Assessment of communication tools on Small and Medium Scale performance in Ibadan Metropolis

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Abstract
Research in the Ibadan metropolitan area looked at how SMEs' use of communication technologies affected their productivity. The effects of verbal, nonverbal, written, and face-to-face communication on the efficiency and productivity of SMEs are investigated in this study. The study's methodology was based on descriptive surveys. Small and medium-sized business owners and managers in the Abeokuta metropolitan area made up the study's population. There were 225 participants in the study. The Yamane sampling model was employed in this investigation. Using a well-designed questionnaire, the study's primary data were gathered. The target respondents were surveyed using a questionnaire. A regression model was used to assess the gathered data. Researchers found that SMEs performed better when they were able to communicate effectively using face-to-face, telephone, written, and nonverbal means. Researchers in the Ibadan metropolitan region discovered that SMEs' productivity is affected by the communication tools they use.

Keywords: Communication, Performance, SMEs

Introduction

Organisational growth is the end result of incorporating resources, abilities, and procedures that are unique to a firm. A company's present organisational production activities are highly related to its growth potential (Coad, 2009). Corporate growth is defined by Hakkert and Kemp (2016) as an increase in a firm's revenues and profits over two separate time periods. One way to measure a company's growth is by looking at how well it acquires, organises, and converts its own resources like labour, cash, and knowledge into products and services that customers want to buy (Britney & Kungu, 2020). According to Jacqueline, Sebyala, and Micheal (2014), employee engagement is an essential and fundamental business activity because a company's longevity depends on its employees' capacity to communicate well with one another and form strong bonds. Still, significant communication channels have been underutilised because the emphasis has traditionally been on organisational hierarchical power rather than strategic importance. Because of the cumbersome reporting system, upper-level management often ignores the recommendations of lower-level employees. Due to competing claims of responsibility and power, employees are less likely to comply when their supervisors and subordinates fail to effectively communicate (Mlhud, 2017). Under some conditions, the communication divide between managers and employees leads to feelings of distrust, disdain, or undervaluation of their professional responsibilities (Gou, 2012).

In the contemporary corporate landscape, effective communication with employers, employees, clients, suppliers, and consumers is essential for success. The most accomplished corporate leaders globally have perfected the skill of communication. The current business landscape is exceedingly challenging. To maintain profitability in the current competitive global market, all production components (labour, machinery, and materials) must be meticulously managed. Human resources present the most significant challenge among production components, as personnel management requires the adept handling of ideas, feelings, and emotions to optimise output, unlike other inputs. In this context, effective organisational communication is essential (Shonubi & Akintaro, 2016). The literature indicates that communication is a crucial tool for executing our everyday responsibilities (Okwuagwu, Nnoje, Onoh, & Ikpezie, 2017).

Communication is the human endeavour that unites individuals and cultivates relationships. This indicates that individuals engage with one other via communication. It is the adhesive that unites individuals inside an organisation. Individuals must communicate with others to exchange their experiences, occupations, disappointments, aspirations, and childhood concerns (Opele, Ajayi, & Akinyele, 2022). In many businesses, managers frequently assign the responsibility of successful communication to the human resources department, as their attention is primarily directed towards operational operations. Managers prioritise target attainment, neglecting the seamless exchange of information and the extent to which employees comprehend that effective information dissemination enhances morale, hence increasing productivity to optimise income (Mohammed, 2022). Job generation, investment allocation, and social welfare all benefit from the small and medium-sized enterprise sector, which in turn helps to reduce poverty (Brittney & Kungu, 2020). Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria confront several obstacles to growth, despite their important societal contributions and numerous policy recommendations. These include a lack of data, credit, and financing; an inadequate skills matrix; insufficient competencies to meet market demands and build market links; and limited access to vital business development services. Research on communication as a central concept has proliferated, with studies spanning a wide range of industries and companies (e.g., Musheke and Phiri (2021)), Mohammed (2022), and Shonubi and Akintaro (2016)). However, this study aims to fill a gap in the literature by investigating the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises in the Ibadan metropolitan area, where there is a lack of previous research on the subject.

