

INFORMATION ORIENTATION AMONG THE EMPLOYEES OF TELECOM SECTOR: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Anju Thapa

Research scholar, The Business School, University of Jammu
Email: anju_kumar311@rediffmail.com

ABSTRACT

Today organisations are increasingly aware of the potential use of information in providing competitive advantage for sustaining their long term success. Information is being widely recognized as the most important asset of an organization in the current transition towards knowledge-based economies. Information Orientation (IO) measures the extent to which individuals perceives that their organisations possess the capabilities associated with effective information use to improve organisational performance. The present paper is an attempt to study the level of Information Orientation among the employees of telecom sector. The study also investigates the various dimensions of Information Orientation viz. Information Technology Practices (ITP), Information Management Practices (IMP) and Information Behaviour and Values (IBV) in both the select public as well as private sector telecom organizations. The results revealed that for an organisation to be more oriented towards Information all the variables should be high. Also, it has been found that the Information orientation in public sector organisations is significantly different than the private sector organizations.

Keywords: Information Orientation (IO), Information Technology Practices (ITP), Information Management Practices (IMP) and Information Behaviour and Values (IBV)

INTRODUCTION

Today organisations are increasingly aware of the potential use of information in providing competitive advantage for sustaining their long term success. Information is being widely recognized as the most important asset of an organization in the current transition towards knowledge-based economies. Information Orientation (IO) measures the extent to which individuals perceives that their organisations possess the capabilities associated with effective information use to improve organisational performance. Contemporary the organizations are becoming knowledge driven and to keep abreast of the latest trends has become important for the success of an organization. Information and knowledge is critical not only for competitive existence but also for the sustainability of the organizations. So

every individual associated with the organization i.e. management, employer, employees, workers, stakeholders, competitors etc must be Information Oriented and transparent enough in order that who so ever possess he can be benefited fully. Thus, for the sustainability of the any organization in a competitive environment, adequate Information is needed, which is to be collected, managed and disseminated. Also Effective Information use in organizations depends on the way how people sense, represent, and communicate, for this one should possess the attitude of seeking, learning, and sharing information (i.e. Information behavior and values).

Various studies shows that Information Orientation among the employees increases business performance in one or another way (C.S.Lee , I.S.Ko, C.Jung, 2008). Also, it has been assumed that Information Orientation significantly reduces information asymmetry. This influence may be mediated by information sharing and information collection. It is also added that the organizations having stronger orientation towards information may have less information asymmetry problems, and thus would be more capable to make appropriate decisions based on information (Hsieh, Lai and Shi, 2006). Also it has been assumed that Information Orientation can be enhanced, if combined with competent Information technology practices, Information management practices and information behaviour and values (Donald A. Marchand, William J. Kettinger, and John D. Rollins, 2001). In addition Information Orientation mediates the link between Information seeking behaviour of employees in the organizations and their performance. Thus, from the above studies it can be assumed that there exists a relation between Information Orientation of the individuals in the organisation and their information behaviour and values, the result of which enhance the overall performance of the organisation. The purpose of the present research paper is to study the Information Orientation (IO) among the employees of public and private sector Telecom organisations. A comparative study of variables of Information Orientation can be done in both public as well as private sector telecom organizations. Thus, the Information Orientation can be enhanced in the organisations only if combined with competent Information management (IT practices and Management practices) and information behaviour and values.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The finding of the study shall fill the gap in the existing literature. The focus of the study is to measures the extent to which individuals perceives that their organisations possess the capabilities associated with effective information use to improve organisational performance. The study has been conducted in the select Jammu region. The respondents of this research study shall comprise of the employees of the Telecom Sector viz. BSNL (public sector) and AIRTEL (private sector).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To study the level of Information Orientation among the employees of select organisation
2. To compare Information Orientation in public as well as private sector telecom organizations

