

Impact of Digital Communication in Human Resources: A Comprehensive Review

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Abstract: Modern businesses increasingly recognize the value of digital communication within their HR departments. This study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of how organizations utilize digital communication and its impact. The prevalence of social media in recent years has made it a ubiquitous presence across various digital platforms. Both Indian and international businesses employ digital communication platforms for purposes such as marketing their products, engaging with customers and employees, advertising job openings, and connecting with the public. One notable advantage is its significant simplification of the hiring process for HR managers. Furthermore, digital communication empowers HR departments to monitor employee activities and reinforce the company's brand. This research aims to explore digital communication's role as a medium in HR departments. It underscores the importance of the topic through a review of relevant literature, drawing upon reputable sources like Wiley, Emerald, and Sage to highlight the extensive adoption of digital platforms for internet-based communication. The study also establishes the contextual framework for the use of internet technology in digital HR communication. Notably, it identifies the need for further research due to the rapid advancements in internet technology. This research examines the function of digital communication within HR departments, potentially revealing new dynamics in the determination of formal and informal communication activities within organizations.

Keywords: Digitalization, Human Resources, Human Resource Management, Digital Communication, Social Media, Training

1. Introduction

In the realm of HR, digital communication is recognized as a method of transmitting information or ideas electronically and digitally to recipients (Sef, 2006). In today's modern era, digital communication stands as the predominant mode of interaction. It opens up new avenues for collaboration between managers and employees, thanks to advancements in information and communication technologies. Mobile technology, in particular, has gained remarkable prominence and its escalating usage, even within organizations and institutions, cannot be overlooked (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014). These digital advancements stem from emerging digital technologies and have a substantial impact on the performance of organizations (Guo et al., 2017). Consequently, the introduction and integration of these new technologies into an organization's processes and operations have become imperative (Ghobakhloo, 2018). However, it's noteworthy that there remains a scarcity of managerial guidelines to navigate this transformative journey (Moeuf, 2018).

Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) definition characterizes "social media" as a collection of web applications rooted in the principles and technological framework of Web 2.0. These applications enable users to create and exchange content among them. Social media's significance within the realm of strategic communication is increasingly acknowledged, particularly for its role in advancing an organization's mission (Hallahan et al., 2007). Its utilization spans various professional domains, including investor and financial communication (Koehler, 2014), marketing and brand communication (Hanna et al., 2011), public relations (Kent, 2013), political communication (Macnamara, 2012), crisis communication (Schultz et al., 2011), organizational communication (Huang et al., 2013), and corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication (Kesavan et al., 2013). Social media serves as a platform for both service providers and clients to independently assess companies, products, and services, often in real-time. Businesses are encouraged to establish a presence on social networks due to the cost-effectiveness of doing so, which can yield significant positive financial

impacts (Zarella, 2010). This presence enables organizations to actively engage with their audience, fostering relationships and potentially reaping benefits for their business endeavors.

In their study, Clark and Roberts (2010) explored the question of whether employing digital media in the selection and recruitment process qualifies as a socially responsible practice. Their findings revealed a notable disparity between how individuals utilize digital media in their personal lives versus their professional context, particularly in the eyes of employers. Smedley (2014) lends further insight by emphasizing the pivotal role of advertising in the recruitment process. Smedley highlights that the evolving landscape of job seekers, encompassing both active and passive candidates, necessitates organizations to be adept in using appropriate language and terminology to effectively engage their target audience. This adaptability is crucial for organizations to confidently reach out to potential candidates in the digital sphere.

2. Review Of Literature

Digitalization of Human Resource Management

The literature review on the Digitalization of Human Resource Management serves as the cornerstone of this study, playing a pivotal role in establishing the research's context, critically assessing prior scholarly work, and pinpointing the research gap. Its primary objective is to consolidate and synthesize the insights and theories put forth by scholars regarding the digitization of human resource management. Since the inception of the research topic concerning the digital transformation of human resource management, numerous academics have contributed significantly to this domain. In this study, we have meticulously organized and categorized the relevant literature into specific themes, ensuring a coherent and meaningful assessment of the existing body of knowledge. As the conceptual framework for this research on human resource management and its digital transformation took shape, this literature review played a central role in providing a foundational structure for crafting prospective research inquiries and constructs. It serves as a compass, guiding the study towards a deeper understanding of the subject matter and ultimately aiding in the generation of valuable insights.

