

THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY OF “THE FUTURE AWARDS SEASON 7”

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DECLARATION

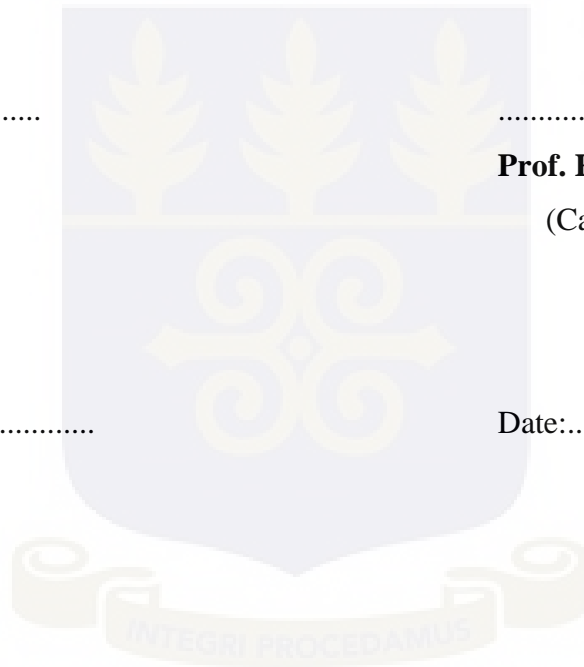
I hereby declare and confirm that this dissertation is entirely my own work and was produced from research undertaken under the supervision and guidance of Prof. K. Ansu-Kyeremeh. All works cited in this work which are not mine have been duly acknowledged in the reference section.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to God Almighty who has always been there for me, all through my academic journey, throughout my life in school and beyond. All praises and adoration be to him.

To my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Odetola, you have really been my pillar, and may you live to reap the fruit of your labour, you are the best any child would wish for. I love you so much.



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine the communication strategy of The Future Awards Season 7 (2012) with emphasis on the channels of communication. The Future Awards is an annual event with several stages and processes all of which need to be communicated to the target audience. The study identified the communication channels used at each stage of the award and the reason for the choice of such channels by the organisers. Daft and Lengel's media richness theory guided the study.

Data were collected qualitatively using an interview guide to conduct in-depth interviews for detailed information and responses. Six senior managers responsible for the planning and execution of the award in relation to communication were interviewed.

Communication channels such as social media, websites, television, radio, print, outdoor, interpersonal communication, events and telephones were identified as having been employed. The research also found that the major communication channel used was social media and the overall strategy was the use of entertainment celebrities for the video and voice promotions to communicate with the target audience which was mainly young people within the ages of 15-35. Social media was the richest medium amongst all the various channels selected by The Future Awards organisers; against the face-to-face channel identified by Daft and Lengel as the richest medium of communication. The lean channels were formal letters, magazines and posters, corresponding to that proposed by Daft and Lengel as the lowest information rich channels.

Facebook and twitter in particular were powerful tools that helped in achieving the communication strategy for the season.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background

The success and impact of an event largely depends on the way it is communicated (Moss, 2010). According to Lasswell (1948pg. 29), the most objective definition of communication “is who says what, to whom, in which channel, and with what effect?” A message is issued from a source to an individual or a group using a specific communication mode, in order to induce the receiver(s) to adopt a belief or opinion. Effective communication requires, therefore, the integration and coordination of a number of elements in order to achieve the objectives set. This requires a clear strategic direction along with detailed sub-strategies addressing the different levels of objectives (Guy, 2006).

Strategy could be seen as the thinking part of the communication design; meaning the logic behind the actions (Robert, 1997). Drucker (1954) sees it as an indication of an organisation’s positioning for the future, deciding what should be done rather than how it should be done. Strategy requires choices and deciding what particular kind of value an organisation wants to deliver (Porter, in Gibson 1997).

Communication strategies for events are very important. As a planned experience, an event has the potential to communicate pre-determined messages and cultivate desired relationships with stakeholders (Kotler, 2003). The Future Awards is an annual event that has different messages for each season to send to the target audience through different channels. Communication is an essential aspect of the event management, as it determines the successful achievement of the project goals. A well planned communication strategy

facilitates the management process, increases event visibility and attracts customers (Kotler, 2003).

Communication strategies are plans for communicating information related to a specific issue, event, situation, or audience through a medium. They help in communicating with the public, stakeholders, or even colleagues. Communication strategies do not have to be formal written documents. They can simply involve taking the time to think about a communication problem or issue and determining the best approach for communicating the message or information (Craig, 1999). When significant events are to be conducted such as The Future Awards (TFA), a communication strategy can help organise the information that needs to be communicated, identify concerns that may be raised, and ensure the proper audiences are reached.

A communication strategy is very important because in this information age, competition for audience attention depends on the success of your communication. We now live in a world of information overload. The literature suggests various steps for approaching the communication strategy for a project. In all these steps by various scholars, there are five salient steps common to all. They are:

- a. **Communication Channels:** The effectiveness of a well-developed creative message will remain largely dependent upon the choice of methods and media used to execute it. Creativity is also important at this stage in determining new and innovative methods and media in order to gain maximum coverage, impact and effect. Choosing the most appropriate media mix should begin with a focus on the already identified

target audiences. The choice is therefore initially limited by the reach of the medium, only including those media which target the required audiences.

- b. Communication goals and objectives: For each communication objective set there will be a number of possible ways to achieve the desired outcome. These alternative strategies need to be generated through use of the information gathered in the situation analysis and the customer/target market analysis (McGuire, 1976).
- c. Key Message(s): The development of the communication message begins with the objectives and the positioning statement. The overall theme of a campaign needs to be encapsulated succinctly and then built upon to create specific messages for each communication method and medium to be used.
- d. Target Audience: Exposure refers to ensuring that the target audience comes into contact with the message. This is obviously necessary and is an important part of communication strategy in terms of media selection, coverage and repetition. Consequently, marketing communicators must try to ensure that this attention selectivity works in their favour by targeting the right audience in the right way (Guy, 2006).
- e. Monitoring and Evaluation: This will help stay focused on stated objectives. The communication strategy has to be linked to the roots of the organisation and must be treated seriously. All of the employees and people involved in the organisation must commit to the strategy 100%.

For the purpose of this research, emphasis will be placed more on the channel component because it is a small study and the researcher considers channel as a key component of the communication strategy. The channel is the means used to convey the message or used to transfer information. In a communication process, the sender uses some kind of channel (also

called a medium). It loads itself with the message and passes it on to the intended receiver(s) (Meesala, 2007).

There are different communication activities that can be applied in achieving the communication strategy. They can be public relations, publicity, advertising, lobbying, word of mouth, promotional events, celebrity endorsement or sponsorship.

The Wirthlin Report (1999: 22) suggests that in determining whether or not the communication strategy is appropriate, it should be judged against the following criteria:

1. The communication strategy must have credibility within the organization before it can gain credibility outside because if the senders of a message do not believe in what they are sending as credible, then the receivers of the message will not accept the message as credible.
2. The organisation should be committed to reinforcing and meeting the perceptions and expectations conveyed by the communication message.
3. The communication strategy must not be easily countered by media or opponents and should reflect anticipated shifts in the positioning of competitors.

In a non-profit organisation, such as The Future Project (TFP) which is in charge of The Future Awards (TFA) it is always important to know what resources you have at your disposal, be it financial or just sheer mass of volunteers. To start with, every organisation needs to be able to have financial stability and this is difficult to achieve in the case of non-profit organisation since most of their funding comes from sponsors or the government. Even though these are great sources of income, at times the regulations can be very stringent upon what the funds can be used to achieve. Money cannot be spent too lucratively or on a whim. When creating a communication strategy, it is necessary to think about how much the planned media campaign will cost.

Communication strategies are very important, since all organisations have some sort of method to portray their core message to their stakeholders. Without having a strategy that effectively reaches the predetermined target audiences, there is no way the organisation will influence as many people as it wants to. Communication strategies include the way communication is developed, analysed and managed (Poston, *et al.*, 2009).

1.1 The Future Awards

There are several national awards in Nigeria that give recognition to people in various sectors. Among them is the Africa Movie Academy Awards (AMAA), an offshoot of the African Film Academy. It focuses on research, training and propagating film making in Africa. The Social Enterprise Report Awards (SERA) focuses on organisations and individuals that give back to the society; it awards good corporate social responsibility and philanthropy. The Nigerian Music Video Awards (NMVA) recognizes good picture quality, content and production of music videos. The Nigerian Culture & Tourism Awards (NICULTA) is another award that promotes Nigerian culture & tourism, and then there is The Future Awards (TFA) for young Nigerian achievers in different fields of endeavour.

The Future Awards, which has been in existence for seven years, has always been a successful event since its inception. The award is aimed at celebrating young achievers within the 18 to 31 age group, and showcasing them as role models to inspire a young generation of Nigerians to believe in themselves and the future of their country. It celebrates the best young Nigerians and gives them a platform to expand their goals and vision.

The Future Awards has been referred to by the World Bank President as “Nobel Prize for young Africans” in 2011 and “The biggest youth awards in Africa” by the London

Metropolitan University in 2009. Forbes International also declared the award as “Nigeria’s most important youth award” in 2012. It is the most influential and popular youth platform that identifies young people who have excelled in their work in Nigeria.

