answer key questions: whether a teamwork model could be applied to professional photography studios, whether evidence of teamwork already exists in such environments, and how teamwork can be encouraged and improved. Through this investigation, the chapter aims to provide recommendations for enhancing collaborative practices in professional photography studios.

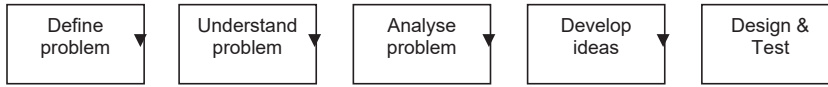
The research follows a structured format, beginning with a literature review that explores design processes, teamwork, and collaborative dynamics in creative industries. The methodology outlines the research approach, including data collection through structured questionnaires and participant selection criteria. The results present quantitative and qualitative analyses of teamwork within photography studios, highlighting leadership, communication, and role distribution challenges. The discussion interprets these findings, comparing responses across different roles. Finally, the conclusion and recommendations propose strategies for improving teamwork, decision-making, and workflow in professional photography studios while suggesting areas for future research.

## 2. Literature Review

Among different business processes, the design process exhibits the closest relationships between quality, cost, and time (Simatupang et al., 2004). However, many creative agencies and organizations have not thought the process through properly or are still relying on outdated practices because “that is the way it has always been done” (Khaleghimoghaddam, 2023; Tessier, 2020; Tessier & Zahedi, 2019).

The design process can be straightforward, or it can be varied and complex. According to Pawar and Sharifi (2002), Abbasi and Tucker (2013), and Hains-Wesson (2015), the design process starts when questions about why, how, and even whether to go ahead with a project are being raised. Research needs to be carried out before, during, and after the design process. Cooper and Press (1995) and Ale Ebrahim and Ahmed (2009) identify that the design process is not just style or clever ideas; it is not an isolated activity but a process that involves a design task and how the designers' skills are employed in progressing a problem to its solution. To sum up, Bruce and Bessant (2002) state that, in essence, there are three broad phases of activity in any design process: a planning phase, a development phase, and a production phase. Fig. 12.1 illustrates a five-stage model of what designers do when working on a problem.

Over the past 30 years or so, organizations have begun to shift from traditional styles of accomplishing work and making decisions toward more team-based models of getting work done (Chiocchio & Forgues, 2011; Ulloa & Adams, 2004; Zahedi and Heaton, 2017). Teamwork is the process whereby a group of people develop a clear shared objective, select a leader, agree on a plan, and define individual responsibilities, skills, and resources to do the job well



Q1

Fig. 12.1. A Diagram Showing Cooper and Press's Model of the Creative Process of Design. *Source:* Author.

(Bruce & Bessant, 2002; Wheelan, 2009). A team role, as defined by Meredith Belbin (2023), is “A tendency to behave, contribute, and interrelate with others in a particular way.” Belbin describes a pattern of behavior that characterizes one person’s behavior in relation to another in facilitating the progress of a team. The value of the Belbin team-role theory lies in enabling an individual or team to benefit from self-knowledge and adjust according to the demands of the external situation.

According to Clarke (2003), a team is characterized by several key attributes. First, all members must have a shared awareness of unity, fostering a collective identity and purpose. Second, interpersonal relationships are essential, allowing members to contribute, learn from one another, and collaborate effectively. Lastly, a team must possess the ability to act together toward a common goal, ensuring that individual efforts align with the overall objectives of the group.

Cross and Cross (1995), Kilker (1999), Fisher (2002), Bosch-Sijtsema (2007), and Bear and Woolley (2011) stress that creative teams are different from other working teams; they are sensitive, intuitive, experimentalist, nonconformist, and concerned as much about the development of their skills and talents as about their organizations’ objectives (Bear & Woolley, 2011; Bosch-Sijtsema, 2007; Cross & Cross, 1995; Fisher, 2002; Kilker, 1999). The organization’s culture will also likely affect the designers’ self-concept. If the organization’s culture values communication, interaction, and teamwork, then these qualities may be integrated into the designers’ self-concept to the extent that the designers define themselves according to that set of ideas. Creative teams are able to merge the insights of many disciplines (Turner, 2000; Walton, 2000, 2002); their description of design teams’ features is presented in Fig. 12.2.

Lockwood (2004) adds that the design team is a design project in itself. After establishing the design team, its purpose should be stated broadly: to set goals; to market an idea, service, or product; to study details; to do strategic planning; to evaluate concepts; to solve problems; and to integrate design with other corporate functions. The management of collaborative purpose should be a part of design management, because project success will not be repeatable without well-defined processes to align individuals and teams.

