Information Management and Business Review (ISSN 2220-3796)
Vol. 15, No. 3, pp. 314-324, September 2023

Exploring Communication Channel Selection for Enhanced Audit Quality: Internship Student's Perspective

Siti Nurulhuda Mamat[1], Khair Syakira Bustamam[1*], Siti Azrina Adanan[1], Amilia Saidin[1], A'ieshah Abdullah Sani[1] & Khairunnisa Abd Samad[2]
[1]Faculty of Accountancy, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Melaka, Malaysia
[2]Faculty of Business Management and Administration, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Melaka, Malaysia
*ksyakira069@uitm.edu.my

Abstract: Effective communication is essential for maintaining audit quality and providing assurance over financial information. This study investigates auditors' communication channel preferences and their impact on audit quality in the context of digitalization and changing communication norms. The research aims to address two primary questions: the communication channels auditors prefer and use for audit-client communication, and how the choice of communication channels influences audit quality. The audit quality is measured through audit effort and auditor performance using a descriptive and quantitative research design. The preferred and actual communication channels are categorized as traditional (face-to-face) and technology-mediated (e-mail, instant messaging, phone calls). The findings reveal that while auditors prefer in-person meetings and texting platforms, they mostly use technology-mediated communication during audits, possibly due to factors like the COVID-19 pandemic. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of auditors' communication choices and their impacts on audit quality. It suggests that the complex relationship between communication channels and audit quality needs further exploration, potentially through larger sample sizes and mixed-method approaches. The insights gained from this research can benefit audit practitioners, regulators, and educators in enhancing audit communication practices and quality.

Keywords: *Communication, Audit Quality, Internship, Digitalization, Audit.*

1. Introduction

The importance of quality is paramount in conducting audits of financial statements, as it ensures the provision of reliable and trustworthy assurance on the financial facts disclosed by the audit client. The audit quality is determined by the effectiveness of the audit team in detecting substantial misstatements in the financial statement and reporting them (De Angelo, 1981, Wooten, 2003). The informative nature of audit findings holds significant implications, as the quality of the audit directly influences a multitude of decisions. To enhance the quality of audits, regulatory and professional entities have established standards, best practices, and frameworks to provide support for audit quality. Audit firms are likewise dedicated to the ongoing enhancement of audit quality.

Despite being in the best interests of many, audits are not always of high quality. Public company audits worldwide are subject to annual inspection by the Public Company Audit Oversight Board (PCAOB) to evaluate quality. The inspections indicated the presence of persistent audit problems that have occurred repeatedly for many years. The PCAOB report in 2022 shows about 40% of several audits inspected with significant deficiencies, a surge from the findings observed in 2021 (34%) and 2020 (29%).

In Malaysia, the Audit Oversight Board (AOB) inspection report 2022 also showed an increase in the number of engagements inspected that require significant improvements, 36%, up from 24% in 2021. The general cause of the deficiencies resulted from incomplete audit procedures, insufficient audit evidence obtained or potentially owing to auditors not putting up enough effort during the audit, which ultimately compromised the audit quality. There have not been enough studies so far to investigate reasons for audit firms to compromise audit quality although there has been a great discussion about poor audit quality being to blame for audit failures. Concern over the quality of auditing continues to grow with the rapid spread of digital transformation along with the global crisis which will increase the need for quality digital auditing. The shift to digital auditing increased the risk of miscommunication (Satya & Shauki, 2022).

In the era of digitalization, large businesses are increasingly using digital technologies to enhance business operations, hence facilitating the feasibility of digital auditing. The traditional channels of face-to-face (f2f) communication during the audit are becoming less common. It is more prevalent to see young auditors' preference for digital written communication, namely e-mail over f2f communication (Bennet & Hatfield, 2018). Digital audit communication has witnessed the widespread adoption of many technological channels such as WhatsApp, teleconference, and video calls as common audit communication. Input provided by the performer of audits on their channel preferences in audit communication has been limited.

Despite the importance of communication within an auditing context, relatively little about how staff auditors choose a channel of communication and how this choice affects their audit quality. As such, this study explores auditors' choice of communication channel and how staff auditors perceived the change to a more digitalized communication channel in audit fieldwork. This study is to accomplish the following objectives, firstly to identify the auditors' preference and most used choice of communication channels when communicating with client management during the audit process and secondly to examine the relationship between the auditors' choice of communication channels and audit quality. The rest of the paper discusses the following: Section 2 explores the literature reviews; Section 3 discusses the sample data and research method; Section 4 elaborates on the discussion of the results; and the last section concludes the paper.

