**THE APPLICATION OF COMPUTER MEDIATED COMMUNICATON (CMC) IN ORGANIZATION COMMUNICATION OF ENGAGEMEDIA**

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**Abstract**

The advancement of communication technology and internet play significant role in communication circulation of an organization. The communication by using technology is known as Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). CMC enables an individual to communicate by means of computer-based communication devices which are supported by internet and available applications. The purpose of this research is to study the application of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) in organization communication of EngageMedia. This research used two main theories: Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) and organization communication. Besides, it is supported by some approaches which support CMC, namely Social Presence Theory, Social Context Cues Theory, Media Richness Model, and Social Identification/deindividuation (SIDE).

The result shows that CMC eases organization communication. Either internal or external communication process is not hindered by time, space or phisical meetings. CMC distinctively supports unlimitted communication, as anyboby can convey messages to anybody else by means of such communication devices without waiting for formal meeting nor by using middleman.

**Key words: Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), Organization Communication, EngageMedia**

**INTRODUCTION**

Internet was firstly developed at the end of the 21st century and has been evoluting since then. Nuryanto (2012: 3) states that this is parallel to unlimited human’s wish and dream. This drives communication technology development to satisfy human’s need which becomes complex, including internet facilities and features (browser, e-mail, social network, and social media) which are used in communication by means of computers, which is known as Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). This vast usage develops into new internet features like e-government, e-commerce, e-education, e-medicine, and e-laboratory.

The leap of information and communication technology advancement has been iresistable since the application of CMC which diverts how people communicate. At present, the application of CMC is not limited to connect inter parties, but has developed into a level of how messages or information is written, multiplied, and broadcasted to society by means of internet-assisted computers. Computers, in this sense, does not only include Personal Computer (PC) or laptop, but also all internet-assisted devices, such as smart-phones, telegraph, radio, and television (Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic 2004: 18-19).

CMC system enables an individual to communicate by means of computer-based communication devices which are supported by internet and available applications. CMC covers chatting, world wide web (www), which consist of text, graphics, photography, audio, video, and audio visual message. People can also read online news, papers, play virtual games which facilitate the gamers to communicate in the system, communicate in social media, and can access social media platform like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram which belong to CMC. Generally speaking, CMC is communicative transaction by using computer as a means of information exchange.

Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic (2004: 206-207) claim that the possession of skill in working virtually has created a new working space which never existed before only in a decade. In Yogyakarta, there is an organization which has applied CMC concept since its establishment in 2006, that is EngageMedia. EngageMedia is an NGO which focuses on environment and social issue. One of its reasons to apply CMC is because its members spread in different cities of many countries, among others are Melbourne, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Bangkok, besides Yogyakarta and Jakarta of Indonesia (Interview of Nikolas Borang, Engagement and Learning Specialist Engage Media, 12 February 2019).

Organization communication plays important role in strengthening member’s relation to achieve organization’s goal, developing conducive working atmosphere, and motivating each member. Communication in an organization consists of different levels and purposes, besides covering personal to vast communication. Levels of communications in an organization consist of group, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and public communication. From purpose poin of view, there are vertical (either downward or upward) communication and horizontal communication among members (Ruliana, 2014: 12-13).

This research focuses on the application of CMC either internally or externally in organization communication of Engagemedia. In CMC, there are synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (delay) concepts. Synchronous is when conversation is done directly by using computers, such as voice call, video call, chatting, and others. Asynchronous concept is when the call is indirectly done or it takes time in getting the response (Sujiatmoko, 2013: 1 & 4). In general, this reseach is conducted in order to study deeper on what role EngageMedia plays in applying CMC pattern of mostly existing communication processes.

Gustiawati (2013: 6) states that effective communication relation creates comfortable atmosphere in an organization, which, in turn, creates trust and satisfaction among members and finally leads to member’s working productivity and contribution to organization. From the description above, the researcher intends to study deeper on how CMC concept is applied in organization communication of EngageMedia.

**LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODS**

**Computer Mediated Communication (CMC)**

Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) is a term used to describe the existence of two or more people who are interrelated by internet-assisted computers. As is is described by Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic (2004: 15), this theory refers to any types of communication among individuals which are assisted by computer technology.

Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic (2004, 31) say that basically, internet is not the only communication technology, but a score of different technologies for communication. In another word, internet is a system which consists of sub-systems which possess each different communication types or genre. There is not only single way used in communicating via internet. There keep emerging new ways of communication by means of internet as a response toward the changing technology and social condition.

