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RESEARCH REPORT

An Explorative Study to Describe the Hybrid Effect of Centralised and Decentralised Communication on The Overall Productivity of Organisations: The Story of Mr Price

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I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the BA Honours in Communication Science to the Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research title

An explorative study to describe the hybrid effect of centralised and decentralised communication on the overall productivity of organisations: The story of Mr Price

1.2 Contextualisation

Many organisations believe in the need to choose between having a centralised or decentralised communication System in order to communicate effectively with ones stakeholders and publics (Ven, 1986). Mr Price has managed to overcome this issue by incorporating both communication structures, resulting in a Hybrid Communication System. The research report focuses on the Hybrid Communication System of Mr Price, by taking into account three main themes. The themes consist of the effect on the motivation of the employees within Mr Price, the effect on time management within Mr Price and the contribution to crisis management within Mr Price.

The themes can also be referred to as, the research questions of the research report, which will be used to analyse the overall outcome of the productivity of Mr Price. The research report will serve as a guideline, as to whether organisations should choose one communication system over the other or whether organisations should incorporate Mr Price's Hybrid Communication System, which will allow organisations to benefit from both communication structures (Ven, 1986). The research report aims to explore Mr Price's Hybrid Communication System and use the data collected for the benefit of the organisation and to add to the body of knowledge for other organisations and institutions.

1.3 Rationale

The researcher has chosen to conduct a research study on the effect of centralised and decentralised communication on the overall productivity of Mr Price in order to gain an in-depth understanding of both centralised and decentralised communication and compare the two structures with relevance to the organisation and to South Africa as a whole. Centralised communication has served its purpose for many years and at this present state it has served as a useful tool within organisations when dealing with crises and effective decision making (Brass, 1984). It provides organisations with a form of structure and contributes towards the productivity within organisations.

Decentralised communication has helped organisations to optimise crisis situations, during a short period of time. It has provided organisations and its employees with a sense of belonging and purpose (Dessein, 2002). Many managers still believe in choosing one structure over the other, as there is always two sides to a coin, meaning that each structure could result in a positive or negative impact for the business, which ultimately depends on how it is used, when it used and the employees that are involved (Weick,1987).

Organisations in South Africa today are heavily based on structure and relationships therefore organisations are in a constant battle of whether to use a centralised or decentralised form of structure. Due to the dilemma with which organisations are facing the hybrid communication system of Mr Price is worth researching, as it addresses the controversial issue of whether it is really improving the effectiveness of productivity within Mr Price and whether other organisations can benefit from the hybrid structure or whether businesses should solemnly focus on one communication system.

1.4 Problem statement

There is a belief in organisations that they have to choose between centralised and decentralised communication in order to communicate effectively (Ven, 1986). Both forms of organisational communication can be effective or ineffective within organisations, as there are questions of whether it seeks to improve or jeopardise the productivity within the business over time (Boland, 2000). Organisations are often expected to choose between having a centralised or decentralised communication system. However Mr Price has managed to overcome this issue by incorporating both communication structures, resulting in a hybrid communication system. Therefore this research study wants to discover how Mr Price has combined both centralised and decentralised communication. The first objective will outline how centralised and decentralised communication has an effect on the motivation of employees within Mr Price. The second objective of the research study will determine whether centralised and decentralised communication contributes to time management within Mr Price. Finally, the research study will also outline whether centralised and decentralised communication affects crisis management within Mr Price.

1.5 Research goal

The purpose of this study is to describe the effect of centralised and decentralised communication on the productivity within the Mr Price Group using a qualitative approach. The researcher will aim to gain an in- depth understanding of Mr Price's Hybrid Communication System in order to use the knowledge for the benefit of the organisation and to explore new ways of incorporating both communication structures.

1.6 Research questions

- Does centralised and decentralised communication have an effect on the motivation of employees within Mr Price?
- Does centralised and decentralised communication contribute to time management within Mr Price?
- Could centralised and decentralised communication affect crisis management within Mr Price?

1.7 Research objectives

- To describe how centralised and decentralised communication affects the motivation of employees with Mr Price.
- To describe how centralised and decentralised communication contributes to time management within Mr Price.
- To describe how centralised and decentralised communication could contribute to crisis management within Mr Price.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Research paradigm

The researcher has chosen to use an Interpretivism paradigm for the research report in order to gain an in depth understanding of how the Hybrid Communication System is proving to be beneficial for Mr Price. In terms of whether the employees are being motivated to add ones opinions and whether the Hybrid Communication System is contributing to time management and crisis management within Mr Price. The aim of Interpretivism is to gain an in-depth understanding of the individuals' perceptions of the Hybrid Communication System. This requires the researcher to spend a certain

amount of time in direct contact with those being studied (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout, 2014).

The Interpretivism paradigm relates to the research report, as the report is based on whether centralised and decentralised communication has an effect on the overall productivity within Mr Price. The research report focuses on the communication specialised team in particular and their feelings or opinions about the issue, whilst looking at the Network Theory. Due to the report taking the human perspective into account, while trying to gain an in depth understanding of ones viewpoints the research report would be characterised as an Interpretivistic in nature (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout, 2014).

The research report focuses on the Hybrid Communication System of Mr Price, which looks at the combination of centralised and decentralised communication used by the Mr Price Group. Due to the nature of the topic addressing ones viewpoints and understanding of the topic it takes on an Interpretivistic approach, which deals with understanding the human aspect of ideas and situations (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout, 2014). The researcher will be collecting data from the communication specialised team in order to obtain evidence to supplement the findings and gain a more holistic view of the topic, which ultimately speaks of Interpretivism.

