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The use of Graphic Rhetoric in communicating business strategy to a diverse audience: A quasi-field experiment

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A research article submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

5 November 2017

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

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This manuscript is original and not under review, consideration or published elsewhere.

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Abstract

Communication is paramount to promoting successful implementation of business strategy. However, little research has focused on what constitutes effective communication of strategy. A quasi-field experiment was conducted to build on current research regarding whether the use of graphic rhetoric is better than text in communicating business strategy to a diverse audience. A total of 44 employees were exposed to the same strategic message through different modes of communication: one using graphic rhetoric and the other text. A pre-test was administered to determine demographics, business strategy exposure and understanding. A post-test was administered to review the levels of attention, agreement, understanding and recall. Participants were then retested seven days later to further test recall. Results suggest that graphic rhetoric can enhance the communication of business strategy across a diverse audience. Further research with a longitudinal design is necessary to understand the role of visual rhetoric in comprehension and implementation of strategy.

Introduction

The success of a business strategy is strongly reliant on its implementation (Kaplan & Norton, 2008; Kernbach, Eppler, Bresciani, 2015; Pella, Sumarwan, Daryanto & Kirbrandoko, 2013; Van Riel, 2008; Yang et al., 2011). However, a major challenge in the implementation of a strategy is a lack of shared understanding of the strategy by all employees (Kaplan & Norton, 2005; Kernbach et al., 2015; Yang et al., 2011, Shimizu, 2017). This lack of shared understanding is largely due to poor communication (Kernbach et al., 2015; Yang et al., 2011). Management's ability to communicate effectively to employees ultimately influences their ability to successfully implement their strategy (Fourie & Van de Westhuizen, 2008; Hrebiniak, 2006). Communication is thus paramount to the success of strategy implementation (Yang et al., 2011). Despite this, little research has been done on what constitutes effective communication of a business strategy (Kernbach et al., 2015).

Burkhard's Knowledge Visualisation Framework (2008) guided the researcher in developing the appropriate visualisation type to communicate the business strategy effectively in this study. It is hoped that this research will contribute to improving the way business managers communicate strategy to employees leading to better implementation of business strategies and thus more successful employees and companies.

Literature review

A business strategy is a plan to achieve the long-term goals of a business and its function is to determine the direction and alignment of a business towards specific goals (Leonardi, 2015). In order to achieve the specific goals, business teams need to follow an overall aligned

organizational strategy in order to meet and exceed stakeholder expectations and to gain a sustainable advantage over the competition (Hu, Leopold-Wildburger & Strohhecker, 2016).

The implementation of business strategy is the most important step in the strategy process (Crittenden & Crittenden, 2008; Kernbach et al., 2015). However, strategies are most likely to fail due to poor implementation or execution (Kaplan & Norton, 2008). Even the most well-formulated strategy will not produce superior performance if it is not successfully implemented (Yang, Guohui & Eppler, 2010, Chebat,1999).

A major problem in the implementation of strategy is the inability of management to communicate clear goals and objectives to employees (Price & de Wet, 2012). Yang, Guohui and Eppler (2011) conducted an extensive review of the literature and identified four barriers to effective communication of strategy to employees. These barriers include employee **attention/awareness, comprehension, agreement, and retention** of the strategy.

Management tend to underestimate the importance of the involvement of lower level management and employees for the successful implementation of strategy (Kernbach et al., 2015). This results in uninformed employees that **lack awareness** of and **attention** to the business strategy (Kaplan and Norton, 2008). In such cases employees lack direction in making daily decisions, as they have no comprehension of the strategic direction (Fourie & Van de Westhuizen, 2008).

Employees who **understand/comprehend** what they are doing, why they are doing it and how their role adds value to the greater strategy, tend to be more engaged and motivated to add

value to the business. There is, however, a significant difference between hearing about a strategy and actually understanding it. Understanding/comprehension brings meaning and clarity. Employees often lack understanding of the business strategy as strategy is often abstract and is difficult to define, describe and communicate to employees (Fourie & Van de Westhuizen, 2008; Kernbach et al., 2015). Managers need to make deliberate actions to reduce the complexity of their strategic plans to manageable / focused portions that are actionable and understandable and that are inclusive of all employees (Hrebrink, 2006; Price & Wet, 2012).