2. Literature Review

Effective Communication on Audit Quality: Effective communication plays a crucial role in the auditing procedure as it enables the exchange of information, resolution of uncertainties, and cultivation of a trusting relationship between auditors and clients. Effective communication is pivotal in bolstering the auditor's capacity to discern risks, assess evidence, and render well-informed judgments, culminating in enhanced audit quality.

The client-auditor relationship is significantly impacted by effective communication, leading to favorable outcomes such as the acquisition of essential information and enhanced cooperation. Consistent and customized communication, by the client's preferences, can cultivate trust and transparency, resulting in enhanced audit quality. In a study conducted by Setyaningrum & Kuntadi, (2019) communication has a positive effect on the efficacy of the internal audit. Communication between the auditor and the client is crucial, particularly regarding the deliverance of audit reports that have been prepared reliably and are accompanied by relevant and timely evidence. Communication is effective when the client comprehends what the auditors say (Lim et al., 2016). This is in line with the study conducted.

Auditing activities are seen to benefit greatly from the strong communication skills of the auditors. Communicating in collecting audit evidence has an association with the overall client satisfaction in responding to the audit query leading to a higher audit quality. A high-quality audit process results in increased audit effort, prompt reporting, fewer legal complaints, efficient audit work and ultimately greater audit fees (Iskandar, et al., 2010). Similarly, Chouhan et al. (2021) collected data from both auditors and auditees and the study also proved that effective communication is one of the quality attributes influencing audit quality. According to the media richness theory, which Daft and Lengel developed in 1984, various communication channels have varying degrees of effect on the quality of communication, which in turn affects the quality of work (Ishii et al., 2019).

Choice of Communication: The choice of communication channels impacts the exchange of information, understanding of complex issues, and the overall relationship between auditors and clients. Client size, legal regulation, the nature of the audit engagement, the complexity of issues, geographical distance, and the urgency of matters posed challenges in coordination and communication in auditing (Downey & Bedard 2019), especially in global audit. As such all contribute to the choice of communication method. In the study conducted by Mamat et al. (2022), within the established framework from a business perspective, it is indisputable that the efficacy of corporate information flow significantly impacts the selection of the communication channel. The factors that contribute to the selection of a communication channel include the quality, utility, and accessibility of the information being conveyed corporate networking is an additional determinant that affects the corporate communication channel. It pertains to the establishment of trust

among users and the overall quality of the information being transmitted. Moreover, the level of user literacy on the digital platform also plays a significant role in determining the preferred communication medium.

Numerous researches have been conducted to examine the communication channel choice of auditors in the context of auditor-client contact. According to Tkalac et al. (2020), there exists a significant statistical relationship between the choice of communication channel and the level of communication satisfaction. The process of channel selection involves deliberate and strategic decision-making over the most suitable and anticipated means of communication (Zack, 1993). Multiple research investigations have consistently demonstrated that face-to-face communication surpasses other forms of communication due to its inherent capacity for conveying a greater breadth and depth of information.

According to Short, Williams, and Christie (1976, cited in Saiewitz and Kida, 2018), effective communication occurs when the recipient senses the other's presence. Higher presence increases interaction awareness. Many oral and nonverbal clues are used in direct communication. Bad communication codes may present the organization as engaging with a less trustworthy person. Face-to-face communication increases understanding due to the volume of information shared. People are more responsive and inclined to disclose more information if they understand (Pollman, et al., 2021). Being understood improved relationship satisfaction and sustainability.

There are other cases where continual communication tactics can alleviate issues, depending on the degree of intricacy involved. Increased participation of the component auditor in various meetings, including the engagement kick-off, instruction discussions, and fraud brainstorming, serves to alleviate the difficulties that arise from complicated global systems and language/cultural boundaries (Downey & Bedard, 2019).

