

Analysis on Media Choice by Two Telework Groups

Bongsik Shin¹ and Kunihiko Higa²

¹Department of Management Information Systems
Karl Eller Graduate School of Management
The University of Arizona
Tucson, AZ 85721

²Tokyo Institute of Technology,
Graduate School of Decision Science and Technology
Department of Industrial Engineering and Management
Tokyo, Japan

With the rapid proliferation of computer networks, the potential of electronic communication media to increase the effectiveness of internal processes of organizations and the performance of group activities has been frequently discussed. Especially with the increased adoption of distributive telework across organizations, effective use of low-cost and general purpose communication media is becoming an important issue for a successive organizational process. A contingency study is made to investigate the role of the management support and communication characteristics on the media use of teleworkers. The study is focused on two general purpose communication media: email and telephone.

In this regard, the study is made to see the impact of the management support and communication-related characteristics (types of communication tasks, perceived reliability on a communication medium, and levels of communication urgency) on the media choice of teleworkers between email and telephone. By studying the association between the management support and the media use, and between the characteristics of communication

and the media choice of teleworkers, we evaluated (1) whether the richness of a medium is a socially constructed concept or an medium-inherent feature and (2) the implication of management support in moderating adoption of email among teleworkers.

We differentiate our study from existing studies of media choice by focusing on remotely distributed teleworkers, by using clearly defined work groups that enable the investigation of collective behaviors, and by analyzing the data captured during the actual use of communication media. The analysis indicates that factors of communication characteristics, especially the communication urgency and the perceived reliability on a communication medium, influence the media use of teleworkers. Management support, as a moderating force, greatly improved the adoption and effective use of email. This study demonstrates that information richness of a medium can be reinforced through the social re-definition process enabled by an active management involvement. The effective adoption of email at the telework group indicated additional implications that need more attention in the future research.