Strategy implementation requires **agreement and buy-in** from employees. Strategy implementation efforts may fail if the strategy does not receive support and commitment from the majority of employees (Everse, 2011; Kaplan & Norton, 2008). Shared understandings are important and require alignment and focus (Kernbach et al., 2015). Alignment translates into having a direction that is accepted and understood by all employees in order to increase employee motivation and buy-in to achieve the strategic intent of the business (Fourie & Van der Westhuizen, 2008).

Employees who are in agreement with the strategy and clearly understand the strategy are in a position to **recall and action** the strategy on a daily basis. However, employees who cannot recall key elements of the strategy will be unable to implement strategy successfully. The way in which the strategy is communicated, thus, is paramount to the success of strategy implementation.

Vehicles/modes of communication

Since it has been established that communication of strategy is key, the most effective ways of communicating a strategy then become important. How the message is communicated, ensuring clarity of understanding as well as buy in and engagement from an employee's perspective, is of significantly greater importance than the actual strategy itself (Govender, 2012).

Textual documents, bullet points, Powerpoint slides etc. are the conventional and primary methods of communicating strategy but they are not necessarily the most effective way of communication (Fourie, 2008; Kernbach et al., 2015). Strategy tends to be confined to a textual document that is largely inaccessible to employees, if accessible at all.

An alternative method of communication that has proven to be successful in other contexts is visual representation or the use of visual rhetoric. The use of visuals in overall literature has increased 400 percent since 1990 (Neoman.com, 2017). In a world that is daily becoming more visual one needs to better understand how to improve the communication of business strategy.

Visual rhetoric refers to how visual images communicate meaning (Demirdogen, 2010). Visual rhetoric generally falls under a group of terms, which encompass visual literacy (Kostelnick, 1998). The visual representation of strategy using visual rhetoric, a combination of visual images/ visual actions and text, has the ability to allow employees across different managerial and educational levels to better understand what the strategy is and how it works (Kernbach et al., 2015). It allows management to simplify the strategy down to its operational tactics and show employees how each role fits together and why, improving understanding and clarity (Bresciani, & Ge,2014; Currie, 2017). Visual communication also helps the reader to interpret the message, to understand it quickly and holistically (Kostelnick, 1998). Visual rhetoric, thus, has the potential to address the 4 barriers outlined by Yang et al (2008) discussed above.

Knowledge Visualisation Framework (Burkhard, 2005)

Burkhard (2005) developed the Knowledge Visualisation Framework (Figure 1) to better understand the transfer of knowledge through visualisation. For effective transfer and creation of knowledge through visualization, four aspects in the form of questions should be considered:

1) What is the purpose of the communication?

2) What knowledge needs to be transferred?

3) Who is going to be receiving the communication?

4) What is the best medium to use to communicate with the particular audience, to clearly transfer the specific message? (Burkhard, 2005, p. 529).

Function Type	Knowledge Type	Recipient Type	Visualization Type
Coordination	Know-what	Individual	Sketch
Attention	Know-how	Group	Diagram
Recall	Know-why	Organization	Image
Motivation	Know-where	Network	Map
Elaboration	Know-who		Object
New Insight			Interactive Visualization
			Story

Fig. 1: The Knowledge Visualisation Framework

The Knowledge Visualisation Framework describes four elements that make up the knowledge visualisation framework. These include the function type perspective, the knowledge type perspective, the recipient perspective and the visualisation type perspective.

The function type perspective identifies the functions of visual representation for processing information. This perspective is rooted in research in perception and neuroscience (Koffka, 1935; Frah, 2000; Ware, 2000; cited in Burkhard, 2005).

This perspective focuses on six functions of visual representation including social, emotional and cognitive elements. Visual methods help to coordinate participants in the communication process. Visual representation also captures participants' attention through the use of emotional inserts to activate, motivate and inspire employees. Visual communication allows individuals to remember processes and improves recall. Elaboration is fostered in teams and it also allows individuals to develop new insights.

The work of Tversky (1974) and Anderson (1980) on cognitive theory and visual methods are aligned to Burkard's Knowledge Visualisation Framework. The authors acknowledge a strong relationship between visual cognition and memory. Tversky (1974) found that individuals exposed to visual communication spend twice as much time examining the visuals than the text, and Anderson (1980) found that visuals have a more powerful place in cognitive memory than text, assisting in communicating complex messages with simplicity.

