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ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION AS A FOUNDATION OF BUSINESS EFFECTIVENESS: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW IN THE CONTEXT OF OFFLINE AND ONLINE MARKETING

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Abstract

Communication is a fundamental process that determines the success of coordination, motivation, and decision-making within organizations and business activities. This article conceptually examines the process, direction, media, barriers, and cross-cultural dimensions of organizational communication based on Robbins and Judge's framework, and relates them to marketing communication practices in offline and online business contexts. A descriptive-qualitative library research method was used, reviewing core organizational behavior literature alongside recent digital marketing journals. The findings show that the effectiveness of organizational communication is strongly influenced by the fit between channel richness and message ambiguity, an understanding of psychological and cultural barriers, and adaptability to digital channels in customer interaction. As a result, business actors, whether operating conventionally (offline) or through social media and e-commerce (online), need to design communication strategies aligned with audience characteristics and message nature to build productive working and customer relationships.

Keywords: channel richness, marketing communication, offline business, online business, organizational communication

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is the process of conveying and understanding meaning between the sender and receiver of a message. It is one of the most crucial functions in organizational behavior because it serves as a means of control, motivation, emotional expression, and information dissemination for decision-making (Robbins & Judge, 2022). Without effective communication, coordination between individuals and units within an organization, including business organizations, will struggle to function optimally.

Communication issues become increasingly relevant when linked to the contemporary business context, which is no longer limited to face-to-face interactions at business premises (offline), but also includes digital interactions through social media, messaging applications, and e-commerce platforms (online). Digital transformation encourages businesses, including Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), to adopt new communication channels to reach and retain customers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kannan & Li, 2017).

Based on this background, this article aims to: (1) review the basic concepts, processes, directions, and media of organizational communication according to Robbins and Judge; (2) identify communication barriers and the cultural dimensions that influence them; and (3) analyze the relevance of this theory to marketing communication practices in offline and online businesses, supplemented by case studies of MSMEs as an illustration of application.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This article was compiled using library research with a descriptive-qualitative approach. Data were obtained from primary sources, including organizational behavior textbooks (Robbins & Judge, 2022), and secondary sources, including nationally and internationally accredited journal articles discussing media richness theory, cross-cultural communication, and digital marketing communications. The analysis was conducted by reviewing, comparing, and synthesizing these concepts to build a framework of understanding applicable to offline and online business practices.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Concept and Function of Communication in Organizations

Robbins and Judge (2022) define communication as the process of conveying and understanding meaning. This definition emphasizes that communication does not stop at simply delivering a message; it is only considered effective if the sender's intended meaning is truly understood by the recipient. The four main functions of communication in organizations include control (regulating the behavior of organizational members through policies and procedures), motivation (providing direction and feedback on performance), emotional expression (a means of conveying feelings and fulfilling social needs), and information (a basis for decision-making). In a business context, these four functions also apply to the relationship between management and employees and between companies and customers, for example, when an MSME conveys product information while building emotional closeness with its consumers through social media.

3.2. Communication Process

The communication process consists of seven interrelated elements, as summarized in Table 1 and depicted as a flow in Figure 1.

Table 1. Elements of the Communication Process (adapted from Robbins & Judge, 2022)

No	Element	Description
1	Sender	The party who initiates communication by conveying ideas or information.
2	Encoding	The process of changing ideas into messages in the form of words, symbols, or certain languages.
3	Channel	Media for delivering messages, for example verbally, in writing, by telephone, e-mail, or social media.
4	Receiver	The party who receives the message sent by the sender.
5	Decoding	The process of the recipient interpreting the message according to the meaning intended by the sender.
6	Feedback	The recipient's response that indicates whether the message was understood correctly.
7	Noise (Interference)	Physical, psychological, or technical barriers that interfere with the communication process.