2.2 Theoretical foundation

Network Theory (Peter Monge and Noshir Contractor)

The Network Theory states that patterns of communication exist within organisations that serves as a guideline to show who communicates with whom. As a result of communication, relationships form which establish the overall organisational networks (Littlejohn and Foss, 2011). Networks are social structures that are created by communication amongst individuals and groups within organisations. Networks are the lines of communication within an organisation. There are five types of networks, namely: Formal networks, Emergent networks, Personal networks, Group networks and organisational networks (Littlejohn and Foss, 2011).

Formal networks are prescribed by organisational rules and form part of the structure of an organisation. Emergent networks are informal channels that are formed by regular, daily contact amongst members (Littlejohn and Foss, 2011). Personal networks refers to individuals having a connection with others. Group networks occur

when certain members communicate more frequently with others, which ultimately results in organisational networks, whereby a variety of smaller groups are formed (Littlejohn and Foss, 2011).

The main concept of the Network Theory is surrounded by connectedness. Connectedness looks at the idea that there are relatively stable pathways of communication among individuals who communicate with one another and are linked together into groups that are in turn linked together into an overall network (Littlejohn and Foss, 2011).

The basic unit of an organisation is the link between two individuals. Links in organisations can be direct or indirect (Littlejohn and Foss, 2011). The links may overlap in functions and could pertain to authoritive or friendship links. Links can also be characterised by a number of qualities, such as size, which refers to the number of people involved. Connectedness, which refers to the degree of the ties between members and centrality, which refers to the degree in which individuals and groups are connected (Littlejohn and Foss, 2011).

Networks function in various ways within an organisation namely, networks control information flow, networks bring people with common interests together, networks build common interpretations, networks enhance social influence and networks allow for an exchange of resources (Littlejohn and Foss, 2011).

The Network Theory relates to the research topic, as it speaks of connectedness of individuals, meaning people sharing ideas and communicating about issues and activities of the organisation. The theory speaks of the control of information, which directly relates to the hierarchy of structure within an organisation and the flow of information (Littlejohn and Foss, 2011). Therefore it relates to the topic of the Hybrid Communication System of Mr Price, as it speaks of networks and structure and identifies the flow of communication, as to whom is allowed to say what to whom within the organisation. The theory discusses both aspects of centralised and decentralised communication within an organisation, as it speaks of communication links as well as formal and personal networks. The Network Theory indirectly addresses the research topic of the Hybrid Communication System of Mr Price due to the communication nature of the theory being the flow of information, the exchange of resources and the

various groups that form. These aspects form the basis of the research topic, as they relate to communication and structure.

2.3 Conceptualisation

Centralised communication- The control of an activity or organisation under a single authority (Oxford dictionary, 2016). For the purpose of this research report it refers to communication flowing in a linear motion, meaning one way communication.

Crisis- A crucial stage or turning point in the course of something (Collinsdictionary, 2016). For the purpose of this research report it refers to an event or sudden change to the organisation that affects the normal functioning of the organisation.

Decentralised communication- The transfer of decision making power to individuals or units at all levels of an organisation (Oxford dictionary, 2016). For the purpose of this research report it refers to two way communication, allowing for feedback.

Motivation- The act or process of giving someone a reason for doing something (Merriam Webster, 2016). For the purpose of this research report it refers to whether the employees have an internal drive to achieve the organisations goals.

Productivity- A measure of the efficiency of a person, machine, factory or system (Business Dictionary, 2016). For the purpose of this research report it refers to how well or fast the organisation is getting work done or meeting ones target.

2.4 Review of Previous Literature

Communication is a human activity that is overlooked in terms of its importance. There are many different ways to describe communication, as there is no one definite definition of communication (Littlejohn and Foss, 2011). Communication plays a vital role in our lives as, it allows individuals to express ones thoughts through language. Without communication organisations will cease to exist, as organisations will not be able to inform their stakeholders about the purpose of the business and therefore stakeholders will not support the organisation, which ultimately leads to the detriment of the organisation (Littlejohn and Foss, 2011). The literature review will discuss the themes of centralised and decentralised communication and its effects on organisations. It will also consist of aspects of crisis management, time management and motivation of employees within organisations. The first objective will outline how centralised and decentralised communication has an effect on the motivation of

employees within organisations. The second objective of the research study will determine whether centralised and decentralised communication contributes to time management within organisations. Finally, the research study will also outline whether centralised and decentralised communication affects crisis management within an organisation.

Centralised and decentralised communication and its effect on the motivation of employees

Motivation refers to the ability of the managers and the organisation to provide the employees with an internal drive to want to succeed and be happy within ones working environment (Merriam Webster, 2016).

Researchers in Massachusetts proposed a paper on the notions of genre and genre repertoire as tools for investigating the structure of communicative practices within a community. According to Orlikowski (2004) and Yates (2004) communication is a fundamental activity through which social interaction is accomplished and has not yet been researched as a routine organising activity. Many researchers focus on communication in the media and technology. Weick (1987) noted that interpersonal communication is the essence of an organisation because it creates structures that then affect what else gets said and done and by whom. The structures create resources for communication such as hierarchical levels, common tasks, exchangeable commodities and negotiable dependencies, therefore communication should be conceived as inherently embedded and actively involved in everyday social practices (Orlikowski, 2004).