The knowledge type perspective focuses on the type of knowledge that needs to be conveyed to the audience. Five types of knowledge rooted in knowledge management literature are identified including: Knowing-what (factual knowledge), Knowing-how (procedural/process knowledge, as knowing how things are done), Knowing-why (Rational or reason knowledge, allowing employees to greater understand the purpose or meaning), Knowing-where (orientation knowledge albeit geographical or locational), Knowing-who (Key roles players / supporters).

The recipient perspective focuses on the target audience and recipient context. Depending on the target group.recipients can be individuals, a team, an organisation, or networks. Understanding the context of the group is key to identifying the best method of visualisation for communicating a strategy.

As people learn in different styles so we need to communicate in a manner that best fosters effective communication with that particular audience. The Recipient type perspective is the focus on the target audience and their context. Extremely relevant in South Africa's linguistic and cultural diversity context.

Visualisation Type Perspective: The type of visualization required for effective communication is not standard for all purposes or recipients. Visual communication is structured using the most effective means in order to ensure effective communication of the strategy. The seven main visualisation methods include sketch, diagrams, images, maps, objects, interactive visualisations and storytelling. The framework assists in finding the most effective visualisation types for the transfer of knowledge.

The Knowledge Visualisation Framework is closely linked to Yang et al. (2010) four major limitation areas affecting strategy implementation: attention, comprehension, agreement and retention. Burkhard's framework provides a theoretical framework to guide the development of visual representation methods and focuses on addressing the limitation areas described by Kernbach and colleagues.

South Africa is a unique context characterised by multiple cultures and languages (Webb, 2002). The legacy of Apartheid has also resulted in vast socio-economic inequalities in the South African population. Businesses in South Africa are microcosms of the South African context and are made up of people from vastly different backgrounds, cultures, languages and socio-economic status. This diversity only adds complexity to the already complex communication of business strategy in South Africa. Similarly, as the global village develops businesses need to effectively communicate across vastly different backgrounds, cultures and languages. Diversity in the workplace calls for innovative methods of communicating strategy successfully to all employees.

Yang et al. (2010, p.18) argue that "communication is mentioned more frequently than any other single item promoting successful strategy implementation". Despite this little research has focused on what constitutes effective communication of business strategy (Kernbach et al., 2008). Textual communication in the form of bulleted lists on power point slides dominates the mode of communication of strategy but it is not well understood how effective this method of communication is (Kernbach et al., 2015).

In the same way visual rhetoric is gaining popularity in communicating strategy but the effectiveness of this method of communication has not been extensively tested (Kernbach et al., 2008). The exception is the study conducted by Kernbach et al. (2015), where the authors identified the gap in the literature and focused on *how* the information about a business strategy that is communicated is represented and how effective this mode of representation is in communicating the strategy. The study was conducted in Switzerland, which is a well-resourced, high-income context. The authors conducted a study where they aimed to gather empirical

evidence regarding whether the use of visualisation is more effective than the use of text when conveying a business strategy. Findings showed that the participants exposed to the visual representation of the business strategy paid significantly more attention to, agreed more, and better recalled the strategy than the group exposed to the textual representation. However, no significant difference was found regarding the groups understanding of the strategy.

This study attempted to build on the work conducted by Kernbach et al. (2015) with a focus on better understanding what constitutes effective communication of business strategy within an organisation with diverse employees. The Knowledge Visualisation Framework (Burkhard, 2008) guided the researcher in developing the appropriate visualisation type to communicate the business strategy effectively in this study.

Research Methodology

Design

A quantitative, explanatory study was conducted (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). A quasi field-experiment was carried out to determine if visualisation was more effective than text in communicating a business strategy.

Population

The population for the study included all employees who receive strategic communication or instructions in a business in South Africa. The reason for this is that although not all employees were engaged with the entire business strategy they are involved in implementing parts of the functions of strategy. Employees ranged from middle management through to junior coordinators, across various age groups, languages, races, experiences and cultures. All participants were South African.

