EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVE USE OF COMMUNICATION MEDIA BY BABCOCK UNIVERSITY STUDENTS’ ASSOCIATION (BUSA)

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Abstract

The tradition of organized student associations /unions within tertiary institutions is aimed at fostering an understanding between institutional administration and the students. This can only be achieved when there is effective communication through the use of appropriate media by the association in its interaction with its primary target (students). With constant increase in student population, these associations such as Babcock University Students’ Association (BUSA) face the challenge of sustaining effective communication. This study sought to find out Babcock University (BU) students’ evaluation of the effectiveness of BUSA’s communication media. Adopting the survey research design, 650 students were sampled from the nine (9) Faculties of Babcock University. The study found the Public Address System (PSA) to be BUSA’s most utilized communication medium. Although majority (58%) of the students considers BUSA to be effective in its communication, 45.1% of the students opine that the poor state of the PSA hinders effective communication. BUSA should be intentional in creating awareness of its other communication media especially the social media. This will help the association effectively disseminate information and message(s) to BU students at all times, and record a higher level of student participation in communication through feedback.

Keywords: Effective Communication, Communication Media, Tertiary Institution, Babcock University Students’ Association (BUSA), Babcock University

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is the hub for mutual existence among members of every society. It is a process of meaningful interaction through an exchange of ideas, feelings, and expectations through verbal/spoke words, written documents, and non-verbal gestures. The process of communication occurs at levels of: intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, public, and cultural/intercultural levels. It
is at the group level of communication that student bodies within tertiary institutions such as Babcock University Student Association (BUSA) interact with its members; adopting communication strategies that are executed face-to-face, and or through various channels of the mass media.

With developments in Information Technology (IT) providing numerous communication media, information is easily circulated among a heterogeneous audience (in this case students) within minutes through internet sources such as: social media, blogs, emails, designated World Wide Wibe (WWW), through communication channels that are traditional to university campuses such as: banners, fliers, public address system (PAS), notice boards, and text messaging. The use of these channels is aimed at facilitating effective interactions between student association and its member on matters of: student welfare, socials, and academics. BUSA was established in 1999 when the institution formally known as Adventist Seminary of West Africa (ASWA) was renamed Babcock University (BU). The change in name ensued when the Federal government of Nigeria led by President Olusegun Obasanjo signed the charter which licensed the institution to operate as the foremost private institution in Nigeria. BUSA was established by the Governing Council of BU in order to have a liaison between the administration and students. At the inception of the association, the student population of the institution was less than one thousand, as there were only three faculties of: Education And Humanities (EAH), Management and Social Sciences (MSS), and Science And Technology (SAT). With the progressive increase of enrolment, the student population for the current 2014/2015 Academic Year stands at over ten thousand students of nine faculties.

The yearly increase in student population no doubt marks a positive development. However, it poses a communication challenge to BUSA, as the level of communication between BUSA and the student population has been observed to be low despite the fact that the association has employed the use of diverse communication strategies through the use of multiple communication channels. For instance, following on the social media platforms of BUSA – busaconnect on Twitter, and Babcock University Students’ Association on Facebook are at 2,500 students which is merely a quarter of its population. The low followership raises concern as the social media is presently the most popular of all communication channels among tertiary students majority of whose daily existence revolve around the social media. This study sought to find out BU students’ evaluation of the effectiveness of BUSA’s communication strategy. The objective was to establish the media of communication utilized by BUSA, the level of feedback in communication between the association and students, the perceived level of effectiveness in the communication, as well as factors that foster and or hinder effective communication between the association and the student.
2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were raised for this study:

1. What medium of communication does BUSA utilize the most to disseminate information to BU students?
2. What is the level of interaction between BUSA and BU students?
3. What factors promote, and hinder effective communication between BUSA and BU students?

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study was anchored on the Shannon and Weaver Communication Model which details the process of mass communication with reference to the components for effective communication to occur.

According to Anaeto, Osifeso and Onabajo (2008), Shannon and Weaver’s communication model displays the dynamic process through which information is transmitted from the sender to the receiver. Communication originates from an information source (sender) who transmits a message through a channel to the receiver of the message. It is at the destination stage that the message is processed for final use by the receiver. The component of feedback in this model depicts an interaction between the information source and the receiver of the message. Effective communication is recorded when the message is successfully decoded or received without distortions (Noise), and there is an avenue for feedback so as to allow the receiver make clarifications, and draw maximum meaning intended by the information source.