Genres serve as an institutional template for social action and organising structure. It serves as a guideline for individuals' behaviour within the work place (Orlikowski, 2004). For example look at two different business situations, whereby the one is democratic while the other is autocratic. It is said that members will deviate from the genre either by creating new ones or modifying the old ones, while undermining top management decision making that could ultimately result in a less autocratic form of organising (Orlikowski, 2004). Therefore, according to Orlikowski (2004), centralisation is seen as a negative factor, as individuals are becoming more aware of their social surroundings and want to be a part of the decision making within a

business, as an increase in knowledge circulation amongst employees will result in an increase in one's motivation levels and the productivity of the organisation.

The researcher agrees with Orlikowski (2004) on the topic of centralisation, as being a negative factor for organisations. Due to society, culture and globalisation which has resulted in individuals wanting to be heard and striving for the need for value. Therefore organisations are made up of employees and employees should be seen as the number one asset of the organisation, as without the employees there will be no organisation. Employees have the power to make or break the organisation, simply by word of mouth or actions. Therefore if organisations move towards a decentralised structure, it will result in the employees feeling valued and an increase in the productivity of the organisation.

"Knowledge is power", in organisations according to Dessein (2002) who agrees with Orlikowski (2004), that much of the information used in decision making is dispersed in the hierarchy. Lower level managers are more informed about consumer needs, competitive pressures, specialised technologies or market opportunities than their superiors (Dessein, 2002). The press is full of stories of the shift of companies using lower level managers to make decisions in order to profit from this knowledge. The aim of this paper is to understand why an uninformed principal may grant formal decision rights to an agent who is better informed but has different objectives (Dessein, 2002). A principal often delegates authority in order to avoid noisy communication and the loss of information which stems from the different objectives. Differences in objectives between the principal and the agent are often systematic and predictable. It is documented that managers may be short term biased, status-quo biased and risk averse, while the agent is naïve, and hence the trade-off is the loss of control under delegation and a loss of information under communication (Dessein, 2002). Both Orlikowski (2004) and Dessein (2002) believe that over time employees will become the sole focus of decision making, due to a lack of control by managers. They suggest that organisations need to be moving towards a more democratic and decentralised structure in order to survive in the changing environment. However, not everyone has the same viewpoint on this issue. According to Brass (1984) centrality can be viewed positively.

Brass (1984) examined the relationships between structural positions and the influence at the individual level of analysis. The structure of the organisation was conceptualised from a social network perspective and consists of the flow of information, friendships and the influence by both supervisors and non- supervisors (Brass, 1984). In literature on power actors in central positions are viewed as potentially powerful because of their greater access to and possible control over relevant resources. Fombrun (1983) found that centrality in communications was related to attributed influence, but the effect was relatively minor when compared to formal position, rank and status. In the social network literature, centrality dates back to the small group laboratory studies of the 1950s (Bavelas, 1950, Leavitt, 1951, Guetzkow and Simon, 1955, Shaw. 1964, Davis, 1969). These studies concluded that people in central positions tended to emerge as leaders of the groups.

The researcher can argue that Brass (1984) and Fombrun (1983) make a valid point by stating that centrality can be seen as a positive factor, as it creates leaders and power relations within organisations. However, although it may result as a positive factor in this instance it could also be seen as a negative, as individuals do not appreciate being treated unfairly. The researcher agrees that an organisation has to have some form of structure and hierarchy, as it serves a valid purpose within all organisations, although it would be more beneficial for an organisation to revise its strategy and explore the idea of incorporating both centralised and decentralised communication.

Centralised and Decentralised communication and its effect on crisis management within organisations

The researcher views crisis management, as having the ability to make informed decisions in order to find solutions to problems or correct any unforeseen issues that may have occurred.

Freeman (1979) has attempted to clarify the conceptualisations of centrality as it relates to particular measures. Freeman (1979) states that there are three related measures of centrality, (1) degree or number of contacts, (2) betweenness, (3) closeness or proximity. Therefore if two people, A and C are connected only through person B. B would fall between A and C and would have control of any resources that

flow between A and C. Freeman (1979) suggested that it is particularly appropriate for measuring the control of information.

Brass (1984) suggested that centrality can be viewed positively, as it allows for structure and faster decision making when it comes to important issues, such as crises. Therefore, if the organisation is experiencing a crisis situation top management will disseminate the appropriate information to the lower level employees, as to who is allowed to say what to whom, which will ultimately save time, as all employees will be aware of what to do and how to handle crises for future unforeseen events. It is good for measuring the control of information and creating leaders, as individuals will be provided with the skills to control and manage an organisation (Brass, 1984). The point of having a form of structure is to know who is in charge and who is allowed to say what to whom.

In a decentralised hierarchy that position or state of power will be disregarded or seen as not valued as everyone will have a say. According to Tsai (2001) who agrees with Orlikowski (2004) and Dessein (2002) on knowledge having power suggests that not everyone has the ability to apply that knowledge strategically in order to improve the business.

The need for a centralised and decentralised communication system in relation to time management within organisations

The researcher refers to time management, as having the ability to make faster decisions, which will result in the overall productivity of organisations. If organisations are increasing ones time management it will in turn result in faster production.

Tsai (2001) mentioned that knowledge transfer between organisational units allows for mutual learning, interunit cooperation and the ability for innovation and performance. However, it is not always easy to access information from other units and some units may not have the capacity to absorb and apply the knowledge for their own use. Huber (1991) suggested that a learning organisation is characterised by motivational unit that are intimately connected to one another. By linking units together a network arrangement provides a flexible learning structure that replaces old hierarchical structures that lead to a hypothesis being formed.