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The current literature demonstrates that study of Information Orientation by Marchand et al (2001) claimed to be one of the first studies to identify a link between information systems and performance. Information sensing, collection, organisation, communication and use with a high information orientation are critical to the knowledge-based organisations (Marchand et al 2001). The author has achieved this by broadening the scope of the practices examined and including elements such as information management practices and organisational culture. Also information-based organisations require specialists of many kinds to carry out their mission and translate their objectives into specific actions. It has been seen that Knowledge workers or a manager plays an essential role in managing information as well as implementing information and communication technology in organisations. (Hargrove, 2001; Kluytmans, 2005; Boonstra, 2005). In a recent study it has been revealed that the information and information related systems represents a competitive advantage and have improved their ability to identity and promote managers and employees who have IT as well as operational skills (Marchand, 2010). In an another study by Prasad and Heales (2008), it has been seen that technology has penetrated significantly into business processes and directly controlling these key processes or their introduction has resulted in a radical change in those business processes. It is also highlighted that IT alone cannot generate values, rather it is how IT is used that contributes to organizational performance. The successful organization is based on Information advantage. The information is dispersed throughout a market in the form of competition and Information gaps are thus closed (Picot, Reichwald, and Wigand, 2008). The business environment is constantly changing and evolving. Business themselves change over time and as they grow and develop, the information needs of the business will also change.

The Information Orientation model points that the organisation that demonstrates effective uses of Information (IO behaviour and values IBV), Information management (Information management practices IMP) and management of its information Technology (Information technology practices ITP) in combination affects organizational performance. It has been seen that if an organisation is “mature” i.e. effective in all three of these areas, the organisation will experience superior business performance (Aytes and Beachboard, 2007). Gaither and Frazier (2007), revealed in the study that advances in Information and communication technology have allowed organizations to more easily manage operations and to work on projects which are globally dispersed among the teams. The wide spread use of e-mail today allows employees to communicate quickly and cheaply with vendors and customers as well as with co-workers. This also results in faster decision and improved performance at the work place. Information Orientation could significantly reduce information asymmetry. This influence may be mediated by information sharing and information collection. It has been found that IO could also significantly influence e-business adoption. It is also added that the company with stronger IO may have less information asymmetry problems, and thus would be more capable to make appropriate decisions based on information (Hsieh, Lai and Shi 2006).

Further, Marchand (2004) differentiate the low IO organizations from the organizations possessing high IO. People don't know enough about their customers to adequately serve and anticipate their needs in the former while Information is easily accessed across

organizational boundaries and hierarchies in the later. Efforts to serve customers have failed due to a lack of information and sharing across channels while managing information-collecting, organizing, maintaining is viewed as everyone's responsibility. Also the decisions are made on gut-feel rather than the facts as there is no clear payback from ever increasing IT investments in case of organizations where IO is low while managers have a keen sense of urgency about what they don't know and IT is viewed as integral to the organizations business- not simply as a support function. According to Sen and Taylor, (2007), findings relating to the "critical role" of information in organisations and specifically small companies. Information also emerged as a critical supporting theme, either explicitly, having clear reference to corporate information competence or implicitly, not immediately identifiable as corporate information competence. It has been found that suppliers, distributors of various industries greatly value the acquisition of strategic information sharing which may also help in taking important decision that entails significant costs, substantial costs, substantial risks and unclear benefits. (Frazier et al, 2009). In addition to it, Information Technology practices, management of information and information behaviours all must be strong and working together, if superior business performance is to be achieved. An organization must excel at all three capabilities (in essence, having "high" IO) to realize superior business performance (Marchand, Kettinger and Rollins, 2000). It is further added that the Information system functions should not be a solely information systems function, but should be distributed throughout the whole organization for business value creation (Peppard et al, 2000).

Thus, from the existing literature it has been seen that Information and Infirmination related systems do affect the performance of employees in the organisations and they need to be more oriented towards Information for more effective performance. The purpose of the present paper is to study the level of Information Orientation (IO) and to establish a link among Information Technology practices, Management practices and Information behaviour and values to Information Orientation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study has been conducted among employees of Telecom sector viz. BSNL (public sector) and AIRTEL (private sector) in Jammu region of the state Jammu and Kashmir. The data has been collected by means of a standard questionnaire (Source: Aytes and Beachboard. Using the information orientation maturity model to increase the effectiveness of the core MBA IS course; Journal of Information Technology Education, 2007). The three variables used in the present study are: Information Management Practices (IMP), Information Technology Practices (ITP), and Information Behaviour and Values (IBV). The questionnaire contains a total of forty items with five-point Likert scale ranging from one-strongly disagreed to five-strongly agreed. The sample is randomly selected and sixty respondents are personally meet to give their responses. The data collected was mainly primary in nature.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data analysis has been done to understand the level of information orientation among the employees in the Telecom sector and make comparison between public and private sector organisations. The responses from the respondents have been subjected to simple percentage

