Perceived Communication Channels Based on Role Understanding Competency among Managers and Employees in Selected Industries Inrwanda

Maniraho Muhamedi and Mohd Yahya Mohamed Ariffin
Faculty of Leadership and Management, University Sains Islam Malaysia, Nilai, Malaysia

Abstract: Now a days, communication technologies that support organizational communication have became commonly more used than in the past, the question of what is their perceived richness between tradition and modern communication. This study aims to examine the most used communication channels among seven communication channels namely: face-to-face, addressed document, mobile telephone, fixed line telephone, SMS, e-mails and Facebook based on role understanding competency. The findings revealed that most used communication channel was e-mail followed by addressed documents, face-to-face, land line telephone, mobile telephone, SMS and Facebook. The results also showed that there is a negative relationship between the role understanding competency and the level of effectiveness of communication channels.

Key words: Role understanding competency, media richness, communication channels, negative, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Managerial communication involves the connection between managers and employees as well as company, government and publics. People establish and organize in the humblest sense to become things accomplished. Communication is the basic factors which play main role in every organization activities and procedures. Managers and employees communicate to each other to understand the situation, organizeac complishments, problems resolution, establish objectives and make decisions and broadcast instructions and commands (Daft *et al.*, 1987). Usually, managers have depended on face-to-face communication, phone or written memos and letters to communicate with their employees as well as their colleagues. However, now a days with the advance and development of information technology such as computers and smart phones practical systems of communication are becoming more widespread (Zmud *et al.*, 1990). Managers in the public and private companies, industries, institutes and organizations have developed significantly to include these modern and advanced communication technologies into the workplace (Harrison, 1997).

In Rwanda, in two decades the degree of taking on and integration of information technology in socio economic life was very low and the shortage of technically qualified professionals was visible at all levels. From 1999 Rwanda government recognized the need for a strategic technology use for long term development which called vision 2020.

In 2001, the Rwandan government established the 1st National Information and Communications Infrastructure (NICI) plan, "An integrated ICT-led socio-economic development policy and plan for Rwanda" to address a plan for the ICT development of the nation between 2001 and 2005. There are subsequent 2nd, 3rd and 4th phase plans guiding ICT policy through 2020. The 1st NICI plan (2001-2005) was aimed to improve a knowledge-based economy around ICTs. The 2nd phase of the plan (2006-2010) was focused on strengthening this new economic base. The 3rd plan (2011-215) looks at sustaining the development and compete in the global market for information-based services and products. The 4th plan (2016-2020) will finally look to see how the new processes and development can bring Rwanda to middle-income status (Harrison, 2005). Like other countries in the region, Rwanda has manufacturing companies which use traditional and new communication technologies as well as produce products for local and regional consumption.

According to Suh (1999), among numerous theories that attempt to describe how different communication channels have dissimilar effects on role understanding competency, the Media Richness Theory (MRT) is one of the most commonly mentioned one. This theory suggests that different communication channels use in organizations can affect the employee's understanding and task performance. MRT originally addressed traditional channels such as face-to-face and telephone, however in recent times, it has been extended to

Corresponding Auhtor: Maniraho Muhamedi, Faculty of Leadership and Management, University Sains Islam Malaysia, Nilai, Malaysia

include electronic means of communication. Communication media differ in the richness of the information processed.

Literature review

Perceived richness communication channels based on role understanding competency: Communication has extremely important influences within or among managers and employees in workplace groups in that communication channels in which particular organization use to express information, resources and even policies of the company. Organizational communication can be generally defined as communication with one another in the perspective and context of a company, industry, institution and organization (Eisenberg and Goodall, 1997; Shockley, 1988). Those communication channels act and transfer information within a company, this involves accomplishments and activities of transferring, sending and getting or receiving messages through different films of power using different message methods or arrangement and negotiating or discussing different matters issues of concern and interest to the group people belong to or the enterprise or industry people work for.

The interchange and needs of information is the necessity and requirement for proper or official work in the organizations. On the other hand, communication in the company, organization or workplace is more difficult procedure than just the information exposes (Bratton *et al.*, 2007). Many researchers and scholars have defined communication as the exchange of information between a sender and a receiver where the message flows from one point to another and the communicators are linked together by channels including (Kalla, 2005).