Saiewitz and Kida (2018), on the other hand, discovered mixed results. In light of the absence of urgent demands and the client's satisfaction with the lack of interruptions from auditors, it is anticipated that the response to the email query will exhibit a bias toward supplying information that is more advantageous to the organization. In contemporary audit communication, there has been a notable increase in the utilization of digital platforms such as WhatsApp, teleconference, and video calls. However, auditors are required to exercise their professional skepticism in giving professional judgment (Satya & Shauki, 2022). Video recording, such as Zoom meetings, is frequently employed to elicit feedback from clients (Durkin, Jollineau, & Lyon, 2020) because it heightens the sense of presence and information richness. However, the use of multimedia elements in video communication might potentially lead to distraction, since individuals tasked with auditing must allocate their attention to both the substantive material and the visual enhancements present in the video. This situation may lead auditors to readily accept the explanations provided by customers, hence reducing the probability of engaging in subsequent interactions with clients. In contrast to electronic mail, auditors are afforded a greater amount of time to analyze and assimilate the material provided by clients, hence minimizing potential sources of interruption. Videos might potentially hinder the performance of junior audit employees, hence limiting their effectiveness as auditors.

Traditional vs. Technological Communication Channels: Advancements in technology have expanded the range of communication options available to auditors and clients. Video conferencing, email, instant messaging, and collaboration tools offer efficient ways to bridge geographical gaps and facilitate real-time communication. As such virtual communication can enhance the timeliness of information sharing and decision-making.

According to Srikanth and Puranam (2011), the use of technological advancements to support distant cooperation and the utilization of electronic tools for sharing work in progress might enhance the mutual predictability of actions, hence mitigating communication difficulties. The increased accessibility and dependence on electronic tools can be advantageous in situations when there is a high level of complexity arising from linguistic or cultural limitations. Compare and contrast traditional communication channels (e.g., face-to-face meetings, phone calls) with technological channels (e.g., email, video conferencing, instant messaging). Explore how technological advancements have expanded the options available for auditors to communicate with clients (Downey & Bedard, 2019).

There are additional new indications that digital communication is preferred. Texting would be a suitable alternative to face-to-face contact during times when it is not possible. Written communication may be more effective than speaking face-to-face or over the phone. A survey of auditors revealed that under certain circumstances, auditors would prefer email over face-to-face communication (Carlisle & Hamilton, 2021). The decision depends on the situation's urgency and the form of evidence to be gathered. Due to the age and experience difference, auditors feel more at ease communicating with senior client personnel via email because they can verify more evidence (Bennett & Hatch, 2018) and communication via Email does not necessitate instantaneous responses (Drossman et al., 2020). Rahim et al. (2020) demonstrate that the mode of communication employed during the auditing process has a significant impact on the collection of audit evidence by both audit staff and auditors. Effective communication serves as a guiding mechanism for audit staff and auditors, enabling them to obtain the necessary audit evidence required to fulfill their respective responsibilities.

The selection of a communication channel has a substantial impact on the quality of audits as it influences the sharing of information, comprehension of intricate subjects, and the relationships between clients and auditors. When determining the most suitable communication channels, it is important to take into account several elements like the preferences of clients, the specific characteristics of the audit engagement, the level of technological preparedness, cultural issues, and regulatory obligations. By using a variety of communication strategies and cultivating channels for receiving feedback, it is possible to achieve heightened levels of audit quality and ultimately better overall results.

3. Methodology

Population and Sample under Study: This study used a descriptive and quantitative method to examine the association between independent and dependent variables. The study's dependent variable in this study was represented by audit quality, which was measured through audit effort and auditor performance. The independent variables, on the other hand, were characterized by various choices of communication channels, grouped by traditional channels (in-person face-to-face meetings) and technology-mediated communication (e-mail correspondence, instant messaging, and telephone calls).

The population in this study were 65 undergraduate accounting practical students of UiTM Cawangan Melaka who are doing internship training in various audit firms in Malaysia as proxies for staff auditors. These students had participated in audit engagement with at least 6 months of audit experience. Staff auditors in practice frequently interact both formally and informally with audit clients and more frequently perform audit procedures and make inquiries (Hawkins, 2023). Therefore, students are appropriate respondent groups to study the effects of the auditors' choice of communication channels on audit quality. The total sample respondents were 36 students. Isaac and Michael (1995, as cited in Hill, 1998) justified that a sample size of 10-30 is sufficient for an exploratory study.

Instrument of the Study: The instrument used for gathering data is a survey method and this study used an online questionnaire for that purpose. Bougie and Sekaran (2019) highlighted the use of a questionnaire as a written set of questions that record respondents' answers, and it is considered the most effective and efficient approach to collecting data. The reason for choosing the questionnaire method is to maintain the confidentiality of the information and protect the identity of respondents.

