

THE EVOLUTION OF COMMUNICATION FROM TRADITIONAL TO DIGITAL IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

ANCA JARMILA GUȚĂ *

ABSTRACT: *Living in a world characterized by a considerable increase in the use of technology in all areas and knowing that communication is a crucial element of our daily life, human interactions and the functioning of society as a whole, this has become more than just a simple transmission of information between individuals, being a dynamic and complex process that is carried out through different types of communication channels, and the digital era in which we live is no longer characterized by face-to-face communication. It is expanding at an accelerated pace in virtual space. In the current context of modernization and digitalisation, e-communication has become an essential component in interactions with public institutions, transforming the way citizens interact and access administrative services. In this paper, we presented the concept of traditional communication, e-communication and the evolution of communication from traditional to digital, we also presented the role and importance of communication in public administration and the main digital trends of communication in the interaction between citizens and public institutions.*

KEY WORDS: *Traditional communication, e-communication, public institutions, public administration, digitalization.*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *M16, H23.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the current context of modernization and digitalisation, e-communication has become an essential component in interactions with public institutions, transforming the way citizens interact and access administrative services. Living in a world characterized by a considerable increase in technology, communication is a crucial element of our daily lives, human interactions and the functioning of society as a whole, becoming more than just the transmission of information between individuals, it is a dynamic and complex process that is carried out through different types of communication channels,

* *Assoc. Prof., Ph.D., University of Petroșani, Romania, gancajarmila@gmail.com*

and the digital era in which we live is no longer characterized by face-to-face communication, but is expanding at an accelerated pace in the virtual space.

Essentially, communication is what allows us to express our thoughts, feelings and intentions, understand each other, and build human connections. In addition, communication is the engine of interpersonal and social relationships. Through communication we develop our social skills, learn to adapt to different environments, build connections and connections with others, and allow us to collaborate and cooperate effectively.

Both “*communication*” and “*e-communication*” are processes by which information is transferred between individuals or groups, but in a different context and using distinct technological means.

E-communication is a term that refers to electronic communication, i.e. the exchange of information using electronic communication tools such as the Internet, e-mail, social networks and mobile applications. They are a wide range of communication methods that have become an integral part of modern life. **Internet communication** is a set of actions and processes mediated by computers through which interlocutors transmit information through messages that can take various forms. Communication is an absolutely indispensable process for humanity, and over time messages have been transmitted through various ways, thus communication taking on various forms and being used in various environments

The evolution of communication from traditional to digital is a complex and fascinating process, marked by a series of remarkable transformations in the ways and technologies used to transmit information. In the past, communication manifests itself in different ways such as writing, images, drawings, vocal sounds, behavior, and other forms of communication. gestures and other non-verbal means to convey messages and understand the intentions and emotions of others.

The advent of television and radio opened the way for communication through television and radio media, bringing with it a new way of attracting and influencing the general public. With the technological evolution and the emergence of the virtual environment, communication has gained unprecedented freedom and accessibility. With the development of the internet and the first web pages, communication has become increasingly digital, and the possibilities for transmission and interaction have increased significantly.

Online communication has undergone radical transformations over the last 10-15 years. The integration of visual and audio content, as well as the interactivity element, have transformed the Internet into a vibrant, dynamic and attractive environment for communication and collaboration. With the advent of social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, communication has become more than just an exchange of information. These platforms have paved the way for a continuous dialog between people and have focused on the element of surprise and interactivity, strengthening their leading positions in digital communication.

Today, online communication is no longer just about sending information, but aims to achieve goals such as generating notoriety, increasing sales, mass information and public loyalty, etc. In the digital environment, progress, performance, creativity and new ideas become essential driving forces that drive change in communication.

2. DIGITAL TRENDS AND PERSPECTIVES OF COMMUNICATION IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

In modern society, communication plays an essential role in the functioning of public administration. In an information-rich environment, access to data is easy, but managing and using it properly requires effective communication. It is very important that civil servants are able to interact both at the institution level and with the public in order to achieve the desired results through communication and to be able to carry out the tasks properly.