In addition, internal communication is an essential and fundamental management action and movement in every organization since it is important for employees to receive information from managers concerning their job. However, several communication models with different emphasizes have been set out asa way to define the nature of communication and how organizational communication acts and performs. According to Ackley (1997) any employee communication purpose that is not performing strategic communication is not working normally. He argues that employee communication must be advanced like every purpose or function that supports organization make money, save money, improve job satisfaction and show and establish organization's staff standards. He expresses that the managers and employees communicators must be "painting the picture" of organization's actions and accomplishments required to complete its assignment and mission.

Using richness communication channels effectively conveys understanding of the shared aims, goals and objectives between manager and employee relationships. Hair *et al.* (2005) explain that the exchange of information between superiors and subordinates carries understanding competency between them. The understanding competency is described as shared meanings and mutual understandings resulting from interpreting messages in the same manner by manager and employee, influenced by the richness communication tools of sources of information (Pandey and Garnett, 2006).

In an organization, communication is essentially important between managers and employees. It is the duty of junior employees to understand superiors as their leaders. It is from this idea that it is quite necessary for the superiors to decide richer communication channels as part of conflict resolution, basis of response and answer questions or deliver departmental or bureaucratic changes. Conrad and Poole (2011) describe communication as "a process through which people, acting together, create, sustain and manage meanings through the use of verbal or nonverbal signs and symbols with a particular context".

The managers in an organization use richness communication tools effectively as basis of encouraging employees to do their jobs properly. When communication is clear at the top level management, confidence and output of the employees tend to go up. When managers take poor communication channels it removes a significant feed-back loop from employees and can develop anger, demotivation and fears, especially, if they go without resolution because they do not perceive managers to be accessible. Hansen (2004) says that when managers are unsatisfying in resolving a communication problem this becomes an operational serious mistake and lowers the effectiveness of the communication tools.

Another key factor of relationships between manager and employee is the channel which is used by managers to send information to the employees. It is not sufficient to communicate through e-mails or voicemails all the time. There are periods when employees need to interact physically with their superiors. Face-to-face contact helps to respond too many of unanswered questions. Therefore, lower communication channels such as e-mails, especially when the information may have a higher ambiguity or equivocality, can often times create levels which may result into making organization employees unhappy.

Hypothesis: The study tested the relationship between role understanding competency and the level of effectiveness of communication channels and the following three variables namely: office assignment,

company time/schedules, company official announcements, the researcher tested the following hypotheses:

- H₁: there is a significant relationship between office assignment and level of effectiveness of communication channel in the Sulfo Rwanda Industries
- H₂: there is a significant relationship between company time/schedules and level of effectiveness of communication channel
- H₃: there is a significant relationship between company official announcements and level of effectiveness of communication channelin the Sulfo Rwanda Industries

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design: This study used a survey and semi interviews design to examine the most commonly used communication channels based on role understanding competency between managers and employees in the Sulfo Rwanda Industries in Kigali Rwanda in January and February, 2014. Reinard (2001) explained that a survey is an empirical study that uses questionnaires or interviews to discover descriptive characteristics of phenomena. Mixed model design has six different method designs which are: the convergent parallel design, the explanatory sequential design, the exploratory sequential design, the embedded design, the transformative design and the multiphase design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). However, researcher intends to use the convergent parallel design.

Additionally, self-administered questionnaires and interviews were used as instrument for data collection. Questionnaires were established to test the three parts for which the seven communication channels used might observe the most used through the office assignment, company time/schedules and company official announcements. All items used a four-point Likert scale while 1 represented almost never and 4 always.

All items were pilot examined using a sample of fifty among managers and employees. The descriptive analysis was measured for each variable used in this study to get reliability coefficient. The result shows that face to face channel of communication has the highest means with 2.9231 in the office assignment compare to the other communication channels. However, addressed documents have the highest in both company time schedules and company official announcements in juxtaposition with other communication channels with the means 2.6923 and 3.5769, respectively. Whereas, interviews piloted by using Cohen's Kappa interpretation and formula.

In total, the questionnaire had over twenty items, examining also the respondent's individualities and most used communication channels based on role understanding competency.