### 3. Research Methods

The methodology of this chapter follows a structured approach, beginning with a literature review to establish and justify theoretical knowledge relevant to the

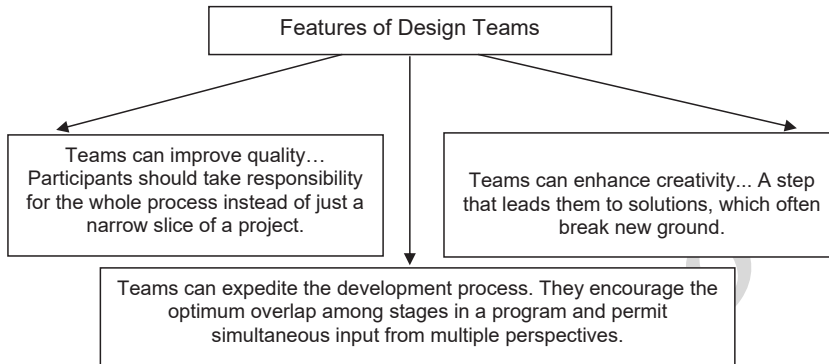


Fig. 12.2. A Diagram Showing the Features of Design Teams.

Source: Author.

study. An appropriate research vehicle is then selected based on real-life scenarios, accessibility, and conceptual alignment. A questionnaire is developed using insights from the literature review and distributed to participants for completion. The gathered data is then presented quantitatively, followed by a qualitative analysis that includes interpretation based on selected theoretical models and reflective evaluation of the findings.

Structured questionnaires, derived from the literature review and previous research, were used for gathering the primary data for this chapter. This method was chosen as the simplest, most direct way of obtaining information. First, a pilot questionnaire containing 16 questions about teamwork was sent by e-mail to a limited sample of the research society. The purpose of the pilot study was to determine the efficiency of the questions in obtaining the relevant answers that could meet the objectives of the chapter. Following this, the final questionnaire was drawn up containing only 12 more defined questions and was sent out to the whole research sample (62 designers—i.e., photographers, art directors, and stylists—working in a number of professional photography studios and agencies based worldwide) to fill in. The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine whether operational teamwork already exists in each of the surveyed studios/agencies and the level of interpersonal relationships between designers. From the 62 survey forms sent, only 28 completed forms were returned by the participants, and these were used during the data analysis stage of the study. This means that almost 50% of those addressed with the questionnaire form took part in the research survey. A 50% response rate in the context of design studies is actually a high response rate. Also, those 28 respondents are, in fact, a realistic and reflective sample of participants if we put in mind the rarity of professional photography studios that employ, besides photographers, art directors, and stylists, who are needed to take part in this research survey (see Appendix).

## **4. Results**

The following section presents the data collected during the empirical study of this chapter. A total of 28 designers participated in the study, divided into three categories: 10 photographers (each response representing 10%), 8 art directors (each response representing 12.5%), and 10 stylists (each response representing 10%). The questionnaire included 12 questions grouped under six main categories: purpose and direction, team leadership, understanding roles, meetings and workflow, communication, and team relationships. Findings indicate varied perceptions regarding teamwork and leadership within professional photography studios. For example, while all participants agreed on understanding standard operating procedures, responses regarding workload distribution were mixed, particularly among photographers, suggesting issues with role clarity or leadership. Confidence in leadership also varied, with stylists showing the highest agreement and photographers displaying neutrality. Concerns emerged regarding the regular updating of procedures, with most photographers (80%) and stylists (60%) disagreeing, pointing to a possible communication or leadership gap. Additionally, while stylists were most satisfied with meeting structures, photographers and art directors showed more neutral or negative responses. Communication patterns revealed that most photographers (80%) felt uninvolved in their colleagues' design decisions, aligning with the expectation that creative professionals work independently. Lastly, responses about shared objectives were inconsistent across roles, highlighting a potential lack of clarity in organizational goals within some studios. These findings suggest that while teamwork exists within professional photography studios, challenges in leadership, communication, and role distribution may impact overall collaboration.

## **5. Discussion**

By far, the most positive responses in most areas came from the stylists, and the most negative responses came from the photographers. Art directors also responded positively in many areas.

For stylists, the strongest area was team leadership. They are confident in their leaders' decisions and believe their decisions are based on fact and not emotion.

