# 

How Can Mass Communication Strategies Align Ideas And Actions To Facilitate Breakthroughs That Influence, Persuade, And Guide Stakeholders Towards Desired Outcomes?

Michel Suarez

Saint Thomas University

**Chapter Overview**

This is an important chapter of the dissertation because it focuses on methods used to collect relevant data on strategic communication that can lead to its breakdown. It also identified the aspects of strategic communication that if utilized appropriately, can lead an organization toward incremental change in strategic communication. Specifically, it investigates how organizations can utilize strategic communication factors to prevent the breakdown of organizations’ operations. Without the arrangement of an appropriate communication plan, the entire organization may suffer lack of transparency and clarification (Tuck, 2014). Implementing strategy in business communication can ensure effectiveness and identify areas of concern.

In business, strategic communication involves strategies or activities that can aid in reaching an organization’s goals. This study was completed using qualitative research method to examine the evolution of strategic communication at the corporate level and its effectiveness within the firm. Additionally, the factors that lead to ineffectiveness or weakening of strategic communication were also analyzed (Adler & Elmhorst, 2012). The qualitative research method was used to collect data and analyze the data to derive at the appropriate findings. And therefore, it is important to point that the research was conducted using qualitative research method and structured interview techniques.

**Critical Analysis of the Chosen Methodology**

This dissertation’s methodology is qualitative research method in nature and utilizes structured interview questions. Structured interview techniques provide accurate answers and the interviewer can observe the interviewees and therefore, errors are minimized. The qualitative research method was selected because of its flexible nature in data collection; the methodology supports the research to formulate perspective and set a focus (Smith, 2015). Observation research design was used to appropriately answer the research question. The observation research design is draws a conclusion, by comparing subjects against the control and therefore, it provides appropriate and accurate research result. However, researcher’s unique observation skills are critical in this regard. The concept of strategic communication deals more with the experiences and cultural aspect of an organization rather than the concept of variables, which are usually used in quantitative methodology.

Results emerge from qualitative research method rather than process-oriented results therefore, it is focused on grounded theory to improve the focus of the research and achieve its required targets successfully. Since quantitative methodology deals mostly with the specific technique of data collection, inappropriate or inaccurate information would be collected if the survey questions were answered incorrectly. The qualitative methodology may seem more prone to interference from individual bias or perception of particular information or issues. (Turner III, 2010). However, this can be strength; a gathering of individual opinion data can enable researchers to get predictive information with appropriate details behind the issue, offering deeper information.

**Participants:**

The participants were employees of the organization known as YouTube and students. This was selected because of its prominence and ability to reach audiences, as well as its availability. The participants were selected based on gender, sex, level of education and experience in communication. The participants were aged between 21 years to 45 years and 55% of the participants were female, 40% male and the remaining 5% did not state their gender. The researcher interviewed several YouTube employees, including supervisors, and discussed the development of strategic communication processes with respondents. Additionally, 25 Miami Dade College students were interviewed via a focus group for investigating the effectiveness of YouTube advertisements.

**Target Population and Sampling Method**

The primary objective for sampling was to choose an organization like YouTube that excels in the field of broadcast communication. The names of the respondents have been kept confidential in the dissertation. Purposive sampling was implemented, which is “a method of sampling where the researcher deliberately chooses, who to include in the study, based on their ability to provide necessary data.” (Parahoo, 1997) For this research, the random sampling method was used to collect data from the target population. The organization was chosen by the researcher and the employees were selected randomly from all employees who were willing to respond. A number of YouTube interviews were analyzed, and 25 videos were assessed for this purpose to formulate a substantial perspective. The interviewees were asked questions related to strategic communication, impact and strategies used by their parent companies.