Population and sample: The population of this study involved of all managers and employees who use those communication means in their workplace of all departments of the company. They were selected because all were involved in communication each other during job actions. The sample size of the study was derived from quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative sample size is derived from Krejcie and Morgan (1970) when the population is 750, a sample size of 254 is recommended. However, the sample size of the study is between 248 and 254 whereby, the researcher took an average sample estimated to 251 people. However, the study used 459 executives and co staff was taken from a total of 740 of the total population. This qualitative study used the purposeful sampling technique. The researcher identified eight informers, three managers and five employees. In addition to semi structured interviews, the researcher attempted to use follow up interview questions (Sekaran, 2003).

Data analysis: All the quantitative data collected were entered into computer for analysis. They were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0 for windows. Descriptive statistics and multiple regressions were used to analyze the data with concern to the aims of the study. The descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentages were used to determine the background of the respondents. They also described the level of the most used communication channels. In addition, the data interpreted after information collected from study participants by using the transcripts as well as thematic analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of respondents: As shown in Table 1 that describes the number of managers and employees as far as gender is concerned. The frequencies were 275 male and 184 female managers and employees. More than half managers and employees participated in the study of whom 275 (59.9%) were males and 184 (40.1%) were females. However, the biggest number of participants was local workers with 450 (98.0%) whereas international workers were only 9 (2.0%).

According to marital status, the workers who got married had biggest number of participants 309 (67.3%). Whereas, those who were not married (singles) were 150 (32.7%). In addition, working experience was

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	275	59.9
Female	184	40.1
Total	459	100.0
Nationality		
Rwanda	450	98.0
International	9	2.0
Total	459	100.0
Marital status		
Single	150	32.7
Married	309	67.3
Total	459	100.0
Working experience (years)		
1-5	124	27.0
6-10	82	17.9
11-15	113	24.6
16-20	114	24.8
21 and above	26	5.7
Total	459	100.0
Highest educational achievement		
No education	2	0.4
Primary certificate	28	6.1
Secondary certificate	231	50.3
Diploma	29	6.3
First degree	163	35.5
Masters	6	1.3
Total	459	100.0
Job destination		
General director CEO	1	0.2
Product manager	3	0.7
Administrative manager	3	0.7
Supplying manager	4	0.9
Marketing manager	2	0.4
Finance and accounting manager	3	0.7
Office agent	230	50.1
Clearing agent	8	1.7
Accountant	68	14.8
Key officer	16	3.5
Secretary	16	3.5
Marketing agent	21	4.6
Cleaner	17	3.7
Driver	18	3.9
Security	33	7.2
Office clerk	16	3.5
Total	459	100.0
Departments		
Ihema street	181	39.4
Market street	147	32.0
Total	459	100.0

Table 2: The role understanding competency

Communication channels	Office assignment (mean)	Company time/ schedules (M)	Company official announcements (M)
Face-to-face	2.9163	2.9063	2.9093
Addressed documents	3.1267	3.0172	3.0065
Mobile (cellular) telephone	2.1743	2.1634	2.2632
Fixed line telephone	2.8679	2.7758	2.7669
SMS	1.6296	1.7387	1.6487
e-mails	2.9853	2.9935	2.9748
Facebook	1.3704	1.3623	1.4701

Based on data, participants who were office agents registered highest number 230 (50.1%). They followed by accountants 68 (14.8%) and general director CEO was the least participants with 1 (0.2%). Additionally, Ihema street had biggest number of participants 181 (39.4%). They were followed by Market street 147 (32.0%). Whereas, 131 (28.5%) were participants from Gikondo department.

The role understanding competency: Based on the objective of the study, the result indicates that the superiors and workers of Sulfo Rwanda Industries considered themselves as most experienced with addressed documents with the mean (Mean = 3.1267) for office assignment of the industry (Mean = 3.0172) for company time/schedules and 3.0065 for company official announcements whereas least tool of communication experienced was facebook (Mean = 1.3704) for office assignment of the company, (Mean = 1.3623) for company time/schedule and (Mean = 1.4701) for the company official announcements. Meanwhile, the experience with other channels which are e-mails (Mean = 2.9935) face to face (Mean = 2.9163) fixed line telephone (Mean = 2.8679), mobile (cellular) telephone (Mean = 2.2632) and SMS (Mean = 1.7387) which is more used than facebook. The details shown in Table 2.