method and mean score method in order to know the level of Information orientation among the employees in the select Telecom organizations.

Demographic Profile

For studying about the demographic profile of the employees, simple percentage method was used. The results shows that more than half of the respondents were males (61.5 percent) and rest were females (38.5 percent). In terms of age majority of respondents (62 percent) are below 35 years and about 45 percent respondents have their tenure less than 2 years, 31.7 percent respondents have their tenure ranging between 2-5 years, 15 percent respondents have their tenure ranging between 5-10 years and 8.3 respondents their tenure more than 10 years. About 24 percent employees have income below Rs. 15000, 45 percent have income ranging Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 30,000 and 31 percent respondents have their income more than Rs. 30,000. More than half (61 percent) of the employees are post-graduate, 27.7 percent are graduate and 11.3 percent are others.

Information Technology Practices (ITP)

The variable Information Technology Practices (ITP) consisted of three variables viz. IT for management Support, IT for Operational Support and IT for Business Process Support. The mean score of all the three variables are given below:

Table 1. IT for management Support

		Public	Private
1	Sharing knowledge	4.44	4.46
2	Market developments	3.40	3.95
3	Identifying business opportunities	3.34	4.14
4	Managing market trends	3.01	3.65
5	Taking business risk	3.23	3.58

Table 1 depicts the use of Information technology for management support in the public and private Telecom organizations. The table shows the five statements on which mean scores were calculated for comparing public and private sector Telecom organizations. As revealed by the table, in case of public-sector Telecom organizations, sharing knowledge has the highest mean score (4.44), followed by market development (3.40) and least in case of managing market trends (3.01) while in private- sector Telecom organizations, again sharing knowledge has maximum mean score (4.46), followed by Identifying business opportunities (4.14) and least in case of taking business risks (3.58). Thus, from the above table it has been seen that all the items has mean scores above average in both public as well as private sector Telecom organizations.

Table 2. IT for Operational Support

		Public	Private
1	Innovation and creativity	3.71	4.00
2	Exploring and sharing new ideas	3.82	3.95
3	Developing new products & services	3.54	4.11
4	Relations with suppliers and customers	3.67	4.20
5	Controlling business operations	3.03	3.50
6	IT supports employees	3.34	4.14
7	Improves the efficiency of operations	3.01	3.65

Table 2 shows the use of Information technology for operational support in the public and private Telecom organizations. The table shows the seven statements on which mean scores were calculated for comparing public and private sector Telecom organizations. The table given above revealed that in case of public-sector Telecom organizations, Exploring and sharing new ideas (3.82) has the highest mean score, followed by Innovation and creativity (3.71) and least in case of Improves the efficiency of operations (3.01), which is also above average while in private- sector Telecom organizations, Relations with suppliers and customers has maximum mean score (4.20), followed by IT supports employees (4.14) and least in case of Controlling business operations (3.50), which is again above average. Thus, from the above table it has been seen that all the items has mean scores above average in both public as well as private sector Telecom organizations.

Table 3. IT for Business Process Support

		Public	Private
1	Supports business process and people	3.10	3.92
2	IT integration across departments	3.25	4.04

Table 3 depicts the use of Information technology for Business process support in the public and private Telecom organizations. The table shows only two statements on which mean scores were calculated for comparing public and private sector Telecom organizations. The table given above revealed that in case of public-sector Telecom organizations, IT integration across departments (3.25) has the highest mean score, followed by Supports business processes and people (3.10) while in private- sector Telecom organizations, again IT integration across departments (4.04) has maximum mean score, followed by Supports business processes and people (3.92). Thus, from the above table it has been seen that all the items has mean scores above average in both public as well as private sector Telecom organizations.