For art directors, the strongest areas were understanding differences and processes. Art directors' jobs are very skilled, so it is very important for them to understand the roles of their work associates as well as to have a process in their routine. The weakest area for some art directors was purpose/direction, as some art directors disagreed that they shared the overall objectives of their colleagues. This could be due to a lack of communication and guidance from team leaders.

The responses from the photographers were quite negative in most areas, especially team leadership. The surveyed photographers seem to suffer from a lack of confidence in their leaders. In fact, team leadership is an extremely important role in the design process and can also affect all the other areas of teamwork, in particular communication and processes, as this is where the leader

Q3

exerts the most control. If communication was broken down, the team became ineffective and fragmented leading to disharmony, low moral and breakdown of interpersonal relationships.

Furthermore, the photographers disagreed that they are involved in the design decisions of their colleagues, but agreed that they involve colleagues in the process of their work, which is an interesting contradiction. Nearly half of the surveyed photographers also felt that the workload within their studios isn't shared evenly. A positive area for photographers was understanding differences, as all agreed that they understood the roles of their work associates.

## **6. Conclusion**

The findings suggest that the majority of surveyed designers actively involve their colleagues in their work processes, indicating the presence of teamwork dynamics within professional photography studios. While all respondents reported a full understanding of standard operating procedures within their studios or agencies, further analysis of their responses suggests a degree of misunderstanding regarding teamwork and overall operational processes. Additionally, there is no clear system in place for updating work procedures in some studios, despite the necessity of such revisions for effective teamwork. Similarly, the absence of a structured decision-making and problem-solving framework was noted in several studios, which may impact efficiency and collaboration. More than half of the designers acknowledged the existence of regular work meetings, which, even if informal, play a vital role in monitoring progress and aligning team efforts with organizational objectives. Notably, six photographers reported no difficulties in accepting feedback, while only two art directors and four stylists expressed the same view. This may indicate that some designers refrain from offering feedback to colleagues due to concerns about receptivity. Despite these challenges, most designers expressed confidence in their associates, reflecting a positive team environment and reinforcing the presence of a collaborative and supportive culture within professional photography studios.

## **7. Recommendations and Future Research**

Based on both theoretical and empirical studies, the author recommends that professional photography studios adopt a clear structure for problem-solving and decision-making to enhance teamwork efficiency. Leaders should involve team members in discussions about work-related decisions, ensuring transparency and motivation. Encouraging designers to exchange opinions and ideas is essential, as shared objectives are a key characteristic of successful teamwork. Establishing clear and common goals for all team members can improve collaboration, while regularly questioning and updating procedures based on team input fosters continuous improvement. Recognizing and utilizing the diverse skills and experiences of team members strengthens the overall workflow. Regular meetings should be held, ensuring that all members participate in

discussions, listen to different perspectives, and contribute to a positive team environment. Any concerns regarding workload distribution should be openly addressed to maintain fairness and trust within the team. In summary, professional photography studios are advised to focus on leadership development, improving communication skills, implementing training strategies, setting clear objectives, optimizing operational management through effective models, and establishing continuous professional development systems. Furthermore, additional research is needed to identify the most effective tools and models tailored to the unique requirements of professional photography studios.

## Acknowledgment

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## Appendix: “The Used Questionnaire Form”

### Scientific Research Questionnaire Form

Thank you in advance for taking part in this research!

Research topic:

“A Survey Study of Design Teamwork in the Context of Professional Photography Studios”

Researcher: Prof. Dr. Mustafa Yousry Matbouly.

### Questionnaire

Please, use the descriptions below to score your personal opinions of the questionnaire statements:

- Strongly Agree: Fully agree with the statement.
- Agree: Agree, but not completely.
- Slightly Agree: Partially agree with the statement.
- Neutral: Have no opinion.
- Slightly Disagree: Partially disagree with the statement.
- Disagree: Disagree, but not completely.
- Strongly Disagree: Fully disagree with the statement.

1. I involve my colleagues in the design process of my projects.

Strongly Agree	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Agree	Neutral
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Disagree	

2. I am confident in my leaders' decisions.

Strongly Agree	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Agree	Neutral
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Disagree	

3. I understand the standard operating procedures within the studio/agency.

Strongly Agree	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Agree	Neutral
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Disagree	

4. I agree that workload is shared evenly.

Strongly Agree	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Agree	Neutral
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Disagree	

5. Procedures are regularly updated and routinely questioned.

Strongly Agree	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Agree	Neutral
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Disagree	

6. There are regular meetings that are professionally monitored and recorded.

Strongly Agree	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Agree	Neutral
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Disagree	