Hypothesis testing:

- H_1: to determine the relationship between office assignment and level of effectiveness of communication channels, simple multiple regression with enter method was done for office assignment and level of effectiveness of communication channels in the Sulfo Rwanda Industries

As shown in Table 3, a significant model emerged from the analysis with F = 118.064, p = 0.000. It means that the level of effectiveness of communication channels had significant impact on the office assignment (β = -0.453, t = -10.866, p = 0.000). However, the impact was negative which means the higher the level of effectiveness of communication channels, the less the level of office assignment. The independent variable

measured as key factor among respondents, those who had worked between 1 and 5 years registered highest number 124 (27.0%). This was followed by 16-20 and 11-15 years which was 114 (24.8%) and 113 (24.6%) respectively. However, 6-10 and 20 years above recorded the lowest number which were 82 (17.9%) and 26 (5.7%).

Moreover, participants with secondary school level certificate registered highest number 231 (50.3%). Those with bachelor degree were 163 (35.5%) whereas those who held diploma and primary certificate registered with 29 (6.3%) and 28 (6.1%). However the lowest educational achievement was masters level and no education by 6 (1.3) and 2 (0.4%).

Table 3: Simple multiple regression between office assignment and level of effectiveness of communication channel

Model variable (N = 459)	Unstandardized coefficients (B)	SE	Standardized coefficients (β)	t-values	Sig.
1 Constant	3.961	0.145	-	27.241	0.000
Level of effectiveness of communication channel	-0.845	0.078	-0.453	-10.866	0.000

F = 118.064; p = 0.000; R = 0.453; R^2 = 0.205; R^2 Adj. = 0.204

Table 4: Simple multiple regression between company time/schedules and Level of effectiveness of communication channels

Model variable (N = 459)	Unstandardized coefficients (B)	SE	Standardized coefficients (β)	t-values	Sig.
1 Constant	2.789	0.143	-	19.465	0.000
Level of effectiveness of communication channel	-0.357	0.077	-0.213	-4.659	0.000

F = 21.709; p = 0.000; R = 0.213; R^2 = 0.045; R^2 Adj. = 0.043

Table 5: Simple multiple regression between company official announcements and level of effectiveness of communication channels

Model variable (N = 459)	Unstandardized coefficients (B)	SE	Standardized coefficients (β)	t-values	Sig.
1 Constant	2.771	0.105		26.444	0.000
Level of effectiveness of communication channel	-0.335	0.056	-0.270	-5.984	0.000

F = 35.805; p = 0.000; R = 0.270; R^2 = 0.073; R^2 Adj. = 0.071

(level of effectiveness of communication channels) had managed to explain about 21% of variance in the criterion variable (R^2 = 0.205). Therefore, the H_1 was supported":

- H_2: in order to define the relationship between company time/schedules and level of communication channels, the researcher used level of communication channels as independent variable and company time/schedules as dependent variable

As presented in Table 4, a significant model appeared from the analysis with F = 21.709, p = 0.000. It means that the level of effectiveness of communication channels had significant effect on the company time/schedules (β = -0.213, t = -4.659, p = 0.000). However, the effect was negative which means the higher the level of effectiveness of communication channels, the less the level of company time/schedules. The independent variable (level of effectiveness of communication channels) had managed to explain about 5% of variance in the criterion variable (R^2 = 0.045). Therefore, the second hypothesis was supported.

- H_3: to determine the relationship between company official announcements and level of effectiveness of communication channels, simple multiple regression with enter method was completed for company official announcements and level of effectiveness of communication channels in the Sulfo Rwanda Industries

As exposed in Table 5, a significant model prepared from the analysis with F = 35.805, p = 0.000. It means that the level of effectiveness of communication channels had significant influence on the company official announcements (β = -0.270, t = -5.984, p = 0.000). However, the influence was negative which means the higher the level of effectiveness of communication

channels, the less the level of company official announcements. The independent variable (level of effectiveness of communication channels) had succeeded to describe about 7% of variance in the criterion variable (R^2 = 0.073). Therefore, the third hypothesis was supported.

Interview responses; in both manager and works experience: The first interview question was what are the most common communication channels used to communicate with your colleagues in the company?

Based on interview response, the types of communication preferred by managers in terms of communicating with their colleagues are totally different for employees. Managers believed that the most common communication with their colleagues is internet followed by telephone. While employees agreed that the most common communication with their colleagues is telephone (fixed line and mobile) while some of them preferred face-to-face and SMS.