Measurement of Variables: The formulation of the questions used to measure the variables was derived from the arguments from previous literature. The measurement of variables in this questionnaire was assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 'Not Important–1 to Very Important–5. The questionnaire comprised three sections, each corresponding to the measurement for each variable. The first section (Section 1) of the survey instrument pertained to the demographic information. The respondents were required to provide some basic information such as gender, the type of audit firms they are currently doing their internship, and the state which would be useful when performing a descriptive analysis.

The second section (Section 2) encompassed the communication channel choice such as the level of audit client that the auditor frequently communicates with and the frequency of the communication. Respondents

were also asked about the preferred and actual channels (face-to-face, e-mail, instant messaging, video conferencing, phone calls, and others) used by them during the audit process.

Section 3 represented the measurement of audit quality. Respondents were first asked in open questions to describe what they know about audit quality to assess their basic understanding. Then, they were asked regarding their effort and performance from the use of their choice of communication channel. The items for the audit quality all started with "Which channel you used contributes the most in..." The audit quality is measured from 6 statements: Audit effort (3 statements) and auditor's performance (3 statements). The pertinent questions regarding channel choice and audit quality were developed based on prior studies and changed to fit the needs of this study.

Pilot Test: A pilot test was conducted one week before the questionnaires were sent out to selected respondents. The questionnaire items were reviewed by two audit lecturers to evaluate the reliability of the contents. Both lecturers were selected to participate in the pilot test due to their expertise in the audit process. They have extensive knowledge, skills, and experience in teaching auditing to undergraduate students as well as being involved in several studies related to audits and surveys. The purpose of the pilot test was to ensure the clarity of the questionnaire to respondents and to detect other possible weaknesses in the questionnaire. Some feedback received from the pilot study helped to improve the questionnaire, especially in Sections 2 and 3, where they suggested suitably worded statements for better understanding, from an auditor's perspective.

4. Findings

For this study, the undergraduate accounting practical students of UiTM Cawangan Melaka represented the unit of analysis. All respondents are aged between 21-30 years old, have a bachelor's degree as their highest qualification and have less than one year of audit experience.

Demographic Information: This section presents the demographic data of respondents comprising questions on gender, type of audit firms and the state where they are doing the internship training. Table 1 shows the detailed results of the demographic profile based on section 1 of the survey. The results are as follows:

Table 1: Demographic File on Gender, Types of Audit Firms and Its State

Demographic Profile	Freq.	Percent
1. Gender		
Male	12	33.33
Female	24	66.67
2. State		
Kuala Lumpur	12	33.33
Selangor	8	22.22
Others	16	44.44
3. Type of Audit Firm		
Big Four	1	2.78
Non-Big Four	35	97.22
Total	36	100.00

Based on gender, it shows that out of 36 respondents, 24 respondents or 66.67 percent were female and 12 respondents or 33.33 percent were male. This indicates that both genders participated in the study. About 20 respondents are doing internships in Kuala Lumpur and the Selangor area while others working in firms located in other states such as Melaka and Negeri Sembilan. This implied that the samples are not limited by geography and thus versatility offered in the survey as the regional norms of a location can influence communication preferences. Of the 36 respondents, 35 or 97.22 percent are doing internships at non-Big Four firms while only one respondent representing 2.78 percent working at a Big Four firm.

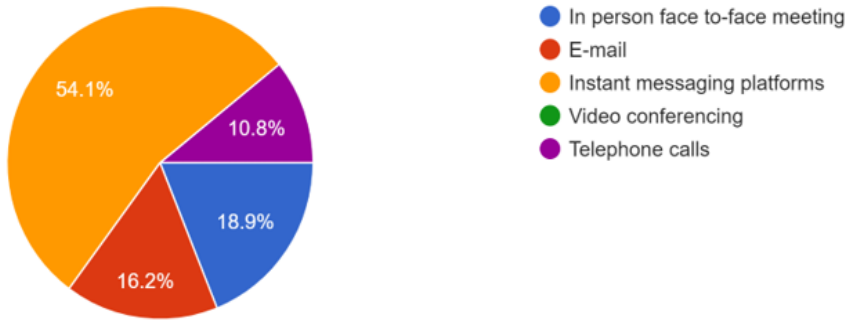
Research Objective 1: Respondent's Communication Channel Choice: Table 2 presents results on the level of audit clients with whom respondents frequently communicate based on Section 2 in the survey, as follows. The frequency and percentage that provide the descriptive information were analyzed.