Research Objectives

The specific objectives are to:

1) examine the effect of face-to-face communication on small and medium scale enterprise performance;
2) determine the effect of telephone communication on small and medium scale enterprise performance;
3) evaluate the effect of written communication on small and medium scale enterprise performance.
4) ascertain the effect of non-verbal communication on small and medium scale enterprise performance.

Literature Review

Communication

For optimal operation, nearly every organisation depends significantly on communication. Any company or organisation can't succeed without good communication (Mutuku & Mathooko, 2014). By doing so, it removes inefficiencies and provides the necessary tools for staff and consumers to succeed and be fulfilled. Prolonged production durations and reduced profitability are the outcomes of less-than-ideal communication. To avoid this outcome, it is essential to communicate well (Joey 2002).

According to Mutuku and Mathoko (2014), the process of communication involves the exchange of information between two parties, with each party contributing their own interpretation of the message. Communication is a win-win process with interdependent parts, as this interaction analysis shows.
The term "communication" refers to the exchange of thoughts, feelings, and suggestions amongst people in an organisation. Effective communication is the backbone of any thriving organisation.

One of the most important parts of management is communication. Organisational effectiveness suffers when upper-level management avoids communicating with middle-and lower-level managers.
Maintaining communication among the organization's stakeholders is crucial for carrying out the management functions of organising, motivating, leading, and controlling. Effective managers have strong communication skills, which allow them to build and sustain connections with their workforce, which in turn ensures the precise execution of critical daily duties. Faster information transfer is essential for modern businesses (Nabi, Foysol, & Adnan, 2017).
In order to build and maintain connections with their staff, which are essential to the day-to-day operations of the business, managers must have strong communication skills.

Staff members at all levels of an organisation are able to work together towards common goals and strengthen the company's formal structure when they are able to communicate effectively. Organisational level communication improves overall performance by promoting coherence across various components, which in turn empowers and advances the organization's missions (Norbin, Karanja & Nyamwamu, 2011). Organisational success, according to Harris and Nelson (2008), hinges on engaged employees. The importance of open lines of communication among workers to the success of a business and the quality of interpersonal relationships was stressed. Differences in workplace culture, economic growth, and social advancement are striking. certain companies' reporting structures are convoluted and confusing for employees to understand; they contain competing lines of authority and responsibilities and give certain employees more responsibility than their bosses. Some companies fail to use internal communication tools like memos and intercoms, which limits how employees can learn about the company's goals and plans.

Communication Tools

Face-to-Face Communication

People are able to respond quickly to nonverbal clues (such gestures and mimicry) while they are interacting face to face. Such two-way feedback processes in communication, defined by questioning and alternating speech, allow for quick understanding with substantial flexibility. Because it is easier to understand personal communication than mass communication, the former has a greater impact. Due to its quicker comprehension, interpersonal communication has a greater impact than mass communication. When two or more people physically meet, they are engaging in face-to-face communication, which is defined by Berko (2007) as an interpersonal communication style.

As stated by Tubbs and Moss (2003), who provide a technical explanation, face-to-face communication involves multiple channels. Information is received and processed from numerous channels simultaneously. Sense organs are the means by which in-person communication takes place.

Written Communication

Therefore, complicated events, like performance reviews, are better articulated through written communication. Email and other computer-assisted communication tools have greatly increased productivity, dispelling the notion that conventional textual communication was sluggish. Some public servants in administrative roles write vague letters. They might be quite long and there isn't always a good reason for writing them. Inadequate wording in writing prevents ideas from being effectively communicated, according to Piran and Sheenan (2009). In such a case, inaction leads to worse performance (Byakutaga, Onen, Oonyu, & Kasesene, 2016). One of the first known ways of conveying information was through writing. There are numerous forms of written communication, including letters, notes, research papers, reports, and comparable materials. There is a physical record of this communication that can be used for reference in the future. Writing is a great form of mass communication since it can be quickly and readily shared with many people. All members of the audience can be certain that the information is accurate because it is consistent across all users.