The first respondent expressed his preference of communication channels among managers and their colleagues by stating the list of channels which preferred among managers. Respondent 1 said: "internet, internet same thing, internet, telephone and intercom there are main full channels". The participants argued the most used communication channels between employees and their colleagues as mentioned before by explaining why they use certain means of communication for example Respondent 5 said "you see we use fixed line and also mobile phone for example when I go out of the company I use mobile phones which belong to the department, we have department's mobile phone not personal telephone" whereas respondent 4 said "almost we communicate, for example like here we close each other so we use face-to-face then when there is distance he or she is little far we use internal telephone even you can move to him in order to discuss".

Another respondent commented on previous respondents said with this statement. Respondent 8 stated: "I can say that also mainly we use telephone because I can see if I talk to that one it will be bothering others then I call him or if there is a case which we have to discuss I move to him in order to discuss it we use verbal language again mainly we use internal telephone".

The second question was, what are the most common communication channels used to communicate with your employees in the company? According to participants, the communication between managers and employees weather downward or upward stated that the most used communication channel is internet especially internal internet (outlook) as respondent 2 mentioned that "okay with employees, yes, we have e-mail system okay and also all communication we use it but we have also when we communicate directly we put it in e-mail, it is locally also yeah" where managers send information to the head of department then they spread them to other employees and telephone is used too as well as other channels like it has been mentioned in previous statement also as explained by Respondent 3 said "Also with employees, we use telephone, e-mails and outlook".

The third question was what are the most common communication channels used to communicate with your managers in the company? Based on respondents, the communication between employees and managers weather upward or downward indicated that the most used communication channel is internet especially internal internet (outlook) where employees receive information from managers through the head of department then they spread them to other employees. In the meantime, employees reply to managers through the same tool of communication. They use also internal telephone and external telephone in order to accomplish their duties as well as other types such as face-to-face and walk talkie were mentioned.

The participants stated that by giving example, respondent 4 explained: "managers sometimes send e-mails telling me what they need me to do and also I can reply it telling them that I have accomplished my work or they can tell me face-to-face. Ok face-to-face eehhh but also telephone is used. There is mobile and fixed line, Ehhh internal telephone, e-mail and face-to-face".

Another Respondent expressed that supervisors are accessed to internet where they receive messages and send them to other employees where said: "first of all the department has chief and the chief access to e-mail then manager send message to chief of department then the chief spread it to other employees".

The comparison of role understanding competency: The results of both quantitative and qualitative data were combined in order to answer the objective of the study. Responses to the seven communication channels as mentioned before that were used by the managers and the employees were examined. As convergent parallel model, the quantitative results showed that the managers and employees of Sulfo Rwanda Industries believed themselves as most experienced with addressed documents with lowest practice with facebook. However, the experience with other channels which are face-to-face, landline telephone, mobile (cellular) telephone, SMS and e-mails placed between these two channels.

On the other hands, the qualitative findings presented that the types of communication chosen by managers in terms of communicating with their colleagues are absolutely dissimilar with employees. Managers assumed that the most common communication with their colleagues is internet followed by telephone. Whereas, employees favored that telephone (fixed line and mobile) while some of others preferred face-to-face and SMS are the most common communication channels when they contact with their colleagues.

In addition, the participants believed that internet is the most means of communication followed by internal and external telephone. They mentioned other communication channels such as face-to-face and walkie-talkie in terms of communication between managers and employees weather down ward or upward communication in order to complete their assignments.

CONCLUSION

The study delivered some unexpected conclusions. The first surprise was that both managers and employees in the company emphasis on which medium, they transfer information through it regarding the communication channels are obtainable and less on which communication channels are most common effective. Based on the results of this study, communication channels in general have a negative relationship with that competency. There were a significant negative relationship between the communication channels and all variables related to competency namely: office assignment, company time/schedules and official announcements.

The company increased usage of modern communication channels resulted in increased acceptance of innovation to the communication channels used. Consequently, management should evaluate the types of communication channels most preferred between superior and employees to plan the increases of available types of communication.

IMPLICATIONS

The implications of this study arrange a list or rank of media could be used as a communications framework for managers and employees in the Sulfo Rwanda Industries which can help them to pick or select appropriate media in their daily task and assignment in various situations. In this way, managers could communicate with employees and use the appropriate means of communication. The findings should provide to managers and employee's perception such as the point that e-mail is the most preferred based on role understanding competency followed by addressed document and telephones (fixed line and mobile) calls.

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