In the end, 25 YouTube employees were interviewed. Several data collection methods were initially considered, including direct observations and written documents, in association with probability sampling and non-probability models, but they were determined to be ineffective. (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 2014) why? According to Creswell (2012), interviews are effective data gathering methods that involve transferring of information from interviewee to interviewer in a more comprehensive and detailed manner. In this context, the criteria developed by Lincoln and Guba were considered extensively, affirming the constructivist and naturalistic assumptions. The authenticities, as well as criteria for the participants, were based on ontological, educative, tactical, and catalytic authenticity. (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) 25 students from radio and television broadcasting programs at Miami Dade College were included for focus group discussion to triangulate the results of the study. The results of the qualitative study will be compared to assess inter-rater reliability.

Focus group interviews are considered a valid and reliable method for collecting information regarding how people perceive, think, and react towards a particular phenomenon (Kruger & Casey, 2014). It is because, it provides accurate information and the interviewer can under nonverbal communication as well. For the current study, an interview guide was developed using the guidelines from the Calgary University Manual and was found to be effective in collecting information (Eaton & Brown, 2017). The interview guide covered all relevant aspects of information-gathering for the study. Initially, the demographic performance was developed to investigate the participants’ demographics, such as age, education, and gender. According to literature, the most important demographics with regard to advertisement efficacy were age and occupation. Therefore, age, education, and discipline were used in the study.

**Item Generation:** The interview guide was designed, with relevant open-ended questions generated with the help of the literature review.

**Try Out:** Experts from a variety of backgrounds and programs evaluated the interview guide. Two pilot focus groups were conducted to appraise the reliability and validity of the interview guide.

**End Product** The following items have been included in the interview guide to explore the effectiveness of YouTube advertisement.

**Qualitative Interpretation**

The consensual qualitative research (CQR) method was used to interpret the data (Hill et al., 2005; Hill et al., 1997). Consensual qualitative research was used, following the open-ended questions and a semi-structured interview. Consensual qualitative research is described as the use of open-ended questions and semi-structured interview provide consistent and in-depth information regarding the opinion and experiences of the individual (Hill et al., 1997).

In the study, “cues” are defined as “the multiple ways a message can be communicated, such as with nonverbal cues like facial expressions and verbal cues, such as tone of voice.” (Dennis & Kinney, 1998). The more cues a medium can proffer along with the receiver perceive, the richer the medium is considered. When verbal or nonverbal cues are removed, it can take longer and be more difficult to understand a message. Following the interview, the data were reanalyzed on the same day by the researcher to ensure its accuracy, uniformity, and coherence.

**Instrumentation**

Instrumentation is the tools or means, by which investigators attempt to measure variables or data collection. It is a critical aspect of an interview that can enable the researcher to obtain appropriate tools for further data collection. (Roberts, 2010) The primary instrument that furthered this research was the researcher himself, the researchers are involved in several tasks, such as talking to the individuals on the phone call and writing down important points that will be shown in the findings section. Several skills were utilized, such as interactive competence, steering, attention, and technical competence (Herr & Anderson, 2014). However, interactive competence is the radical change on thinking on what is going on, technical competence is knowledge and skills, which are utilized to achieve specific goals and therefore, these aspects, are essential for the completion of the research. .

Technical competence, the ability to organize the interviews, was the most important skill (Sampson, 2012). Technical competence was enacted by explaining matters of confidentiality to the participants and by preparing consent forms. Even though it was the first time the researcher performed such a critical and challenging task, with much-appreciated help, the researcher was able to conduct instrumentation effectively.

At first, the interviewer contacted YouTube through their helpline number, and after describing the dissertation to them, the managers permitted the commencement of research activities with the promise of confidentiality. During the waiting period, reports, journals, and articles were reviewed to ensure that the researcher would deal with the employees effectively. After that, the company's manager was contacted through the same helpline number to get a list of names and contact information of the employees, to explain the dissertation in more detail with regard to ethical issues that are discussed below. Twenty-five employees were selected as the sample size for this dissertation. These employees voluntarily joined the study, and further email correspondence occurred regarding confidentiality, discrimination, and information sharing so that they were comfortable while providing valuable answers.

During the interview, these employees were the first asked to talk about their daily lives, hobbies, and education, in order to make the employees comfortable while discussing personal information with the researcher (Chenail, 2011) The opening stage of a conversation is critical; inefficiency in this skill would alienate participants. Interview management and initiation skills enabled the researcher to ensure that the participants’ negative non-verbal signals and silence were ignored. However, the task was challenging for the interviewer, so the data transcription included information about the skills obtained during the process.