7. I experience difficulty in the reception of diverse opinions.

Strongly Agree	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Agree	Neutral
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Disagree	

8. I fully understand the roles of my work associates.

Strongly Agree	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Agree	Neutral
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Disagree	

9. I am confident in all of my work associates.

Strongly Agree	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Agree	Neutral
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Disagree	

10. I regularly review and evaluate my targets in line with the original brief and initiate change when necessary.

Strongly Agree	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Agree	Neutral
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Disagree	

11. I am regularly involved in the design decisions of my colleagues.

Strongly Agree	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Agree	Neutral
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Disagree	

12. I share the overall objectives of my colleagues.

Strongly Agree	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Agree	Neutral
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Disagree	

### **Personal Details**

To help us tabulate your answers more effectively, you are asked here to insert a few personal details. However, all scores are compiled and analyzed electronically, and so your data will remain anonymous.

Name:.....

Gender:	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female
Age:	<input type="checkbox"/> Younger than 20	<input type="checkbox"/> 20 to 30
	<input type="checkbox"/> 31 to 40	<input type="checkbox"/> 41 to 50
	<input type="checkbox"/> 51 to 60	<input type="checkbox"/> Older than 60

Occupation/position:.....

Thanks again for your time and help!

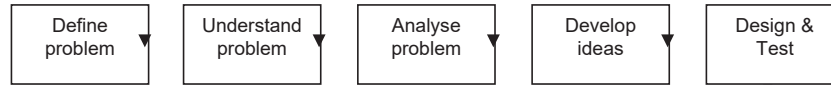
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## Author Query Form

### Queries and/or remarks

[Q1]	Alt-text, a concise written description of images and non-text elements serving as an alternative for individuals with visual impairments or those using screen readers, has been generated: "Short descriptions" for simple images (e.g., photographs) and additional "long descriptions" for complex images (e.g., graphs and charts). Please review the alt-text thoroughly to ensure the generated text captures all essential information from the image accurately.
[Q2]	Missing reference: Ref "Ulloa & Adams, 2004; Zahedi and Heaton, 2017; Wheelan, 2009; Turner, 2000; Walton, 2000, 2002" is not listed in the "References" section; please provide complete reference details.
[Q3]	Please check the sentence 'If communication was brokendown, the team became...' for clarity, and correct if necessary.

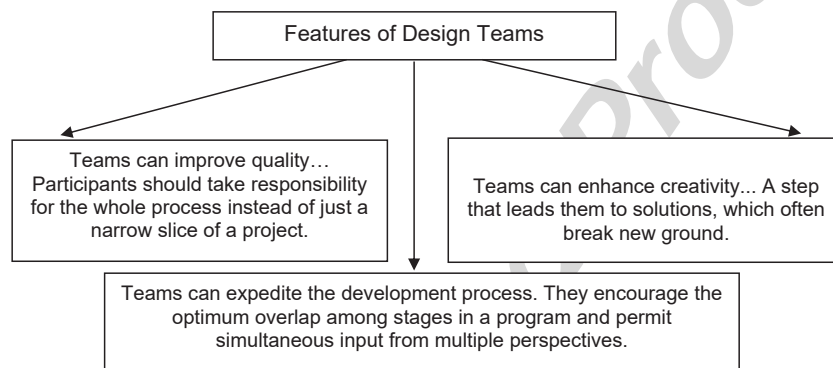
## Alt-Text Descriptions



**Fig. 12.1.**

**Short:** A flowchart showing five steps from defining a problem to designing and testing.

**Long:** The flowchart contains five text boxes arranged horizontally from left to right. Text box 1: "Define problem." Text box 2: "Understand problem." Text box 3: "Analyse problem." Text box 4: "Develop ideas." Text box 5: "Design and Test." Text 1 to 4 each has a solid downward-pointing arrow in the middle of the right edge.



**Fig. 12.2.**

**Short:** A flowchart of features of design teams showing quality, creativity, and development process benefits.

**Long:** The flowchart contains a top box labeled “Features of Design Teams” and connects to three boxes below. The left box states, “Teams can improve quality ellipsis. Participants should take responsibility for the whole process instead of just a narrow slice of a project,” and is connected to the top box with a bottom leftward arrow. The right box states, “Teams can enhance creativity ellipsis. A step that leads them to solutions, which often break new ground,” and is connected to the top box with a bottom rightward arrow. The center bottom box states, “Teams can expedite the development process. They encourage the optimum overlap among stages in a program and permit simultaneous input from multiple perspectives,” and is connected to the top box with a vertical downward arrow.