In seven years, The Future Awards has produced over 150 winners and 1,200 nominees across the world. It has been in the forefront of inspiring a new generation of leaders and entrepreneurs for Nigeria. This award has created and connected a new elite set of change markers and nation builders for higher impact in the country.

Apart from celebrating young Nigerians for their hard work and adding value to the country, it further does a symposium called The Future Awards Symposium for Young Emerging Leaders. It is a platform where young and upcoming leaders who are going to be in government in the future interact with the older people who are already in leadership positions. It is a session where discussions about the problems facing Nigeria are discussed. The major goals of The Future Awards are to inspire leadership, build enterprise and to make active citizens (TFA Brochure, 2012).

The organisers of this award are called The Future Project (TFP), which is a social enterprise and change communications firm affiliated to Red Media Group that is set up based on a strong, practical commitment to human development, especially in Nigeria. It is also committed to finding effective and innovative ways of addressing social issues. It is one of the most respected private sector organizations and has worked with the African Union, the US Government, the British Council, the Ministry of Youth Development and the Nigerian Presidency. The award process has also been taken to South Africa, London, Ghana and Ethiopia to engage young people.

The Future Awards has visited 23 states in Nigeria, doing town hall meetings, conferences, symposiums, amongst others. The awards are judged over a two-month period, supervised by

a central working committee, a board of judges and an independent audit committee. The board of judges is made up of the country's brightest young journalists across print, electronic and online media, and the independent audit committee is made up of distinguished Nigerians across sectors (Guardian Newspaper, 6 June 2012). Annually, there is a charity fundraiser for a selected charity which will encourage all attendees of the event to help raise money. The Down Syndrome Foundation of Nigeria was The Future Awards' selected charity for 2012. It is a non-profit organisation which seeks to provide care for children with down syndrome, some of whom have been abandoned by their parents and society on the basis of culture and myths that tend to stigmatise them. The Future Awards get contributions in cash and kind from kind-hearted individuals to support and raise funds for the charity.

Over the years, the event has created superstars across sectors and role models in businesses, creativity and innovation. With its impact, The Future Awards has been able to reach both the leadership of young people as well as young people at the grassroots and community levels because of communication. As an outstanding annual event, it continues to draw a lot of attention to itself. It is that level of attention that interests the researcher to analyse its communication strategy.

The managing partner of The Future Awards, Adebola Williams in an interview with Rubbin Minds, a youth talk show that airs on national TV (Channels, Nigeria), said “media is a practical and innovative tool that is used to engage the heart and minds of young people”, so the award uses media to affect the life of young people. Some profit making organisations create their communication strategy to sell their product or their service, but The Future Project is an NGO that is in charge of organising the awards. One will wonder what they are doing so well, when it is organised by a non-profit making organisation. This study therefore attempts to analyse the 2012 communication channels used in achieving these strategies.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Much of the literature encountered for review has examined campaign strategies from the point of view of health, marketing campaigns, computer technologies, internal communication of organisations, amongst others. However, little has been done on studies that reflect events such as national awards. The Future Awards, which is a recognized event in Nigeria, has been celebrated and has achieved so much attention from the Nigerian populace for seven years. The Executive Director of The Future Project claims “Communication has played an important role in the event’s success and popularity”, but this raises curiosity about what channels of communication the organisers are using and how this has accounted for their success (Chude Jideonwo, personal communication, December 18, 2012 in Lagos, Nigeria).

The problem for the research was to identify how the channels in the communication strategy of TFA were used to communicate with the target audience and the reason for the choice of these channels.

1.3 Research Objectives

The broad aim of the study was to find out the overall communication strategy adopted by The Future Project as the strategy may have contributed to the success of the award. The specific objectives were:

- To identify the communication channels used for the award.
- To find out the reason for the choice of such channels, and to identify the target audience.

1.4 Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

R.Q1. What are the channels used to communicate with target audience and what informs the choice of channels selected?

R.Q2. What channels are employed in the communication activities at the various stages of the award?

R.Q3. What is the effectiveness of the channels?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study will add to literature and contribute to scholarly works on effective channels of communication. Also for future event organisers, it serves as a guide and as a store of best practice and knowledge of organising events like awards. It will further serve as secondary data for any further research on The Future Awards. Also the study intends to fill the gap in literature because there is little or nothing done in that area; communication strategies for national awards.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study focused on the channels an organisation used in putting out a campaign that has been successful; it did not concentrate on the audience perception of the channels chosen and awareness of the project. An in-depth analysis of the organisation's communication channels for the 2012 event was examined. The researcher could have examined communication strategy of other organisations in manufacturing, telecommunication or even banks, but an NGO in charge of a national award (The Future Awards) was chosen because of the popularity of the awards.

1.7 Operationalisation

Communication Strategy: The blueprints for communicating with the audience and stakeholders of the award. This was observed by examining the target audience, communication objectives, key messages, monitoring/evaluation and most importantly the medium selected for communication.

Medium: This means the various channels the organisers of the award used to communicate the message to their target audience.

Message: This is the content intended to be communicated to the target audience of The Future Awards.

Rich Media: This carried the most information with immediate feedback. According to this research work, a channel is rich if it clarifies ambiguous issues to promote understanding in a timely manner. Examples of such according to this study are facebook, twitter, Google+ etc.

Lean Media: This media carries the least information with slow or no feedback. Examples of such according to this research work are formal letter, magazines and posters.

Reach: this means the amount of people that will get the message when sent.

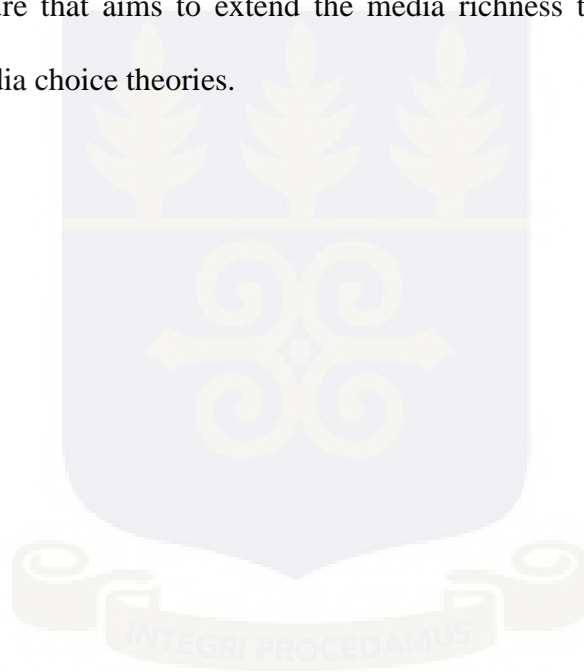
1.8 Organisation of the study

Chapter one comprises the background of the study, statement of problem, objectives, research questions, scope of the study, limitations of the study, significance of the study and the organization of the study. Chapter two discusses the theoretical framework underpinning the study, which is the media richness theory. The chapter also reviews some related literature on communication strategy. Chapter three discusses the research methodology used in gathering and analysing data collected and the sample selection for the study. Chapter four

presents the findings which are done based on themes developed out of the research questions while chapter five of the study discusses the findings, recommendations and conclusions.

1.9 Summary

This introductory chapter provided a background to the study, defined the problem and outlined three research questions which the study sought to answer. The chapter also provided some information on The Future Awards. The next chapter situates the study within the media richness theory and reviews relevant literature on the topic. This research project joins a body of literature that aims to extend the media richness theory, one of the most widely investigated media choice theories.



CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the theoretical framework used to support this study is introduced and the researcher also reviews some related works on media richness theory. Some literature was also reviewed and research work done in the field of channels in communication strategy. The study was underpinned by the media richness theory. The literature review is sectionalised according to some identified themes in the study.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

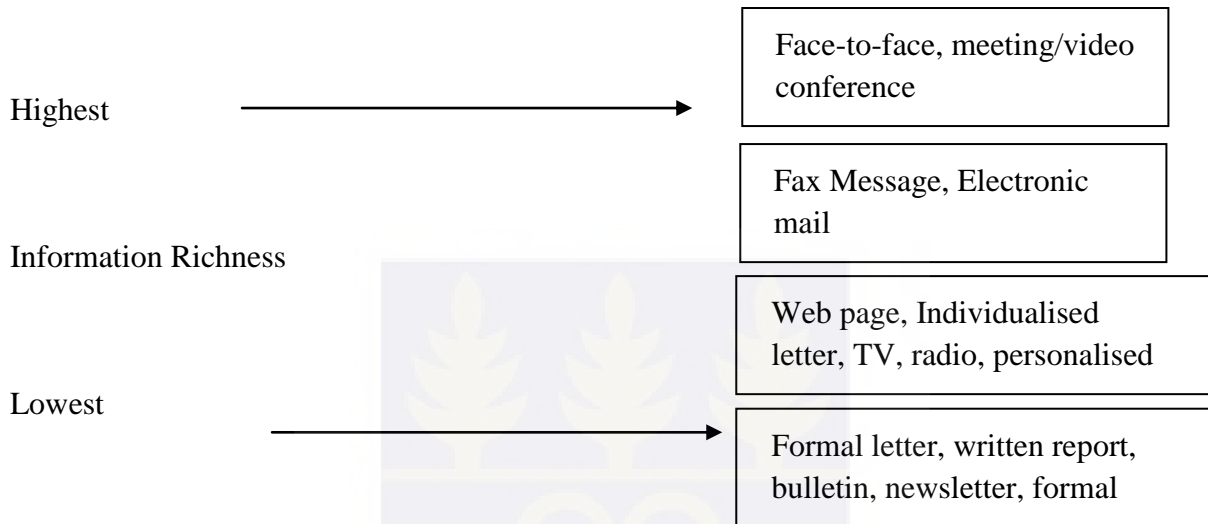
The three major components of the communication process involve a chain of the sender-channel-receiver, what connects the sender and the receiver is the channel. The channel is a medium through which the message is carried to the target audience. Given the focus of this research which is the communication channels used for The Future Awards, emphasis was placed on the channels selected to carry out its communication activities. In that regard, media richness theory (MRT) was used as the theoretical framework for the study.