Writing that is thorough, easy to understand, and factually correct is essential for successful written communication. Written communication must be precise and easy to understand in order to convey information effectively because of the lack of instant response (Prabavathi & Nagasubramani, 2018). Not explicitly addressed are other types of written communication such as circular letters and memoranda. Miller (2015) argued that in order to be read, circular messages must be brief. Miller (2015) and Oakland (2000) both agree that people tend to ignore lengthy texts like memos and circulars. This seems to be the case, since many companies encourage employees to put documents on the shelf due to their length and the fact that their reading culture is lacking.

Non-Verbal Communication

According to Bovee and Thill, as referenced in Kristiyanti (2012), nonverbal communication includes all behaviours that help communicate without using words, such as body language, vocal intonation, and attitude. Unconsciously, two people communicate through nonverbal cues while they engage in conversation. Body language includes not just facial expressions but also eye movements, posture changes, and gestures. These subtle and obvious movements and gestures enhance the spoken story and pave the way for a conversation that makes use of nonverbal cues (Kristiyanti, 2012). We use body language, gestures, and visual signals to effectively communicate with clients when they ask us questions. The use of nonverbal cues in communication allows for the conveyance of meaning (Ibrahim et al., 2022).

Everything that can be conveyed through means other than spoken words is a part of nonverbal communication. Using non-verbal cues such as body language, attitude, or action rather than words is one way to demonstrate this (Asubiojo, Adewusi, & Oyediran, 2005). Both deliberate and accidental occurrences are possible. Postures, facial expressions, eye contact, vocal inflections, closeness, gestures, colours, symbols, noises, and diagrams are all components of nonverbal communication. Because of the difficulty of verbalising complex ideas, nonverbal cues play a crucial role in interpersonal communication. The use of nonverbal clues is fundamental in most human relationships, and this aids and improves verbal communication (Akinola, 2014).

Small and Medium Scale Enterprise Performance

When it comes to a country's economic growth, medium and small businesses are vital. Economic and social progress cannot be achieved without them. Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) play an important part in reducing regional disparities between rural and urban areas and in creating jobs, according to the World Bank (2013). Large corporations have emerged from once-small and medium-sized businesses. The Central Bank of Nigeria

(2003) highlights the significance of medium and small businesses in creating jobs in Nigeria's manufacturing sector. Reduced rural-urban migration and increased resource efficiency are two outcomes of small and medium-sized businesses' reliance on locally sourced raw materials that necessitate less processing equipment. To cut costs and increase efficiency, small and medium-sized businesses use cutting-edge technologies and recycle materials that would otherwise go to waste. The provision of raw materials to larger firms by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) makes a substantial contribution to the national production. Based on their overall workforce and/or asset valuation, small and medium-sized firms are characterised by the World Bank (2013). Using the traits mentioned before, we can differentiate between big organisations and small and medium-sized businesses. In different organisational or geographical settings, "small" and "medium" businesses are defined differently.

Companies are considered medium-sized if they have less than 250 workers, a yearly revenue of less than €50 million, or a total balance sheet amounting to less than €43 million (Bouri, Breij, Diop, Kempner, Klinger, & Stevenson, 2011). A small business is one that does not have more than 50 employees, generates less than €10 million in sales, and/or has a total of less than €10 million in assets. In business parlance, "performance" means the results achieved by a company within a certain time limit. According to Mulyadi (2007), an organization's performance is measured by how well it accomplishes its strategic goals through the implementation of individual initiatives. In his work on the topic, Muhammad (2008) defines corporate performance as an organization's ability to achieve its goals through the efficient and effective use of its resources. According to Mulya, Hidayati, and Zainurrosalamia (2022), this assessment measures how well a company meets its performance metrics and how it compares to its peers and previous performance. The level of success in carrying out an activity or policy program to achieve the stated goals, objectives, mission, and vision of an organisation is characterised by Wibowo (2010) as performance. Performance, according to the several definitions given, is the result of an individual's or group's efforts to complete tasks in pursuit of goals, with those efforts being measured against certain standards within a given time frame.