In actual fact, Shannon Weavers model is applicable to every form of communication. It’s relevance to this study lays in the fact that effective communication can only occur between BUSA and BU students when messages are sent through designated media of channels that allows for the decoding of the information and for two-way feedback.
3.1 Tools for Effective Communication

The aim of every communication interaction is to derive effective communication – mutual understanding of the communicated message. Effective communication occurs when: messages are disseminated through appropriate channels, there is active listening, frequent dialogue/interaction in communication, and appropriate language is utilized. The use of appropriate communication channels makes for the receiver to pay attention to the message. It requires that the message be disseminated through a medium most suited to yield the expected result in communication. Active listening required the receiver of the message to be intentional in making sense of the communicated message. The importance of active listening is a key component to ensure effective communication.

The frequent dialogue interaction between the sender and receiver in a communication process is paramount to ensuring effective communication. It fosters feedback and clarity in message because the sender can proffer clarifications to the message sent, and as such, enable the receiver attain maximum understanding. Effective communication can be achieved when there is feedback in- a process whereby both sender and receiver of messages engage in further interaction in order to ensure clarity. According to Schramm as cited in LaRose & Straubhaar (2001), feedback between the source (sender) and the receiver is essential to regulate the flow of communication. The lack of feedback could lead to a distorted flow and understanding of the message thereby causing the receiver to misinterpret or disregard the information.

Language in effective communication refers to the written word, as well bodily expressions otherwise referred to as non-verbal cues. According to Mehrabian (2005), over half of the messages we send to people are non-verbal messages and body language is one of them. The use of language for effective communication is the ability of the sender to effectively disseminate messages that can be decoded by the receiver in the absence of the sender, or without spoken words. The use of appropriate language in communication goes a long way in ensuring effective communication as all parties (sender and receiver) understand the content of the disseminated message and feedback can be generated.

3.2 Factors that Impede Effective Communication

In the communication process, there are various factors that serve as a deterrent for effective communication to be achieved. Some of these factors include:

1. Lack of Feedback: Feedback in any communication process is key to determine the level of understanding the receiver has concerning a disseminated message. According to Schramm as cited in LaRose & Straubhaar (2001), feedback between the source and the receiver is essential to regulate the flow of communication. Without feedback in the
communication process, effective communication cannot be achieved as it is one of the key factors in determining the level of understanding of a disseminated message (information) to the receiver. 

2. **Noise:** This is another important factor that impedes the flow of communication effectively. According to the Shannon and Weaver model of communication, noise is anything added to the information signal but not intended by the information source, and therefore causing distortion in the message. For effective communication to ensue between the sender and the receiver, noise must not be present. The presence of noise in the communication process serves as a barrier to the intended message (information). The receiver of the disseminated information may not properly understand and digest the disseminated information thereby causing him/her to disregard or discard the information.

3. **Overcrowding of Message Content:** The very popular saying of the quote “*Less is more*” can be applicable to this factor. Disseminated messages are meant to be direct and specific not hauling excessive ambiguous message content. Relevant information helps to avoid congesting the entire communication channel with irrelevant information. For communication to be effective, messages (information) must be brief, precise and straight to the point. This way, the receiver understands the content of the disseminated information very quickly.

4. **Grapevine Factor:** This communication is a typical example of informal communication. The grapevine factor entails the dissemination of information through rumor mill (gossip). This affects the effectiveness of communication because gossips usually carry untold truth about certain message content and this to an extent becomes a major obstacle to effective communication.

### 3.3 Babcock University Students’ Association (BUSA) Communication Media

BUSA was established in the year 1999 when Babcock University began operations as one of the foremost private universities in Nigeria. Since its inception, the association has spear-headed most of all student related activities within both campuses of the institution. As the inception of the association, positions held by the executives were: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Public Relations Officer (PRO), and Chaplain. However, additional executive positions were soon created as student population increased. In addition to the previously mentioned positions inclusive, the present BUSA executives include a: Sergeant at Arms, Scribe, Senate President, Resident Hall Senators, Director of Transport and Ventures, Sports Director, Director of Socials, General Secretary and Welfare Director.
The communication strategy of BUSA in 1999 was the use of Hall Congress which was a statutory meeting often held at night between the executives and the entire student population. This communication strategy was deployed to discuss key issues on student welfare, and to dispatch information from the university administration. The Hall Congress was mostly held at night because this was the appropriate time all students on campus were present without the interference of class activities.

Over the years, the association has utilized other media of communication such as: banners, fliers, social media (Twitter and Facebook), mobile telecoms (bulk SMS), word of mouth and Public Address System (P.A System). According to the current BUSA President, the use of the Public Address System by the association has been the main communication strategy adopted by BUSA in disseminating information to BU students. The idea behind the use of the PAS was enable the dissemination information to the students’ at the comfort of their halls of residence especially at night, when they are all in their rooms.