Based on the above mentioned hypothesis which states that the centrality of an organisational unit's network position is positively related to its innovation. The centrality of a unit increases its ability to recognise and respond to new market opportunities and gain a competitive advantage (Tsai, 2001). It can enhance its profitability by applying other units' knowledge or practices to adapt its products to the market needs, to respond to emerging market trends and to deal with competitive challenges. The centrality of a business is likely to improve the businesses overall operations (Tsai, 2001). Tsai (2001) believes that centrality is directly related to innovation and the success of the business. He believes that it allows for faster decision making which contributes to keeping up with market trends, taking advantage of an opportunity that presents itself and dealing with challenges or threats that might affect the functioning of the organisation.

The researcher does not agree with Tsai (2001) on the concept of centrality being related to the innovation of the organisation, as the purpose of innovation is to create new ideas for the organisation, which should take the concerns of all employees into account. The concept relates back to the three research objectives of the motivation of employees, time management and crisis management. Therefore Tsai (2001) is correct in stating that organisations need centrality, as not everyone has the skills to apply certain aspects of knowledge to certain situations. However, if organisations placed employees as the number one focus of the organisation, this strategy could result in an increase in time management, as employees will work more productively.

The introduction of the Hybrid Communication System

Although it is good to have a centralised structure, Ven (1986) suggests that in order for an organisation to reach maximum profitability, it should have a mixture of both decentralised and centralised communication. Ven (1986) states that the process of innovation is defined as the development and implementation of new ideas by people who over time engage in transactions with others within an institutional context. Ven (1986) mentioned that general managers are faced with a various problems that functional managers do not have to face. General managers have to deal with decisions that could ultimately affect the organisations success, while functional managers deal with the day to day small decisions. Ven (1986) suggested that the lower level employees contribute towards certain strategic decisions that general

managers are faced with, while still having a centralised hierarchy whereby top managers will make the final decision (Ven, 1986). This method will result in less pressure for the general managers and it would increase the motivation of the employees. A happy employee results in an increase in work ethic and the overall productivity of the organisation. If managers can master the idea of allowing employees to feel included, this will result in employee motivation, which will result in employees working faster to complete the task and putting in a great amount of effort, as the employees now feel valued. This will impact time management, as the work will be produced in a shorter duration of time, which ultimately increases the productivity of the organisation. Ven (1986) believes that this method would be appropriate for organisations, as it would improve the time management, quality, motivation, productivity and profitability of organisations.

The Hybrid Communication System is the process of incorporating both centralised and decentralised communication structures within an organisations business practices. Mr Price has incorporated the Hybrid Communication System within the business, as the company wanted to create an environment, whereby everyone feels valued and all viewpoints are acknowledged. According to Ven (1986) in order for an organisation to be successful and survive in the changing environment the organisation needs to incorporate both centralised and decentralised communication, as the structures both have negative and positive aspects, but together the structures create something extraordinary. Mr Price is one of the organisations that make use of this Hybrid structure.

In conclusion the literature review speaks of both centralised and decentralised communication and its impact on crisis management, time management and motivation of employees. All three aspects of the literature make up the overall productivity of an organisation. According to Orlikowski (2004), Dessein (2002) and Weick (1987) who all agree that centralised communication can be seen as a negative factor for organisations, as individuals have a strong need to be heard and want to be a part of the decision making of the organisation. Orlikowski (2004) and Dessein (2002) also mentioned that knowledge is power and in order for organisations to survive in this changing environment organisations need to move towards a more decomratic structure.

However according to Brass (1984), Fombrun (1983), Freeman (1979) and Huber (1991) centralised communication is seen as a positive factor for organisations as, it helps organisations create leaders, it controls the flow of information, it helps during crisis situations and it contributes to time management within organisations. According to Tsai (2001) and Ven (1986) who suggested that in order for organisations to be successful, organisations need to adopt a communication system that incorporates both centralised and decentralised communication.The researcher hopes that the Hybrid Communication System will guide organisations in terms of its overall productivity, innovation, performance and reaching maximum profitability. Therefore the researcher can conclude that it is vital for organisations to incorporate both centralised and decentralised communication structures. The Hybrid Communication System should benefit the organisations in terms of increasing motivation levels of employees, improving time management and contributing to crisis management within organisations. The Hybrid Communication System should ultimately improve the overall productivity within organisations.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

3.1.1 *Nature of the research design*

The research report is Qualitative in nature, as it attempts to gain an in depth understanding of employees and ones feelings about centralised and decentralised communication on the overall productivity within Mr Price. Qualitative research centres primarily on feelings and opinions of individuals and ones experiences (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, Bezuidenhout, 2014). Therefore, the research report is qualitative, as the research issue, sampling and data analysis methods are all qualitative and the main focus of the research report is to understand employees' viewpoints on the effect of the Hybrid Communication System within Mr Price. In relation to the motivation of employees, the improvement of time management and the contribution to crisis management within the organisation. Which are all elements that contribute to the overall productivity within organisations.

3.1.2 *Time dimension*

The research report is cross-sectional, as it is going to be conducted over a short period of time. Cross-sectional research looks at the impact or effect of a phenomenon, as it is conducted at a given point in time (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, Bezuidenhout, 2014). For the purpose of this research report which focuses on the effect of centralised and decentralised communication on the overall productivity within Mr Price and will be conducted over a short period of time, it would be classified as cross-sectional research

3.1.3 *Line of reasoning*

The research report is deductive, as it derives from general theories to specific assumptions (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, Bezuidenhout, 2014). Deductive reasoning allows for the testing of an existing theory which is conducted before the actual research is done (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, Bezuidenhout, 2014). For the purpose of this research report it would be considered a form of deductive reasoning, as the research is based on previous literature and theories such as the Network Theory which is then used to specifically understand the perceptions of specialist on the effect of the Hybrid Communication System on the productivity within Mr Price.