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Unit of analysis

In this study the unit of analysis were individuals as the researcher aimed to investigate the individual's attention, comprehension, agreement and retention of a business strategy through two mediums/modes (visual rhetoric and bulleted list) of communication. It could be argued that the groups attention, comprehension, agreement and retention should form part of the analysis. However, for the purpose of this study it was assumed that individual's results culminated into groups findings.

Yang's barriers to communication of business strategy were incorporated into the key objectives/ hypotheses of the study.

Objectives/ hypotheses:

- To determine if visual rhetoric is more effective than text in engaging the attention of participants in the communication of a business strategy.

- To determine if visual rhetoric is more effective than text in facilitating participant understanding of a business strategy.

- To determine if visual rhetoric is more effective than text in facilitating participant agreement/ shared understanding of a business strategy.

- To determine if visual rhetoric is more effective than text in improving retention of a business strategy.

Sampling method and size

Sampling adopted a census approach where all employees in the transport unit were invited to participate in the study. A total of 44 participants were approached to take part in the study, with 43 participants taking part. The allocation of text and graphics or method of communication was assigned randomly prior to the start of the study.

Measurement instrument

As this research was conducted through a quasi-field experiment, manipulating the means of strategic communication, and measuring the quantitative outcomes of the four components, a questionnaire was best suited to measure the effect of the strategic communication on the two groups (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The outcome measures included attention, comprehension, agreement and retention of a business strategy through two mediums/modes (visual rhetoric and bulleted list/ text) of communication. Participant demographics were also collected.

The questionnaire was piloted in a different location and business environment to check for ambiguity or any errors (Hofstee, 2006) prior to the actual study being conducted.

Data collection

The research was conducted by means of a quasi- field experiment. This quasi-experiment was closely modelled on the method conducted by Kernbach et al. (2015).

Two groups of employees were shown the same business strategy, consisting of various goals and operational tactics. The same presenter presented in both locations to ensure validity and consistency. Presentations followed the same order of proceedings and content. Validity was verified using an independent third-party auditor who sat at the back of the room for all presentations to ensure that the messages conveyed were consistent and without bias.

The first group had the strategy and its operational tactics communicated to them using visual rhetoric (Visual Metaphor) on a power point slide by the presenter.

The second group had the strategy and its operational tactics communicated to them using written text (Bullet points) on a power point slide the following day.
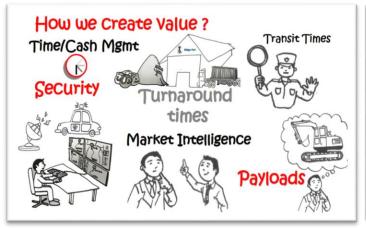

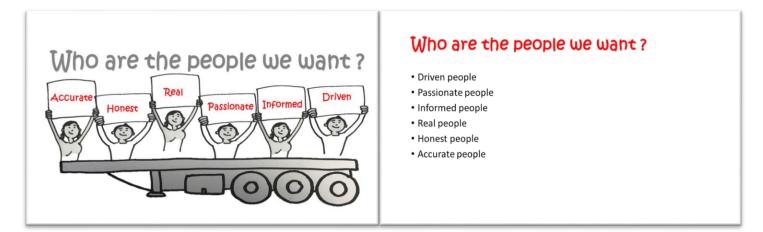*Figure 2 Example 1 of graphic rhetoric vs text used*

Figure 1 Example 2 of graphic rhetoric vs text used.

The presenter verbally explained the strategy and its operational tactics using the presentation as a means of support and referral. There were no handouts.

The visual metaphor used was informed by Burkhard's (2005) Knowledge Visualisation Framework. The researcher worked with a graphic facilitator to develop and prepare the visual communication, in line with the four perspectives outlined in the Knowledge Visualisation Framework including function, knowledge, recipient and visualisation. As described in Burkhard's (2005) Knowledge Visualisation Framework the recipient's context is key to the method of visualisation chosen. This is particularly important given the diversity in the sample. The visualisation type included sketch, images and objects as these were thought to be the most effective visualisation types for the transfer of knowledge for this audience, particular industry and form of communication. For example, an image/sketch of a warehouse was used as a means to show the asset base and ability to leverage existing customer networks.