E-communication has become an important element also within the public administration, enabling the rapid transmission of information both within public institutions and mass information, collaboration, communication, exchange of information and interaction with the public, thus managing to carry out their activities in an efficient and fast way, eliminating distance barriers and reducing costs.

The websites of public institutions provide a platform for promoting activities and services, as well as for solving citizens' problems. Blogs and social networks facilitate the exchange of ideas and feedback, contributing to increased transparency and public involvement in the administrative process.

In a world of continuous technological evolution, public officials should be aware of the latest communication tools to carry out their tasks in an efficient and transparent way. Effective communication is the key to success in public administration, helping to improve services to citizens and build trust in public institutions.

Individuals involved in online communication in public administration can be divided into the following categories:

- Public institutions within the local public administration;
- Central public administration;
- Citizens.

The information and Communication technologies (ICT) revolution plays a substantial role in the relationship between citizens and public administration, thus improving the quality of public services and facilitating communication and interaction between them.

To this end, in order to ensure citizens' access to relevant information provided by public institutions, to increase citizens' involvement, to provide access to public services, including from a distance, to interact quickly and efficiently with citizens and respond to their expectations, public institutions tend to invest time and resources in technologies, digital platforms, applications and social media sites, thus trying to increase citizens' satisfaction.

Electronic communication uses various methods to transmit information in a fast, efficient and secure manner both between public administration and citizens and between various public institutions. Among these methods we can illustrate:

- **E-mail** - public institutions can send messages, information and documents to citizens and other institutions instantly, securely and at low cost.
- **Websites** provide a platform for publishing detailed information about the services and activities of public institutions, facilitating communication with the general

- public.
- **Blogs** are used to communicate and interact with citizens by publishing articles, news and opinions relevant to the community
 - **Chat** is an instant messaging service that allows people to communicate with each other in real time using even pseudonyms so they can expose their thoughts without being criticized. Chat groups are often organized according to themes or age groups. Exemple populare de chat-uri sunt: *Messenger, WhatsApp, Telegram, Google Talk, Skype etc.*
 - **Social networks** allow public institutions to interact directly with citizens and other institutions, promote activities and create online communities where various topics of public interest are discussed. (*Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.*)
 - Electronic signatures – an electronic signature is an encrypted code that uses a cryptographic key used to sign and transmit documents online in a fast, secure and confidential way.
 - **Internal communication platforms:** Public administration may use internal communication platforms, such as *Microsoft teams, Slack or Google Workspace*, for collaboration and communication between employees. These platforms facilitate rapid exchange of information, organization of meetings and projects, and promote effective collaboration between teams.
 - **Online forums and communities:** Public administration can create and manage online forums or virtual communities where citizens and employees can discuss different topics, share ideas and provide feedback. These platforms provide an open environment for dialog and civic participation.
 - **Customer relationship Management systems (CRM):** The use of CRM systems in public administration can facilitate communication and interaction with citizens and other stakeholders. These systems allow the administration to manage and respond effectively to citizens' requests and complaints, monitor feedback and improve services according to identified needs.
 - **Webinars and online conferences:** Public administration can organize webinars and online conferences to inform citizens and other stakeholders about projects, policies and initiatives. These online events offer the opportunity to interact in real time, answer questions and receive live feedback.
 - **Online petition platforms:** Public administration can use online petition platforms to allow citizens to register and sign petitions electronically. These platforms facilitate the collection and management of petitions, and provide transparency in the decision-making process.

Overall, these electronic communication methods are tools used to strengthen the relationship between public administration and citizens, as well as to streamline administrative processes within public institutions.

3. TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION VERSUS E-COMMUNICATION IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Communication within public institutions is essential for the efficient functioning, carrying out their activities and maintaining a positive relationship of collaboration and interaction with citizens and other entities, thus ensuring the transmission of information in a transparent manner and fulfilling their tasks, goals and objectives related to the public interest and the satisfaction of citizens' needs.

