



International Journal of Institutional Leadership, Policy and Management  
Volume 6, Issue 4, pp. 609-620, 2024.

ISSN: 2735-9220

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# DIGITAL INFORMATION GENERATION AND DISSEMINATION SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIAN BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS

**Phoebe Tega AGBAMU**

Business Department

University of Delta, Agbor, Nigeria

[agbamu.phoebe@unidel.edu.ng](mailto:agbamu.phoebe@unidel.edu.ng)

**Stella OMOROJIE**

Business Department

University of Delta, Agbor, Nigeria

[stella.omorojie@unidel.edu.ng](mailto:stella.omorojie@unidel.edu.ng)

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## ABSTRACT

This study explored digital information generation and dissemination skills essential for effective communication in business organizations in South-South Nigeria. The primary objective was to identify the specific digital skills required for efficient information exchange within these organizations. Two research questions were formulated, along with two hypotheses, which were subsequently tested. A survey research design was adopted, with a study population of 696 and a sample size of 366 business organizations operating digital offices. Data collection was conducted using a structured questionnaire comprising 22 items. The data analysis was carried out using mean and standard deviation, while the t-test was employed as a parametric technique for hypothesis testing. Findings indicated that digital information generation and dissemination skills are crucial for effective communication in South-South Nigerian organizations. The hypothesis test results showed no significant difference in the mean ratings of management and employees regarding the digital information generation skills required. However, a significant difference was observed in their ratings of the digital information dissemination skills needed. Despite this, both management and employees recognized the necessity of these skills for effective communication. Based on the study's findings, it was concluded that digital information generation and dissemination skills are essential for communication in business organizations within the region. Consequently, it was recommended that the National Universities Commission (NUC) integrate practical topics on digital information generation and dissemination into the business education curriculum, specifically in the Office Information Technology course.

**Keywords:** Electronic, Information Generation, Information Dissemination, Skills, Communication, Business Organisations.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Agbamu, P. T., & Omorojie, S. (2024). Digital information generation and dissemination skills for effective communication in South-South Nigerian business organizations. *International Journal of Institutional Leadership, Policy and Management*, 6(4), 609-620.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Technological breakthroughs have permeated nearly every aspect of contemporary culture, and information generation and dissemination is no exception. These advancements have significantly changed and increased the means available for generating, disseminating and communicating information both within and outside business organisations that have embraced the paperless trend and become digitally transformed. Digitally transformed organisations operate paperless offices and handle information electronically from generation to dissemination. An electronic, paperless or automated workplace is analogous to an office that utilises integrated information systems and a variety of software tools to reduce paper usage and increase electronic information generation and dissemination efficiency (Dykman & Davis, 2012). The paperless trend has expanded to include the services provided by businesses to their clients. Chao (2015), for example, highlighted that large institutions are providing their clients with the convenience of mobile applications and the possibility to receive electronic invoicing and basic business information.

Information is power and communication of information within and outside the organization has become so indispensable for effective job performance and productivity by all members of staff. Information provides economic value to an organization and according to Hinojosa and Cleveland (2017); organisations are investing in methods for disseminating information among members of their organizational network in order to retain knowledge gained through information and increase their competitive advantage. With the internet's capacity for disseminating information that is growing exponentially, businesses that wish to remain relevant in the business world must prioritise information dissemination via the internet. Electronic information generation and dissemination capabilities will enable information to flow smoothly between employees, employees and management and even between the organization and remote workers.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The workforce in business organisations is characterized by graduates who are products from institutions of learning. Extant studies show that some of the skills needed for effective digital information generation and dissemination in organisations and institutions of learning are hardly been taught by business educators to business education students in universities and other higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. Umoru, (2020) asserted that the Office Technology and Management curriculum was well conceived to produce graduates with needed skills in the workforce but that fifteen years has passed since the curriculum was prepared and a lot of it has become outdated. Also some high level management staff still experience difficulty in embracing information technology. Information providers are faced with the challenge of disseminating the right information, to the right people, at the right time, using the right techniques and tools. To achieve this, the gap that exist between the training given to business education graduates and the skills they should possess for digital information generation and dissemination need to be bridged. In addition, members of management team need to get over the fear of technology and communicate information digitally.