2.1.1 Media Richness Theory

To determine the most appropriate channel of communication for sending messages, one needs to identify whether verbal or nonverbal communication should be used. At the same time, ideal channels of communication can be selected through an examination of the information richness and symbolic meaning of messages (Daft & Lengel, 1984). Media richness theory was introduced in 1984 by Richard L. Daft and Robert H. Lengel. It was originally developed primarily to describe and evaluate communication media in an organisation. The theory has been widely studied, and the original authors have written

several additional articles on the topic, including a study in which they described media richness and the ability to select appropriate media as an executive skill. Information richness refers to the volume and variety of information that can be transmitted.

Figure 1 Communication Channels



Source: Daft, R.L, & Lengel, R.H (1984) Information Richness: A new Approach to managerial behaviour and organisational design. In Research in organizational behaviour, Staw, B. & Cummings L. (Eds) Vol. 6 Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, Incpg. 191.

As shown in Figure 1, face-to-face meetings have the highest information carrying capability, because the sender can use a combination of verbal and nonverbal communication channels and the receiver can provide instant feedback. When a wrong channel of communication is used, it leads to a waste of time and misunderstanding. When communication is unclear, information rich channels are required (Guo *et al.*, 1997).

Figure 1 shows the ranking of rich media to lean media. The assumptions of media richness theory are that:

- a. Face-to-face is the richest medium;
- b. People want to overcome equivocality and uncertainty so a variety of media used in an organisation work better for certain tasks than others;
- c. Effective managers make rational choices matching a particular communication medium to a specific task or objective required by that task.

The study sought therefore to identify and develop a checklist of channels used and conclude whether they fit into Daft and Lengel's communication channel table.

Media richness theory is useful in examining the impact that different communication media potentially have on the message (Daft & Lengel, 1984). The theory essentially states that task performance increases when the task needs are matched to the medium's richness. The theory was used to find out why each medium was selected by The Future Awards organisers. Daft and Lengel (1984) have written various articles that describe media richness and the ability to select appropriate media as an executive skill.

Media richness theory is a framework to describe a communication medium by its ability to reproduce the information sent over it. It is used to rank and evaluate the richness of certain communication channels, such as phone calls, video conferencing, and email. For example, a phone call will not produce visual social cues such as gestures, so it is a less rich communication medium than video conferencing, which allows users to communicate gestures to some extent. Specifically, media richness theory states that the more ambiguous and uncertain a task is, the richer the format of media that is required to successfully relay it. Based on contingency theory and information processing theory, it explains that richer, personal communication means are generally more effective for communication of equivocal issues than leaner, less rich media.

Media richness is used to determine the "best" medium for an individual or organisation to communicate a message (Rice *et al.*, 1993). It represents the richness of a medium and its ability to adequately communicate a complex message. The theory states that communication that can overcome different frames of reference and clarify ambiguous issues to promote understanding in a timely manner is considered richer. Communication that takes a longer time to convey understanding is less rich. Media richness theory states that all communication channels possess certain characteristics that make them more or less rich, and one major purpose of choosing a communication medium is to reduce the equivocality of a message. Equivocal communication is the use of strategic language to provide reasonable answers to questions that, if answered with clear, direct communication, could cause negative repercussions (Bavelas, Black, Chovil, & Mullet, 1990). Equivocality means ambiguity, the existence of multiple and conflicting interpretations about an organizational communication. Equivocality often means confusion, disagreement and lack of understanding (Watson *et al.*, 2007)

Media richness theory is used to analyse communication media choices and to help reduce ambiguity of communication through the appropriate selection of communication media. The theory implies that a sender should select a medium of appropriate richness to communicate the desired message (Lengel & Daft, 1989). This theory was examined in the context of the organisers of the event and their choice of channel to reach their target audience. Daft and Lengel's (1989) article indicated that senders are often forced to use less-rich methods of communication.

This study was not intended at stating that one medium is better than the other. The choice of each channel by the organisers helped to strengthen the effectiveness of the communication strategy. Attempting to rank different media choices in their richness did not imply that one is

better than the other. Each media type has its own advantages and disadvantages and each is probably more appropriate than the other in different situations (Newberry, 2001).

Communication media differ in their ability to facilitate understanding. Media can be characterised as high or low in "richness" based on their capacity to facilitate shared meaning. A rich medium facilitates insight and rapid understanding. They are ranked on their capacity for processing equivocal information, the media classifications are face-to-face, telephone, addressed documents, and unaddressed documents. The richness of each medium is based upon a blend of four criteria (Daft, Lengel and Trevino, 1987).

1. Feedback-Instant feedback allows questions to be asked and corrections to be made.
2. Multiple cues-An array of cues may be part of the message, including physical presence, voice inflection, body gestures, words, numbers, and graphic symbols.
3. Language variety-Language variety is the range of meaning that can be conveyed with language symbols.
4. Personal focus-A message will be conveyed more fully when personal feelings and emotions infuse the communication. Some messages can be tailored to the frame of reference, needs, and current situation of the receiver.

Face-to-face is considered the richest communication medium because it allows rapid mutual feedback.

2.1.2 Criticism of Media Richness Theory

The major criticism of this theory is that it was developed before the widespread use of the internet (email, social media, instant messaging, chat room and more). Some have questioned

its ability to accurately predict what new media managers may choose. Also new information technologies have expanded capabilities that make it difficult to categorise them as single communication media because they perform various functions of different media in one medium. Despite initially drawing support from fellow researchers, MRT has been the object of much scrutiny within research circles on both an empirical and conceptual basis. Among the empirical criticisms, researchers have questioned the validity of the approach used by Daft et al. (1987).

Another major criticism of the theory is that cultural background, social pressure or even cognitive competence is a more compelling influence on media choice, rather than its richness or leanness as claimed by Daft and Lengel (1989).

The selection of communication channel can have a great impact on the success or failure of a communication strategy. As a result, the channels used to carry out communication activities by the organisers of The Future Awards were examined.

2.2 Related Works

Albert and Johnson in 2005 did a study on the effect of communication frequency and channel richness on the convergence between Chief Executive and Chief Information Officers. The study used a postal survey consisting of two questionnaires. The study found that the channels used are face-to-face, telephone, E-mail, Business memo and Voice mail. The study also tested the assumptions of the media richness theory. It concluded that convergence between a CEO and CIO about the role of IT is invaluable to an organization. This study confirmed the effect of communication frequency on convergence concerning the current, enhancement future, and differentiation future roles of IT. It also confirmed the effect

of channel richness on convergence concerning the differentiation future role. They regarded face to face and telephone as information rich channels just like Daft and Lengel postulated.

Mary Beth Watson-Manheim and France Bélanger (2007) also did a study on Communication Media Repertoires: Dealing with the Multiplicity of Media Choices. They explored how workers use combinations of communication media, either simultaneously or sequentially, to complete an interaction with their sometimes-distributed colleagues. They stated that studies usually focus on selection of one communication medium, primarily e-mail, or on comparisons between two media, often face-to-face versus some electronic medium. Beth and Bélanger (2007) indicated however, that the focus on selection or use of a single communication medium limits the understanding of current media usage in organizations, and may not capture the complexities of combining media. The channels used were emails, telephones and voice mail. They concluded that individuals often combine the use of electronic media with face-to-face communication but comparing the use of an electronic medium to the use of face-to-face is also insufficient, and not realistic in many firms.

Richard L. Daft, Robert H. Lengel and Linda Klebe Trevino (1987) examined the relationship between the content of managerial communication and media selection. A model was proposed that can help determine when face-to-face or other communication media were appropriate. The research findings suggested that face-to-face communication has a special ability to communicate the types of decisions made by senior managers. This study accepts the assumptions of the media richness theory. Daft et al concluded that high performing managers intuitively understand that face-to-face communication is needed for unstructured communications and written communication works best for more routine communications.

Ahmed, Ashir (2012) did a study on hypothesizing the aptness of social media and the information richness requirements of disaster management. The author first analyzed the social presence theory, media richness theory and task-media fit to investigate the suitability of various types of social media in disaster management. Then, on the basis of this analysis, use of social media is proposed to facilitate the communication tasks involved in the interaction between disaster management agencies and communities during disaster management.

Johnson and Albert (2005) also did a study on extending media richness theory: the influence of a shared social construction. The study was on understanding factors influencing communication media choice and exploring optimal ways of communicating within an organisational context. The study found that computer-mediated communication (CMC) systems have emerged in recent years and have revolutionised communication. It has made possible new and expanded forms of group work. The study further found that CMC media have become an integral component of organisational communication as they are more convenient and less expensive than travelling to face-to-face meetings as well as being integrated into multi-media environments and digital networks. Computer-mediated communication media include e-mail, voice-mail and video conferencing over digital networks. These media have come to be known as the new media as opposed to the traditional media of face-to-face meetings, telephone and text based documents which the study referred to as lean media. The study concluded that media richness alone does not determine how effectively an equivocal task is solved.