According to Noel et al. (2000), human resource management has undergone a digital transformation, implying that various forms of data such as text, audio, video, and visual images, which are used in HRM processes, are now digitized and transmitted electronically between computers and other electronic devices. This digitization allows the workforce to collaborate effectively without the necessity of physical presence in the same physical location

Digitalization of Human Resource Management Using Traditional, Relational and Web Technologies-

According to Bondarouk and Ruel (2006), the concept of relational HRM involves a choice between two approaches for conducting HR practices. On one hand, organizations can opt for more intricate HR practices like recruitment and selection through the Digitalization of Human Resource Management. On the other hand, they can stick with traditional methods such as newspaper advertisements and paper-based application forms.

Strohmeier (2007) highlights that relational HRM primarily centers on the networking and interaction among various stakeholders in the field of human resource management. It places a significant emphasis on how different HR technologies facilitate these interactions and collaborations among system users.

Lengnick-Hall & Moritz (2003) elaborate on how relational Digitalization of Human Resource Management goes beyond the automation of transactions, particularly using the internet instead of traditional paper-and-pen processes. It encompasses various technologies such as intranets, extranets, HR portals, employee self-service, manager self-service, and application programs to facilitate interactions and collaborations among HRM system users.

Bondarouk and Ruel (2006) further emphasize that relational HRM places a higher priority on the utilization of HR technologies to carry out fundamental business operations, such as performance management and recruitment and selection. Unlike the administrative focus of conventional HRM, relational HRM is more concerned with leveraging HR tools that support core business functions, including hiring, training, performance assessment, and rewards. This represents a more advanced and strategic approach to Digitalization of Human Resource Management.

HR Change Management Process-

As highlighted by Gloet and Berrell (2003), the evolution of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has had a profound impact on how organizations are managed and has brought about fundamental changes in our social and economic landscapes. Hitt and Brynjolfsson (2000) articulate ICT by empowers organizations to implement transformative shifts in various aspects of their operations. These changes encompass re-engineering, decentralization, flexible work arrangements, outsourcing, lean production, teamwork, and customer relations. Furthermore, ICT provides organizations with the ability to adapt to dynamic market conditions by facilitating quicker production cycles and more responsive strategies that align with evolving consumer preferences. In essence, ICT stands as a catalyst for organizational innovation and adaptability, ushering in an era of enhanced teamwork, customer relations, and flexibility to meet the ever-changing demands of the modern business landscape.

According to Matmann (2006), the evolving HR landscape necessitates that both managers and employees take on more HR-related responsibilities. In businesses that invest in information and communication technology (ICT) or exhibit a high level of computer usage among their workforce, organizational changes are more likely to occur compared to those that do not invest in ICT or have limited computer usage among employees, as pointed out by Arnal et al. (2001).

Thite et al. (2008) observe a transformation in the role of e-HRM within organizations. Initially focused on transactional HR operations, e-HRM has expanded its scope to encompass more complex transformational functions.

Lawler III & Mohrman (2003) highlight a significant shift in the realm of employment law, which is compelling Human Resources (HR) departments to undergo a transformation in their operations and strategic roles. This transformation is particularly crucial in supporting the success of businesses of all sizes. It signifies the evolving nature of HR's role in response to changing legal requirements and business needs.