## **Aim and objective of the Study**

The aim of this study is to establish the digital information generation and dissemination skills needed for effective communication in South-South Nigerian business organisations. The specific objectives are to:

- Determine the information generation skills needed for effective communication in South-South Nigerian business organisations.
- Establish the information dissemination skills needed for effective communication in South-South Nigerian business organisations.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions directing the study are:

- What digital information generation skills are needed for effective communication in South-South Nigerian business organisations?
- What digital information dissemination skills are needed for effective communication in South-South Nigerian business organisations?

## **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses formulated for this study were tested at 0.05 levels of significance:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of management and employees on the digital information generation skills needed for effective communication in South-South Nigerian business organisations.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** The digital information dissemination skills needed for effective communication do not differ significantly as perceived by employees and management in South-South Nigerian business organisations

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **The National Archives of Australia Records Management Model (2004)**

The theoretical framework for this study was based on National Archives of Australia Records/Information management model (2004), which was derived from the records continuum and record life circle theories, and the Skill Acquisition Theory. The National Archives of Australia Records Management Model (2004) provided guidance on managing information in both public and private organizations to ensure that an organization's system generates, capture and maintain records effectively. The standard applies to the management of records/information in all formats or media, generated or received in the conduct of an organization's activities.

## **Skill Acquisition Theory**

Another idea that is relevant to this inquiry is the notion of skill acquisition. According to Dekeyser (2007), Skill Acquisition Theory (SAT) promotes a sort of learning in which repeated exposure results in long-lasting improvements in an individual's ability to do a given job. With sufficient repetition, the task may eventually become automatic, without the need for cognitive inspection. For instance, after we learn to drive a car, driving becomes instinctive, something we do without thinking.

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION**

### **Information Management**

The current work environment has recorded a drastic change from paper-based processes to digital processes. In digital offices, information generation, storage, retrieval, dissemination, protection, retention and disposition are managed digitally. Makhura (as cited in Ibezim, (2018) emphasised that information management is concerned with the generation, receipt, processing, storage, distribution, usage and retirement of records. Alozie (2015) stated that information management is a process that controls the quality and quantity of information created in a manner that effectively serves the need of the organization. Alozie stressed further that if records containing information cannot be retrieved when they are needed, then records management skills are not being applied by records managers, in turn the organizations` ability to perform properly and give account of its actions could be negatively affected.

Agomuo (2006) described electronic information management as the application of information management principles in an electronic environment, which is normally supported by specialized technology systems. It is primarily a software based technology used by organizations to manage all their information in records electronically regardless of format over the entire life circle of records. Agomuo stated that electronic records management supports the immediate operational requirements for business information typically within a defined work area. The introduction of computers therefore assists in achieving and adding value to the conduct of business transaction (Johare, 2001). Information management is very important to every organization because information in records is one of the organizations most valuable assets. It also supports the medium to long term information management needs of a business.

### **Digital Information Generation and Dissemination**

Information generation is the initial capturing of information and encoding of same using the correct approach and infrastructure, for example, generating e-mail, and WhatsApp messages. Generated information is useful when it is disseminated to end users. Digital information dissemination is initiating a transmission of or making information available through the intranet, internet or other digital network. Information dissemination is a social process that stems from interpersonal relationships and the resources that are available for information distribution digitally.