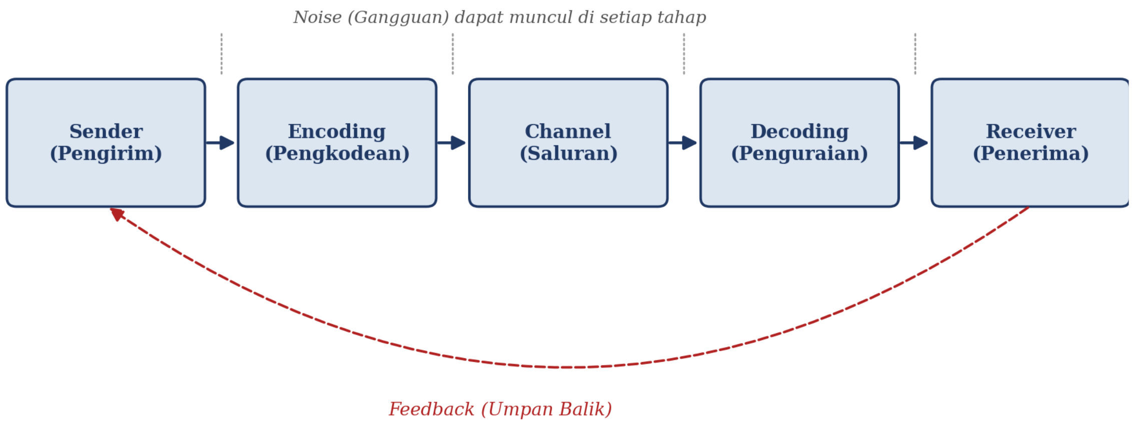

Figure 1. Communication Process Flow
Feedback flows back from the Receiver to the Sender, while Noise can appear and interfere at any stage of the flow.

3.3. Direction of Communication in an Organization

Robbins and Judge (2022) identified four directions of communication flow in organizations as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Direction of Communication in the Organization

Direction of Communication	Characteristics	Examples in Business
Downward (top to bottom)	Work instructions, policies, and directions from management to subordinates.	Business owners establish customer service SOPs for store staff.
Upward (bottom to top)	Reports, suggestions, or complaints from subordinates to superiors.	Staff report customer complaints to the store manager.
Lateral (horizontal)	Coordination between individuals or units at the same job level.	The marketing team coordinates with the production team for product stock.
Grapevine (informal)	Unofficial channels are in the form of rumors or information that spreads quickly.	The issue of price changes circulated by word of mouth among employees.

3.4. Media Variety and Channel Richness

In addition to direction, organizational communication can also be distinguished based on its mode, namely oral communication (fast and flexible, suitable for discussion and clarification), written communication (formal and documented, but at risk of misinterpretation), and nonverbal communication (body language, facial expressions, and intonation that strengthen or even change the meaning of spoken messages) (Robbins & Judge, 2022).

The concept of channel richness was first developed by Daft and Lengel (1986), who stated that each communication channel has a different capacity to convey meaning clearly based on four criteria: speed of feedback, diversity of cues (verbal and nonverbal), use of natural language, and level of message personalization. The higher the capacity, the richer the channel, and the more suitable it is for complex or ambiguous messages. Further research by Daft, Lengel, and Trevino (1987) showed that high-performing managers tend to choose rich channels (e.g., face-to-face) for ambiguous messages, and light channels (e.g., written memos) for messages that are merely informative.

Table 3. Communication Channel Richness Levels (adapted from Daft & Lengel, 1986)

Wealth Level	Channel Examples	Characteristics
High richness (rich)	Face to face, video call	Direct interaction, fast feedback, complete verbal & nonverbal cues.
Medium richness	Telephone, voice calls, instant messaging	Feedback is relatively fast but lacks visual cues.
Low richness	E-mail, memo, official letter	Slow feedback, limited communication cues, higher risk of misunderstanding.

3.5. Persuasive Communication: Automatic and Controlled Processing

In the context of influencing attitudes or behavior, Robbins and Judge (2022) distinguish two pathways for processing persuasive messages. Automatic processing is a fast, spontaneous, habit-based or intuitive thought process without in-depth analysis, while controlled processing is a slower, conscious thought process involving critical analysis. In marketing practice, light promotional content on social media (e.g., short advertisements or visual testimonials) tends to be processed automatically by consumers, while high-value or high-risk purchasing decisions typically undergo controlled processing that considers reviews, price comparisons, and seller credibility.

