

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION AND BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY. A CASE STUDY OF GREECE**

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article history:</b></p> <p><b>Received</b> 20 February 2023</p> <p><b>Accepted</b> 18 May 2023</p>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> The aim of this study is to examine the relationship that exists between business communication and business sustainability in uncertain times.</p> <p><b>Theoretical framework:</b> The study utilized the stakeholder theory which helps in explaining business sustainability in times of uncertainty and how it is influenced by different aspects such as communication.</p>
<p><b>Keywords:</b></p> <p>Internal Business Communication; Horizontal Communication; External Communication; Business Sustainability; Times of Uncertainty.</p>	<p><b>Design/methodology/approach:</b> The questionnaire was used to collect data was from a sample of 138 business owners or employees of SMEs in the manufacturing sector of Kozani Greece.</p> <p><b>Findings:</b> The results of this study shows that internal business communication has a positive effect on sustainability of a business during uncertain times. The results also show a positive effect of horizontal and external business communication on business sustainability during times of uncertainty. Since human interaction is the cornerstone of service providers' operations, this transfer assumes a great impact in business, most especially in the service industry. A sustainable strategy or plan must incorporate excellent communication. In order to effectively plan and consequently construct sustainability as well as sustainable plans, people must communicate themselves both internally as well as externally using the appropriate form(s) of communication. Therefore, managers in reputable organization ought to communicate with the receiver in a clear, direct, and accurate manner whether utilizing oral communication to enhance business continuity during times of uncertainty.</p>
	<p><b>Research, Practical &amp; Social implications:</b> The results are of great importance to the field of business management especially concerning the relevance of business communication in supporting sustainability of businesses during crises or times of uncertainty.</p> <p><b>Originality/value:</b> The study provides is original knowledge on business communication in supporting sustainability during the different uncertain times.</p> <p>Doi: <a href="https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2023.v8i5.1477">https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2023.v8i5.1477</a></p>

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## RELAÇÃO ENTRE COMUNICAÇÃO EMPRESARIAL E SUSTENTABILIDADE EMPRESARIAL EM TEMPOS DE INCERTEZA. UM ESTUDO DE CASO DA GRÉCIA

### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** O objetivo deste estudo é examinar a relação que existe entre comunicação empresarial e sustentabilidade empresarial em tempos incertos.

**Referencial teórico:** O estudo utilizou a teoria das partes interessadas que ajuda a explicar a sustentabilidade dos negócios em tempos de incerteza e como ela é influenciada por diferentes aspectos, como a comunicação.

**Desenho/metodologia/abordagem:** O questionário usado para coletar dados foi de uma amostra de 138 empresários ou funcionários de PMEs no setor manufatureiro de Kozani Grécia.

**Resultados:** Os resultados deste estudo mostram que a comunicação empresarial interna tem um efeito positivo na sustentabilidade de um negócio em tempos incertos. Os resultados também mostram um efeito positivo da comunicação empresarial horizontal e externa na sustentabilidade dos negócios em tempos de incerteza. Sendo a interação humana a pedra angular das operações dos prestadores de serviços, esta transferência assume grande impacto nos negócios, sobretudo na indústria de serviços. Uma estratégia ou plano sustentável deve incorporar uma excelente comunicação. Para planejar efetivamente e, conseqüentemente, construir a sustentabilidade, bem como planos sustentáveis, as pessoas devem se comunicar tanto interna quanto externamente usando a(s) forma(s) apropriada(s) de comunicação. Portanto, os gerentes de uma organização respeitável devem se comunicar com o destinatário de maneira clara, direta e precisa, seja utilizando a comunicação oral para melhorar a continuidade dos negócios em tempos de incerteza.

**Pesquisa, implicações práticas e sociais:** Os resultados são de grande importância para o campo da gestão empresarial, especialmente no que diz respeito à relevância da comunicação empresarial no apoio à sustentabilidade dos negócios durante crises ou tempos de incerteza.

**Originalidade/valor:** O estudo fornece conhecimento original sobre comunicação empresarial no apoio à sustentabilidade durante os diferentes tempos de incerteza.

**Palavras-chave:** Comunicação Empresarial Interna, Comunicação Horizontal, Comunicação Externa, Sustentabilidade Empresarial, Tempos de Incerteza.

## RELACIÓN ENTRE COMUNICACIÓN EMPRESARIAL Y SOSTENIBILIDAD EMPRESARIAL EN TIEMPOS DE INCERTIDUMBRE. UN ESTUDIO DE CASO DE GRECIA

### RESUMEN

**Propósito:** El objetivo de este estudio es examinar la relación que existe entre la comunicación empresarial y la sostenibilidad empresarial en tiempos de incertidumbre.