## **Review of Related Empirical Studies**

Hinojosa and Cleveland (2017) conducted a study on organizational information dissemination within collaborative networks using digital communication tools in the United States of America. The research question was: how does tie strength influence the effect of information dissemination within a collaborative social network. The three hypotheses proposed for the study were: the stronger the tie strength as demonstrated by intimacy, the more likely the diffusion of information and the stronger the tie strength as demonstrated by structural variables, the more likely the diffusion of information, also the stronger the tie strength as demonstrated by social distance, the more likely the diffusion of information. The participants were selected from population of employees who utilize lync for disseminating information within an organization and are considered meaningful users of the system. The preliminary data indicate that stronger tie strength has a positive effect on information dissemination. They concluded that organisations can leverage this study to determine the value of their collaboration systems and whether efforts should be conducted to promote tie strength as a mechanism for promoting information dissemination among employees.

In Botswana Shonhe (2017) reviewed literature on information dissemination techniques in the 21<sup>st</sup> century era. The objective of the study was to establish various kinds of techniques used to disseminate information in the 21<sup>st</sup> century era. The three research questions that directed the study were: what are the roles and skills required for the 21<sup>st</sup> century information provider, what are the characteristics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century information seekers and what are the techniques used for disseminating information in the 21<sup>st</sup> century era? The review showed that ICTs allow simultaneous and multiple information access. Though it provides various advantages, it has also brought challenges in the information management profession as roles and skills are changing to suit the era. It is also evident from the literature that information users and seekers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are required to possess certain skills especially computer literacy skills. The reviewer concluded that information literacy and technology skills are necessary for effective/timely information provision and access.

Okolocha and Baba (2017) conducted a study to determine the skills required of secretaries to manage electronic information effectively in polytechnics in North-Central Nigeria. The study was conducted using a survey research design. The study was guided by two research questions: To what extent do secretaries possess electronic record creation skills necessary for effective e-records management in polytechnics in North-Central Nigeria; to what extent do secretaries possess electronic record retention skills necessary for effective e-records management in polytechnics in North-Central Nigeria, At the .05 threshold of significance, two null hypotheses were tested. The research questions were answered using 41 questionnaire items and their means and standard deviation. The study's findings indicated that secretaries' electronic record generation abilities were woefully inadequate for the modern era, in which electronic records management is critical. Additionally, it was discovered that secretaries possessed just a rudimentary understanding of electronic data keeping. The test of hypotheses demonstrated a statistically significant difference in the mean assessments of secretaries at state and federal polytechnics about their level of electronic information management proficiency. According to the findings, it was recommended that employers educate secretaries through in-service training in order for them to learn the skills necessary for proper computerised information management. Additionally, curriculum planners should review OTM curricula for polytechnics at all levels.

## METHODOLOGY

The study employed a survey research design to assess the perceptions of management and employees regarding the electronic information generation and dissemination skills required for effective information management in South-South Nigerian business organizations. The study population consisted of 696 individuals, comprising 174 management staff and 522 employees. The total sample size included 366 automated business organizations.

The research instrument, titled Skills Needed for Effective Generation and Dissemination of Information (SNEFEGADI), is a self-developed questionnaire designed for an ongoing study. Sections B and E of the questionnaire were structured using a 4-point Likert scale: Much Needed (4), Needed (3), Barely Needed (2), and Not Needed (1). Two subject matter experts reviewed each item to ensure relevance, content coverage, language appropriateness, and clarity of purpose. Additionally, two other experts assessed the criterion-related validity of the instrument, focusing on the scale and scoring system used in developing SNEFEGADI.

The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha technique to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. After analysis with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26, Section B, which focused on digital information generation skills, yielded a reliability coefficient of .820, while Section C, which addressed digital information dissemination skills, had a reliability coefficient of .790. The reliability coefficients for each section are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Reliability of the Instrument Score

S/No	Dimension	No of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Digital Information Generation Skills	12	.820
2	Digital Information Dissemination Skills	10	.790

A Cronbach's Alpha having a threshold or cut-off of 0.70 is acceptable and generally regarded as a sufficient or satisfactory level (Taber, 2018). Therefore, the reliability obtained in these sections showed that the instrument was reliable to be used for the study. Mean and standard deviation were utilized to answer the research questions. Any mean above 2.5 was regarded as needed, and below 2.5 was regarded as not needed. While the null hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics at .05 alpha levels of significance with the aid of SPSS. A total of 366 questionnaires were administered by the researcher with the help of 10 (Ten) research assistants and 346 were retrieved, making 94% return rate.