HR Knowledge Management Process-

As noted by Biesalski (2003), the proliferation of information technology has been the catalyst for organizations to place a greater emphasis on the factor of knowledge. Information technologies, such as e-HRM solutions that facilitate the networking of information, enable businesses to establish a cohesive framework for their knowledge management efforts. Particularly, the advent of the World Wide Web and the increased accessibility of new information and communication technologies (ICT) have played a pivotal role in driving the impetus towards knowledge management (Newman, 1991). Knowledge management (KM) encompasses a range of practices that govern how effectively a company can generate, disseminate, and harness knowledge to achieve its objectives. It underscores the importance of leveraging technology and processes to optimize the utilization of organizational knowledge. Ajjiferuke (2003) highlights that information technologies, including intranets, web portals, and groupware, are frequently harnessed to facilitate the exchange of knowledge within an organization's community of practice. These technologies are valued for their capacity to broaden the reach and expedite the process of knowledge transfer among workers. Essentially, they serve as enablers for enhancing the dissemination of knowledge among employees, contributing to the growth and development of the organization's collective knowledge base.

According to Lengnick-Hall and Moritz (2003), the Digitalization of Human Resource Management offers the HR function a unique opportunity to play a pivotal role in enhancing organizational effectiveness. This is achieved through strategies like knowledge management and the cultivation of intellectual and social capital, which are empowered by digitalization. Biesalski (2003) asserts that organizations employ a variety of strategies to acquire, organize, and make knowledge accessible. One method currently utilized is maintaining a competency tree, which is stored in a manager's database in the form of a straightforward tree data structure. This approach aids in structuring and managing knowledge within the organization, ensuring that it is easily accessible and usable when needed.

As noted by Bingham and Galagan (2007), Indian businesses utilize digital HRM as a strategic tool for training and development, aiming to bolster their knowledge capital and stay competitive on a global scale. This emphasis on training and e-learning is particularly pronounced in significant Indian IT companies (Tyler, 2006). This is partly because Indian educational institutions often do not adequately prepare students for corporate

careers. In response to this need, the National Knowledge Commission was established to position India as a potential leader in knowledge and learning (Bhattacharya and Sharma, 2007).

Furthermore, Indian businesses are actively promoting e-learning initiatives to enhance the knowledge capital of their employees, thereby contributing to the overall success of their organizations. This trend is especially prevalent in large Indian enterprises and multinational corporations aiming to provide their workforce with access to best practices (Bhatnagar and Sharma, 2005). However, it's worth noting that one obstacle hindering the Digitalization of HRM services in Indian firms is the reluctance of HR leaders to relinquish control over HRM operations and their traditional roles. This resistance to change poses a challenge to the adoption of digital HRM practices in the Indian business landscape. According to Taylor (2004) professionals actively engaged in knowledge management activities often include information technologists, process and product developers, and human resource managers. These roles are instrumental in driving knowledge management initiatives within organizations.

Lengnick-Hall and Moritz (2003) underscore that the Digitalization of human resource management empowers HR functions to contribute significantly to organizational effectiveness. This is achieved through strategies like knowledge management, fostering intellectual capital, and nurturing social capital.

Hitt and Brynjolfsson (2000); OECD (2002) explored that the digitalizing human resource management offers several advantages for firms. It can enhance shareholder value and align with the evolving information economy, making it a strategic move in the contemporary business landscape.

Biesalski (2003) mentions Daimler Chrysler AG, Plant Worth, which utilizes skill management within its HR solution. This approach enables the tracking of each employee's expertise level, thereby making implicit knowledge more transparent within the organization.

Digital World Communication

"Social media" is typically defined as a group of digital applications rooted in the technological framework of Web 2.0, which operate over the internet and enable the exchange and generation of User Generated Content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In the context of HR management, these digital platforms offer a new way to connect and engage with employees.

Boyd and Ellison (2008) describe social networking sites as web-based services that allow users to create semi-public or public profiles within a defined system. These platforms facilitate the creation of networks where users can connect with others and share their thoughts and opinions. In HR management, there's a growing emphasis on creating networks of employees rather than focusing solely on individual relationships. This approach can encourage employees to go the extra mile to achieve performance goals.

It's worth noting that while employees often use social networking for personal purposes, its significance in the workplace is undeniable. Barry and Pearson's (2015) explained that there were over 1.7 billion social media users globally, and this number was projected to rise to approximately 2.6 billion by 2017. These platforms have the potential to shape interactions and connections both inside and outside the organization. Kalny (2007) argues that Web 2.0 technology should be primarily leveraged within the organization, advocating for employees to use technology for both personal and organizational purposes. In this regard, social media networks serve as tools for representing and mapping interactions between individuals and groups within the organization (Alberghini et al., 2014). This mapping can provide insights and opportunities for more effective HR management and communication strategies.