Theoretical Review

This investigation employed the human relations theory. Wrench, Punyanunt-Carter, and Ward (2015) assert that the human relations approach is pivotal as it marked the inaugural instance of promoting two-way communication, wherein interactions between employees and their managers were regarded as dialogues rather than a one-sided directive from the manager to the employee. Moreover, the human relations approach perceives communication as a tool that management can utilise to secure cooperation from subordinates. The concept affirmed that employees seek to express their opinions and participate in their tasks (Wrench et al., 2015). The human relations theory can be effectively applied in an organisational context by fostering communication among employees, especially during periods of transition aimed at improving both individual and organisational performance.

Methodology

Ibadan, capital of Oyo State, was the site of the research. The managers and owners of small and medium-sized businesses in the Ibadan Metropolis were surveyed using a standardised questionnaire. Small and medium-sized business owners and managers in the Ibadan Metropolis made up the study's population. Owners and managers of small and medium-sized businesses in the Ibadan Metropolis were the intended respondents. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2014), there are a total of 1,189 small and medium corporations in Ibadan Metropolis, consisting of 946 small-scale organisations and 243 medium-scale businesses. Medium and small businesses were chosen using homogeneous purposive sampling. Using the Yamane (1967) sampling approach, 299 small and medium business owners in Ibadan Metropolis were surveyed. Using the statistical package for the social sciences, we used descriptive statistics, including frequency tables for respondent analysis, and multiple regression analysis, an inferential statistical method, to test our hypotheses and show how one variable affected the others. To determine how communication technology affected the efficiency of SMEs, researchers used multiple regression analysis. So, this is how the regression model is defined:

Smp = *f* (Ffc, Tlc, Wtc, Nvc)..............................(3.1)

X = (Communication Tools) Independent variable

Where:

Smp = Small and Medium Enterprise Performance

Ffc= Face to Face Communication

Tlc= Telephone Communication

Wtc= Written Communication

Nvc= Non Verbal Communication

f= Functional Notation

The regression equations are given below:

$Smp = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Ffc + \beta_2 Tlc + \beta_1 Wtc + \beta_4 Nvc + \mu$ ....(3.2)

Where:

β_0= Intercept

β_1 = Coefficient of independent variables

μ = Error Term

Results and Discussion

Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Two hundred ninety-nine (299) questionnaires were distributed, and two hundred twenty-five (225) were retrieved from respondents for data analysis. The gender distribution of respondents indicated that one hundred twenty-six (56%) are male and ninety-nine (44%) are female. The respondents' marital status indicated that ninety-seven (43.1%) are single, ninety-five (42.2%) are married, and thirty-three (14.7%) are divorced. Respondents' educational qualifications revealed that fifty-seven (25.3%) attended primary school, sixty-six (29.3%) attended secondary school, sixty-five (28.9%) attended colleges, thirty-six (16%) attended polytechnic, and one pursued a university degree. The work experience of the respondents indicated that twenty-four

(10.7%) have spent less than 5 years with the organisation, forty (17.8%) have spent between 6-10 years, eighty-eight (39.1%) have spent between 11-15 years, fifty-seven (25.3%) have spent between 16-20 years, and sixteen (7.1%) have spent 21 years or more.