## RESULTS

### Analysis of Research Questions

**Research Question One:** What digital information generation skills are needed for effective communication in South-South Nigerian business organisations?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of the responses of management and employees on the digital information generation skills needed for effective communication in South-South Nigerian business organizations

S/No	Item statement	Employees		Remark	Management		Remark
		Mean	SD		Mean	SD	
	Ability to:						
1	Start computer application software to enter text	3.72	.49	Needed	3.53	.50	Needed
2	Double click and drag with mouse	3.50	.59	Needed	3.48	.50	Needed
3	Select items from a pull-down menu	3.48	.57	Needed	3.48	.57	Needed
4	Create files folders and templates	3.55	.61	Needed	3.48	.57	Needed
5	Use the horizontal and vertical scroll bars in a window	3.35	.69	Needed	3.33	.51	Needed
6	Create e-mail online where records can be stored	3.41	.61	Needed	3.43	.65	Needed
7	Use Word processing application to create database	3.36	.67	Needed	3.53	.57	Needed
8	Create record in more than one application at a time	3.17	.67	Needed	3.15	.78	Needed
9	Work with excel application for record creation	3.36	.66	Needed	3.50	.57	Needed
10	Create database on spreadsheets record keeping	3.26	.67	Needed	3.52	.50	Needed
11	Create power point graphics/slides	3.10	.69	Needed	3.30	.59	Needed
12	Create online ordering packages for products	2.79	.89	Needed	3.20	.78	Needed
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.34</b>	<b>0.65</b>	<b>Needed</b>	<b>3.41</b>	<b>0.59</b>	<b>Needed</b>

The data presented in table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of the responses of management and employees on the electronic information generation skills needed for effective communication in South-South Nigerian business organisations. Management and employees have unanimous opinion, as all the items raised to elicit information on need of electronic information generation skills for effective communication item means are above the criterion mean of 2.5. Employees` item means of items in electronic information generation skills are ability to: start computer application software in order to enter text 3.72, double click and drag with mouse 3.50, select items from a pull-down menu 3.48, create files, folders and templates 3.55, use the vertical and horizontal scroll bars in widows 3.35, create email online where records can be stored 3.41, use word processing application to create database 3.36, create record in more than one application at a time 3.17, work with excel application for information generation 3.36, create database on spreadsheet record keeping 3.26, create power point graphics/slides 3.10 and create online ordering package for products 2.79.

That of management are ability to: start computer application software in order to enter text 3.53, double click and drag with mouse 3.48, select items from a pull-down menu 3.48, create files, folders and templates 3.48, use the vertical and horizontal scroll bars in widows 3.33, create email online where records can be stored 3.43, use word processing application to create database 3.53, create record in more than one application at a time 3.15, work with excel application for record generation 3.50, create database on spreadsheet record keeping 3.52, create power point graphics/slides 3.30 and create online ordering package for products 3.20. The implication of this, is that employees need the ability to start a computer application software in order to enter needed text, and double click and drag with a mouse, select items from a pull-down menu, create files, folders and templates, use the vertical and horizontal scroll bars in widows, create email online, use word processing application to create database, create record in

more than one application at a time, work with excel application for record creation, create database on spreadsheet record keeping, create power point graphics/slides and create online ordering package for products to a high extent. The grand mean of 3.34 for management and 3.41 for employees also reveal that all the electronic information generation skills are needed for effective communication in South-South Nigerian business organisations.

