

COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS OF MEMOS BY EMAIL IN UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study was motivated by the need to bridge the gap in research in the effectiveness of communication channels of internal communication of organisations. The Technological Determinism (TD) theory underpinned the research. The survey method of research was adopted. The sampling technique adopted was census because there was no need for selection of representative sample. The instrument of data collection was questionnaire which was distributed electronically by placing the google form on University WhatsApp platforms. Analysis was by simple percentage. The study could not establish a relationship with the propositions of the Technological Determinism theory and recommended a reorientation for the staff on the adoption of technology

KEYWORDS: Comprehension, Recall, Communication Effectiveness, Ethics, Professionalism.

INTRODUCTION

Organisational communication is the exchange of ideas in an organisation transmitted through various platforms as arteries both horizontally and vertically. Arguably the success or failure of any institution is a function of how effective this exchange becomes.

Since the advent of the 21st century, development and innovation have happened with the speed of light. Technologies become obsolete within a few years of invention in order to meet up with the changing needs in the environment. According to Amuzat (2025) technologies are implemented to improve citizen services, such as chatbots for customersupport. To galvanise the workforce, competition in the market place demands clarity in communication in an effective and efficient manner.

Prior to the explosion in Information and Communication technology (ICT) internal communication of any organisation was limited to face-to-face meeting and official memos in hard copy shared with the various units of their institutions. Technology has made communication so fast and easy that distance and time are no longer major barriers in society, business, or politics. Ekong (nd) further states that advances in communication have shrunk social, economic, and political time and distance. However, with the development in ICT many channels/media have emerged to accelerate the speed at which information is shared internally. Platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, LinkedIn, Telegram, YouTube, Threads, Snapchat and X (formerly Twitter) have emerged. These apps have been applied beyond their initial targeted audiences and purposes, and have become semi-official medium of information sharing in organisations.

Particularly apps like LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook have been deployed as tools of internal communication, partly because of their appeal to, and acceptance by the

millennials who have resorted to Google meet and zoom to conduct interdepartmental meetings across geographical boundaries. Other apps with wide application as tools of organisational internal communication include Telegram, WhatsApp. Many organisations now set up digital platforms to provide means of interaction among staff members. The Email has also become a reliable means of internal communication. Its popularity is perhaps because it is just a way of performing a function traditional, yet so new that researchers subscribe to the fact that it is new. In reality what changed with email is the virtual nature of the internet that makes delivery of memos possible almost in real time. Nothing has significantly changed about memos, other than the convenience offered by the internet.

Statement of the Problem

The internet has shrunk the world into what is commonly referred to as a global village and organisations have responded by deploying it in their communication – intra and inter – for effective and effective management.

The University of Port Harcourt like most corporate bodies have leveraged the internet and provided a Gmail platform to staff to serve their email purpose. Staff of the University are required to open and activate the Gmail in order to enhance social interaction among themselves. Over the years, the Email has become a major way of disseminating information in memo format. However, the communication effectiveness of this medium has not been evaluated. This work was motivated by that gap.

Objectives of the study

Communication effectiveness is critical in achieving goals of an organisation. It is required for a motivated work force which ultimately leads to productivity and employee enculturation.

The objectives of this paper was to determine the communication effectiveness of Memos sent through Email in the University of Port Harcourt. Specifically, the objectives are to:

- i. Ascertain the comprehension of programmes and policies of the University communicated through email
- ii. Determine recall and compliance by staff members of the University of Port Harcourt.

Research Questions

- i. What is the traceable comprehension of programmes and policies of the University of Port Harcourt communicated through Email Memos?
- ii. What are the evidences of recall and compliance to the programmes and policies communicated through Memos by Email?

Theoretical Review

Theories as systematic framework or principles that explain a phenomenon are central in understanding the underpinning assumptions of any research. Theories provide the framework to evaluate any phenomenon. This paper was guided by the Technological Determinism (TD) theory that postulates that technology drives social change. Propounded in 1964 by McLuhan in his work “Understanding Media: The extensions of man”, where he

posited that the medium is the message. This implies that content of media benefits from the medium which shapes society's experience. Over the years, this theory has been applied by scholars and castells (2000) has argued that the internet and social media influence social order and interactions. Apparently, the internet has done to the television what it did to radio and press.