**Step-By-Step Guide for Interview**

* First, the larger research queries regarding the study were described along with an outline of the broader scope.
* After that, questions were developed by focusing on the previously described areas. Such questions were further refined to comply with the specification of the respondents. The major objective was to attain insight into respondents’ expertise and experience regarding the knowledge area.
* Once the questions and their scope were developed, the language was adjusted according to the understanding and cultural backgrounds of the respondents.
* In order to attain a deeper insight into the sample’s perspective, most of the questions were formulated using how, rather than why. In this regard, the approach of open questions was applied.
* After the development of questions, the format and structure of content was evaluated by considering the cultural implications and comprehension level of respondents. Warm-up questions were also devised.
* Subsequently, the flow of questions was decided.

**Data Collection**

Several kinds of interviews were identified from the literature for this dissertation: structured, unstructured, and semi-structured (Gordon, 2012). Utilization of these methods has allowed many researchers to balance flexibility and formalness. This dissertation required the researcher to focus on one aspect at a time, and diverge more in the interview to get adequate details. The researcher got the opportunity to ask questions within a certain formal range while enabling him to go more in-depth as needed. This approach provided a deeper understanding of the subject matter, enabling the interviewee and the researcher to garner surprising details about the effectiveness of communication strategies within the organizations (Katz, 2015).

Since communication is a sensitive topic, the utilization of appropriate interview techniques was required to ensure success (Seidman, 2013) Therefore, the interview questions were designed such that they enabled employees to be free in providing appropriate answers to the research questions, without being afraid of breaking the company's confidentiality regulations. The questions had been carefully asked the employees so that they can freely provide critical details with full confidence in giving appropriate answers.

Employees were contacted to ascertain their preferred interview location. The majority were most comfortable at the work location after working hours. For some employees, timing concerns led the researcher to cancel the face-to-face interview in favor of a phone call. Telephone interviews were taken individually on two consecutive days to ensure that the employees do not contact others. (Lichtman, 2012) They were not given details about other respondents, to prevent further contact or to reveal the specifics about the interview process, especially the questions.

Before starting the interview process, the objectives and introduction of this dissertation, and its potential to help in identifying areas of development in communication, were explained to every respondent. During the interview, critical points were written down to fulfill the research objectives. Every interview took about 20 minutes to accomplish.

**Theme**

According to renowned anthropologist Morris Opler, it is imperative to recognize themes in order to analyze cultural intricacies. (Bernard & Ryan, 2003) It is also asserted that every culture features certain declarations that can be defined as themes. Thematic expressions then help researchers to delve deeper. Major thematic expressions may include repetition of particular ideas and words, silence regarding seemingly audacious questions, or usage of cultural vocabulary or language connectors.

Throughout the data collection, interviews were conducted and evaluated by considering the prominent themes. For this purpose, coded interviews and index cards were used. The underlying reasons for the interview were considered throughout to pinpoint the required findings. Moreover, for all the questions, expected responses were jotted down after brainstorming. After the interviews, the index cards of participants’ responses were analyzed one by one in a comparative manner. Similar answers were stacked together to assess the strength of a particular response. After sorting out all index cards accordingly, the themes could be clearly identified. A comparative analysis was conducted that matched the actual and expected responses. In order to determine next steps, as well as the underlying outcomes of research findings, it is significant to focus on the themes of what most participants said. Any biases were avoided and the researcher included even unexpected responses in the research, regardless of presumed responses. Following the stacking, reflection, and summarization, it was now time to demonstrate the thematic results. For this purpose, all the themes were separated, and through an assessment, the trends of responses were described. The researcher highlighted what became clearer after the process and what changes had to be made in previous perceptions. Moreover, any new questions that arose were also considered.