Table 2: Results of the Audit Client Level and Frequency of Communication

Communication Usage	Freq.	Percent
1. Level of Audit Client		
Lowest Management	24	66.67
Middle Management	8	22.22
Top Management	4	11.11
2. Frequency of Communication		
Seldom	9	25.00
Once a month	3	8.33
Once a week	4	11.11
Several times a week	18	50.00
Daily	2	5.56

According to the above data analysis, it indicates that 24 respondents, or 66.67 percent of them often interact with the lowest management level of audit clients namely with either the Supervisors or Executives. It followed by 8 respondents or 22.22 percent who frequently interact with the middle level of audit client management (i.e., Departmental Managers) and only 4 respondents, or 11.11 percent who frequently interact with the top management such as the CEO, Managing Director, and other Board of Directors. This implied that practical students are the appropriate respondents' group as a proxy to staff auditors who frequently interact with client management and therefore can offer reliable information required for the study. When asked about the frequency of audit-client communication during the audit process, it shows that the majority of respondents (50 percent) communicated with clients several times a week, while only 5.56 percent communicated daily. About 25% of respondents had rarely communicated with clients during the audit. It implied that the frequency can vary depending on factors such as the complexity of audits, the level of client cooperation or the strength of the auditor-client relationship. The other descriptive data is about the most preferred and used communication channel when communicating with audit clients. It can be seen from the figure 1 below:

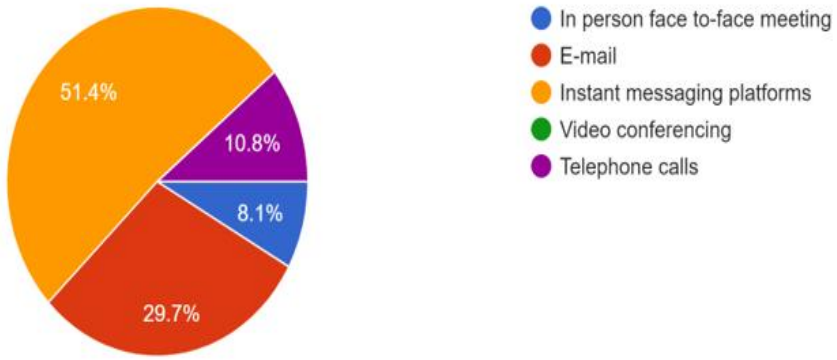
Figure 1: Preferred Communication Channel in Regular Audit-Client Communication



From the above chart, it can be seen that the respondents prefer instant messaging platforms (54.1 percent) followed by in-person face-to-face meetings (16.2 percent) in their regular audit-client communication and the least preferred channel is through telephone conversation. Instant messaging or texting promotes quicker response time and more back-and-forth communication (Saiwietz & Kida, 2018). It is positively associated with understanding, but only when face-to-face communication is low (Pollman, et al., 2021). This is evidenced by the recent health crisis where the restricted movement orders were implemented causing people to work from home and the usual f2f communication used for audit communication is falling away. The cause of the audio platform appears to be less preferred (10.8 percent) by auditors might be due to

clients not seeing visual cues in the auditor's behavior, resulting in delayed response (Saiwietz & Kida, 2018). Delays in responding would cause an audit delay.

Figure 2: Most Used Communication Channel in Regular Audit-Client Communication



According to the data in Figure 2, the majority of the respondents used instant messaging platforms (51.4 percent) for client communication during the audit process relatively equally with what they preferred followed by e-mail (29.7 percent), with the least usage of in-person face-to-face meeting platforms (8.1 percent). The reason could be due to the COVID-19 pandemic brought new norms, and most of the communications during the pandemic were by e-mail (Albitar, Kikhia & Hussainey, 2021).

We present evidence that despite many of the respondents prefer to communicate via texting and face-to-face, they mostly use technology-mediated communication, namely instant messaging platforms, e-mail, and telephone calls more often during the audit process compared to face-to-face. The advent of the Pandemic has resulted in a significant shift in communication, transitioning from traditional to digital channels (Melović, Baynazoğlu & Šerić, 2023).