A questionnaire measuring demographics, business experience and English skills was administered prior to the presentation. A second questionnaire that measured attention, comprehension and agreement, perception of the visualisation and perception of the presenter was administered directly after each presentation one hour after the completion of the presentation to measure retention and recall of the strategy (Geuens & De Pelsmacker, 2017).

A questionnaire measuring retention and recall was administered again seven days after the presentation to test retention and recall over a longer period of time. This was informed by Kernbach et al.(2015) as a recommendation on how to improve on their data gathering process.

Analysis approach

The key outcome measures included attention, comprehension, agreement and retention of a business strategy through two mediums/modes (visual rhetoric and bulleted list) of

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communication. The independent variable was the visual representation of the strategy with dependant variables being attention, comprehension, agreement and retention of the business strategy.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS statistical software. Descriptive statistics were generated. An t-test was conducted to determine if identified differences of significance occured.

To test whether there was a difference in terms of Attention. Engagement, Understanding, Recall, between the two communication modes (Graphics and Text), the Chi-square test of independence was used.

Results

The purpose of the research was to compare two different communication methods of business strategy across a diverse sample of employees.

A total of 43 employees participated in the study with 18 exposed to text and 25 exposed to the graphic rhetoric. There was a response rate of 100% of the 43 employees who took part in the study.

The diversity of the sample is described in table 1 and shows the social complexity of the business environment.

Table 1: Demographics of the samples

	Text (n=18)	Graphics (n=25)
Females	5	6
Males	13	19
No. of religions	4	5
No. of languages spoken	4	3
No. of race groups	4	3

Participants' age, strategic experience and English skill was fairly similar between the two groups exposed to text and graphic communication (Table 2). The rating of English skill was included as business in South Africa is generally conducted in English and thus was relevant to this research. It is important to note that there is a significant difference in the number of years that the average employees have been involved in the business with those exposed to graphic communication having more experience. Work experience between the two groups does differ but is not significantly different.

Table 2: Employee work characteristics

Mode of Communication	Age (Mean/ Std. Dev)	Work Experience (Mean/ Std. Dev)	Years at Company (Mean/ Std. Dev)	Strategy Experience (Mean/ Std. Dev)	English Skills (Mean/ Std. Dev)
Text (n=18)	35.67	2.86	2.33	2.71	4.33
Graphics (n=25)	32.56	4.54	5.84	2.84	4.16
TOTAL	33.86 (SD = 8.11)	4.71 (SD = 2.63)	3.95 (SD = 3.74)	2.79 (SD = 1.12)	4.23 (SD = .75)
T-Test	$t = 1.25$; $p = .22$	$t = -1.40$; $p = .18$	$t = -2.54$; $p = .01*$	$t = -.38$; $p = .71$	$t = .74$; $p = .46$

Strategic communication in the form of attention, engagement, understanding and recall was compared between the text and graphic rhetoric groups.

Table 3: Independence and no of people by factor

Mode of Communication	Dependent Variable							
	Engagement		Understanding		Recall		Attention	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Text **(n=18)**	10 (56%)	8 (44%)	5 (28%)	13 (72%)	15 (83%)	3 (17%)	10 (56%)	8 (44%)
Graphics **(n=25)**	9 (36%)	16 (64%)	10 (40%)	15 (60%)	22 (88%)	3 (12%)	16 (64%)	9 (36%)
χ^2	χ^2 = 1.62; p = .20		χ^2 = .69; p = .41		χ^2 = .19; p = .66		χ^2 = .31; p = .58	

To test whether there was a difference in terms of attention, engagement, understanding and recall between the two communication modes (Graphic rhetoric and Text), the Chi-square test of independence was used. The Chi-square was useful in this test as the variables were categorical. As shown in Table 3, the results suggest that there was no statistical association between communication mode with respect to all the four dependent variables (Attention, Engagement, Understanding and Recall) as the p values were greater than .05.

The contingency tables for each of the dependent variables were considered individually.

For Engagement, despite the lack of statistical significance (χ^2 = 1.62; p = .20), it is important to note that there were relatively more people who felt they were more engaged after being exposed to Text presentation [56%] compared to those that received the graphic rhetoric [36%]. Although more respondents that received the graphic rhetoric [40%] indicated to have understood the strategy demonstration than the text group [28%]. This seems consistent with the results of Table

7, which found that the respondents from the graphical group reported a higher correlation between perception of the presenter and perception of the presentation (r = .909).