**Marco teórico:** El estudio utilizó la teoría de las partes interesadas que ayuda a explicar la sostenibilidad empresarial en tiempos de incertidumbre y cómo se ve influenciada por diferentes aspectos, como la comunicación.

**Diseño/metodología/enfoque:** El cuestionario que se utilizó para recopilar datos fue de una muestra de 138 propietarios de negocios o empleados de PYMES en el sector manufacturero de Kozani Grecia.

**Hallazgos:** Los resultados de este estudio muestran que la comunicación empresarial interna tiene un efecto positivo en la sostenibilidad de una empresa durante tiempos inciertos. Los resultados también muestran un efecto positivo de la comunicación empresarial horizontal y externa sobre la sostenibilidad empresarial en tiempos de incertidumbre. Dado que la interacción humana es la piedra angular de las operaciones de los proveedores de servicios, esta transferencia supone un gran impacto en los negocios, muy especialmente en la industria de servicios. Una estrategia o plan sostenible debe incorporar una excelente comunicación. Para planificar de manera efectiva y, en consecuencia, construir la sostenibilidad y los planes sostenibles, las personas deben comunicarse tanto interna como externamente utilizando las formas de comunicación adecuadas. Por lo tanto, los gerentes de una organización respetable deben comunicarse con el destinatario de manera clara, directa y precisa, ya sea utilizando la comunicación oral para mejorar la continuidad del negocio en tiempos de incertidumbre.

**Implicaciones de investigación, prácticas y sociales:** los resultados son de gran importancia para el campo de la gestión empresarial, especialmente en lo que respecta a la relevancia de la comunicación empresarial para apoyar la sostenibilidad de las empresas durante crisis o tiempos de incertidumbre.

**Originalidad/valor:** El estudio proporciona un conocimiento original sobre la comunicación empresarial para apoyar la sostenibilidad durante los diferentes tiempos de incertidumbre.

**Palabras clave:** Comunicación Empresarial Interna, Comunicación Horizontal, Comunicación Externa, Sostenibilidad Empresarial, Tiempos de Incertidumbre.

## INTRODUCTION

Communication is very essential in regard to the prosperity and sustainable growth of entities the business world (Veršič et al., 2022). Every sustainable plan or strategy must include effective communication, both domestically and globally (Cramer et al., 2018). For strategies to be developed and apps to be created for sustainable activities, people must express themselves inwardly within their organisation. The importance of expressing oneself externally after completing internal duties cannot be overstated. In other words, individuals must communicate effectively both internally and outside so as to plan and build sustainable business initiatives (Fragouli et al., 2016). Some occupations, like computer programming or truck driving, need less communication aptitude than others. According to Kloprogge et al. (2007) effective communication helps in sustainable growth or competitiveness of business during uncertain times. Sustainability in businesses is also explained by the stakeholder theory that asserts that communication helps to provide business managers with the flexibility to deviate from standard business procedures when required (Hörisch, Freeman, & Schaltegger, 2014).

Genç (2017) indicated that there are many various ways to define communication, but they all have something in common like "transferring," "engagement," and "sharing with others." Business communication involves processes that happen when different ideas and information are transferred between people or groups of persons for purposeful objectives (Newig et al., 2013). Information must be transformed, but so must emotions, ideas, wants, and perceptions. Internal communication in the workplace may go in one of three directions: upward with different superiors, downward with the different subordinates, or lateral with peers. Customers and service providers may communicate outside. There are many reasons to communicate, but the majority of them are done so in an effort to influence the other(s)' emotions, ideas, or even actions (Kalogiannidis & Kontsas, 2021). Contrarily, sustainability has become a popular business strategy. It means serving present requirements while taking exceptional care to protect the financial, human, or environmental resources of the future. According to Newig et al. (2013), sustainability is an all-encompassing term that can be used to connect with society, increase customer diversity, cut operating costs, and benefit the community at large. As a result, sustainability can help businesses gain a competitive edge in the market through communication (García-Santiago, 2022).

Businesses frequently perform poorly during uncertain times because they find it challenging to comprehend and adapt to shifting circumstances and expectations (Basri & Siam, 2019). Better communication was selected by 48% of respondents in a poll of 150 top

executives from the biggest U.S. companies as the best cure for poor morale (Matkevičienė & Jakučionienė, 2021). Unsurprisingly, one third of respondents said that poor morale was mostly due to a lack of direct and honest contact with employees (Charalampides et al., 2013). Effective communication may be challenging in any situation, but it can be more challenging when people are nervous, worried, or otherwise disturbed. Employees need motivation, consolation, and education. They want their grievances to be heard, understood, and honestly handled. A sincere human touch and sensitive, timely communication may go a long way toward assuaging fears and promoting optimism. During times of change and uncertainty, there are higher expectations for open and honest communication, hence management must have a strategy in place (Deng et al., 2022). This study investigated the connection between business communication and business sustainability in times of uncertainty.