Communication in public administration takes place on several levels, including between different levels of administration, on the same level and between the administration and citizens or other entities, such as NGOs, political authority or interest groups.

Traditional communication involves the use of methods such as face-to-face meetings, letters, written documents, newspaper announcements, phone calls, etc. Traditional communication is very important and provides direct human interaction. In traditional communication we can recall a set of advantages, but also a comprehensive list of disadvantages and challenges.

Advantages of traditional communication:

- Personal interaction: Traditional communication enables direct human interaction, fostering emotional and empathic connections. This is important in establishing trust and long-term relationships.
- Authenticity: Face-to-face communication or personalized letters give authenticity and can be adapted to the specific needs of the interlocutors. Messages and interactions reflect truth, honesty and transparency without being distorted or manipulated.
- Detailed dialogs and instant feedback: Face-to-face meetings allow for wider discussion, providing room for clarification and instant feedback.
- Reliability in environments with limited access to technology: Traditional communication is particularly useful in areas where access to technology is limited or for groups that prefer traditional interactions.

However, traditional communication also presents a number of *disadvantages* and challenges such as:

- Slow pace: Traditional communication can be slower than digital means, requiring time for physical meetings, document processing and distribution.
- High costs: The resources needed for printing, distribution, meetings and logistics can be considerable.
- Difficulty reaching a wide audience: Unlike e-communication, traditional methods are less effective in conveying messages to a large or geographically diverse audience.
- Lack of flexibility: Once a document is printed or a published announcement, it is difficult to make adjustments or updates. Also, traditional communication is less flexible in terms of schedule, some meetings cannot be postponed, physical presence is mandatory.

- Physical presence dependence: Face-to-face meetings and interactions require physical presence, which can be difficult for people with reduced mobility or those living at large distances, in other cities, countries, etc.
- Limited storage capacity: Traditional communication requires physical space for storing documents and archives.
- Reduced accessibility for some categories of people: People with disabilities, for example, may have difficulty getting documents in physical format or attending face-to-face meetings.
- Negative impact on the environment and sustainability: Intensive use of resources such as paper raises sustainability issues and environmental impacts.

E-communication, like traditional communication, has the same goals - to inform, persuade and maintain an open relationship with citizens and/or other public institutions, organizations or interest groups - the difference being given by the methods, techniques used and the degree of efficiency.

E-communication involves the use of modern technologies and also presents a set of advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages of e-communication:

- Speed and efficiency: Fast, efficient and secure distribution of information to the general public, saving time and resources.
- Accessibility and flexibility: Digital platforms allow easy access to information from anywhere in the world and at any time.
- Low cost: E-communication reduces the need for paper, printing and physical distribution, reducing costs considerably.
- Rapid feedback: Digital channels enable immediate feedback and interaction, facilitating citizens' dialog and participation.
- Citizen involvement in decision-making and administrative processes: Through the use of digital platforms, citizens can be invited to participate in debates, opinion polls, public consultations, etc. It provides an effective way for institutions to collect opinions and suggestions directly from the community, facilitating an open dialog between the administration and citizens, giving people the chance to express their opinions and influence decisions that directly affect them, which can increase trust and transparency in government. It also allows institutions to get a clearer picture of citizens' needs and expectations.
- Store and manage information in an organized, easy-to-access and searchable way. Allows the storage, management and tracking of all information, messages, methods of interaction and communication.
- Time saving: Shortens the time of administrative processes, reducing the time lost at the counter (kiosk) within public institutions.
- It allows people with the same interests or problems to be identified and is easier to manage and solve the needs and problems of multiple people at the same time.