Similar patterns were also observed in terms of Recall and Attention. Relatively more people in the graphical group indicated that they remembered the strategy than those in the text group even after the seven-day period. This concurs with the understanding assessment because if a strategy is clearly understood, recall rates are likely to be higher. Likewise, more respondents in the graphic rhetoric group were observed to have higher scores in Attention than those in the text group.

The results suggest that communicating a business strategy with the use of graphic rhetoric can improve awareness, understanding and recall of the business strategy when comparing to text. This study was limited with a small sample size and it is anticipated that a greater level of significance would occur with a larger sample size. However, the results show that in terms of Engagement, those employees who received the text presentation seemed to be more engaged.

In any environment, there are always contributing and distracting factors that play a part of any communication. The perception of the presenter and the presentation are two factors that do influence the communication message. As stipulated by Kernbach (2015) the perception of the presenter and the presentation are positively influenced by the presence of visuals or graphic rhetoric.

Table 4: Perception of the presenter and presentation

Mode of Communication	Perceptions of …	(Mean /SD) (Rating 0-5)
Graphics (n=25)	Presenter	4.86 (.32)
	Presentation	4.66 (.45)
Text (n=18)	Presenter	4.36 (.88)
	Presentation	4.06 (1.09)

Participants were asked to rate the visuals and the presenter on a rating scale of 0-5 to better understand the influence of the visuals/ text and the presenter on employee's awareness, understanding, engagement and recall of the strategy.

The participants exposed to graphic rhetoric rated the presenter and the presentation more positively with a lower standard deviation than the group who received text presentation. This suggests that use of graphic rhetoric can be more effective than text in the communication of business strategy although the differences were not significant.

Table 5: Significance of perception of the presenter and presentation

| Perceptions of … | Mode of Communication | | T-Test | |
	Graphics (n=25)	Text (n=18)	t-statistic	p value
Presenter	4.86	4.36	2.46	.02*
Presentation	4.66	4.06	2.35	.02*

*significant at $p < .01$

The correlation analyses between the perception of the presenter and the perception of the presentation for both Text and Graphic communication modes are not significant ($p < .01$).

However, the results show that Graphics rhetoric (r = .909) has a higher correlation of the perceptions of the presenter and the presentation than Text, (r = .819) this suggesting that the use of graphic rhetoric can play a part in improving the communication of business strategy.

Table 6: Correlation of mode vs Presenter and Presentation

	Mode of Communication	Perception of Presentation
Perception of Presenter	Text (n=18)	.819*
	Graphics (n=25)	.909*
	Total	.911*

*significant at $p < .01$

With the complexity of communication, compounded by the perception and engagement or passed experiences of employees, it is important to note that communication bias was not measured or taken into account in this study.

As an additional part of the research a question was asked of the employees as to what format they believe would be the most effective format for communicating the business strategy.

Table 7: Choice of method of communication

I would have preferred the strategy explained to me in…… Row Labels	Graphic (n=25)	Text (n=18)
A picture presentation	56,00%	38,89%
A text presentation	20,00%	33,33%
Video	20,00%	27,78%
Other	4,00%	0,00%

There was still a request for text, however, pictures being the dominant mode for communication for both the graphic rhetoric and text groups. Interesting, video communication was also requested by both groups.

Conclusion

The importance of strategy implementation is highlighted in current research, as the success of a business is determined by its ability to implement or execute its strategy. The effectiveness of communication of business strategy, thus, needs to be enhanced.

In today's business environment change and volatility are the norm and businesses need to ensure that they sustain their competitive advantage through the alignment of strategic intent across all units and departments. The ability to ensure successful alignment/strategy implementation is facilitated through effective communication (Yang et al., 2011) of the business strategy across all employees. Furthermore, as the global business environment develops so too does the diversity of employees that employers are required to effectively communicate to.

The principles of the Knowledge Visualisation Framework (Burkhard, 2005) of knowing the purpose of the message (function type perspective), the reason for the message (Knowledge Type Perspective), who the target audience is (Recipient Type Perspective) and how the message is conveyed (Visualization Type Perspective) are relevant and major factors in successful communication of business strategy.