3.2 Population

The researcher will be conducting a population study, which deals directly with individuals.

3.2.1 *Units of analysis*

Units of analysis are the smallest units of the research report that can be investigated in order to gather data for the research report (The Independent Institute of Education, 2014:P35). For the purpose of this research report the unit of analysis would be the communication specialist team. The communication specialists are the main focus of the research, as the semi-structured interview would be conducted on the team in order to gather the data for the research report. The data would be used to explore

the new hybrid communication structure and provide other organisations with a new focal point of business.

3.2.2 *Population parameters*

The population parameters refer to the nature, size and unique characteristics of the population of the research report (The Independent Institute of Education, 2014). For the purpose of the research report the population parameters consists of:

- Needs to be an employee of the Communication Specialist Team at Mr Price in Durban
- Employees that have been working for a minimum of three years at Mr Price

3.3 Sampling
3.3.1 *Non-probability sampling*

This research report is based on non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling occurs when it is difficult to gain access to the entire population (The Independent Institute of Education, 2014). Therefore the sample is purposefully chosen and not every unit has an equal chance of being selected (The Independent Institute of Education, 2014).The research report is purely based on non-probability sampling, as the sample population will be pre-selected according to the parameters of the research report. The research report is also based on qualitative research, therefore the goal is not to generalise the findings which makes the research sample non-probability sampling.

3.3.2 *Purposive sampling*

The method of sampling occurs when the researcher purposefully chooses the elements to include in the sample based on a set list of characteristics (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, Bezuidenhout, 2014). The researcher would use this method of sampling by purposefully selecting the specialised communication team for Mr Price in order to collect the data for the research report. Purposive sampling will work best

for the researcher, as the researcher aims to gain knowledge that is specialised and highly specific according to the research topic, which will be best articulated from the communication specialist team.

3.3.3 *Sample size*

The sample size of the research report will be 3 employees who form a part of the Communication Specialised Team at Mr Price in Durban. The target population is all employees in South Africa who fit within the population parameters. The accessible population is approximately 7 employees, therefore 3 employees should allow the researcher to achieve an estimated result for the research report.

3.4 Data collection method

The researcher has decided to conduct a semi-structured interview. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative method of inquiry, whereby the researcher combines a set of open ended questions in order to explore the various themes of the research topic (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, Bezuidenhout, 2014). The first theme that will be discussed within the research questions is the effect of the Hybrid Communication System on the motivation of employees within Mr Price. The second theme is the effect of the Hybrid Communication System on time management within Mr Price. The third and final theme of the research report is the effect of the Hybrid Communication System on crisis management within Mr Price. Although the research consists of specific themes the participants will not be limited to a set of pre-determined answers (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, Bezuidenhout, 2014).

Semi-structured interviews are used to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomena, while allowing the participants to raise any issues that the researcher may not have considered. There are however, negative and positive aspects to semi-structured interviews. The positive factors consists of the interviews providing the researcher with valuable feedback on the participants' experiences. The negative factors consists of the interviews being time consuming and requiring some level of training and practice (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, Bezuidenhout, 2014).

A Semi-structured interview was chosen for the research report, as it is a simple and easy way to collect data from the target population (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, Bezuidenhout, 2014). The researcher will interview the participants based on a list of pre-selected questions that pertain to the outcome of the research report. It is designed in a logical order of importance and consists of a short paragraph explaining the purpose and structure of the interview. It also outlines the degree of anonymity or confidentiality and consists of open and closed ended questions (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, Bezuidenhout, 2014). The researcher chose to conduct a semi-structured interview for the research report due to the nature and paradigm of the research report. The researcher also decided on a semi-structured interview, as it is an easy way of obtaining data from individuals at a limited time frame and at a low cost. A semi-structured interview is also a good research method of data collection when the research is based on individuals' perspectives and experiences. The researcher will attach a copy of the questions that will be asked during the interview as an addendum on page 31 of the research report.

3.5 Data analysis method

The researcher will use Qualitative Content Analysis in order to analyse the data collected from the specialist team of Mr Price. A content analysis is a systematic technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content based on rules of coding (Nieuwenhuis, 2016: 111). The researcher will use thematic coding in order to analyse the text according to themes by conceptualising the data. The researcher will use a process of data reduction by identifying themes and searching for specific concepts related to the research report (Nieuwenhuis, 2016: 111). These concepts consist of centralised communication, decentralised communication, structure, crisis and motivation. Therefore by looking for elements of these concepts the researcher will be able to characterise the data into themes, which will make it easier to analyse the data and obtain specific results. This method of analysis will provide the researcher with valid evidence that pertain to the topic, which can be used to either prove or disprove that the hybrid communication system is feasible and should or should not be used by other organisations.

4 FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

The information collected for this research report was provided by three individuals from the Mrp Group. The researcher decided to conduct semi-structured interviews on three participants from different departments within the organisation. The three participants were, Tracy, Megan and Lucinda. Tracy is a 28 year old female from the Mrp Sports division. Megan is a 35 year old female from the HR Group division and Lucinda is a 36 year old female from the Communication Wellness department. All three participants form a part of the Communication Specialist Team. The Participants names and ages were changed in order to protect their identity and ensure confidentiality.