As stated earlier in the problem statement, studies on communication channels of a project such as awards have received scant coverage. However, basic components of communication strategies which are communication channel, key message, target audience, communication

objectives and evaluation have all been examined in different studies which will be useful to this research.

2.2.1 Communication Channels and Media Choice

Miller (2012) did a survey research in U.S and Canada on what communication channels 42 nonprofit organisations (NGOs) used to communicate with their target audiences. The survey listed 14 options and asked respondents to select up to three most important.

The six most important communication channels used were: website (68%) and email (67%), followed by print (newsletter and direct mail, 38%), facebook (31%) and events (38%). Texting, audio (podcasts) and photo sharing were the least important channels. Miller (2012) noted that the importance of social media channels: facebook, twitter and blogging held steady from 2011-2012. Emailing was the most popular frequency for nongovernmental organizations monthly. These organisations emailed their typical supporters at least monthly. Quarterly, direct mails are the most popular frequency for NGOs to their supporters. Miller (2012) concluded that NGO communicators are excited about investing in new websites and integrating communications channels to increase effectiveness.

Miller (2012) also noted that smaller NGOs prefer channels that cost less; examples are facebook, twitter, blogging and social networking sites, while larger NGOs tense more heavily on traditional channels, examples are print and paid advertising. Miller (2012) recommended that NGOs should avoid the old brochure style website and work more on making their website more user-focused and interactive.

Nicky, Debbie, Phillips and Adam (2004) did a study in England on how the government engaged the target audiences through a well-designed communications campaign to improve

the management of municipal solid waste. In examining the communication strategy, emphasis was placed on the following principles: key messages, channels, target audience, communication objectives, monitoring and evaluation. Nicky *et al.* (2004) also studied which communication tools were to be considered most effective by local residents. Survey methodology was adopted for the study of the citizen panels. Nicky *et al.* (2004) found that 91% of respondents were 'satisfied' in terms of being kept informed about the scheme and that the preferred option for communication was leaflets (79%), followed by newspapers (34%) and personalised letters 33%). A relatively high proportion of residents were found to have access to the Internet at home (66%) but only 15% were prepared to use this as a communication channel.

Nicky *et al.* (2004) used this method and they achieved their results because they were interested in looking at citizen's perception of the communication strategy.

According to the findings, communications activities have 'influenced' some 75% of the respondents to recycle more and from the survey analysis; newsletters (70%) were the most effective communication method.

Nicky *et al.* (2004) observed how the communication campaign had helped underpin the introduction of a highly successful Kerbside Scheme. The recommendation made was that, in the future, organisers or organisations must use standard communication strategies to design their campaigns, something that would require highly trained and competent staff, not generalists.

To Prahinski and Benton (2004), a communication medium refers to the method used to transfer information. They further noted that the two predominant classification schemes in

communication strategy include medium richness and formality. Prahinski and Benton (2004) examined the supplier's perceptions of four buying firms' supplier evaluation communication strategies in Ontario (Canada) to determine how specific communication strategies influenced supplier performance. Three categories of communication were examined: content, medium and feedback.

The methodology adopted was survey and in depth interview. Prahinski *et al.* (2004) used survey because the major objective of the study intended to evaluate the communication strategy and channels used whether it affected the buyer-supplier relationship. Another reason for their choice of methodology was to enhance the generalisability of collaborative communication and buyer-supplier relationship. The study was augmented with in-depth interviews with two automotive manufacturing executives, which provided an in-depth understanding. Prahinski *et al.* (2004) found the other communication dimension strategies adopted by buyers, to include direct influence strategy; informality (such as word-of-mouth communication) and media richness. They recommended that the buying firm manager should design specific communication channels in an organisation.

Chien & Chiu (2007) conducted a study in Taiwan on communication strategies in support of product launch. The study focused on determining which message content and channel was most effective in introducing new high-tech products and how to manage the communication process to achieve greater effectiveness. The study's theoretical framework was from the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) of persuasion. Importance was placed on message content, channels, clarity and consistency. Self-administrated questionnaires were used to gather information with respect to the communication channels used by Taiwanese high-tech companies for their product launches.

Chien & Chiu (2007) found that the channels used were mainly mass media (television, radio and newspaper) to reach broader customer markets and to establish their brand identities. Chien & Chiu (2007) recommended that messages communicated by an organisation must be clear, uniform and integrated so that the target audience responds and reacts to it as expected. They also recommended that proper and effective channels should be used to communicate to target audience.

2.3 Summary

The researcher was unable to find any prior studies assessing communication campaigns for major national events such as awards in the sub-Saharan African context. Consequently, this study focused on the choice of channels of The Future Awards, organised by a non profit organization in Nigeria. This study used only the in-depth interview because it was a small study and it was more concerned with how and why the organisers of the award have chosen a medium over the other in their communication strategy. This chapter reviews the MRT theory and related studies done in the field of communication strategies.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the method employed in gathering data for this study. The study was designed as a qualitative one where the depth of issues was of primary importance rather than numbers. It also describes the instrument used for data collection, data analysis as well as data sources. The chapter contains information on the interviewed organisers.

3.1 Overall Approach to the Study

Qualitative research is an empirical investigation that collects analyses and displays data in descriptive form. Data gathered through qualitative methods are restricted to the setting in which they were obtained. In-depth interviews were used to gather data for this research. This was to ensure that detailed information and responses were obtained.

In-depth interview is a conversation between an interviewer and an interviewee. The interview provided a clear understanding of issues discussed. The main reason for undertaking in-depth interviews with the executive director, communication manager and others was to afford the researcher the chance to gather detailed information on the communication strategy of the award and also the communication plan.

3.2. Sampling

Sampling involves the selection of units such as people or organisations from a population of interest (Trochim, 2006). A sample, according to Wimmer and Dominick (2011), is a subset of a population that is representative of the entire population.

The population for this study was the workers in the organisation (TFP). Six semi-structured interviews were carried out with a range of individuals from senior managers to the workers

within the organisation (The Future Project) especially those responsible for the planning and execution of the award in relation to communication. The Executive Director was asked about the choice of channels adopted for the project and why they are chosen. The Project Lead was asked about the various stages of the awards and how they are communicated. The Communication Manager was asked about the target audience and about the messages that are sent through the various channels. The chairman of the Central Working Committee for the award was also asked about the communication activities for the different stages and processes of the award.

The interviewees were selected using purposive sampling for the in-depth interview.

Many of the questions asked were focused around gaining an in-depth understanding of the various channels used in communication from the launch of the award process to the end of the award event. Purposive sampling selects subjects on the basis of specific characteristics or qualities. The characteristics of those selected for interviewing are described next.

In all, six decision making members in the TFA team were interviewed. The Executive Director of The Future Project who is a co-founder of The Future Awards was interviewed. The Marketing and Operations Director of The Future Project who is also a founding partner was interviewed. The two were responsible for executing strategies and ideas for the brand. The chairman of the central working committee for The Future Awards was also interviewed. He was responsible for the communication plan with other members of the committee. The two project managers for 2012 were in the best position to explain the implementation of the communication of the award process to the target audience. In addition, the communication manager of the project who was in charge of monitoring and evaluation of the communication strategy annually was also interviewed.

3.3 Data Collection

Data was collected by conducting face-to-face, in-depth interviews. The interviews took place at the convenience of the participants and the research was guided by a question guide to allow for enough discoveries of research questions. The study relied on only primary sources of data which were the above selected members working on the project's communication. Qualitative research usually uses small sample designs which are carefully selected in order to gather rich data that provides the researcher with in-depth understanding of the group, organisation or individual.

The questions answered by the interviewees were open-ended questions focused on understanding the communication channels of The Future Awards. The in-depth interviews were (See Appendix A) conducted over a period of seven weeks. Entering the field the research started with the premise that the organisation uses several communication media to support communications. This is based on initial interviews with senior management. Finally, the researcher observed the physical work environments, technologies, and applications available in the organisation.

3.3.1 Data Collection Procedure

Prior to the start of data collection, contacts were established with the founders of The Future Project explaining the purpose of the research and soliciting for their cooperation and support. Letters, phone calls and emails were sent severally to the organisation, reminding them about the study and to maintain relationship with them before the actual days were fixed for the interview. Once they agreed to take part in the study, the date, time and venue were fixed at their convenience.

The data collection instrument was shared with the two founders for their comments. However, the question guide was not followed chronologically because the questions were not all the time asked in the order they appeared on the guide.

The interviews were recorded and as support to the recordings, the researcher took notes during the interviews. One hour was spent with each of the founders while thirty minutes was spent with each of the other four interviewees. All interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the interviewees and transcribed verbatim. Also to augment the audio tape, interview notes were taken as backup for data collection. The interview was conducted with the organisers of the annual event: the Executive Director (Chude Jideonwo), two Project Managers (Bukonla Adebakin and Seun Oluwole), Communication Manager (Damilola Oluboyede), chairman of the Central Working Committee (Mai Atafo) and the Marketing Director (Adebola Williams).