**Research Question Two:** What digital information dissemination skills are needed for effective communication in South-South Nigerian business organisations?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of the responses of management and employees on the digital information dissemination skills needed for effective communication in South-South Nigerian business organisations

S/No	Item statement	Employees			Management		
		Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
	Ability to:						
13	Print and disseminate information	3.02	.78	Needed	3.05	.75	Needed
14	Share and transfer files/information over the network	3.57	.55	Needed	3.63	.52	Needed
15	Use Short Message Service (SMS) notification and multimedia content	3.40	.67	Needed	3.55	.53	Needed
16	Send fax message to clients	3.32	.73	Needed	3.45	.57	Needed
17	Use social media networks ie. WhatsApp/Imo	2.80	1.05	Needed	3.37	.66	Needed
18	Use Google SMS, twitter, Facebook and other Web applications	3.15	.78	Needed	3.37	.66	Needed
19	Use the Quick Response QR two dimensional bar Codes	3.16	.87	Needed	3.50	.68	Needed
20	Send data in binary mode	2.74	.92	Needed	2.88	.69	Needed
21	Send data in stream mode	2.48	.98	Needed	2.73	.92	Needed
22	Send data in compressed mode	2.52	.97	Needed	2.63	.88	Needed
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.02</b>	<b>0.83</b>	<b>Needed</b>	<b>3.22</b>	<b>.69</b>	<b>Needed</b>

The data presented in table 3 indicated the mean and standard deviation of the responses of management and employees on the need for electronic information dissemination skills for effective communication in South-South Nigerian business organisations. It can be deduced from the table above that all the item statements presented and scored are responded to as needed by both management and employees as their means are above 2.50, the criterion mean. Employees item mean of items in electronic records dissemination skills are ability to: print and disseminate information 3.02, share and transfer file/information over the network 3.57, use Short Message Service (SMS) notification and multimedia content 3.40, send fax messages to clients 3.32, use social media networks i.e. WhatsApp/Imo 2.80, use google SMS, twitter, Facebook and other Web applications 3.15, use the Quick Response QR two dimensional bar codes 3.16, send data in binary mode 2.74, send data in stream mode 2.84 and send data in compressed mode 2.52.

Ratings for management are ability to: print and disseminate information 3.05, share and transfer file/information over the network 3.63, use Short Message Service SMS notification and multimedia content 3.55, send fax messages to clients 3.45, use social media network i.e. WhatsApp/Imo 3.37, use google SMS, twitter, Facebook and other Web applications 3.37, use the Quick Response QR two dimensional bar codes 3.50, send data in binary mode 2.88, send data in stream mode 2.73 and send data in compressed mode 2.63. All the ratings are above the



criterion mean of 2.50. The implication is that ability to print and disseminate information, share and transfer file/information over the network, use Short Message Service (SMS) notification and multimedia content, send fax messages to clients, use social media networks i.e. WhatsApp/Imo, use google SMS, twitter, Facebook and other Web applications, use the Quick Response QR two dimensional bar codes, send data in binary mode, send data in stream mode and send data in compressed mode are needed to a high extent by employees in South-South Nigerian business organisations. The grand mean of 3.02 for employees and 3.22 for management also revealed that all the electronic records dissemination skills are needed for effective communication in South-South Nigerian business organisations.

## TEST OF HYPOTHESES

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant difference between the digital information generation skills needed for effective communication as perceived by employees and management in South-South Nigerian business organisations.

Table 4: T-test analysis of the difference on digital information generation skills needed for effective communication as perceived by employees and management South-South Nigerian business organisations

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	DF	t	p-value	Alpha Level	Decision
Employees	286	40.04	4.53	344	-1.412	.159	.05	Not Sig.
Management	60	40.95	4.63					P>0.05

The data presented in table 4, shows the t-test analysis of the difference on the electronic information generation skills as perceived by employees and management in South-South Nigerian business organisations. It can be discerned from the table that employees have a mean of 40.04 and standard deviation of 4.33 while management have a mean of 40.95 and a standard deviation of 4.63 respectively. The observed probability value (p-value) or sig at 0.05 level of significance with 344 degree of freedom is .159 which is greater than the chosen alpha level of 0.05,  $t(344) = -1.412$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . Since the p-value is greater than the chosen alpha level, the null hypothesis of “There is no significant difference on the electronic information generation skills needed for effective communication as perceived by management and employees in South-South Nigerian business organisations” is accepted.