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Gender Distribution Male Female Total	126 99 225	56.0 44.0 100.0
Marital Status Single Married Divorced Total	97 95 33 225	43.1 42.2 14.7 100.0
Educational Qualification Primary Secondary College Polytechnic University Total	57 66 65 36 1 225	25.3 29.3 28.9 16.0 .4 100.0
Work Experience Below 5Years 6-10Years 11-15Years 16-20Years 21Years and Above Total	24 40 88 57 16 225	10.7 17.8 39.1 25.3 7.1 100.0

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2024

4.2 Face to Face Communication and SMEs Performance

Using basic regression analysis, we calculated and analysed the respondents' ratings on two factors: their relationship with others and the performance of SMEs. This allowed us to test the hypothesis. There is a strong positive link between SME performance and face-to-face communication, as shown in Table 2 with a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.632. One way to measure how much variance in the independent variables accounts for the overall variation in the dependent variable is by using the R2 statistic. An R2 value of 0.400 indicates that there is a 40% correlation between SME performance and face-to-face communication. The corrected R^2 value of 0.397, which shows that the model fits the data quite well, lends credence to this conclusion. As can be shown, even after adjusting for all mistakes, the model can only explain 39.7 percent of in-person communication, with the remaining 60.3 percent attributable to the error term.

Table 2: Face to Face Communication and SMEs Performance

Variable	Co-eff.	Std. Error	t-value	Sig.
Constant	1.663	0.148	11.263	.000
Face to Face Communication	0.533	0.044	12.191	.000
R	0.632			
R Square	0.400			
Adj. R Square	0.397			
F Stat.	148.612(.000)			

Dependent Variable: SMEs performance

4.3 Telephone Communication and SMEs Performance

In order to test the hypothesis, we used simple regression to compute and analyse the scores of respondents on two variables: the performance of SMEs and telephone communication. According to Table 3, the correlation coefficient (R) is 0.326, which means that there is a weak but positive association between SMEs' performance and telephone communication. Return on investment (R2) measures how much of a change in the independent variables can be explained by a change in the dependent variable. With an R2 value of 0.347, the results imply that 34.7 percent of the variation in SME performance can be explained by phone conversations. With an adjusted R^2 value of 0.116, the model's quality of fit is indicated, lending credence to this argument. This demonstrates that the model explains just 11.6% of the variation in telephone communication after accounting for all mistakes and modifications, whereas the error term is responsible for 88.4%.

Table 3: Telephone Communication and SMEs Performance

Variable	**Co-eff.**	**Std. Error**	**t-value**	**Sig.**
Constant	2.619	0.145	18.070	.000
Telephone Comm	0.326	0.059	5.525	.000
R	0.347			
R Square	0.120			
Adj. R Square	0.116			
F Stat.	30.522 (.000)			

Dependent Variable: SMEs performance

4.4 Written Communication and SMEs Performance

In order to test this hypothesis, we used simple regression to examine the data on two variables: written communication and the performance of SMEs. A strong positive association between written communication and the achievements of SMEs is indicated by a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.534, as seen in Table 4. The coefficient of determination (R2) is a measure of how much of the variation in the independent variables can be explained by changes in the dependent variable. The results show that written communication explains 28.5% of the variation in SME performance (R2 = 0.285). The corrected R^2 value of 0.282 shows that the model has an excellent degree of fit, supporting this conclusion. Table 4 shows that after adjusting for all mistakes, the model still only explains 28.2% of the variation in performance among SMEs; the remaining 71.8% is due to the error term.

Table 4: Written Communication and SMEs Performance

ariable	o-eff.	d. ror	value	g.
onstant	869	166	.235	00
ritten omm	520	055	424	00
	534			
Square	285			
dj. R Square	282			
Stat.	.816(.000)			

Dependent Variable: SMEs performance

4.5 Non-verbal Communication and SMEs performance

In order to test this hypothesis, we used basic regression techniques to examine participant judgements on two variables: the efficiency of SMEs and nonverbal communication. A high positive link between nonverbal communication and SME performance is indicated by Table 5, which indicates a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.876. The value of R2 shows how much of the total variance in the dependent variable can be explained by changes in the independent variables. A high R2 score of 0.768 indicates that non-verbal communication explains 76.8% of the variation in SME performance, according to the available data. The corrected R^2 value of 0.767, which indicates that the model is well-fitting, lends credence to this assertion. Table 5 shows that after adjusting for all mistakes, the model still only accounts for 76.7% of the performance of SMEs, with the remaining 23.3% being the result of the error term.