3.3.2 Data Collection Instrument

The instrument used for this study to gather data was the interview guide (See Appendix A). This interview guide was designed and questions were phrased in a way the interviewees understood. The interview guide involved specific questions, covering all the three research questions for the study.

3.4 Data Analysis

Analysis of data is a process of editing, cleaning, transforming, and modeling data with the goal of highlighting useful information, suggestion, conclusions, and supporting decision making Adèr and Helmsing (2008). All voice data were transcribed into textual data and the transcripts were read several times from beginning to the end for proper understanding. From

each transcript, significant phrases and sentences that were needed were identified and organized into themes. An in-depth thematic analysis was used to analyse the data gathered. The themes were then described and a report was written based on the findings. Transcribing some interviews took two and half hours while some took two hours.

The channels were ranked into a hierarchy from the richest to the leanest medium. The rich media including are face-to-face and meeting/video conference. They are the channels that carry the most information while the lean media such as formal letter, written report, bulletin, newsletter and formal numeric report carries the least information according to Daft and Lengel (1989). The findings from the report are presented in this study in the form of narrations, inferences and direct quotations.

3.5 Ethical Issues

Interviewees were given assurances and undertaking that the research exercise was strictly for academic purpose and that the researcher did not have any personal or financial interest that would be dependent on responses. Informants were also assured that their responses would not put them at a professional risk or disadvantage nor would the findings be made available to competitors in a way that would undermine their organisational advantage. They were actually given an option to decline participation.

3.6 Summary

The central purpose of the research methodology outlined in this chapter involves the overall approach to the study including population, sampling procedure, data collection and analysis. The study was conducted qualitatively using in-depth interviews. The next chapter presents findings from the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data gathered including their analyses for the purpose of answering the research questions. The study looked at the channels of communication that were adopted by the organisers for each stage and process of the award. It also examined the reason for the choice of each and how that selection could have reflected the assumptions of the media richness theory. The findings also ranked what the organisers call the rich and lean channels for the awards. The findings were organized as answers to the main research questions. The findings of this study were also discussed in relation to the theoretical framework within which this study was situated. In all, six people were interviewed all of who worked on the project in 2012.

4.1. Communication Channels Used for TFA

The study findings revealed that the executive director determined the channels chosen for communication. TFA used all platforms that could reach the target audience. According to the executive director, (Tuesday, 9th July, 2013):

We use all platforms that can reach the target audience, TV, radio, print, outdoor at strategic locations (billboards, rollup banners, wall banners), online, flyers and small events where TFA engages with audience directly. TFA started when social media evolved and we are one of the first that used social media for a national campaign. So if any other media comes out tomorrow that will reach our target audience, and then it will be considered and used.

There was mixture of interpersonal and mass media communication channels. The communication manager also explained;

For social media, TFA as an official handle on facebook and twitter. There is a social media personnel in charge of tweeting every five minutes and placing facebook updates regularly. Also short stories are

posted on my space and nairaland for others to comment. Google hangout is also used to interview people online like skype but it can involve two or more people. Press releases are sent out every week to update our audience; video promos are also sent to the premium websites in Nigeria. These websites are all media partners of the award so they update the stories on TFA.

Figure 2: Communication channels used by The Future Project for The Future Awards.

CATEGORY	TYPE OF CHANNEL
SOCIAL MEDIA	Facebook, twitter, My space, Google Plus, Nairaland, Black Berry Messenger
WEBSITE	TFA's official website, The Future Project official website, Bellanaija.com, Ynaija website, NETng
BLOGS (Blogger, Blogspot)	Linda ikeji blog, Ladun Laidi blog, 360nobs
KICK VIDEOS	Youtube, Vimeo, Podcast/Audio sharing, Crawlers
TELEVISION	Channels TV, Africa Magic on DSTV, NTA (Nigerian Television Authority), Hip TV (a youth music station), Silverbird Television, One Mic Station, AIT (Africa Independent Television), Soundcity, Ebony life TV
RADIO	LPMS (Live Presenter Mentions) on Cool FM, Wazobia FM, Nigeria Info FM
PRINT	Magazine: Complete Fashion Mag, Genevive Magazine, TW Magazine, Y! Magazine, Newspapers, Letters with TFA letter headed paper,
OUTDOOR	Rollup banners, Billboards, Flyers, Stickers, Posters
INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION	Word of mouth, Staff/Volunteers meeting, Spoken words in native languages and translated to community members, Face-to-face meetings with stakeholders, Presentations
EVENTS	Media/Press releases, media coverage, press briefings.
TELEPHONE	Text messages, calls
INTERNET	Email, Web Casting, Wikis (PBWorks, Wikispaces, Wetpaint)

As shown in Figure 2. The project manager further added that:

Video promos are played on these television stations, they are also media partners of the awards so the ads are aired in exchange for

mentions on banners and promos. Short videos and short documentaries of what is going on about TFA are being uploaded on blogs. Short stories on past winners and nominees are also uploaded on the TFA website and on youtube for people to see and leave their comments.

The study also found that voice promos, jingles, radio commercials and also radio interviews are done on these premium stations. In addition, feature articles are written and published in newspapers and magazines as shown in Figure 2. For outdoors publicity, banners were placed at strategic places and locations in different states in Nigeria, especially Lagos state.

4.1.2 Media Choices

Figure 3: Use of each communication channel for TFA

S/N	MEDIUM	DESCRIPTION	USED FOR
1.	Television Local, regional, national.	High impact medium with potential to reach international large audiences. Digital television allows for direct response.	Advertising, Publicity / Public Relations.
2.	Radio Local and national	Low impact, low cost medium, quick to produce and air. LPM (Live Presenter Mentions).	Advertising, publicity & sponsorships.
3.	Posters, outdoor media board, rollup banners, flyers	Short exposure but it has good repetition to geographic targeting.	Advertising
4.	SMS text messaging	Personalised with high attention level.	Information and message delivery
5.	Telephone calls	It is one-to-one and it puts across complex information to gain direct response.	To contact nominees that they have been nominated for the award
6.	Flyers, letters and emails	It is sent to many and has direct response.	Flyers are printed for awareness. Emails are used to send out nomination forms
7.	Web page, online banners, pop ups, click through	It is user friendly and gets across to even an international audience at low cost.	Advertising, publicity and PR.
8.	Person to person	High impact with direct response	Meetings with staffs and judges.
9.	Events, press conference and press briefings	High impact and multifunctional in generating publicity and good image.	Nominees reception, the launch and the award night.

Figure 3 shows the characteristics of each media choice. The different communication channels were used for different purposes but the research found out that one channel complimented the other. According to the marketing director, “In selecting appropriate media, it is necessary to consider the characteristics of each medium and evaluate the specific options within each”.

4.2 Stages of TFA

For every stage of the award, communication is very vital because the target audience were being carried along for awareness and engagement. According to the executive director, people sent in nominations from across the country and these nominations can only be done online, the official TFA website and on Facebook. After nominations, the central working committees called the CWC members reduced the nominations. TFA organisers also called industry leaders, journalists and also people who will know about young people doing well. The CWC members looked at the mini profile of these nominees and then finally decided on whom the nominees for the season would be. This was called the LONGLIST when released. The “longlist” with five nominees per category was sent to the independent audit committee members who were made up of 30 distinguished Nigerians. Their duty was to scrutinise and decide on the shortlist of three people per category. The final reduced list was sent to the board of judges, which comprises of young journalists across electronic and online media. The award was done in August because it is the month of international day of the youth.

4.3 Communication Activities for the stages of the award.

Communication was important throughout the process of the award. The communication manager indicated that press releases were sent out every week to update the audience about the process of the award and what is happening. With TFA, there was an official launch of

the season, series of town hall meetings, a nominee’s reception and then the grand finale (the award night).

Figure 4: Table Indicating the Various Stages and Channels used for each stage

STAGE	DESCRIPTION	CHANNELS
The Launch	Communication of the theme for the season	Press conference, rollup banners.
Nominations Opens and Nomination Closes	Communication with all target audience and the entire country.	Flyers, facebook, Twitter, TV, radio, rollup banners, online banners for blogs and websites, press release, emails, telephone.
Voting Begins and Closes	When nomination closes, people are asked to go and vote on two platforms. They can either vote with texting or on the TFA website. The communication is to keep people informed about the closing date.	Text messages, facebook, twitter, online banners, radio jingles, television promos, emails and press release
Nominees Reception	Communication is done to sponsors, partners, shortlisted nominees, staff, volunteers and government. It is an event with press coverage from electronic, print and online media.	Telephone, text messages, video and radio promos, online banners, press release,
Judging	This is when the central working committee, the board of judges and the independent audit committee members screen nominees to produce the finalists. This stage is as well communicated to the audience so that they can be carried along.	Emails, telephones, press release, spoken words, face to face meetings, twitter update, letters, presentations
Get Your Green On Campaign:	It is a campaign for young fashion designers who are partners with the award.	Facebook, TFA website, twitter, emails, text message, telephones, online banner, video promos, radio jingle
Award	Who will be the young person of the year’ will be communicated and through various channels. Short videos about winners are usually done for them to tell their stories on what they have achieved and how they were inspired.	Letters, facebook, radio, TV, email, press release, press conference, billboard, meetings, website stories, live streaming.

The study gathered as indicated in Figure 4 from the project manager that:

Traditional media is used to call for nominations, sending flyers, stickers and banners to different parts of the country for awareness of a new season. Concentration is usually on areas that are far from town because most of them might not have access to the internet and because the award is a national award, everybody in the target group must be aware. The flyers are even done in different languages so that everyone around can understand the message being communicated.