Walther (in Perbawaningsih, Wulandari & Arifin, 2012: 6) states that in order to observe research objects, there are a score of approaches which contribute significantly in the development of CMC theory. Those are Social Presence Theory, Social Context Cues Theory, Media Richness Model, and Social Identification/deindividuation (SIDE).

**Organization Communication**

Communication is an activity which connects one individual to another one, which can be verbally or non-verbally. Communication is conveyed for a purpose, among others are conveying and seeking information, calling others to do what we have persuasively asked, and other purposes. Organization communication is circulating and accepting organization messages in either formal or informal groups in an organization (Romli, 2014: 2). A formal communication is a communication which has been approved by an organization and it is oriented to organization’s interest, such as work of conduct of an organization, productivity, and some different tasks conducted in an organization. While an informal communication is a socially-approved communication. Its orientation is not toward the organization, but to its individual members.

Romli (2014: 6) states that organization communication consists of two, those are internal and external communication. This research focuses on overall series of relation in internal communication of an organization, either downward vertically, from the leader to his/her subordinates or vice versa, and horizontal sideways communication among members.

In context of downward communication, messages circulation is in the form of briefing, organization goals, disciplines, orders, inquiry, and public policy. As stated by Lewis (2008, 116), a downward communication is aimed at telling the goals, changing the attitude, setting the view, lessening anciety, prejudice, and missunderstanding which is caused by missinformation, besides in order to prepare organization members for a change.

An upward communication in an organization is a communication process which flows from lower level (subordinates) to upper level (leader/chief). All levels of leaders, except for the uppermost one have all reasons to communicate upward. Those are in the form of asking or giving information to an individual with higher position (Pace and Faules, 2010: 190).

A horizontal communication is an information circulation among colleagues in the same working unit. A working unit consists of individuals who are posted at the same level authority in an organization who have the same leader (Pace and Faules, 2010: 195). As an organization external communication is a communication which exists among an organization leaders to public outside an organization. In a big organization, an external communication is generally done by its head of communication affair rather than by its leader or office head.

This research used descriptive qualitative method, which does not examine its hypothesis based on certain theory, but by describing a significance to feature a phenomenon, why and how a phenomenon exists (Ghony and Almanshur, 2012: 44). Data collection of this research is observation and interview. Observation is conducted by observing each activity which is related to the application of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) in internal communication of EngageMedia. While interview is conducted to Co-Founder and Executive Director EngageMedia, Communications and Outreach Coordinator EngageMedia, and Project Coordinator EngageMedia Indonesia. This research conducts three data analysis; those are data reduction, data display, and making conclusion/verification Miles and Hubberman in Yusuf (2014: 407).

**RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS**

The advancement of communication technology and internet ease people’s activity in accessing information. Distance and time do not hinder communication among people anymore. It is even supported by the existence of communication canals with their vast kinds of features which make people even closer to each other in communication. The users of communication technology do not need to worry about their data safety in their communication; as it is because the developer of instant messaging communication canals start taking effort in strengthening the data safety of its users.

**An organization Communication by Applying CMC**

An organization communication is an activity of sending and receiving messages in an organization to achieve the shared goals which can be done verbally or non-verbally, either in small or bigger scale, that is conveyed formally or informally. In this subsection, the researcher will present the application of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) in organization communication of EngageMedia.

1. **Internal Communication**

An internal communication is a communication process among the members in an organization, either it is among individuals or group communication (Romli, 2014: 6). Internal communication exists reciprocally via different canals, those are downward communication, upward communication, and sideways communication.

1. Downward Communication

One of the downward communication types that exists in EngageMedia is a communication flow among Executive Director at Editorial and Outreach, Operation and Finance, Accountant, Technology, and Program. An example of this type is weekly meeting, that is Stand Up, when Andrew, as the director presents tasks for the coming week in a video conference by using Jitsi Meet. For instance, he briefs persons in charge of technology or the technician at EngageMedia to change or add editorial policy at EngageMedia website. Or when he asks for the finance staff to submit monthly finance report.

Another example which requests the leader to use video call feature Jitsi Meet is when they need to conduct a discussion with program division, that is to discuss a big event such as a meeting of Asia-Pacific movie makers. It is so done as Jitsi Meet can accomodate a discussion between the institution head and program division. Besides using Jitsi Meet, the head uses text messaging via Mattermost or Signal to present deadline for video editting to Editorial division and Outreach. The head does not only conduct video conference by using Jitsi Meet, but also presents tasks and information by means of existing communication canals which are used by EngageMedia. It means that the head uses varied communication cannals, depending on the purpose and types of messages that need to be presented.