- Real-time monitoring of the status of applications and other administrative processes. Through digital platforms, citizens and civil servants can track the progress of applications, documents or other requests, providing clear visibility of the stages of the process. This transparency allows citizens to be aware of their situation, reducing uncertainty and waiting time.
- Transparency: Institutions may share decisions, reports and other relevant data, ensuring public access to information. This openness increases citizens' confidence and reduces suspicions about how resources are managed and decisions taken.
- Sustainability and environmental protection: Through electronic communication, public institutions reduce the use of papers such as forms, brochures and letters, etc. This contributes significantly to the reduction of waste and the conservation of forest resources. In addition, e-communication reduces the need for physical travel for meetings or consultations, which reduces transport-related emissions of CO₂. Thus, e-communication not only streamlines administrative processes, but also supports sustainability and environmental objectives.

Disadvantages of e-communication:

- Dependence on technology and the internet: Institutions and citizens must have internet connection and appropriate digital devices, their lack makes it impossible to access e-communication.
- E-communication requires appropriate skills and abilities to use tools, platforms and devices from users.
- Investment in its infrastructure and implementation costs. E-communication requires stable and reliable technological infrastructure; interruptions can affect the flow of communication. The costs for implementing the necessary infrastructure can also be quite high.
- Risk of information overload. The constant flow of digital information can lead to overuse of receptors and difficulty filtering relevant content.
- Security and confidentiality: There are risks related to cybersecurity and the protection of personal data, and additional security measures are required.
- Reduced human interaction: E-communication reduces direct human interaction, which can diminish personal and empathic connection.
- Unequal access to Technology: Some groups of citizens may have limited access to the Internet or the devices necessary for e-communication, creating a barrier to communication.
- Need for training: Both public institution staff and citizens may need training to use e-communication technologies effectively.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Effective communication in public institutions is vital for the proper functioning of public administration, for meeting citizens' needs and for ensuring a positive relationship between the administration and the general public. The role of communication is to inform, persuade, listen and maintain an open relationship with citizens in order to improve public services and achieve the objectives of public institutions. Traditional communication has an important role to play, but it must be balanced with modern means to meet current requirements for efficiency, accessibility and sustainability.

Traditional communication and e-communication each have distinct benefits in public institutions. Traditional communication is based on direct human interaction, while e-communication provides efficiency, speed, accessibility and sustainability. E-communication thus improves administrative processes and facilitates the involvement of citizens in real time. To meet the different needs of citizens, a balance between the two approaches is needed, while maintaining transparency and efficiency of public institutions.

REFERENCES:

- [1]. Bessières, D. (2019) *La définition de la communication publique: des enjeux disciplinaires aux changements de paradigmes organisationnels*, Communication & Organisation, 35, pp. 15-28
- [2]. Burlacu, N., Graur, E., Morong, A.J. (2003) *Comunicarea managerială*, Editura Grafema-Libris” S.R.L., Chișinău
- [3]. Farcaș, E. (2016) *The website of the public institution- a tool for presentation, communication and defining institutional identity*, Revista română de jurnalism si comunicare, 4(53), pp. 45-65
- [4]. Guță, A.J., Isac, C. (2018) *Comunicarea în organizații*, Editura Universitas, Petroșani
- [5]. Guță, A.J. (2021) *The role of social media platforms in increasing the efficiency of online communication activity*, MATEC Web of Conferences, Volume 342 (2021), 9th edition of the International Multidisciplinary Symposium “UNIVERSITARIA SIMPRO 2021”: Quality and Innovation in Education, Research and Industry – the Success Triangle for a Sustainable Economic, Social and Environmental Development”, Section: Recent Trends in Business, economics, Law and Public Administration
- [6]. Guță, A.J. (2015) *Analysis of the public management administration in Romania based on diagnostics and SWOT analysis*, Annals of the University of Petroșani, Economics, 15(2), pp. 15-22
- [7]. Guță, A.J. (2023) *Analysis of the peculiarities of the means of e-communication in a public institution, referring to the city hall of Hateg*, Review of International Comparative Management, 24(4), pp. 666-679
- [8]. Zémor, P. (2018) *Comunicarea publică*, Editura Institutul European, Iași