Research Objective 2 The Relationship of Communication Channel Choice and Audit Quality: Section 3 presents results on students' perception of the impact of various communication channels on audit quality, investigating the appropriate communication channel that contributes the most to achieving high audit quality. Respondents were first asked an open-ended question to define audit quality, then, asked about their level of agreement on whether channels affect audit quality, and followed by asking 6 statements to represent audit quality.

Figure 3: Results generated from Word Cloud for the Definition of Audit Quality

The above figure was extracted from the respondents' answers when asked to define the audit quality. Some of the answers provided by the respondents are as follows:

"Audit quality refers to how well an audit is done. An audit is like a careful check of a company's financial information to make sure it's accurate and follows the rules. Good audit quality means the check is unbiased, the auditors are skilled, they follow ethical rules, focus on important areas, communicate clearly, and use modern tools. This helps people trust the company's financial statements and make informed decisions".
"I define the audit quality as the result of professional judgment by an auditor that fits the required standards of auditing".
"The report must complete with information and statements provided by the client and also follow audit procedures".
"How the audit is conducted properly and effectively".
"Consist of completeness, throughout testing and sufficient evidence".

The responses demonstrated the respondents' strong opinions about audit quality. They had been exposed to audit courses in the University before the internship program, and being under internship, as a result, they fully understand the concept of audit quality in the overall audit process. This implied that the respondents could provide the study with reliable information.

Table 3: Results of Respondents' Perceptions of the Impact of Channel on Audit Quality

Impact of Communication Channel on Audit Quality	Freq.	Percent
Yes	34	94.44
No	2	5.56

From Table 3, almost all respondents, except two samples, agreed with the statement when asked whether they believed that the choice of communication channel could affect the quality of an audit.

Table 4: The Means of the 5-Likert Scale Score on the Importance of Effective Communication Channels

Mean estimation	Mean	Std. Err.	Number of obs = 36 [95% conf. interval]	
Importance of Effective Channels	4.666667	.0890871	4.48581	4.847523

When further asked on the level of importance, it can be seen from Table 4 that all 36 respondents gave answers ranging from important to very important, giving rise to a mean score of 4.67 for the role that effective communication channels play in achieving audit quality.

Reliability Test: The audit effort and auditor's performance are the two characteristics of audit quality that, the study employs, and the study makes use of a variety of statements. Statements must be reliable or consistent if they are to be employed for measurement purposes. A reliability test was carried out for this, and the results are summarized in Table 5 and explained below.

Table 5: Items Used for Measuring Audit Quality

Dimension	Item Used to Measure the Dimension	Sample Item	Cronbach α
Audit Effort	15, 16 and 20	Which communication channel(s) contribute the most in terms of asking more follow-up questions with audit clients?	0.7683
Auditor's Performance	17, 18 and 19	Which communication channel(s) contribute the most to the timely completion of your audit work?	0.6781

To measure the reliability of the question items and the content validity of the statements to measure audit quality, the Cronbach alpha value is estimated. The analysis was done using STATA software version MP17. The Cronbach alpha values were acceptably ranging from moderately reliable to high scale for audit effort and auditor's performance respectively. Khalique, Shaari, and Isa (2015, as cited in Szucs, Szabo, Lakner and

Szekacs, 2018) posited that a Cronbach alpha value within the range of 0.5-0.7 is indicative of an acceptable level, while a value over 0.7 is at an excellent level.

Relationship between Communication Channel Choice and Audit Quality: Table 6 shows a positive but insignificant correlation between auditors' communication channel choice and audit quality. The Pearson Correlation coefficient between the two variables is 0.2195. The p-value is greater than 0.05, thus, is statistically insignificant. A study by Jung and Seock (2018) also revealed no significant impact between types of communication channels on the quality of services. The positive relationship however is supported by previous literature (Berezan, et al., 2015) (Deepa & Baral, 2022) (Fritz, 2022).

Table 6: Summary Statistics of Correlation Analysis between Communication Channel Choice and Audit Quality

Variable	Audit Quality	
	Pearson Coefficient of Correlation (*r*)	*p*-value
Communication Channel Choice	0.2195	0.1983

Regression Analysis

Table 7: Summary Statistics of Regression Equation

Group	Mean	Std. dev.	*t*-value	*p*-value
Traditional Communication Channel	3.736111	.283619	-1.3120	0.1983
Technology-Mediated Communication Channel	4	.3364116		

The t-statistic is a measure of the difference between the means of the two groups (traditional channels and technology-mediated channels) relative to the variability within each group. A paired samples t-test was performed to compare audit quality in traditional communication channels (in-person face-to-face meetings) and technology-mediated communication channels (e-mail, instant messaging, and phone calls). Table 7 shows the summary of the test. There was not a significant difference in the audit quality between respondents' choice of communication through traditional channels (M = 3.736111, SD = 0.283619) and technology-mediated channels [(M = 4, SD = .3364116). The *t*-value is -1.312 and the corresponding two-tailed *p*-value is 0.1983. The *p*-value is greater than the conventional significance level of 0.05. This indicates that the difference in audit quality ratings between the two groups (traditional channels and technology-mediated channels) is not statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level.