1. Upward Communication

In this research, a type of upward communication in EngageMedia refers to the communication among Editorial and Outreach, Operation and Finance, Accountant, Technology, and Program to Executive Director. The information which is related to upward communication will be thoroughly presented at Stand Up, that is a weekly online meeting routinely conducted by EngageMedia. Similar to downward communication, upward communication process uses all communication cannals which are used by EngageMedia. Some communication cannals which are routinely used by EngageMedia as a means of upward communication feature is Jitsi Meet, Mattermost, Signal, dan Redmine. The use and choice on these communication cannals certainly depends on its purpose and message types which need to be presented.

An upward communication also accomodates complaint and problems facing the subordinate to their head. It enables the head to recognize what is wrong and needs to be corrected at organization level, besides, it is also important for the head to recommend way out for the problem being faced by the staff. It is, for example, at program division of EngageMedia which is facing hindrance in less ideal cooperation with local partner in conducting a project. In that condition, the head then decides not to extend the joint business with that organization in the next project. This sensitive kinds of matters are usually discussed face to face virtually, so that each member can respond reciprocally at real time.

1. Sideways communication

In the context of sideways communication at EngageMedia, each division or team per project has each chat group at Mattermost and Signal. The purpose of creating group chat is for each member in one division to exchange information before and after general meeting. Besides for information sharing and office task, a group chat is also used as a means to present the problems they face and how to solve the problem together.

Sideways communication process is done to ease each member in the same division in performing their task. The task is commonly presented by the head via division coordinator, who then presents the task to each staff based on each job description. It is, for example for Editorial Division and Outreach, they will share task such as who is responsible in charge of content production in EngageMedia website, who will upload, change thumbnail, and fill up subtitle. Or, who will take care of other websites which belong to existing projects being conducted by EngageMedia, such as Papuan Voice and Video4Change.

1. **External Communication**

In this research, the external communication in EngageMedia is toward the funders, local partners, the activists, technology enthusiasts, and movie maker. The purpose of external communication in EngageMedia is also to maintain the existing good relation with similar organizations whose vision is similar to the one owned by EngageMedia. The communication process with external parties is continuously done by means of communication cannals owned by EngageMedia. It is mainly, Thunderbird, because the message exchange by using e-mail is one of the communication types frequently used by EngageMedia to external parties. The EngageMedia does not insist external parties to communicate by using instant messaging, such as Signal for text message or Jitsi Meet for video call.

In communicating with external parties, EngageMedia usually uses mainstream communication cannal such as WhatsApp. EngageMedia does not request external parties to use communication cannals which are used by EngageMedia, but it leaves the choice to them if they are willing to. EngageMedia usually recommends or ask external parties whether they are willing to use those communication cannals. If the external parties object to using it, EngageMedia will adjust to them. If not, using the communication cannals they don’t usually use brings them problem because they have to install the application first.

**Computer Mediated Communication (CMC)**

To Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic (2004: 15), this theory refers to any types of inter humans communication which is assisted and supported by computer technology. The researcher analyses the data gained in the research by using different approaches, those are Social Presence Theory, Social Context Cues Theory, Media Richness Model, and Social Identification/deindividuation (SIDE).

1. Sosial Presence Theory

This approach emphasizes on how a media is able to accomodate the presence of social individual, those are different emotional expressions without physical presence. Based on an interview result, a communication cannal which is most powerful in accomodating the presence of social individual with different emotional expressions of individual without his/her physically presence is Jitsi Meet. It is because the Jitsi Meet feature which is used by EngageMedia is its video call feature. By doing a video call, any individual will be easier to see face expression and gestures of the people he/she talk with. By doing so, a communication process being done is similar to direct face to face communication.

This approach also reveals that by the existance of internet, a person can communicate at any time at any place, without direct face to face communication. In this research, internet and communication technology become backbone for EngageMedia to communicate with other parties, as distance and time constraint. That’s why EngageMedia keeps trying to use video conference system as an alternative for face to face communication. It is in order to accomodate its members’ social presence besides to recognize different expression they reveal.