Conceptual Review

Comprehension and communication Effectiveness

Communication is the lubricant of social relations; mastery over it is a sine qua non to building relationships. As stated by Godswil & James (2026) The practical transfer of information via writing, speaking, or utilising a medium that facilitates understanding from one person, group, or location to another is known as communication. We do not communicate just for the sake of communication but with the aim of achieving some desired goals. Communication is possible and meaningful if parties in the process understand the code of communication which may be a language or other codes that facilitate the assignment of meaning by participants. This cognitive process of understanding, called comprehension is key to achieving communication objective(s). According to Sperber and Wilson (1995) comprehension is vital in communication because it energises effective exchange and understanding. Comprehension however, is affected by context, shared knowledge and medium (Krant et al, 2003). The comprehension of any piece of communication like memo is influenced by the medium. It is possible to have different understanding and reaction from the same content when transmitted through different media (as the case between radio and television). A hard copy memo is likely to be perceived differently from an electronic or virtual copy even though the contents are the same. For a piece of communication to achieve effectiveness, it must first be comprehended.

Another factor that affects the comprehension apart from the medium, is the style of communication. Writing style whose feature are clear and concise is an aid to comprehension. The opposite is true also if the style lacks those features (Duffy, 2003). Memos also benefit from style because it could be the difference between comprehension or lack of it (Gronbeck et al; 2000, Locker and Kienzler, 2015).

Without doubt, attitude formation and change proceed from comprehension and communication. There is the likelihood of a favourable response by recipients when they comprehend the communication. This response may be acknowledge understanding or taking action based on the communication (Clark, 1996).

Recall and Communication effectiveness

Test of recall in communication is an evaluation to determine or assess communication effectiveness among recipients. This is important because cognitive recall –the mental process of retrieving information– is so central to communication effectiveness. How much an audience recalls a message is influenced by attraction and engagement (Lang, 2000). For Emailed Memos to achieve a high rate of recall, it must first command the attention of recipients. In work environments characterised by both physical and mental distractions, attention would obviously be low and this would affect comprehension and recall. Cognitive recall is also impacted by message clarity and structure (Kovach et al, 2011). This is a less of

a factor than attention because digitised mediated messages like Memo through Email may be received without getting the attention of the recipient if there is no alert system to draw the attention to the message. Consequently, the message would suffer lack of comprehension, without which recall would be impossible. Memos sent via Email may never get the attention of the recipient until the information becomes stale depending on the timing or recency. The time of the day and prevailing situation affect recall as well (Miller and Campbell, 1959). With power and network challenges, Memos may be delayed or even delivered outside work hours, and may never be opened. There is the possibility of the Memo delivered in the spam mail as most bulk messages are considered spam. The reach of email –the proportion of a target recipients that receive message and recall it– is another challenge to communication effectiveness (Cray & Miller, 1989).

Empirical Review

Marshall, et al (2009) did an exploratory study of the impact of formatting in email effectiveness and recall. The research was motivated to close the gap in empirical research about how formatting of emails impacts email effectiveness. The work was not particularly underpinned by any theory, but sufficient literature was reviewed to give direction to it. The survey method of research was adopted and 135 college students were sampled. The study found that formatted messages were more effective in terms of persuasiveness and ensured that recipients recalled message content more accurately. The study concluded that findings lent credibility to existing advice about improving email formatting. This present study is similar to the work of Marshall et al because both considered recall which is a major indicator of communication effectiveness. However, while their work surveyed students, this present work focused on the staff of the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Method

The survey method of research was adopted for this research because of its efficiency in data collection from large sample size in cost effective manner. Particularly, survey lends itself a useful method for on-line instruments. The population of the study was 3,803 as at June 2025 which is the total number of staff as declared by the Registry of the University of Port Harcourt. The sampling technique adopted was census because every member of the population was included in the sample by using on-line platforms for the distribution and retrieval of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was dropped on the University WhatsApp platform, and multiple other platforms where staff of the University belong. Those platforms are the senior staff club WhatsApp platform, the University Staff Unions platforms. The attempt to have the questionnaire emailed to the staff was not supported by favourable response from the authorities. The questionnaire was in the form of a google form linked to the researchers' email and automatically collected data. However, only 188 respondents filled the form. Data was analysed using simple percentage

**PRESENTATION OF DATA AND DISCUSSION
DATA REPRESENTATION**

SECTION A

MEMOGRAPHY

Gender

Male (140) Female (48)

Years in Service

1 – 3 year (8) 4-6 year (12) 7 – 11 years (54) 14 years and above (112)

SECTION B

PHYSCOGRAPHIC

TABLE 1: Recall of last Registry Memo and date and Ownership of mobile device

Yes	No
108	78
150	36

TABLE 2: Receipt of Email received in the last three months

Occasionally	Sometimes	Rarely	Not at all	Total
82(43.6%)	28(14.9%)	26(13.8%)	52(27.6%)	188