**Data Analysis**

In order to answer the research question, the data were analyzed using SPSS and Excel. The data collected were key in and the analyzed using excel where descriptive statistic were used to derived at the appropriate answers. Two main approaches are critical for the establishment of proper research: inductive and deductive. The former is based on the unstructured framework of the interview, where the researcher is involved in finding answers to unstructured interview questions, which might take time. Since this dissertation needed less time more structured answers, the inductive approach was not chosen. (de Casterle et al., 2012) The procedure was rather deductive, in that the researcher was involved in deducing the answers by using open-ended, semi-structured questions.

The following steps were involved in data analysis:

1. The researcher first listened to structured and unstructured interviews again to outline emerging themes.
2. The data was then divided into several themes depending on the research objectives. These themes will become the main headings and subheadings of the findings and discussion section.
3. The main points of the research were summarized, using the descriptive coding method.
4. Finally, the data was validated, as explained in the section below.

**Limitations and Validity**

As expressed above, the qualitative research design is suitable to obtain information about strategic communication, but a few disadvantages exist. Primarily, the data quality that was obtained from about 25 participants had been subjectively impacted, based on the perception of a particular researcher. This makes the data rigidity less certain. Additionally, as compared to the quantitative methodology, qualitative research requires more time. The unpredictable and semi-structured nature of the interviews is another concern. The perception of the reader and the researcher over the same subject matter can be different.

Qualitative methodology is results-oriented, rather than process. Furthermore, the qualitative research technique deals mostly with the detailed approach of categorizing and measuring the answers to the research question. If the information fails to produce the required results, the researcher may choose another direction that can successfully provide information. Such aspects provide more room for the qualitative methodology enabling the researcher to gain access to details by finding more evidence and clues concerning strategic communication without having a limited approach. However, the utilization of qualitative research falls short concerning the predictive approach. Even though this study did not involve the use of prediction, such an approach could have provided the researcher and reader with appropriate statistics, concerning the utilization of strategic communication in real-life scenarios. Furthermore, validity was obtained in this study by comparing these results with those of journals utilizing similar methods of data analysis and collection. The data in this study involved similar results insofar that having a robust strategic communication system in place, improves the likelihood of desired outcomes.

The results were shared with the respondents and their management to check that the result had been rendered correctly. The organization's members reported that the results were accurate and were especially pleased that they could improve their business using the results.

**Ethical Issues**

One of the ethical issues that troubled the research was confidentiality. Efforts were made to ensure that the research paper would include the names of employees involved, at the least. However, the efforts were in vain, as the request was denied because the employees did not want their names to be involved in any research. However, without being held back due to the issue of confidentiality, the researcher could have had achieved higher validity for the particular project. Another ethical issue was discrimination among the organizational members during the interview. The researcher did not want to discriminate between the employees while taking the interviews, as it could have resulted in having distorted responses. YouTube contained people of many races and backgrounds. It was observed that the interviews had to be taken considering all the diverse cultural nationalities and accent considerations with utter respect for diversity. If this procedure had been ignored, the nuance of the respondent’s answers would have been lost in translation and or language barriers. In the end, the researcher gave all appropriate information to the participants to ensure good trust and faithfulness. If the researcher had ignored this particular step, the professional relationship between the respondents and the researcher could have had suffered.

**Summary**

For this study, 25 respondents from YouTube were selected using a randomized procedure. After having finalized respondents, they were all provided with appropriate details and an invitation letter to join the interview process. The obtained results were divided into several sections based on the objectives that enabled other readers to have easier access to the findings with a descriptive summary. Furthermore, the results obtained matched with those of other literature proving their validity and reliability.

**References**

Adler, P. R. B., & Elmhorst, J. M. (2012). Communicating at Work: Principles and Practices for Business and the. Mcgraw Hill Higher Education.

Bailey, C. R., & Bailey, C. A. (2017). A guide to qualitative field research. Sage Publications.

Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Larson, R. (2014). Validity and reliability of the experience-sampling method. In Flow and the foundations of positive psychology (pp. 35-54). Springer, Dordrecht.

Chenail, R. J. (2011). Interviewing the investigator: Strategies for addressing instrumentation and researcher bias concerns in qualitative research. The qualitative report, 16(1), 255- 262.