Information Management Practices (IMP)

The variable Information Management Practices (IMP) consisted of three dimensions viz. Information Processing, Information Maintaining and Information sensing. The mean score of all the three variables are given below:

Table 4. Processing

		Public	Private
1	Hiring skilled people	3.42	3.93
2	Providing training skills	2.24	3.92
3	Evaluating people	2.94	3.10
4	Extremely good at rewarding people	3.27	3.97
5	Training and rewarding employees	2.68	3.22
6	Prevent information overload	3.15	3.62

Table 4 depicts the use of Information management processing in the public and private Telecom organizations. The table shows the six statements on which mean scores were calculated for comparing public and private sector Telecom organizations. The table given above revealed that in case of public-sector Telecom organizations, Hiring skilled people (3.42) has the highest mean score, followed by Extremely good at rewarding people (3.27) and least in case of Providing training skills (2.24), while in private- sector Telecom organizations, Extremely good at rewarding people has maximum mean score (3.97), followed by Hiring skilled people (3.93) and least in case of Evaluating people (3.10), which is above average. Thus, from the above table it has been seen that all the items has mean scores above average in both public as well as private sector Telecom organizations.

Table 5. Maintaining

		Public	Private
1	Reuses information to avoid duplication	3.48	3.85
2	Keeps the data updated	3.45	3.62
3	Access to knowledge resources	3.32	3.80

Table 5 depicts the Information maintaining in the public and private Telecom organizations. The table shows three statements on which mean scores were calculated for comparing public and private sector Telecom organizations. The table given above revealed that in case of public-sector Telecom organizations, Reuses information to avoid duplication (3.48) has the highest mean score, followed by Keeps the data updated (3.45) and Provides access to knowledge resources (3.32), while in private- sector Telecom organizations, again Reuses information to avoid duplication has maximum mean score (3.85), followed by Provides access to knowledge resources (3.80) and Keeps the data updated (3.10). Thus, from the above table it has been seen that all the items has mean scores above average in both public as well as private sector Telecom organizations.

Table 6. Sensing

		Public	Private
1	Information about external changes	3.23	3.44
2	Assessing customer demands	3.28	3.81
3	Anticipating suppliers related problems	3.90	4.00

Table 6 depicts Information sensing in the public and private Telecom organizations. The table shows three items on which mean scores were calculated for comparing public and private sector Telecom organizations. The table given above revealed that in case of public-sector Telecom organizations, Anticipating problems related to suppliers (3.90) has the highest mean score, followed by Assessing customer demands (3.28) and Information about external changes (3.23), while in private- sector Telecom organizations, Anticipating problems related to suppliers (4.00) has maximum mean score, followed by Assessing customer demands (3.81) and Information about external changes (3.44). Thus, from the above table it has been seen that all the items has mean scores above average in both public as well as private sector Telecom organizations.

Information Behaviour and Values (IBV) Capability

The third variable of Information orientation i.e. Information Behaviour and Values (IBV), consists of four variables viz. Information sharing, Formality, Control and Transparency. The mean score of all the variables are given below:

Table 7. Sharing

		Public	Private
1	Formal information among individuals	3.51	3.97
2	Informal information among individuals	3.82	4.14
3	Formal information among departments	3.88	4.22
4	Informal information among departments	3.82	4.28
5	Keeping information to itself	3.12	4.05

Table 7 shows Information sharing among the employees of public and private sector Telecom organizations. The table shows the five statements on which mean scores were calculated for comparing the two organizations. The table given above revealed that in case of public-sector Telecom organizations, Formal information among various departments (3.88) has the highest mean score, followed by Informal information among individuals and Informal information among various departments (8.82) and least in case of Keeping information to itself (3.12), which is again above average while in private- sector Telecom organizations, Informal information among various departments has maximum mean score (4.28), followed by Formal information among various departments (4.22) and least in case of Formal information among individuals (3.97), which is above average. Thus, from the above table it has been seen that all the items has mean scores above average in both public as well as private sector Telecom organizations.