1. Social Context Cues Theory

In this theory, it is presumably, there can be realized or not, that there are regulations or rule that control whether an information is decent or indecent to be presented, or to whom this information may go. These rules concern to different level of post for the personnel of EngageMedia. It is for example, the information concerning administration and finance is considered to be classified. It is especially personal data of the personnel and staff and the organization finance. Information concerning financial matteris usually limited to a limited finance staff and their direct head. Personnel data, salary, and remuneration belong to the same category.

Another rule is concerning different cultures and languages of every EngageMedia members who come from different countries. This difference, for example, then leads to a rule that requires them to conduct some online meetings by using English as a means of communication. The exception is when the meeting is only attended by all Indonesian members. However, it is a common practice for them to still use English in such a meeting. It is obvious that English is generally used in its video conference meeting, voice call, and text messaging.

1. Media Richness Model

This approach focuses on analysing media’s capability in presenting feedback, non-verbal gestures, language variation, as well as presenting emotional expression of the individual who conveys message. There are two pivotal items of media richness in this approach, those are the media’s capability in presenting information and an individual’s capability in conveying the information.

Table 3.1

Media Richness Level

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| No | Software Feature | Description |
| 1. | Jitsi Meet | Jitsi Meet owns a capability in presenting ral-time feedback so that the participants feel as if they did face to face communication. Besides, JitsiMeet does not only able to present verbal and non verbal message, but also emotional expression of the message presenter or receiver via computer-assisted face to face communication. |
| 2. | Mattermost | Mattermost has an ability to present direct feedback when the participant conduct chatting, and can present non-verbal message by using emoticon, although it does not always represent an individual’r real emotional feeling. Besides, it is suitable for text message exchange, Mattermost is also used as presence roll call in EngageMedia. It is similar to fingerprint system, commonly used in other offices. |
| 3. | Signal | Signal is used by EngageMedia to send text message, voice, pictures, videos, document, and voice call. Different from Mattermost, this communication feature is more frequently used for group chat of each division or each team per project. The capability of Signal in giving feedback is similar to Mattermost, that is, when people are in the process of text message exchange directly or when an individual launch a voice call. The individual’s emotional expressions are presented in the form of emoticon. |
| 4. | Redmine | Redmine can not be used to launch a video call, voice call, or message exchange directly. It is why Redmine is considered to have low capability in giving feedback. However, Redmine is considered highly intense in use as it requires EngageMedia to login everyday in order to catch up with daily task deadline to be accomplished. |
| 5. | Thunderbird | Thunderbird is used by EngageMedia as an alternative for Microsoft Outlook to manage e-mail locally by means of computers. It is not only used to exchange e-mail, but also connected to Redmine server. Its capibility in giving feedback and individual’s emotional expressions is considered low, as it can neither be used to launch a video call, voice call, nor text message exchange directly. |
| 6. | NextCloud | In this case, NextCloud is a sowtware which has the lowest level capability in giving feedback and emotional expression. It is because NextCloud can neither be used to launch a video call, voice call, nor text message exchange directly. NextCloud only provides data saving service like Dropbox, Google Drive, or i-Cloud. |

Source: Personal Document

1. Social Identification/deindividucation (SIDE)

In this research, this approach emphasizes the relation among EngageMedia and external parties by making use of website. The use of website by EngageMedia is considered to be an application of CMC. EngageMedia makes use of its website to interact with external parties by means of computers, those are activists who concern with social and environment issue. By means of its website, EngageMedia establishes a network to interconnect the activists of social and environment issue, as well as technology enthusiasts and activists to share information.

While in context of internal EngageMedia, this approach is not significant, because not all members of EngageMedia join the group for similar interest, but for different reasons, especially the same need. The need, in this context, is the need of internal organization, and the need of each individual. Internally, the need of EngageMedia exists as it grows bigger, so that it requires personnel with different skills to handle tasks well.

Whie the need of each individual emerges as a basic need of human-being to survive. This means, EngageMedia creates job vacancies to anybody who possibly does not have interest on social or environment issue but still fits to the existing posts in EngageMedia. For example, for administration and finance division, it is more suitably handled by an individual with that specific capability and experties.

**CONCLUSION**

The application of CMC in an organization, specifically, of either internal or external communication in EngageMedia uses different communication cannals or features, depending on types and purpose of message presentation. It is, for example, for internal communication, EngageMedia conduct a video conference by means of Jitsi Meet for an important and big meeting which requires all organization members to attend. This such important meeting is conducted in a video conference to make it more effective in presenting all information to the participant, besides that it can directly be responded. While, to external parties, EngageMedia frequently conduct message exchange by using e-mails by means of a communication feature called Thunderbird.

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