The evidence from the data is not strong enough to reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in audit quality between the two types of communication channels. The *t*-value being negative (-1.312) indicates that the mean audit quality rating for the technology-mediated channels group is lower than the mean for the traditional channels group, but again, this difference is not statistically significant. The mean values in the technology-mediated channels are lower due to the most used channel, namely e-mail is grouped with the least used channel, phone calls. Consequently, this grouping of channels leads to the observed result. The negative relationship is supported by previous studies (Tkalac Verčič & Špoljarić, 2020). Traditional channels have a greater impact on satisfaction and are more relevant. There is still prevailing reliance on the traditional channel as certain information is dominantly conveyed and communicated via traditional media.

5. Conclusion

The first objective of this study was to identify the auditors' preference and most used choice of communication channels during audit communication. The results showed that many of the auditors, proxied by accounting practical students, preferred to communicate via texting and having in-person face-to-face meetings with clients, but they were using texting platforms and e-mail more often during the actual audit process compared to face-to-face. Our analyses suggest that at times, auditors may occasionally encounter situations that limit their ability to use their preferred communication channel, necessitating the usage of other suitable channels. The second objective was to examine the relationship between communication channel choice and audit quality. The results showed that there is no strong statistical evidence to conclude

that there is a significant difference in audit quality between the two communication channel choices (traditional channels and technology-mediated channels) among the respondents. The insignificant result might be attributed to the limited sample size, perhaps leading to inconclusive findings. Moreover, there might be other variables that are influencing audit quality, which are not accounted for in the analysis. These variables used in the study may distort the actual relationship between communication channels and audit quality.

The study findings indicate a need to study how emerging communication tools impact auditors' choices and their subsequent impacts on audit quality. The results of the study can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between auditors' choice of communication channel and their subsequent impact on the quality of audits. Consequently, these findings can provide valuable insights for practitioners, regulators, and educators within the auditing profession.

This study is also subject to several other limitations. The individuals who took part in the survey may possess different motivations and characteristics in comparison to the auditors themselves, who have varying levels of work experience. Respondents might have difficulty recalling past experiences related to communication channel choice and audit quality, leading to biased responses. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the survey might have overlooked certain questions that could have potentially resulted in more, better insights into the impact of communication channels on audit quality. Taking into consideration these constraints could potentially strengthen the design and execution of future research.

Several recommendations arise from this research. First, future research could consider increasing the sample size to enhance the ability to detect significant differences. Second, it would also be beneficial for future studies to further identify additional variables that could potentially influence audit quality but were not considered in the current study. A mixed-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods could be considered appropriate to help further explore the topic and provide a better understanding of the relationship between communication channels and audit quality.

References

Albitar, K., Gerged, A. M., Kikhia, H. & Hussainey, K. (2021). Auditing in times of social distancing: the effect of COVID-19 on auditing quality. *International Journal of Accounting and Information Management*, 29(1), 169–178.

Bennett, G. B. & Hatfield, R. C. (2018). Staff auditors' proclivity for computer-mediated communication with clients and its effect on skeptical behavior. *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 68–69, 42–57.

Berezan, O., Yoo, M. & Christodoulidou, N. (2016). The impact of communication channels on communication style and information quality for hotel loyalty programs. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 7(1), 100–116.

Bougie, R. & Sekaran, U. (2019). Research Methods for Business: A Skill Building Approach. Wiley.

Chouhan, V., Sharma, R. B., Goswami, S. & Ali, S. (2021). Factor affecting audit quality: A study of the companies listed in Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE). *Academy of Accounting and Financial Studies Journal*, 25, 1-9.

Daft, R. L. & Lengel, R. (1984). Information Richness: A New Approach to Managerial Behavior and Organizational Design. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

DeAngelo, L. E. (1981). Auditor Size and Audit Quality, *Journal of Accounting and Economics,* 3(3), 183-199.