Table 8. Formality

		Public	Private
1	Trust informal sources of information	4.05	4.42
2	Good at passing inaccurate Information	2.14	2.26
3	Good in manipulating information	3.32	3.40
4	Information improve products & services	3.42	3.80

Table 8 shows the formality in the public and private Telecom organizations. The table shows the four statements on which mean scores were calculated for comparing public and private sector Telecom organizations. The table given above revealed that in case of public-sector Telecom organizations, Trust informal sources of information (4.05) has the highest mean score, followed by Information improve products & services (3.42) and least in case of Good at passing inaccurate Information (2.14), while in private- sector Telecom organizations, Trust informal sources of information has maximum mean score (4.42), followed by Information improve products & services (3.80) and least in case of Good at passing inaccurate Information (2.26). Thus, from the above table it has been seen that all the items has mean scores above average in both public as well as private sector Telecom organizations.

Table 9. Control

		Public	Private
1	Company discloses information	2.95	3.10
2	Superiors have great influence	3.95	4.10
3	Members discuss errors & mistakes	2.40	3.21

Table 9 depicts Information control in the public and private Telecom organizations. The table shows three statements on which mean scores were calculated for comparing public and private sector Telecom organizations. The table given above revealed that in case of public-sector Telecom organizations, Superiors have great influence (3.95) has the highest mean score, followed by Company discloses information (2.95) and least in case of Members discuss about errors & mistakes (2.40), while in private- sector Telecom organisations, Superiors have great influence has maximum mean score (4.10), followed by Members discuss about errors & mistakes (3.21) and least in case of Company discloses information (3.10), which is again above average. Thus, from the above table it has been seen that all the items has mean scores above average in both public as well as private sector Telecom organizations.

Table 10. Transparency

		Public	Private
1	Members trust each other	3.02	3.22
2	Respond to changes in the environment	3.25	3.16

Table 10 shows the level of transparency in the public as well as private sector Telecom organizations. The table shows only two statements on which mean scores were calculated for comparing public and private sector Telecom organizations. The table revealed that in case of public-sector Telecom organizations, Respond to changes in the environment (3.25) has the highest mean score, followed by Members trust each other (3.02) while in private-sector Telecom organizations, Members trust each other has maximum mean score (3.22), followed by Respond to changes in the environment (3.16), which is above average. Thus, from the above table it has been seen that all the items has mean scores above average in both public as well as private sector Telecom organizations.

Thus, it has been seen that all the variables of Information Orientation has mean scores above average which shows that there is high level of employees orientation towards Information.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that every individual associated with the organisation i.e. management, employer, employees, workers, stakeholders, competitors etc need to be Information Oriented and transparent enough in order to anticipate and react to the changing market conditions in both corporate as well as public sector. The attempt to study the level of Information Orientation among the employees of the telecom organisations was quite successful. It helped the employees to understand the relationships among Information management practices, Information technology practices, and sharing and effective use of information i.e. Information behavior and values in an organization. The findings of the study provided an excellent opportunity for the employees of the telecom sector organizations to be more oriented towards information to order to become more efficient, cost-effective and transparent. Thus, the study can be concluded by saying that for improving the Information Orientation (IO) of the employees of any organization, Information technology practices (ITP), Information management practices (IMP), along with Information behavior and values (IBV) in the organizations needs to be enhanced.

REFERENCES

1. Aytes, K. and Beachboard, J. (2007). "Using the information orientation maturity model to increase the effectiveness of the core MBA IS course." *Journal of Information Technology Education*, Vol. 6.
2. Baxter, R. and Lyytinen, K. (2005). "Information Technology impact on work practices: A study of 3D CAD capabilities in Architecture, Engineering and Construction." Case Western Reserve University, USA. *Sprouts: Working papers on information systems*, 5 (2), pp 64-84.
3. Bloom, N., Dorgan, S., Dowdy, J, and Rippin, T. (2005). "Management Practices: The impact on company performance." *Centre piece*.
4. Bonifacio, M., Franz, T. and Staab, S. (2009), Knowledge Management: An evolutionary view.
5. Brown, J. N. (2004). "High performance work practices and Human resource Management effectiveness: substitute or compliments." *Journal of business strategies*.
6. Cappeli, P. and Neumark, D. (2001) "Do High performance work practices improve establishment level outcomes"? *Industrial and labour relations review*, Vol 54. No. 4, pp.337.
7. Chaffey, D. and Wood, S. (Nov 2004), Business information system: Improving performance using information systems, pg.10.
8. Chew, E. K and Gottschalk, P. (2000), Information technology strategy and management: Best practices.
9. Earl, M. J (2000), Every business is an information business, pp.16-22.