The major communication tool according to the communication manager was the use of entertainment celebrities for TV promos, online promos and outdoor.

The study further gathered from the communication manager that the official launch of the year's award held on the 29th of May. It was a press conference that had in attendance some alumni of The Future Awards. The past winners and nominees shared with journalists what TFA meant to them in addition to the opportunities which came their way simply because they were past winners of the awards. The press conference had 56 journalists ranging from print, electronic and online media so the news cut across the country. The marketing director also explained that every year, TFA was being launched with a press event or a media event. Rollup which had the theme for the season printed on it, were also placed at the venue of the press conference. The theme for the season was 'TEAR DOWN THESE WALLS!!'

For nominations, the project manager explained that:

Flyers were sent to different states and rollup banners are being placed at strategic places for awareness. We also send press releases to our media partners, blogs, and our official website where people can nominate. The nominations were done on only TFA website and on facebook. We also designed online banners and sent to different websites and twitter saying NOMINATE NOW!!! Finally, emails were sent to nominees to tell them they have been nominated, those that were not contacted via emails were contacted via telephone calls.

The same channels were used when nominations ended. The study further found that when voting began, every channel used for nominations remained constant but some additional channels were added to the various communication channels.

...We used text messages when it came to the voting stage because SMS was used to vote and people could also vote online. There were video promos, television ads, radio jingles and letters to the judges of the award.

The nominees' reception is also communicated to the target audience by different channels. According to the organisers, this stage made use of online and social media unlike other stages because the profile of shortlisted nominees and their names are being posted online to premium websites and blogs.

...The audience are given a week to give their comments and reasons why a nominee should not be selected. There is instant feedback and complain about the age of some nominees because the award is restricted to people within the ages of 15-31.

Interestingly, the study found that some traditional media will pick news from the online media and make it newsworthy to their readers.

For the judging process, concentration is more the lean media according to Daft and Lengel. Emails, telephones, spoken words, face to face meetings, twitter update, letters and presentations. The only time there is communication online is a press release and twitter update to state that the judging process is on and the finalists will soon be revealed.

For the Get Your Green On Campaign, the organisers indicated that all the channels available were used to communicate to the audience except billboards. Finally for the awards, the communication manager stated:

This is the peak and the stage where all our communication channels are used. Newspapers, online banners, bill boards, radio jingle, Letters, facebook, TV promos, email, press release, meetings, website stories and posters. Most importantly, the event was live streamed on Africa Magic and also live streamed online for those the target audience who are not present at the venue.

The study found that there were various reasons for the choice of each channel used for communication but centrally, the choice of one platform over another was because of larger reach, engagement and feedback.

4.3.3 Communication Activity for TFA

The study findings also revealed that eight town hall meetings were held to generate the best nominations in various categories and to stimulate purposive discussions about growth in relevant sectors. The first was “Conversations for Change”, a town hall meeting that was held at Oriental Hotel, Lagos on the 24th of June. The Creative Director of TFA coordinated the sessions. Another one held at Co-Creation hub, Lagos on the 25th of June 2012. This meeting was dedicated to technology geeks. These meetings enabled the organisers to explain the judging process of the award so that young people can challenge it or “pick holes in it” according to the executive director. The next town hall meeting was held on the 26th of June to announce the creative categories of the award especially nominations for the creative artist of the year and the on-air personality of the year. The venue was ‘Bogobiri’, an entertainment arena where young people relax, act drama and poetry recitation. Others were held at the British Council, Ikoyi, Lagos, Abuja, Yola, Port Harcourt, Akwa-Ibom. Each of these events according to the Project manager had the same basic thrust: inform, generate enthusiasm and stimulate discussions among young people. Town hall meetings were another communication activity used for communication with the target audience.

4.4.1 Target Audience

These are the receivers of the messages sent through the communication channels. Findings from the in-depth interview with the Chairman of the central working committee revealed that the target audience for The Future Awards was the educated young people mostly between the ages of 15-35.

Our target audience is broad, people who are to participate in the awards are 18-31 but people that need to be inspired by the awards are from 5-65. The younger people will aspire and the older people will be challenged so that they will respect and correct all stereotype about young people that indicates no intelligence.

The findings revealed that there was a primary and secondary audience. Primary audience was 15-35 years (these are the people that are expected to participate in the award by being nominated and voted). Importantly, the primary communication and message is addressed to these young people. The secondary targets were people within the age of 5-65 who are government, partners, investors, sponsors and the press.

4.4.4. Monitoring and Evaluation of Channel effectiveness

Communication must be monitored and evaluated when different channels are being used (Randal, 1999). The study also gathered that a focus group discussion was done after the award where young people come to review the award process; it is called a resource group meeting. The executive director also stated:

We evaluate by ending out questionnaires for people to fill at every event to measure our success and impact of the event. Also there is instant feedback on the social media platforms and we put it on our official website that people should send emails and comments about the award.

Qualitative measures are mostly done for TFA's evaluation. The project manager also added that there are different ways they monitor depending on the medium¹:

We check headlines in newspapers and stories about TFA then we cut, scan and bind it for reference. We also have some people that are dedicated to checking how many times our TV ads and radio jingles are been played in a week. With online, we use title and quote of the story to search how many people have used the story. We also check media partners' blogs and website for the comments people have posted about TFA and we use website user survey.

For quantitative measures, TFA embarks on quick survey research in some areas and feedback from staffs. Research is also done within working members of TFA e.g.30members of Judges, 50 members of resource group and 12 members of the central working committee.

¹Interview with project manager of The Future Awards on Wednesday, 31st July, 2013 in Nigeria.

Figure 5: How communication channel were being evaluated for TFA

S/N	EVALUATION PROCESS	DESCRIPTION	TIMEFRAME
1.	Impact Log	An informal record compiled in-house that captures how the organization's communication have been received.	Quarterly
2.	Public Opinion Research	Formal survey of a sample with responses aimed at providing TFA with the type of information that will assist to improve the communication strategy	Biennially
3.	Website User Survey	A survey designed to capture website visitors' statistics.	Bi-annually
4.	Internal Communication Survey	Survey of TFA staff and volunteers designed to ascertain the effectiveness of the internal communication process.	Annually
5	Key- informant Interviews	A technique for collecting more in-depth information from stakeholders with particular insight into TFA communications. This could be conducted through focus groups	After the award

According to the chairman of the central working committee, the central working committee members are the survey team that goes around recording and writing what Nigerians say.² (Thursday, 1st August, 2013).

They are enjoined to ask 10 people in a day so that we can know people's response and level of awareness of the award. We also send some of our team members to go to the street and ask random young people about TFA and the various channels used.

The communication manager also stated that the impact log and the public opinion research have helped TFA to be better over the years. He further explained:

We use alexa.com to rank our website clicks and home page visits. Conducting the informant interviews with key personnels in the media has also helped TFA in different ways. We take monitoring and evaluation seriously because that is how we measure the success of the communication objectives stated at the beginning of each season.

4.5 Most effective Channel

Drawing from the six interviews conducted, the study found that social media have been used for TFA from the beginning. The Executive Director added that:

We found out that social media is a platform that has a strong audience for young people. For the first year in 2005, the campaign was only done online with various media bloggers as partners, there were various nominations online and participation from different parts of the country. The online media as now moved to another level because there are so many more websites and many more views so TFA gets to do partnership with premium websites in Nigeria. This explains that TFA doesn't have to be everywhere, once the message is on these premium sites, other small websites and blogs will spread the news and it will go viral.

The study found that social media has been the most effective medium for TFA according to the organisers of the event. The marketing director indicated that:

Social media is not only about us pushing the message but others can also help push the message. For example, nominees were asking people to vote

²Interview with Chairman of the CWC of The Future Awards on Thursday, 1st August, 2013 in Nigeria.

for them, former winners were sending congratulatory messages, fans of nominees were sending broadcast on blackberry and also people were posting comments about the nominees on twitter. There is a combine effort between us the organiser and those that are receiving the message. In addition, TFA's target audiences are more on social media.

The Chairman of the central working committee added that TFA understands the media that is why communication contributed to the success of the award.

Media captures the mind of young people and so we see it as a tool to empower them because we believe the media is very powerful and TFA wants to reach every young person in Nigeria anywhere they are. Some media are more powerful than the others especially in Nigeria.

Lean Media according to the executive director are newspapers, magazine and radio because it reaches a limited audience of people that can afford to buy it. Rich media according to TFA organisers are social media (facebook, black berry messenger, twitter, and blogs). The project manager also stated that:

All platforms are important as much as they are reaching a set of people, but road shows, town criers and radio are not very effective channels of communication. As for radio, only three radio stations partnered with the award so there are less of radio and even TV interviews because of the nature of our target audience. We also do not consider youtube as a rich medium because people do not really follow updates on youtube, so instead of putting our videos on youtube, we would rather put them on blogs or put the link to the video on twitter and facebook. Also the ratio of the Nigerians that read magazines keeps shrinking everyday so magazine is another lean media that we intend to stop its usage from next year.