Many companies have held onto traditional communication methods, particularly since the early popularity of email. Meanwhile, numerous new technologies and communication channels have become integral to the daily lives of millions. In customer support, adaptability is crucial for maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction. Today, this adaptability is made possible through Unified Communications and Collaboration (UCC) solutions and the concept of smarter working.

In light of these new possibilities, companies seeking to leverage digitalization must reevaluate how they work and communicate. Even if this requires a change in mindset, adapting to these emerging communication and collaboration trends is essential for remaining competitive and meeting evolving customer expectations.

3. Findings:

Pratt et al. (2021) delve into the exploration of technology-based communication tools as a means to replicate human-to-human interactions, aiming to enhance engagement with employees and streamline operational processes. Within the context of human resources, these tools enable HR personnel to meticulously assess an employee's record, identifying both positive and negative attributes. Analytics conducted within the digital platform can generate recommendations for employees based on this evaluation.

However, the introduction of such technology also necessitates supporting employees in adapting to the platform's heightened transparency. The feedback provided by digital platforms may unveil areas where employees need improvement or development, which can be both a valuable resource for growth and a challenge that requires proper assistance and guidance.

Nurturing an employee's professional growth and progression is vital for achieving a multitude of organizational objectives. HR professionals and departments play a pivotal role in this by overseeing essential tasks such as annual security assessments and company-specific module training. Beyond ensuring compliance with mandatory training, they also facilitate educational opportunities tailored to roles, which contribute to internal recruitment and staff retention while fostering professional development.

In this pursuit, digital training assistants prove to be valuable tools. Maettig and Foot (2020) highlighted that these digital assistants are instrumental in capturing the best practices of seasoned employees, which can then be imparted to newer team members. Nevertheless, it's important to acknowledge that transferring tacit knowledge, particularly from experienced employees, can be a challenging endeavor in the digital realm.

Maity (2019) highlights that 33.33% of respondents consider intuitive e-learning interfaces to be beneficial in the workplace. These interfaces are designed to make the e-learning experience more user-friendly and accessible, ultimately enhancing the learning process for employees. Lima (2020) explores the concept of innovative organizations and delves into how companies can develop more sophisticated learning platforms. These platforms aim to not only boost employee performance but also nurture the growth of talented and creative individuals within innovative organizations. This aligns with the broader goal of fostering a culture of innovation by equipping employees with the knowledge and skills they need to drive innovation forward.

4. Conclusion And Limitations:

While conducting this study, it's important to acknowledge that there were certain limitations that should be considered. The primary objective of this research was to assess the implementation of digital communication in HRM. To achieve this, the study used specific keywords such as "Digital Communication" and "Human Resource Management" in this search string to comprehensively cover HR-related topics. However, the quantity of relevant research the study could gather and review may have been constrained by the decision to limit the search to a specific set of research journals. The study has found that recent technological advancements have brought about significant changes in how communication is conducted within organizations. Nowadays, organizations have a wide array of communication tools at their disposal to engage with their employees. These tools encompass conventional methods such as printed materials like newsletters, magazines, and posters, face-to-face interactions, emails, and phone calls. Additionally, they include web-based platforms such as intranets, blogs, instant messaging, and social networking sites. These innovations in information and communication technologies have empowered organizations to provide their employees with new collaborative channels, leading to increased productivity and enabling teams to work flexibly, even when they are geographically separated. This also applies to the utilization of digital media for marketing products or services. The use of mobile technology in communication has emerged as a significant influencer, with its current usage patterns witnessing substantial growth. This trend is especially noteworthy, given that mobile technology is now prevalent not only in organizations but also in various institutions. As a result, the study concludes that this area of study warrants further exploration and investigation. Study emphasizes the need for future researchers and professionals to delve into how digital communication is employed in various industries as an integral aspect of HR management.

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