Furthermore, during the holidays, the association utilizes its social media platforms such as: its Facebook page (Babcock University Students’ Association) and Twitter handle (busaconnect) to keep in touch with the students. Following recent agitations for a more direct and speedy contact with its primary members, BUSA deployed the use of hotlines (phone numbers) to enable students get in touch with executives of the students’ association for first-hand information, and also when the need for clarifications on university student policies arise.

4. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Several studies conducted on communication have illustrated the interwoven nature of certain factors for effective communication to be achieved. Some of these factors include: active listening, body language, language, reading, and writing. In a study which sought to determine the importance of effective communication in an organization, Stennes (2005) conducted a survey research in an organization and found out that the importance of communication is inevitable to all human beings as we all interact and disseminate information every day of our lives. The presence of different communication channels help to aid the process of interaction between the sender and receiver of a message (information).

Also, Harshini and Durden (2010) conducted a study to determine the importance of effective communication skills among Accountants using the survey research method of quantitative analysis and they found out that one key factor for any form of communication to be effective is “feedback”. Without feedback, the participants in the communication process would not understand the message disseminated which in turn automatically delays and infers feedback thereby altering the communication process among participants. In this study, 13 different surveys were carried out in the United States of America (USA) and majority of respondents (65%) that participated in this survey highlighted the importance of feedback in the communication process using either of the communication skills examined in the study (written, oral, interpersonal etc.). This can be said to be true as a key component in the communication.
process is feedback. Without feedback, the message disseminated would not be understood and questions would not be asked if needed.

Clemson University (2005), in a study conducted highlighted the various concepts of communication and its conclusion posited that it must critically address the presence of feedback for communication to be effective. Feedback is the only way the receiver understands the message (information) disseminated by the sender. Without feedback in the communication process, communication will be seen as a uni-directional process (one way process) thereby giving room for lack of effectiveness in the content of the message disseminated. The presence of feedback in the communication process provides the participants involved ample room to ask various questions in relation to the messages disseminated and also respond to comments if necessary. The presence of feedback in communication is very essential for everyone participating in one form of communication or another because it gives room for mutual understanding of the messages (information) disseminated by the sender.

5. METHODOLOGY

The survey quantitative research design was adopted in this study. A sample of 650 respondents was randomly selected from a population of over ten thousand students from the nine Faculties of Babcock University. The Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) was used to analyzed the data, which is presented in bar charts, and frequency table for clarity in discussion.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

![Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender](image)

**Analysis**

Figure 1 shows the distribution of male to female respondents in this study. Of the 650 respondents who participated in this study, 326 (50.2%) were *male*, while 324 (49.8%) were *female*. Although majority of the respondents are male, there is a close proportion of male to female respondents in this study.
Research Question 1: What medium of communication does BUSA utilize the most to disseminate information to BU students?

![Figure 2: Distribution of the Communication media utilized by BUSA](image)

Analysis

Figure 2 presents the distribution of the various prominent communication media used by BUSA in disseminating information to BU students which are banners, the social media, Public Address Systems (PAS), fliers, and word-of-mouth. The findings reveal that most BU students receive messages from BUSA through the PAS, word of mouth/face-to-face communication, and Banners at 42.9% (279 respondents), 35.7% (232 respondents), and 30.6% (199 respondents).

The findings reveal that most (42.9%) BU students pay more attention to the communication through the traditional PAS. Also, despite the fact that these students spend ample amount of time on the social media daily, only 22.3% interact with BUSA via its social media platforms.

Research Question 2: What is the level of interaction between BUSA and BU students?

![Figure 3: Frequency of Communication from BUSA](image)
Analysis

Figure 3 shows the frequency of BUSA’s communication with BU students. It reveals that 221 (34.0%) respondents stated that BUSA communicated monthly with BU students, 169 (26.0%) respondents receive information from BUSA weekly, 160 (24.6%) respondents occasionally, 48 (7.4%) receive messages twice weekly, while 26 (4.0%) respondents stated that they get informational daily and never respectively. Based on the response of the majority, it is concluded that the communication between BUSA and the students of BU occur at a frequency of monthly, and weekly.