Creswell, J. W. (2012). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

De Casterle, B. D., Gastmans, C., Bryon, E., & Denier, Y. (2012). QUAGOL: A guide for qualitative data analysis. International journal of nursing studies, 49(3), 360-371.

Gordon, W. (2012). Good thinking: A guide to qualitative research. Admap.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2003). Fourth generation evaluation. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publ.

Herr, K., & Anderson, G. L. (2014). The action research dissertation: A guide for students and faculty. Sage publications.

Hill, C. E., Knox, S., Thompson, B. J., Williams, E,.N., Hess, S. A.,&Ladany, N. (2005). Consensual qualitative research: An update.Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52,196- 205. 55

Hill, C. E., Thompson, B.J.,& Williams, E. N. (1997).A guide to conducting consensual qualitative research.The Counseling Psychologist, 25,517-572.

Joyner, R. L., Rouse, W. A., & Glatthorn, A. A. (2018). Writing the winning thesis or dissertation: A step-by-step guide. Corwin Press.

Katz, J. (2015). A theory of qualitative methodology: The social system of analytic fieldwork. Méthod (e) s African Review of Social Sciences Methodology, 1(1-2), 131-146.

Krueger, R. A., and Casey, M. A. (2014).Focus groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.

Lewis, S. (2015). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches. Health promotion practice, 16(4), 473-475.

Lichtman, M. (2012). Qualitative research in education: A User's Guide: A user's guide. Sage.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2014). Designing qualitative research. Sage publications.

Tuck, P. (2018, September 11). A failure to communicate. https://www.trainingjournal.com/articles/feature/failure-communicate

Pietkiewicz, I., & Smith, J. A. (2014). A practical guide to using interpretative phenomenological analysis in qualitative research psychology. Psychological Journal, 20(1), 7-14.

Richards, L., & Morse, J. M. (2012). Readme first for a user's guide to qualitative methods. Sage.

Roberts, C. M. (2010). The dissertation journey: A practical and comprehensive guide to planning, writing, and defending your dissertation. Corwin Press.

Sampson, J. P. (2012). Guide to quantitative and qualitative dissertation research.

Savin-Baden, M., & Major, C. H. (2013). Qualitative research: The essential guide to theory and practice.

Seidman, I. (2013). Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences. Teachers college press.

Schneider, C. Q., & Wagemann, C. (2012). Set-theoretic methods for the social sciences: A guide to qualitative comparative analysis. Cambridge University Press.

Silverman, D. (2011). Interpreting qualitative data: A guide to the principles of qualitative research. SAGE Publications Limited.

Silverman, D. (Ed.). (2016). Qualitative research. Sage.

Smith, J. A. (Ed.). (2015). Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods. Sage.

Taylor, S. J., Bogdan, R., & DeVault, M. (2015). Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource. John Wiley & Sons.

Turner III, D. W. (2010). Qualitative interview design: A practical guide for novice investigators. The qualitative report, 15(3), 754-760.

Zerfass, A., Verhoeven, P., Tench, R., Moreno, A., & Verčič, D. (2011). European communication monitor 2011: empirical insights into strategic communication in Europe: results of an empirical survey in 43 countries (chart version).

**Appendices**

|  |
| --- |
| **RQ1: What cues are most effective in getting viewers to engage with the ads played before YouTube videos?** |
| **RQ2: What cues are most effective in making a YouTube advertisement memorable?** |
| **RQ3: What cues are most effective in communicating the advertisement’s message?** |
| **RQ4: Are emotions more important than messages in advertisements?** |
| **RQ5: How does psychology work in making an advertisement effective?** |
| **RQ6: Does symbolic advertisement get more attention?** |
| **RQ7: Does feedback mechanism used by the organization to get information from the users increase positive perception of the advertisement?** |
| **RQ8: Does YouTube advertisement feedback impart positive impact in promoting the product?** |
| **RQ9: What is the best source for getting customers’ feedback?** |

Figure 1. Interview Guide