The use of social media for TFA is for quick small news according to the communication manager. This quick small news cannot be sent as a press release or as a TV promo because of the procedure of approval. The organisers all indicated that online is faster and quicker to send instant messages. The use of various stations on television is to ensure that all the target audience was being reached. This means the same message was brought out on different platforms from different angles. The executive director added that

The major reason for the choice of social media as the richest media is because of its instant comments and feedbacks, online buzz and spotlights. TV also has our ads running on DSTV and top national stations and there has been lots of feedback from people.

4.6 Other Findings

The observation done by the researcher to back the interviews conducted was observing the organisers in their preparation for 2013 award. Documents, press releases, advertisements, online banners, brochure, TFA website, blogs and promo videos used for 2012 event were also observed and checked to validate what the organisers said during the course of the interview.

Figure 6: Communication Calendar for TFA Season 7.

S/N	DATE	DESCRIPTION	Notes
1.	27 May	Press Release on Africa, Nominate banners, TV & Radio + Documentary, nominate flier	1. Media Partners, YouTube, TV stations. 2. Social Media updates.
2.	3 June	Press Release on Soyinka, TV & Radio of Goodwill messages + Documentary, Nominate banner + Flier	Design nomination banner + flier
3.	10 June	Press Release End of Nominations + Host/Sponsor announcement, nominate banners	
4.	17 June	Nominees List Press Release + Newspaper/Magazine Ad, Judging is on + Allowance for complaints, Banner leading to profiles, TV & Radio continues	1. Design TFA banner leading to nominees profile 2. Weekly write up on Bellanaija
5.	24 June	Master class, Banner leading to Master class, TV & Radio on Master Class	1. Design Online master class banner 2. Promo on online master class. 3. Weekly write up on Bellanaija (Website)
6.	1 July	TV & Radio of 2012 Winner videos + see more inspiring stories, Banner see more inspiring stories, Post on YPY 2012	1. Design TFA 2012 winners inspiring stories. 2. Weekly write up on Bellanaija
7.	8 July	Nominees Reception + Post Event Photos, 2011 winner videos, Banner see more inspiring stories	Photos to be on site, Facebook and media partners
8.	15 July	2011 winner videos, Banner see more inspiring stories	Photos to be on site, Facebook and media partners with banners
9.	29 July	Keynote Speaker + Date, 2011 winner videos, Banner see more inspiring stories	
10.	5 August	Finalists, Banner – finalist, Awards promo	1. Design finalist banner. 2. Awards promo - Media partners
11.	19 August	Watch the live broadcast and watch live streaming online	Africa Magic.

The claims by the organisers that they used all these channels were validated. The study further found that there was a communication calendar (Figure 6) with timelines that guided the season. The award was launched on the 26th of May 2012 and it was held on the 26th of August, 2012. This calendar helped the communication plan.

The study gathered that there were different communication objectives for each season. The six communication objectives for season seven are:

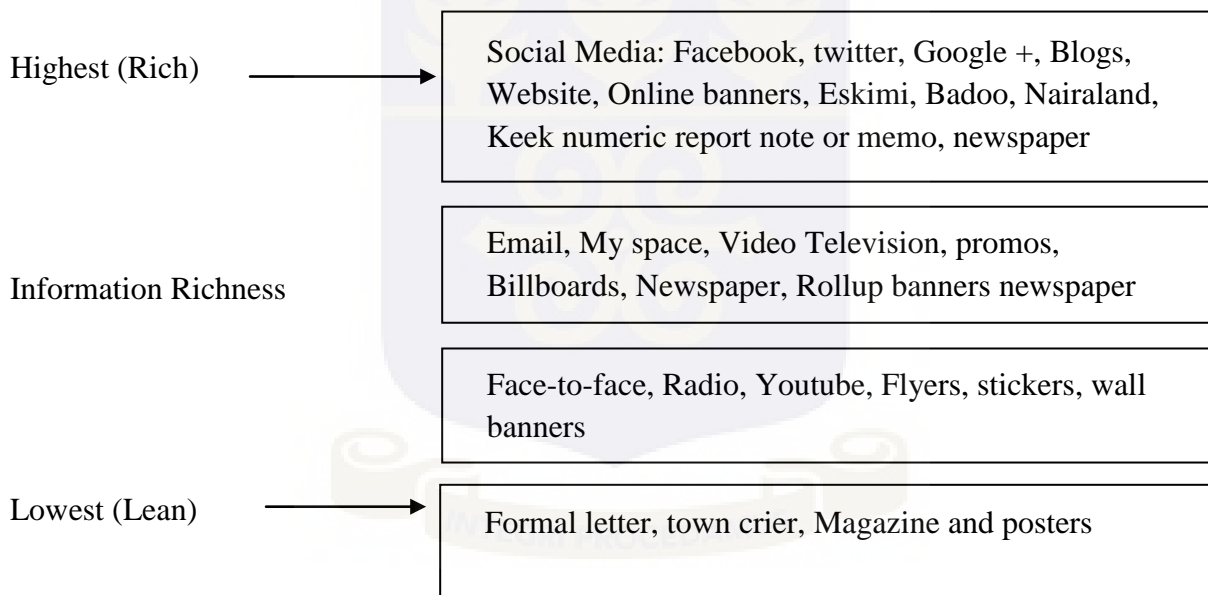
1. To ensure that people take the event more seriously, which is why emphasis will be places on the awards been seen from the perspective of Leaders, Innovators and Entrepreneurs.
2. To ensure that people will start to call the award the Nobel prize for young Africans.
3. Lastly young people must “tear down these walls” which is the theme for the season.
4. To ensure that people engage with the process of the award, for example; people should tweet at TFA handle and ask questions with comments.
5. To get people to watch the event as it is streamed online. The events are being streamed live online so people who are not present at the event can also be a part of it by watching it online.
6. To create general excitement and buzz that emphasises TFA’s role as Africa’s youth event.

Other communication objectives were for people to nominate others or themselves for the award, to ensure that people are aware of when voting begins and also to emphasise credibility before the secondary audience who comprise of sponsors, partners, government and judges.

The study also found that every year, there is a key message but in 2012, the awards was rebranded following the letter sent from the World Bank saying “TFA is the nobel prize for

young Africans” so most of the messages tied into this. Also the message clearly showed what TFA stands for (Leadership, Innovation and Entrepreneurship). Every year, there is always a central theme that drives the award. The central theme for 2012 was TEAR DOWN THESE WALLS. This simply meant young people should tear down the walls of being young and not being able to do great things so against all the odds in the country, tear down the walls that still tried to hold young people down despite all the strife. It was to encourage the youth that they should not stop or give up. The study further found that TFA intended to be made as an advocating tool.

Figure 7: Table Indicating the TFA Channel Ranking

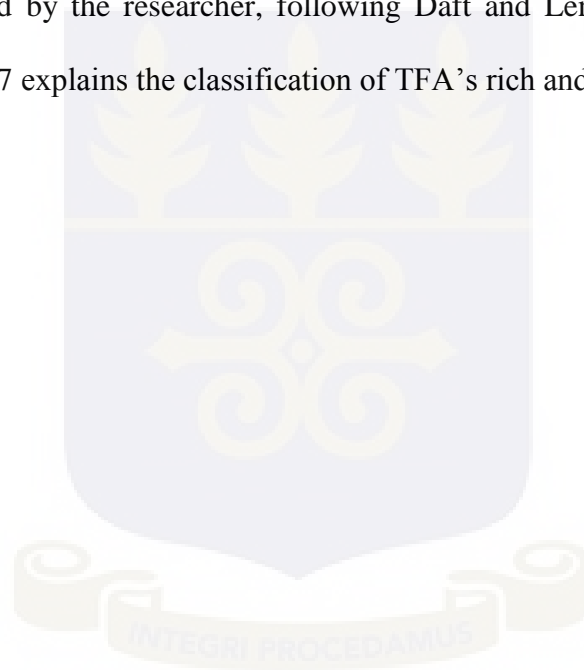


The researcher developed Figure 7 to show how channels were utilized and ranked by the organisers of TFA following Daft and Lengel’s format in Figure 1 (pg. 13).

4.7 Summary

This chapter presented findings on the communication strategy that was used for The Future Awards Season 7. The findings were organised based on the themes deduced from the three research questions. The channels used to communicate were presented; the communication

activities and the channels used for each stage of the awards were also presented. The reason for the choice of the channels were presented and ranked according to how rich the channels were. The chapter also presented the other findings found during the course of the study. The researcher found them useful to this research so they were indicated. The media richness theory claims that different communication media can be classified as lean or rich, according to their ability to convey knowledge and information. The classification scheme proposed by this theory places face-to-face as the richest communication medium, and e-mail as a relatively lean medium (Lee, 1994). According to this study, this proposition is refuted; the table above as designed by the researcher, following Daft and Lengel (1984) information richness design. Figure 7 explains the classification of TFA's rich and lean media.



CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

This study was undertaken to identify the communication channels used for an event like a national award (The Future Awards). It examined the communication activities of the stages of the award. The findings reported in the previous chapters are discussed in this chapter in relation to media richness theory. The findings of the study are discussed as they are organised according to the research questions of the study.

5.2.1. Channels used and reasons for their choice

Media richness theory (MRT) proposed by Richard Daft and Robert Lengel in their seminal 1986 article initially did not consider the new media, but they have been retroactively fitted into the theory's framework. MRT argued that managers could improve performance by matching media characteristics to the characteristics of the tasks. Previous research work has addressed the choice to adopt a single technology, often e-mail (Lee 1994; Markus 1990, 1994), but also video conferencing (Kraut *et al.*, 1999), group ware (Phillips and Brown 1993), and on-line information service (Lamb and Kling 2003), from other alternative communication media. Much research investigates situations when various media are used most effectively, beginning with Daft, Lengel, and Trevino (1987). This study supports Lee (1994) on the use of email as a single technology that is very important for communication.