3.6. Communication Barriers

According to Robbins and Judge (2022), several obstacles that can reduce the effectiveness of organizational communication include:

- Filtering — filtering or modifying information before it is delivered so that the message received is not complete.
- Selective perception — the tendency to interpret information according to personal beliefs or points of view.
- Information overload — a condition of receiving too much information so that it is difficult to process it effectively.
- Emotions — feeling states that influence how messages are received and responded to.
- Language — differences in terms or meanings of words that can potentially lead to misunderstandings.
- Silence — the absence of a response that creates ambiguity.
- Communication apprehension — anxiety when communicating, both verbally and in writing.

• Lying — conveying information that is not in accordance with the facts, thus causing message distortion.

In online business practices , information overload and selective perception are relevant when consumers are flooded with digital advertisements from various platforms, so marketing messages need to be designed to be concise, relevant, and easy to understand.

3.7. Cross-Cultural Communication: High-Context versus Low-Context

Differences in values, norms, and customs between individuals or groups can create cultural barriers in communication. Hall (1976) introduced the concept of communication context, which divides cultures into high-context cultures, which rely on implicit meanings, nonverbal cues, and interpersonal relationships, as is common in Asian societies; and low-context cultures, which are direct, clear, and explicit, as is common in Western societies. Understanding these dimensions is important for businesspeople who establish relationships with partners or customers across borders, for example in designing communication styles on business-to-business websites and cross-market marketing content. Some relevant cross-cultural communication tips to apply include: understanding cultural differences, avoiding stereotypes, using empathy, and focusing on facts and not assumptions (Robbins & Judge, 2022).

3.8. Implications for Offline and Online Business Communication

The organizational communication framework above is relevant to be applied in the context of marketing communication, both in offline and online businesses, as compared in Table 4.

Table 4. Comparison of Communication Characteristics in Offline and Online Businesses

Aspect	Offline Business (Conventional)	Online (Digital) Business
Main channel	Face-to-face interaction, telephone, printed brochures	Social media, WhatsApp Business, e-commerce, digital advertising
Channel wealth	Tends to high richness in direct interactions	Varies, from low (text/DM) to high (live streaming/video call)
Feedback speed	Relatively direct but limited reach	Can be immediate or delayed, wider reach
Risk of obstacles	Physical noise, limited operating hours	Information overload, text misunderstanding, data security
Example of strategy	Personal service, verbal communication with customers	Creative content, brand storytelling, customer engagement

The development of digital technology has transformed the marketing communications landscape, with social media serving not only as a means of communication but also as a strategic instrument for brand building, expanding market reach, and strengthening relationships with consumers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kannan & Li, 2017). Studies on culinary MSMEs show that effective digital marketing communications strategies include building brand identity and storytelling, creating creative and interactive content, collaborating with influencers, and increasing customer engagement through platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok (Regina, Sugiyono, & Hendriyani, 2025). Similar findings on MSMEs in Manado City confirm that the use of social media contributes to increased business competitiveness (Saerang, 2020). However, MSMEs still face obstacles such as limited digital literacy and intense market competition (Roqybah et al., 2025), which aligns with the concepts of information overload and communication apprehension discussed previously.

3.9. Illustrative Case Study

As an illustration, a home-based culinary MSME that initially only served customers offline through a physical stall has now developed a WhatsApp Business channel and an Instagram account to receive orders. In the downward communication stage, the business owner set a standard for responding to customer messages within a maximum of one hour. In the communication stage with customers, product photos and short videos of the production process (a rich channel, high richness) are used to build trust, while order confirmations and invoices are delivered via text messages (a light channel, low richness) to ensure proper documentation. This case study illustrates how selecting a channel that aligns with the nature of the message, in accordance with the principle of channel richness (Daft & Lengel, 1986), can increase the effectiveness of business communication in a hybrid operating model between offline and online.

4. CONCLUSION

Organizational communication is a multidimensional process encompassing the elements of sender, encoder, channel, receiver, decode, feedback, and noise, and proceeds through downward, upward, lateral, and grapevine channels. Communication effectiveness is strongly influenced by the appropriateness of channel richness and message ambiguity, the ability to manage psychological and cultural barriers, and sensitivity to differences in high-context and low-context communication contexts. In a business context, these principles remain relevant across both offline and online operating models; businesses that are able to combine the power of direct interaction with the strategic use of digital channels have the opportunity to build solid internal working relationships and more productive customer relationships. Further research is recommended to empirically test the effect of channel richness on customer satisfaction across various MSME sectors in Indonesia.

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