Theme 1: Urgency

The researcher had noticed that all three participants had spoken about urgency, when questioned about time management. Urgency relates to the time frame of messages being distributed. Therefore it refers to the quickness of messages being disseminated onto the employees in order for them to work effectively. Time management was one of the research objectives that was questioned in order to help the researcher answer the overall research question, which was whether the Hybrid Communication System affected the overall productivity of the Mrp Group.

> "So if there is an urgent message that needs to go out, one hundred percent
>
> that Hybrid model would be important" (Megan, 2017).

Here Megan speaks of urgency, as a means of receiving information on time in order to know exactly what to do and how to go about conducting ones task effectively. She reiterated that it depends on what the communication is that needs to be disseminated. Therefore referring to the importance of the message, which will in turn effect the urgency of the message. This relates back to Tsai (2001) notion that it allows for faster decision making, which contributes to keeping up with the market trends, taking advantage of opportunities and dealing with challenges. Tsai's (2001) notion can be linked back to the Hybrid Communication System in that it allows for communication to be hastily disseminated, which relates back to the concept of time management.

"Yeah I guess so, you can use it to get out a message really quickly" (Lucinda, 2017).

Here Lucinda refers to the term 'quickly', which is another word for urgent. Therefore she mentioned that the Hybrid Communication System would be effective in delivering messages to the Mrp Group within a short time frame. However Megan (2017) did mention a disadvantage to the theme urgency by stating:

"The negative of that…people do not communicate something, because they Think another person is attending to it. Or things get lost in transaction" (Megan, 2017).

By making that statement Megan speaks of urgency in a negative light, in the sense that if employees are all contributing towards the communication within the organisation, information could get distorted and employees might not disseminate information, because they think others are attending to it. Therefore the Hybrid Communication System can be seen as a disadvantage when it comes to the clarity and quality of the messages being disseminated, as the message may be distorted by the time it reaches all employees.

Theme 2: Value

The theme value was derived from the concept of motivation, which was one of the main research questions asked by the researcher. Value was a concept that came up from the participants, in which the researcher noted as important in order to help answer the overall research question. In this sense value is referred to the feeling or lack of importance that employees within the organisation are faced with. Meaning that employees want to be heard and feel valued or a sense of belonging within a business. Employees need a sense of purpose or drive in order to work productively.

"To some degree its good…people get a chance to have their say …even if it's just a little suggestion or opinion" (Tracy, 2017).

"On the other side it can be demotivating…if decisions are always made you feel like you aren't valued" (Tracy, 2017).

"Employees need to be constantly communicated too, so motivation definitely links to communication" (Lucinda, 2017).

"What we have found is that employees want to receive communication from their direct managers about how they doing, and where they are going in their career" (Lucinda, 2017).

Here Tracy and Lucinda make reference to motivation in terms of employees feeling valued and heard. It doesn't matter whether their opinions are incorporated into the decision making of the organisation. However it is highly important that the employees do have a platform to voice their opinion. It is also important for managers to acknowledge good performance with either incentives or appraisals, as this will improve the motivation levels of employees. This can relate back to the literature, whereby Orlikowski (2004) and Dessein (2002) mentioned that employees should be the main focus of the organisation, as they have the power to make or break the organisation. Therefore the employees' well-being should be first priority. The researcher can relate this back to the Hybrid Communication System in that if employees are provided with a platform to voice ones opinions, the employees will feel valued and will be motivated to produce optimum performance, which will ultimately increase productivity within the organisation.

Theme 3: Accountability

Accountability was a theme that derived from the concept of a crisis. It was identified by the researcher when participants were asked about the concept of the Hybrid Communication System contributing to crisis management. Accountability refers to having a responsibility towards something, such as being accountable for delivering a message across or being accountable for handling a certain situation or task at hand.

"You need to make sure you have somebody who is accountable for a message, if there is no accountability you could have a problem" (Megan, 2017).

Here Megan speaks of accountability with reference to a crisis situation, meaning that during a crisis there has to be someone or a team in place to address the issue as quickly as possible. With that being said, centralised communication will work best during a crisis situation, whereby the information comes directly from top management and everybody knows exactly what to do and say, which in turn protects the organisations reputation. This relates directly to Brass (1984) and Fombrun (1983) notion that centrality can be viewed positively, as it allows for structure and faster decision making when it comes to important issues, such as a crisis. The researcher can relate this back to the Hybrid Communication System in that it will provide individuals with an opportunity to solve crisis situations that may occur within the business. This is due to all individuals receiving a set of guidelines as to who is accountable for addressing any issues and how to go about rectifying the problems.

Theme 4: Hybrid

The theme Hybrid was one of the main themes throughout the research report in that the research was based on the Hybrid Communication System, which involved both centralised and decentralised communication and its effect on the overall productivity of the Mrp Group. Therefore the term Hybrid was brought up throughout the interviews, in that each research question addressed the concept of introducing a Hybrid Communication System and each participant made reference to the Hybrid Communication System. To reiterate the concept of Hybrid, the researcher is making reference to an organisation that incorporates both centralised and decentralised communication within their business practices. Meaning that the organisation has to make use of one way top down communication and communication that involves all employees input before making any decisions.

"When you are a part of those discussions you have a clearer idea of what's needed" (Tracy, 2017).

"They both have pros and cons, I think both are needed" (Tracy, 2017).

"So yes it can be very sylode…you don't have a standardised communication… people may not feel like they are being communicated too" (Megan, 2017).