**Hypothesis Two:** The digital information dissemination skills needed for effective communication do not differ significantly as perceived by employees and management in South-South Nigerian business organisations.

Table 5: T-test analysis of the difference on the digital information dissemination skills needed for effective communication as perceived by employees and management in South-South Nigerian business organisation

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	DF	t	p-value	Alpha level	Decision
Employees	286	30.17	5.84	344	-2.521	.012	.05	Sig
Management	60	32.17	4.07					p<0.05

The data presented in table 5 shows the t-test analysis of the difference on the electronic information dissemination skills needed for effective communication as perceived by employees and management in South-South Nigerian business organizations. It can be discerned from the table that employees have a mean of 30.17 and a standard deviation of 5.84 while management have a mean of 32.17 and a standard deviation of 4.07 respectively. The observed probability value(p-value) or sig at 0.05 level of significance with 344 degree of freedom is 0.012, which is less than the chosen alpha level,  $t(344)=-2.521$ ,  $p<0.05$ . Since the p-value is less than the chosen alpha level, the null hypothesis of “The electronic information dissemination skills needed for effective communication do not differ significantly as perceived by employees and management in South-South Nigerian business organisations” is rejected. The alternative hypothesis is upheld. Therefore, the electronic information dissemination skills needed for effective communication differ significantly as perceived by employees and management in South-South Nigerian business organisations.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **Electronic Information Generation and Dissemination skills for Effective Communication**

Data analysis revealed that electronic information generation skills are critical for employees to work in electronic offices. These skills include the ability to: start computer application software in order to enter text, double click and drag with mouse, select items from a pull-down menu, create files, folders and templates, use the vertical and horizontal scroll bars in windows, create email online where records can be stored, use word processing application to create database, create record in more than one application at a time, work with excel application for information generation, create database on spreadsheet record keeping, create power point graphics/slides, and create online ordering package for products. This study confirms the findings of Ovbiagele, Ngbonyebi, and Olaniye (2019), who examined the e-records abilities required of Office Technology Management (OTM) graduates. The authors discovered that skills such as creating e-records in spreadsheets and retrieving saved documents from internal or external hard drives are necessary for OTM graduates to work in the global electronic world of work. Okoye (2014) concurred with the findings of this study. Okoye emphasised that those who work in electronic or automated offices need to be proficient in electronic information creation.

The result of the hypothesis indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in employees' and managements' mean judgments of the electronic information generation skills needed for effective communication in South-South Nigerian organisations. This outcome is consistent with Shonhe (2017), whose review showed that information users and seekers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are required to possess certain skills especially computer literacy skills. The reviewer concluded that information literacy and technology skills are necessary for effective/timely information provision and access. Adekannbi (2016) supported this finding, emphasising the critical nature of e-records skills and abilities for workers in today's Information Communication and Technology (ICT) era. Adekannbi argued that institutions should incorporate training in e-record skills into their curricula.

## CONCLUSION

The data analysis results for research questions one and two indicated that all aspects of information generation and dissemination skills are essential for producing and sharing information in automated offices. The grand mean scores of 3.34 for employees and 3.41 for management in research question one, and 3.02 for employees and 3.22 for management in research question two highlighted this necessity. Hypothesis testing revealed no significant difference between management and employees regarding the digital information generation skills required for effective communication in South-South Nigerian business organizations. However, a significant difference was found in their ratings of the digital information dissemination skills needed. Based on these findings, the study concludes that electronic information generation and dissemination skills are crucial for effective communication in South-South Nigerian business organizations.

## Recommendations

In consonance with the result of this study, it is recommended that:

- Management should foster the training and re-training of employees to possess skills in the two clusters of digital information generation and dissemination skills identified in this study.
- The National Universities Commission (NUC) should include topics in digital information generation and dissemination skills in the business education curriculum for the course: “Office Information Technology” in business education programme.

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