Deepa, R. & Baral, R. (2022). Is my employee still attracted to me? Understanding the impact of integrated communication and choice of communication channels on employee attraction. *Corporate Communications*, 27(1), 110–126.

Downey, D. H. & Bedard, J. C. (2019). Coordination and communication challenges in global group audits. *Auditing: A Journal of Practice & Theory*, 38(1), 123-147.

Fritz, A. (2022). Technological innovation's impact on audit quality and audit fees: Evidence from Distant Audits [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Michigan State University.

Hawkins, E. M. (2023). The Influence of Communication Medium on Professional Skepticism in Auditor-Client Interactions [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of South Carolina.

Hill, R. (1998). What sample size is "enough" in internet survey research? *Interpersonal Computing and Technology: An Electronic Journal for the 21st Century*, 6(3–4), 1–12.

Iskandar, T. M., Rahmat, M. M. & Ismail, H. (2010). The relationship between audit client satisfaction and audit quality attributes: Case of Malaysian listed companies. *International Journal of Economics and Management*, 4(1), 155-180.

Ishii, K., Lyons, M. M. & Carr, S. A. (2019). Revisiting media richness theory for today and the future. *Hum Behave & Emerg Tech*, 1, 124–131.

Jung, N. Y. & Seock, Y. K. (2018). The role of communication channels in delivering service recovery in an online shopping environment. *International Journal of Electronic Marketing and Retailing*, 9(1), 59–76.

Lim, Y. M., Lee, T. H., Yap, C. S. & Ling, C. C. (2016). Employability Skills, Personal Qualities, and Early Employment Problems of Entry-level Auditors: Perspectives from Employers, Lecturers, Auditors, and Students. *Journal of Education for Business*, 91(4), 185-192.

Mamat, S. N., Saidin, A., Bustamam, K. S., Sani, A. A., Adanan, S. A. & Samad, K. A. (2022). A Review of Factors Influencing Business Communication Channels during Pandemic. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences,* 12(10), 979 – 989.

Melović, M., Baynazoğlu, M. E. & Šerić, N. (2023). Family businesses in tourism – the use of digital technologies in times of uncertainty and crisis. *Journal of Family Business Management*, 13(1), 185–209.

Pollmann, M. M. H., Norman, T. J. & Crockett, E. E. (2021). Computers in Human Behaviour Reports a daily-diary study on the effects of face-to-face communication, texting, and their interplay on understanding and relationship satisfaction. *Computers in Human Behaviour Reports*, 3(April), 100088.

Releases, N. (2023). PCAOB Report: Audits with Deficiencies Rose for Second Year in a Row to 40 % in 2022

Rahim, S., Ahmad, H., Nurwakia, N., Nurfadila, N. & Muslim, M. (2020). The Influence of Audit Staff Quality and Client Type on Audit Evidence Collection with Communication Type as Moderation. *Journal of Accounting and Strategic Finance,* 3(1), 103-117.

Saiewitz, A. & Kida, T. (2018). The effects of an auditor's communication mode and professional tone on client responses to audit inquiries. *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 65, 33–43.

Satya, R. I. & Shauki, E. R. (2022). Remote Audit Post Covid-19 Pandemic in Achieving Professional Skepticism Auditor: Implementation of Social Presence Theory (Case Study on the Financial and Development Supervisory Agency). *Proceedings of the 7th Sriwijaya Economics, Accounting, and Business Conference (SEABC 2021)*, 647(Seabc 2021), 346–354.

Setyaningrum, D. & Kuntadi, C. (2019). The effects of competence, independence, audit work, and communication on the effectiveness of internal audit. *Journal of Economics, Business, & Accountancy Ventura*, 22(1), 39-47.

Szűcs, V., Szabó, E., Lakner, Z. & Székács, A. (2018). National seasoning practices and factors affecting the herb and spice consumption habits in Europe. *Food Control*, 83, 147–156.

Tkalac Verčič, A. & Špoljarić, A. (2020). Managing internal communication: How the choice of channels affects internal communication satisfaction. *Public Relations Review*, 46(3).

Wooten, T. C. (2003). It Is Impossible to Know the Number of Poor-Quality Audits that simply goes undetected and unpublicized. In *The CPA Journal*, 78(1), 48–50.