"I definitely think there is a need especially for a group of our size with so many personalities… it's up to the divisions to change it to suit their division" (Megan, 2017). "It is becoming a problem by having this decentralised social media platform on Facebook, we are losing our presence, because we are not getting to that one million people that they are engaging with" (Megan, 2017).

"I definitely think there needs to be both, I think the model of always relying on top down and the very hierarchical approach to organisations is quite outdated" (Lucinda, 2017).

Here Tracy, Megan and Lucinda speak of the Hybrid Model as having both pros and cons to it. On the positive side it covers all aspects of communication in the sense that employees are receiving top down communication and are provided with the opportunity to voice ones opinions. On the negative side it allows for the distortion of communication, as the information may get lost in transaction. According to Ven (1986) it is necessary for organisations to incorporate both centralised and decentralised communication within ones practices, as it ensures maximum profitability by improving time management, quality, motivation and productivity within an organisation. Therefore the Hybrid Communication System may have disadvantages to it, however there is evidence of the need to incorporate both communication structures within an organisation in order to cover all aspects of employees and business needs.

4.1 Trustworthiness

The research report was based on qualitative research which was used to gain an in-depth understanding of individuals' views on whether centralised communication had a positive or negative effect on the productivity of an organisation. The purpose of the research report was not to generalise the findings, therefore one cannot use the terms validity and reliability as these terms are used for quantitative research. The overarching term used for qualitative research is trustworthiness, which can be further divided into four categories (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014).

Credibility refers to the accuracy with which the researcher interpreted the data from the participants (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). The researcher increased the researchers' credibility by making use of triangulation (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014).

Transferability refers to the ability of the findings to be applied in a similar situation and deliver similar results (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). The researcher ensured transferability by allowing researchers from different departments to conduct the same research methods and compare the findings with the original findings to see if the findings correlate or if there were any gaps within the results.

Dependability refers to the quality of the process of integration that takes place between the data collection method, data analysis and the theory generated from the data (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). The researcher ensured dependability by ensuring that the data collected from the participants' links to the theory found on the topic. This ensured that there was a process of integration throughout the research report in terms of the accuracy, non-bias and quality of the findings. Therefore the researcher ensured that the results were credible and the researcher could depend on the results.

Confirmability refers to how well the data collected supports the findings and interpretation of the researcher (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). The researcher ensured confirmability by describing the research process in great detail in order to assist others in analysing, evaluating and measuring the findings and research design. The researcher hopes that others should come up with similar conclusions to the researcher (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014).

5 CONCLUSION

Objective 1: Motivation of employees

The objective motivation of employees derived from the overall research question, which was the Hybrid effect of centralised and decentralised communication on the overall productivity of the Mrp Group. The researcher looked at motivation in terms of employees feeling valued and having an internal drive to work harder at ones tasks in order to reach an ultimate goal. The researcher focused on whether the employees of the Mrp Group felt included within the decision making of the organisation and whether the company had provided them with the necessary skills, opportunities and incentives to feel motivated.

The findings addressed the concept of motivation, by stating that the employees are included within the decision making of the organisation. The Mrp Group makes use of regular meetings and culture surveys to ensure that the employees are being heard and feel a sense of belonging. However with that being said there is always room for improvement. Therefore the researcher would like to recommend additional training to improve employees' skills, so that it will enhance their capability for better opportunities for growth within the organisation. This will in turn motivate the employees to work harder in order to succeed within the organisation.

Objective 2: Contribution to time management

The objective contribution to time management relates directly to the overall research question in that time effects the productivity levels within an organisation. The researcher designed questions based on whether the Hybrid Communication System had affected the time management within the Mrp Group. Therefore the researcher looked at time management in terms of delivering a message across to the necessary people on time in order for them to improve efficiency within the organisation.

The researcher was able to answer the objective of time management, as the findings addressed this concept with regards to the urgency of the messages being disseminated. Therefore the Hybrid Communication System had a positive and negative effect on time management in that it allowed for fast flowing information, which meant that everyone was informed about the changes within the organisation. However on the negative side it allowed room for distortion of information, as

information could get lost in transaction. The researcher would like to recommend new methods of improving distortion of messages by implementing internal systems that are able to track and monitor communication. However these methods will require the researcher to conduct further research on this topic.

Objective 3: Contribution to crisis management

The objective contribution to crisis management derived from the overall research question in that the researcher identified crisis management as a focal point of productivity within an organisation. The researcher looked at crisis management in terms of whether the organisation had a team in place in order to address any crisis issues that may have occurred. Crisis management links back to communication in the sense that employees need to be trained on what to say and what not to say within a crisis situation and who is allowed to communicate to whom.

The researcher found that the Mrp Group did have a crisis management team in place in order to handle crisis situations that may occur. There are individuals who are accountable for certain tasks within a crisis situation. Centralised communication was seen to be the better option during a crisis, as it saves time on deciding what to say and spending more time on restoring the organisations reputation. The results of the study did prove that organisations should incorporate both centralised and decentralised communication within their business practices, even though one form of communication will work best in certain situations. With that being said the researcher would like to recommend that organisations incorporate flyers or regular crisis policies that will inform employees about what to do within a crisis situation, as the researcher found that the employees lacked knowledge on this topic.