The research was planned to be as realistic as possible. Although the strategy communicated was industry and business specific, the audience was a diverse set of employees in the relevant business, who wanted and needed to understand the businesses strategic intent going forward. The researchers designed the business strategy with an in-depth understanding of the context of the audience and were guided by the Recipient Type Perspective outlined in Burkard's theory. In this way, the best method of visualisation for communicating the business strategy was identified.

The importance of the employees understanding of business strategy (Knowledge Type Perspective) and how their daily functions fit into the bigger picture and where they add value to the business (Function type Perspective) is two-fold in both motivation/engagement of employees as well as business alignment. Our study was aligned to Burkhard's Knowledge Visualisation Framework as it aimed to effectively create and communicate the business strategy with the purpose of the strategy in mind, an awareness of what knowledge had to be communicated and the function being addressed.

The results in this study suggest that the use of graphic rhetoric can facilitate effective communication through enhancing attention, understanding, engagement and recall of a business strategy to a diverse group of employees. This builds on and responds to the recommendations made by Kernbach and colleagues as their study was limited to a homogenous sample. It is important, however, to note that despite the diversity of the individuals involved in this study the research was conducted in a single business unit and this may have limited the findings.

Contrary to the Kernbach et al. (2015) article it is important to note that engagement of employees (Function Type Perspective) was greater in text group than in graphic rhetoric group. This could be attributed to the small sample size in this study as the research was not powered to achieve an effect.

Similarly to Kernbach et al. (2015) findings, the depth of comprehension or understanding of participants does still need to be researched further, with a recommendation of qualitative research to explore the depth of understanding. It is important to note that the communication of a business strategy can bring about action of strategy in the form of attention, understanding, engagement and recall but does not guarantee action. These elements are merely an indication of implementation. It is recommended that for future research a longitudinal study across

industries with a larger diversified sample be used to better understand the impact graphic rhetoric and text can have on the communication of business strategy.

It is important to note that perceptions of the presenter and the presentation can be influenced by bias on both the senders and receivers part and this needs to be taken into account for future research. Negative interpretations of images due to past experiences that could distort/ misdirect the message having negative connotations were not be taken into account for purposes of the study.

Business strategy communication and execution is a direct responsibility of senior management (Fourie & Van de Westhuizen, 2008) who have the role of communicating business strategy. As stipulated by Burkard's Knowledge Visualisation Framework the function, knowledge, recipient and visualisation are vitally important for any business manager to understand. The simplification of business strategy in order to meet your audience is a function of knowing your recipient as stipulated by Price & de wet (2012). A strength in this study was that the researcher was also the business manager in the company as well as the presenter for both presentations and, thus, had an in-depth knowledge of the employees (Recipient Type Perspective), the purpose of the business strategy (Knowledge Type Perspective) and an in-depth knowledge of the functions of visual representation for processing information (Function Type Perspective). The role of presenter, manager and researcher may also have negatively influenced the participant's responses to some of the questions and or visuals. Management bias /perception does have the ability to influence the encoding message (Shimizu, 2017). This has not been taken into account in this study.

The results in this study are supported by cognitive theory (Anderson, 1980; Tversky, 1974) and the relationship between visual cognition and memory as participants who were exposed to the graphic rhetoric had better recall than the text group. However, neuroscience regarding colour,

size and location of visuals or text have not been taken into account. Colours were kept constant in order to limit influences.

Allowing employees to interpret, understand and to see how the strategy works (Kostelnick, 1998), leaves an opportunity for communication of business strategy with the use of video, as requested by the employees. This form of communication would require further investigation and would be recommended for future research to further the success of communicating business strategy.

Strategic communication is too often seen as an annual communication rather than a continuous stream of communication throughout the year, enhancing, driving, leading and complementing employees and businesses. The use of graphic rhetoric vs text is equally relevant in facilitation of constant communication. However, in order to better understand the key elements of effective communication of business strategy a longitudinal study is recommended to better understand comprehension and implementation of strategy.

In conclusion, the results of this study suggest that graphic rhetoric can be more effective than text in communicating business strategy to a diverse audience. However, further research using a bigger sample size is required in order to further establish the most effective mode of communication of business strategy to a diverse audience.

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