TABLE 3: Number of Email received in the last three months

1-5 Memos	6-10 Memos	11 and above Memos	Total
110(58.5%)	40(21.3%)	38(21.2%)	188

TABLE 4: Source of information development in the University

WhatsApp	Colleagues	Registry Email	Total
154(81.9%)	8(4.3%)	26(13.8%)	188

TABLE 5: Level of reliance of Registry Memos by Email on a scale of 1-10

1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	Total
74(39.4%)	22(12.2%)	26(14.4%)	30(16.7%)	28(15.6%)	180

TABLE 6: Level of knowledge of policies through Email

Very high	High	None	Low	Very low	Total
16(8.9%)	54(30%)	22(12.2%)	62(34.4%)	26(14.4%)	180

TABLE 7: Level of reliance on Registry Memo for policy knowledge

Very high	High	None	Low	Very low	Total
20(10.9%)	60(32.9%)	12(6.6%)	66(36.3%)	24(13.2%)	182

DISCUSSION

Research on Communication effectiveness is an important evaluation of the communication activities of any organisation. The contribution of communication to corporate earning has been an issue of argument over the years because of the difficulty as determining the monetary value of communication to revenue, unlike other department like marketing and production.

The measure of communication effectiveness can be undertaken by testing for comprehension, recall and persuasive effectiveness. This work concentrated on comprehension and recall because testing for persuasive effectiveness of any communication involves some other test as well.

Out of the 188 respondents who filled out the Google form, impressively, 100% had email addresses even though no respondent was reached by email for the mere fact that the instrument was placed on other platforms. One hundred and fifty of them had a mobile device. By extrapolation almost 80% of the University staff had email addresses. In a work environment where information is the currency of trade, to have about 20% of your work force outside your information net is a cause for worry. One fifth of the workforce is a significant number to be out of reach with information on developments and policies in any institution.

Respondents were tested on recall of information and over 40% of them could not recall the title or date of the last email from the registry. In some cases, from research data the last emails were received within the last 3 to 5 days prior to filling out the questionnaire. Obviously, information recall is low which may be an indication that comprehension is low also. This high number deficiency in recall has affected attendance to programmes like inaugural lectures, congregation and convocation meetings.

The frequency of communication was tested by the number of Memo received through email by recipients. The indices of measure were categorised under the following: 1 – 5 memos; 6 – 10 memos; 11 and above. Evidence shows that more than 58% received the least category indicating that only about five memos have been received through email. By implication, it may be as low as one email that was received and a possibility existed that none was received at all. Recency and frequency could not be attested to. Only about 21% of respondents received eleven and more memos through email.

Research data also shows that a preponderance of members of staff depended on WhatsApp platform as a source of information on development in the university. It is worrisome that in an institution with an official Gmail platform, members of staff predominantly get information of development in the university from WhatsApp platform. Staff members who get information from the Registry accounted for just about 26% of the sample. The challenge with this is that even when an official memo is found on the WhatsApp platform, its authenticity may be compromised.

Furthermore, on a scale of 1 to 10 on reliance, the least level of reliance has the highest percentage of members. Reliance could be a test of availability and recency. Almost 40% of respondents have the lowest level of reliance (1 – 2) from the Registry memo. This could lead to rumour, misinformation and disinformation.

In consistent manner, only about 9% of respondents affirmed very high level of knowledge of the University's policies through the Registry email. A combination of very low, low and no knowledge accounted for 60% of staff. This means that staff of the University barely get sufficient information on the policies of the university and calls for a reorientation of the staff and improvement by the Registry to ensure an improvement in the level of policy knowledge by the staff.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper evaluated the comprehension and recall associated with registry memo by email in the University of Port Harcourt. Existing literature shows that comprehension and recall are central to communication effectiveness. This study was to establish the relationship by evaluating the effectiveness of registry memos through email in the University of Port Harcourt. It was found that comprehension was not proved, neither was recall established. This research did not investigate the reason for this and could not make conclusion in that regard.

The study could not establish the relationship with the proposition of the Technological Determinism theory because the restart to technology and innovation did not affirm a direct relationship.

The following have been recommended:

- i. The registry should enforce the use of university official email by staff in order to ensure that memos are delivered and received in aid of comprehension of communication. This could be achieved by making the university Gmail the channel of signing the monthly payroll.
- ii. There should be a reorientation of staff on the benefit of being connected to the university communication loop.

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