10. Firestone, J. M and McElroy, M. W (2005), Doing Knowledge management. *The learning organization Journal*, Vol. 12, No.2, Emerald group publishing limited.
11. Firestone, J. M and McElroy, M. W (2003) “*The new knowledge management*”.
12. Frazier, G.L, Maltz, E., Anita, K.D. and Rindfleisch, A. (2009). “Distributor sharing of strategic information with suppliers.” *Journal of Marketing*, July, Vol.73, pp. 31-43.
13. Gaither, N. and Frazier, G. (2007). *Operations Management*, ed-9: Thomson, pg.16.
14. Gill, C. (2008) “The Relationship between new work practices, trust and unions”. Egos conference proceedings, Amsteream: Egos conference, 2008.
15. Guthrie, J. P. (2001). “High involvement work practice, turnover and productivity: Evidence from New Zealand.” *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 180-190.
16. Hsieh, C.T, Lai F and Shi, W. (2006). “Information Orientation and its impacts on Information asymmetry and e-business adoption.” *Industrial Management and Data Systems*, Vol.106, No.6, pp. 825-840.
17. Hunter, W. C. and Lafkas, J. (2000). “Information technology: How it affects work practices and wages.” Knowledge Wharton.
18. Information Technology: How it affects work practices and wages, published: January 20, 2000.
19. Kirk, J. (1999). “Information in organization: direction for information management.” *Information Research*, Vol. 4, No. 3.
20. Lee, C. S, Ko, I.S. and Jung, C. (2009). “Evaluating the effectiveness of Information Orientation and Firm performance”, Hicss, 42 Hawai, International conference proceedings on system sciences, pp.9-12.
21. Malhotra, Y. (2005). “Integrating knowledge management technologies in organizational business processes: getting real time enterprise to deliver real business performance.” *Journal of Knowledge management*, Vol. 9, No.1, pp.7-28.
22. Marchand, D.A. (2010). “Managing Information, People and IT to improve Business Performance.” IMD International.
23. Marchand, Kettinger, Rollins (2000). “Information Orientation: People, Technology and the bottom line.” *Sloan Management Review*.
24. Marchand, D.A. (2004). “Information strategy as a key success factor for enterprises and universities.” *Strategy and information management*, IMD Lausanne, Switzerland.
25. Marchand, D. A (2000), competing with information: a manager’s guide to creating business value with information content.
26. Marchand, D. A, Kettinger, W.J and Rollins, J.D. (2001). *Information Orientation: The link to business performance*: Oxford University Press.
27. Picot, A., Reichwald, R., and Wigand, R. (2008). “Information, Organization and Management.” Springer, Verlag Berlin Heidelberg, pp. 3-5.

28. Pil, F.K. and Duffie, J.P.M. (1996). "The adoption of high involvement work practices" *Industrial relations*, 34(3), pp.423-455.
29. Prasad, A. and Heales, J. (2008). "Understanding the use of technology in organisations : A structural approach." *Proceedings of Association for Information Systems*, ACIS.
30. Sanner, Leif and Wijkman, P.M. (2005). "Benchmarking business practices in Swedish manufacturing firms." *Working paper series*, No. 3.
31. Sen, B. A. and Taylor, R. (2007). "Determining the information needs of small and medium-sized enterprises: A critical success factor analysis." *Information Research*, 12 (4) paper 329.
32. Sveiby, K. E. and Simons, R. (2002). "Collaborative climate and effectiveness of knowledge work- an empirical study." *Journal of Knowledge management*, Vol. 6, No. 5, 2002.