5.1 Anticipated contribution

The research conducted from the research report will serve as a guideline for organisations in terms of how to make use of the Hybrid Communication System within ones business operations. Furthermore the research will help close the gap between the controversial topic of whether organisations should choose one communication system over the other (Ven, 1986). The research will contribute to the body of knowledge based on the motivation of employees, an increase in time management and the contribution to crisis management. The Hybrid Communication System will

allow other organisations to explore the benefit of having a more democratic organisation, whereby everyone has a say in the decision making of the organisation (Dessein, 2002). The research will contribute to the innovation of new ideas, which will result in the overall sustainability of organisations. Therefore the Hybrid Communication System will contribute to the success and survival of organisations within the constant changing environment (Orlikowski, 2004).

5.2 Ethical considerations

The researcher applied for ethical clearance, as the researcher dealt with the communication specialist team of Mr Price Group. Ethics refer to a moral or professional code of conduct that sets a standard for individuals' attitudes and behaviour (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014: 264). Therefore, the researcher provided the specialist team with a consent form before conducting any research. The researcher also received a gatekeeper's letter from Mr Price Group in order to gain permission to conduct research on the organisation. The researcher has attached a list of questions that were asked during the semi-structured interviews with the specialist team in order to obtain data for the purpose of the research report. The researcher has also attached a consent form and the gatekeeper's letter from the Mr Price Group. There are ethical considerations that apply to the participants as well as to the researcher, which were addressed as follows:

5.2.1 Ethical considerations relating to the participants & the researcher

- Informed consent- participants were informed about the research report and were provided with a consent form before taking part in the interview (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014).

- Confidentiality- the researcher ensured that the participants' responses were kept confidential, as the researcher would have seen or could track the responses back to the participants.

- Deception- the researcher avoided deception by only using the participants' responses for the purpose of the research report (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014).

- Distortion- the researcher did not distort any results from the findings and remained ethical throughout the research report.
- Unbiased- the researcher remained unbiased throughout the research report by remaining objective. However with that being said the researcher is sometimes unaware of the researchers own biases.
- Inappropriate research methods- the researcher only made use of appropriate research methods that related directly to the research report.

5.3 Limitations of the research proposal

Limitations refer to any problems that may arise when conducting the research report (du Plooy-Cilliers, et al, 2014). For the purpose of the research report the researcher was faced with limitations such as:

- Lack of information- The three employees interviewed were able to provide the researcher with the relevant information on the topic, however they lacked knowledge in certain areas.
- Finance- the researcher was not provided finance to conduct research at a larger scale.
- Time frame- the researcher did not have enough time to conduct a full on in-depth investigation, that may have provided the researcher with more insights on the research topic.
- Absence of employees- The researcher found it difficult to locate employees that were able to provide answers to the research questions.
- Lack of control over variables- the researcher was not be able to control other variables that may have affected the employees' responses, such as the employees' mood at the time or the organisations influence over the employees.

ANNEXURE A

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

The semi-structured interview will consists of 11 questions that will be used in order to determine the effect of:

- **Centralised communication** (top down or one way flow of communication)
- and **Decentralised communication** (all divisions adding their input in the decision making of the organisation)
- On the overall **Productivity** (work progress) of organisations.
- This concept will be referred to as the **Hybrid Communication System**.
- It will also consist of questions about **Crisis** (anything that could affect the functioning of the organisation.
- It will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.
- The data collected from the participants responses will remain confidential and will be used for research purposes only.

Below is a list of the questions that will be asked by the researcher during the interview process:

All questions must be answered honestly and to the best of your ability.

1. Have you been working at the organisation for a minimum of 3 years?

2. Does the organisation practice centralised communication?

3. Does the organisation practice decentralised communication?

4. If you answered yes to question 3 and 4, Please elaborate on how the organisation practices these communication systems?

5. How does the hybrid communication system affect the validity of the messages being distributed?

6. Does the hybrid communication system save time during decision making?

7. Please elaborate on your answer in question 7

8. How does the hybrid communication system effect the motivation of employees?

9. Does the hybrid communication system affect the quality of the work being produced?

10. Does the hybrid communication system contribute towards conflict within the organisation?

11. How does the hybrid communication system contribute to crisis management?

ANNEXURE C

Consent form for participants

I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Tara Houston about the hybrid effect of centralised and decentralised communication on the overall productivity of Mr Price.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. I agree to be interviewed for this research.

2. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.

3. My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.

4. I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.

5. I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

_____   _____

Signature   Date

Consent form for audio-recording/ video recording

I, _____, agree to allow Tara Houston to audio record my interviews as part of the research about the hybrid effect of centralised and decentralised communication on the overall productivity of Mr Price.

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This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
2. The recordings will be stored in a password protected file on the researcher's computer.
3. Only the researcher and the researcher's supervisor will have access to these recordings.

_____   _____

Signature   Date

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Abstract of research report

The research report is based on the Hybrid effect of centralised and decentralised communication within organisations, with specific reference to the Mr Price Group. The Hybrid Communication System makes reference to the ability for organisations to incorporate both centralised and decentralised communication structures within ones business environment. Centralised communication refers to one way top down communication, while decentralised communication refers to all employees having an equal say with regards to the decision making of the organisation. Therefore the purpose of the study was to provide organisations with an understanding of the Hybrid Communication System in order to help improve the organisations overall productivity. The researcher decided to conduct the study on the Hybrid Communication System, as the researcher identified that organisations had the perception of having to choose one communication system over the other. The researcher proceeded to conduct research on the Mr Price Group, who made use of the Hybrid Communication System, by making use of semi-structured interviews in order to gather data for the research report. The researcher interviewed three individuals from the Communication Specialist Team at Mr Price. The findings identified advantages and disadvantages of the Hybrid Communication System. The researcher recommended additional training, as the employees lacked knowledge about the topic.