Table 5: Non-verbal Communication and SMEs performance

Variable	Co-eff.	Std. Error	t-value	Sig.
Constant	0.379	0.114	3.328	.001
Non Verbal Comm	0.854	0.031	27.175	.000
R	0.876			
R Square	0.768			
Adj. R Square	0.767			
F Stat.	738.468(0.000)			

Dependent Variable: SMEs performance

Discussion of Findings

There is an un standardized beta coefficient of 0.533 (t = 12.191; p < 0.05) in personal interaction. The findings show that small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) benefit from face-to-face contact in terms of productivity. This suggests that alternate discourse fosters quick understanding with a lot of leeway, whereas face-to-face communication enhances productive connections between workers and managers. With an F-statistic of 148.612 and a p-value of 0.000 < 0.05, the null hypothesis stating that SMEs' performance is not significantly affected by face-to-face contact is rejected. According to the results, SME performance was impacted by face-to-face interaction, lending credence to the alternative theory. A t-statistic of 5.525 and a p-value less than 0.05 are displayed by the telephone conversation variable, which exhibits an unstandardised beta coefficient of 0.326. The results showed that SMEs' performance was positively correlated with telephone communication. This shows that communicating helps people connect over great distances and gets them used to using modern technology. According to Objective 2's Table 3 analysis, the null hypothesis, which states that SMEs' performance is not significantly impacted by telephone communication, is rejected due to an F-Stat of 30.522 and a p-value of.000 ($p < .05$). The results of this study lend credence to the counterargument that SMEs' performance is impacted by telephone communication. For written communication, the unstandardised beta coefficient is 0.520, with a t-value of 9.424 and a p-value less than 0.001. Written communication improves SMEs' performance, according to the results. Since letters, memos, and reports are documented for future reference, it follows that written communication via these channels increases productivity. According to Objective 3's explanation of Table 4, the null hypothesis, which states that written communication does not significantly impact SMEs' performance, is rejected because the F-statistic is 88.816 and the p-value is.000 ($p < .05$). Written communication impacts the performance of SMEs, according to the study's approved alternate hypothesis. There is a t-value of 27.175 and a p-value below 0.05, along with an unstandardised beta coefficient of 0.854 for non-verbal communication. The results show that SMEs' success is positively correlated with their nonverbal communication. Because of this, it seems that nonverbal cues like body language and facial expressions might serve as a means of communication, allowing for conversations that are intrinsically private and secure. Table 5's explanation of Objective 3 shows that the p-value is less than 0.05 (0.000) and the F-statistic is 738.468. This proves that SMEs' performance is indeed impacted by non-verbal communication, contrary to the null hypothesis. The study's alternate hypothesis, that SMEs' performance is impacted by nonverbal communication, was accepted. Consistent with previous research in Nigeria, this study found that effective communication is crucial for businesses and their employees (Ogundipe, Adetayo, Bankole, and Akinbowale, 2020). In order to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Kenya grow, Moreson, Britney, and Kungu (2020) look at communication tactics.

Conclusion

The study demonstrated that face-to-face communication enhances productive relationships between employees and supervisors. Alternating discussions facilitate rapid understanding with high flexibility. Additionally, communication supports long-distance interactions and exposes workers to new technology usage. Written communication via letters, memos, and reports has significantly enhanced efficiency, facilitating documentation for future reference. Additionally, communication may be conveyed through body posture or facial expressions, which contributes to safe and confidential exchanges due to its inherent nature.

Recommendations

The study recommended that small and medium-sized enterprises identify work practices, information and communication technology (ICT) needs, and business strategies that correspond with the desired business process strategy. Small and medium-sized enterprises must develop innovative products and engage in online sales and purchases to remain viable in the market. Small and medium-sized enterprises should aim to be innovators by introducing new products or services ahead of competitors, thereby anticipating technological advancements and meeting customer demands effectively. SME enterprises must persist in adopting information and communication technology across services, infrastructure, and user skills, as it significantly enhances their performance through increased sales, patronage, market share, and output.

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