Emails were used in every process and stage of the award and because of the technological world we are today, according to the findings their audience have their emails connected to their phones and technological gargets. Significantly however, the findings reported that

managers preferred social media to other alternative communication channels. Albert (2005) argues that subsequent hierarchies confirmed that face-to-face and telephone communication, respectively, were the richest modes of communication. However, they further indicated that e-mail communication was slightly higher in richness than other traditional written communication. This study agrees with the latter postulation and disagrees with the former according to the findings. Albert (2005) also stated that the theory was initially confirmed using qualitative data when tested with traditional media such as face-to-face, telephone, and letters and partially supported for testing with new media such as e-mail and voice mail.

5.2.2 Possible channel influences

The study findings indicated that the channels used were effective. The use of event was the primary tool used to drive communication through all the channels. TFA thrived on partnership especially with media. Equivocality is the barrier confronting the new media. Equivocal situations are novel and nonrecurring. Equivocal situations require hunches, discussion and social support interpreted instantly. Other forms of communication, such as memos, do not allow for timely adjustments and refocusing of the message. Face-to-face also allows the simultaneous communication of multiple cues. Head nods, smiles, eye contact, tone of voice, and other nonverbal behaviour can be used to regulate, modify, and control the communication exchange. Face-to-face communication also uses high variety natural language and conveys emotion. The telephone medium is somewhat less rich than face-to-face. Richard and Lengel (1984) further argued that Feedback capability is fast, but visual cues and body language are filtered out. Individuals rely on language content. The findings for this study do not support the assumptions by Richard and Lengel (1984) on this note. The face-to-face media here did not allow fast progress in communication because of the nonverbal cues which on the other hand is very important to Daft and Lengel (1984). The

study findings supported Daft and Lengel on the notion that the telephone medium is personal and uses natural language which makes it relatively rich.

The study also supports the media richness theory on the note that addressed written communications such as letters, notes and memos are lower still in media richness. Feedback is slow. Only written information is conveyed, so voice cues are absent and visual cues are limited to those on paper. When letters are sent to media partners according to the study, it takes long for the receivers to respond and at times they might not even respond at all, so it is generally regarded by the organisers as lean media.

Albert 2005 stated in his study that recent findings further suggest that use of new media may be appropriate to overcome situational constraints even when the media's characteristics do not match the message content or task.

5.2.3 Communication Activities and Channels

Researchers have found that managers can spend anywhere between 75-85% of their time engaged in communication activities (Panko 1992). Although MRT describes many CMC tools as 'lean', and thus unsuitable for equivocal problem solving, research has also demonstrated that virtual teams employing such tools can in fact produce superior and more effective decisions than face-to-face teams (Valacich *et al.*,2002). In fact, despite their commonly asynchronous nature, organisations have reported positive outcomes when using CMC tools, including reduced delays in information exchange (Baltes *et al.*,2002). Some users have reported an increase in organisational productivity (El-Shinnawy, 1998). The study findings also revealed and supported the notion that CMC (Computer mediated communications) helped the communication at every stage and process of the award.

5.3 Limitation of the Study

The findings of the study should be considered while bearing in mind the following limitations. The first was that this research did not go out to ask target audience about their perception of the channels used by the TFA team. This would have provided proper verification and balance with what the study found instead of totally relying on what the organisers have explained. This could not be done because of the limited time available with which the researcher had to complete the study. Also a more informed analysis would have been done if the study augmented both qualitative and quantitative method. Finally, the study depends solely on qualitative methods in gathering its data, such findings cannot be generalised beyond the sample. The in-depth interview according to Boyce and Neale (2006) is prone to bias. That is to say responses from the interviewees might be biased as they are workers of the organisation. It is also time intensive, due to the time it takes to conduct the interviews, transcribe them and analyse the results.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussion of this study, the following recommendations are made that other researchers must observe and document while examining communication channels of a project. From the findings, it was clear that the sample was limited because of the time frame and resources devoted to the study; only one event was used for the study. For future studies, it is recommended that the sample be larger for better representation and exploration of more communication patterns and channels used for awards.

It is also recommended that future research be conducted to find out why organisations are now referring to social media as a rich media. For future studies, a research could be conducted to find out how why computer mediated communication channels are taking over the conventional face-to-face direct conversation.

Finally the study found out that TFA did not spend a lot of money on media coverage of the events and award process and this made the communication budget lower because the organisers relied on media partnership. Therefore the researcher recommends that for future events organisers should position their brand as very attractive so that they can easily attract media partnership from different channels.

5.5 Conclusion

The study revealed that the communication decisions made by the organisers of TFA has accounted for its success. The award was officially launched on the 29th of May, 2012 and the main event held on the 26th of August 2012. The study examined the communication channels used for The Future Awards 2012, the calendar, the communication channels, and the evaluation of the channels. It is important to note that from the launch of the award to the award night, different communication channels were used, which seems to refute the tenets of the media richness theory that classified face-to-face and video conferencing as the richest media.

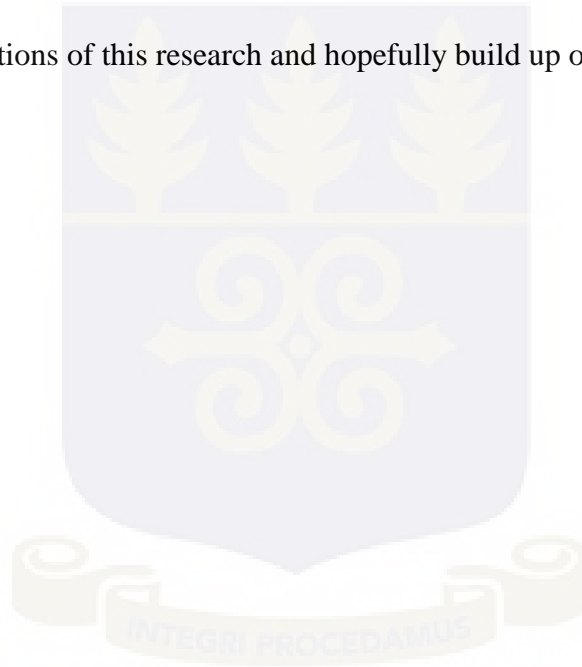
The study found out that social media especially facebook and twitter were considered rich media because there is instant feedback. Computer mediated channels were mostly used for publicity and awareness of the award because of the target audience of the event. Online media is used to publicise the name, age, and profile of nominees so that the target audience can view and then respond within a week. This is not to say other channels like rollup banners, flyers, billboards, TV and radio were not effective but they were not as effective as the online channels.

The study found that the variety of media works better for certain tasks than others and the choice of one channel over another was because of “reach”, this means the amount of people

that will get the message when sent. The lean media according to Daft and Lengel (1984) were formal letters, bulletins, reports and brochures. The study agreed with this position but it also added that magazines and radio were part of lean media.

The use of event was the primary tool used to drive communication through all the channels. Entertainment celebrities were used to gain media attention so that people can use the social media to talk about the event and this fostered the event's popularity.

Finally, the recommendations outlined will serve as a good platform for other research works to be conducted in a similar area. These recommendations will help other research works to overcome similar limitations of this research and hopefully build up on this research.



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APPENDIX A
QUESTION GUIDE

I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. My name is Oluwasola Odetola and I would like to talk to you about The Future Awards Season 7. Specifically, the communication strategy adopted for the awards. The interview should take less than an hour. I will be taping the session because I don't want to miss any of your comments. Although I will be taking some notes during the session, I can't possibly write fast enough to get it all down. Because we're on tape, please be sure to speak up so that we don't miss your comments.

All responses will be kept confidential. This means that your interview responses will only be shared with research team members and we will ensure that any information we include in our report does not identify you as the respondent. Remember, you don't have to talk about anything you don't want to and you may end the interview at any time. Are there any questions about what I have just explained? Are you willing to participate in this interview?

Interviewee

Witness

Date

QUESTIONS

1. What are the stages and process for this award?
2. How are these stages communicated?
3. What are the communication channels selected for each stage and how are they used?
4. Are the communication channels used for each stage different from one another?
5. Why are these channels selected for communication?
6. What medium has been the most effective for communication and why did it work well?
7. How would you describe your target audience that needs to be communicated with for the awards
8. How do you prioritise when wanting to communicate with them?
9. What is the key message intended to be communicated during this season
10. What measures are taken towards monitoring and evaluation of the communication process
11. What are the communication objectives for the season

12. What are the communication activities done to help achieve the objectives?
13. What are the timelines on your communication activities?
14. How do you assign roles and tasks to individual members of the team to carry out the communication plan?
15. How is the communication strategy measured at the end of the event?
16. How effective is the communication channels in improving awareness and knowledge about the future awards.
17. Does the communication strategy change annually?
18. What recommendations do you have for future efforts such as these?
19. Would you recommend TFA's strategy for future organisers? Please provide a justification for your response.

Is there anything more you would like to add?

I'll be analysing the information you and others gave me and submitting a draft report to the organization in one month. I'll be happy to send you a copy to review at that time, if you are interested.

Thank you for your time.