Figure 4: Feedback in BUSA’s communication

Analysis

Figure 4 shows the level of feedback from BU students to BUSA. Firstly, 477 (73.4%) respondents do not send feedback to BUSA while 173 (26.6%) respondents send feedback. The lack of feedback communication between majority of the respondents and BUSA simple means that there is a low level of interaction between BU students and the association. Secondly, 353 respondents (54.3%) indicated that BUSA provides a feedback platform, while 297 (45.7%) think otherwise. The findings reveal that despite the fact that BUSA provides feedback platforms, BU students do not utilize such platforms often as only 26.6% send feedback. This means that the communication between BUSA and BU student is largely a top-down flow; as the students are not active participants in the communication.
Figure 5: Distribution of the Feedback channels

Analysis

Figure 5 shows the channels through which BU student engage in feedback interactions with BUSA. 276 (42.5%) respondents send feedback to BUSA through the associations’ representatives (Senators) in the various halls of residence, 201 (30.9%) respondents by word-of-mouth/face-to-face communication to BUSA officials, 99 (15.2%) respondents through BUSA’s social media platforms, while 43 (6.6%) respondents through BUSA hotlines.

The findings reveal that interactions with BUSA representatives (Senators) in the various halls of residence, and dialogue with other officials are the most prominent means of feedback communication between BUSA and BU students, confirming the low interaction on aided media such as the social media and telephone (hotlines). Therefore, most (73.4%) BU students prefer the face-to-face feedback system, which largely guarantees immediate response.

Figure 6: Determinants of the Level of Interaction between Respondents and BUSA

Analysis

Figure 6 presents the various determinants of the level of interaction between BUSA and BU students. The findings reveal that 271 (41.7%) respondents send feedback to BUSA when they
**Research Question 3:** What factors promote, and hinder effective communication between BUSA and BU students?

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**Table 1: Response to the Effectiveness of BUSA’s communication strategy**

Analysis:
Table 1 presents respondents perception of the effectiveness of BUSA’s communication strategy. 377 (58%) respondents agree and that to the effectiveness of BUSA’s communication strategy, 125 (19.2%) disagree, while 148 (22.8%) and undecided. The findings reveal that the students perceive the communication strategy of BUSA through the use of numerous communication media to be effective.

**Figure 7: Factors that foster, and or Hinder Effective Communication between BUSA and BU Students**
Analysis

Figure 7 presents the various factors that promote and hinder effective communication between BUSA and BU students. 353 (54.3%) respondents indicated that cordial relationship between BUSA officials and BU students was key to promoting effective communication, 271 (41.7%) respondents stated that effective communication occur between BUSA and students as a result of clarity in the communication channels. On the other hand, poor public address system was considered to be the major hindrance at 45.1%. This reveals a lack of the maintenance of the PAS, and as such, a distortion in communication is experienced, and a direct contradiction to the fostering factor of clarity in communication channels, while 40.5% respondents consider the poor mannerism of BUSA officials during communication to be a hindrance in effective communication.

6.1 Major Findings

The following major findings were made in this study:

i. The Public Address System (PAS) is most often utilized by BUSA to disseminated information to BU students as reported by majority (42.9%) of the students who participated in this study.

ii. There is a monthly communication between BUSA and BU students, as most (34%) students receive information from BUSA on monthly bases.

iii. Most (73.4%) BU students do not send feedback to BUSA, although 54.3% of them are aware of the feedback avenues made available by the association.

iv. Most (42.5%) students send feedback to BUSA through its hall representatives (Senators).

v. Most (41.7%) students send feedback to BUSA only when they have an issue to resolve. This suggests that BU students do not seek feedback on information disseminated by BUSA, and the communication flow is largely one sided.

vi. Most (58%) BU students consider the communication strategy of BUSA to be effective, resulting from the cordial relationship that exists between the association’s officials and the students. However, 45.1% of the students opine that the poor state of the PAS has constitutes a major hindrance to the effective communication flow in communication.

7. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, most (58%) Babcock University students perceive Babcock University Students’ Association (BUSA) communication media to be ineffective; as the association utilizes numerous media of: Public Address System (PAS), banners, social media, fliers, and face-to-face communication. The PAS is the most utilized medium of communication, but the lack of maintenance of the PAS has become a hindering factor to clarity in communication. Finally, despite the fact that BUSA ensures monthly communication, the level of feedback from the students is relatively poor, as only 22.6% of the students send feedback, therefore it is concluded that only this fraction of student’s actively participants in communication with BUSA.
Although BU students are of the opinion that BUSA effectively employ use of various communication media to keep the student body informed, there is a low response/involvement in communication from the students.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the findings:

i. There is need for BUSA to ensure that the PAS’s are in good condition, so as to minimize distortions in communication.

ii. BUSA should be intentional in creating awareness of its other communication media especially the social media. This will help the association effectively disseminate information and message(s) to BU students at all times, and record a higher level of student participation in communication through feedback.

iii. The use of communication channels that students pay less attention to such as fliers should be minimized. This is because the association spends money in printing these fliers and they achieve minimal results.

REFERENCES