This study contributes important knowledge to the field of business management especially concerning the relevance of business communication in supporting sustainability of businesses during crises or times of uncertainty. This study sought to find out the relationship between business communication and business sustainability during times of uncertainty, using Greece as a case study. The specific objectives of the study are listed below;

- To establish the effect of internal business communication on business sustainability in times of uncertainty
- To assess the relationship between horizontal/lateral business communication and business sustainability during uncertain times.
- To determine the effect of external business communication on business sustainability in times of uncertainty

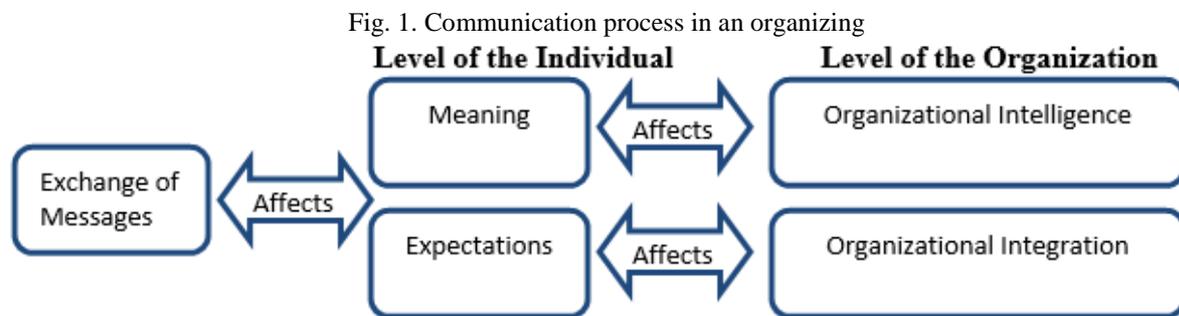
## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Communication in Business**

According to Basri & Siam (2019) effective communication is very important in regard to commercial success of the business. Communication may be used to realise and accomplish public relations goals. Since it is used to inform, persuade, inspire, and promote understanding, communication is crucial. Professionals in public relations are required to be familiar with the basics of communication before effectively using communication technology. They should also be aware of how the communication is sent from the sender to the recipient and how the recipient interprets the message (UNGC; Russell Reynolds et al., 2020). The aforementioned components point to business communication as a process where information or news relating

to business is transmitted between various business partners for the goal of efficient business administration, such as customers, suppliers, business clients, workers, etc (M. Nielsen et al., 2013).

Yustian (2021) indicated that technology advancements now provide possibilities for communication tools. These advancements provide public relations communication tools more traction. Organizational integration and organisational intelligence are the two key ideas in understanding communication. These two concepts are realised as outcomes of corporate communication via the providing and receiving of messages. People may begin to share expectations and meanings that are conveyed by communications when communication within an organization becomes more routine (Figure 1).



Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

Figure 1 illustrates the flow of communication in organizations. Additionally, the process by which people create meaning in their own minds has an influence on organizational intelligence at the level of the organization, and this impacts how people create meaning in their own minds (Fragouli et al., 2016). Additionally, both organisational integration and individual expectations are impacted by individual expectations, and both are impacted by individual expectations by organisational integration (Kalogiannidis, 2020).

According to Akech (2014), even if the degree of the effect varies based on the kind of firm, the design of the job, or the conception of productivity, workers show a relationship between communication in the workplace and their productivity. A successful organisation is one that more commonly provides avenues for well-coordinated upward communication and listens to what its workers say (Newig et al., 2013). Additionally, since staff are educated more effectively and at the right moment and have a "better knowledge of organizational purpose," successful firms are better when using different downward communication patterns (Salvioni & Bosetti, 2014).

## Communication and Sustainable Development

Cramer et al. (2018) highlighted the significance of communication towards achieving a high level of sustainable development whereby it was found that communication sets the foundation for effectively executing operations that influence development. Although communication for sustainable development has many characteristics with other communication strategies, it excels at bridging gaps between various stakeholder groups (Janmaimool Piyapong and Watanabe Tsunemi, 2014). However, several difficulties remain that have not yet been resolved. For instance, the features of the existing medium and design of messages, the practices established for the application, and developing methods to analyse the effect make the use of communication in sustainable development impractical. Any strategy that wants to encourage sustainability must place communication first (Cramer et al., 2018; Ofori et al., 2020). Additionally, external communication with customers, employees, and the community is crucial for the success of sustainability plans; otherwise, the organisation runs the danger of seeing a decline in total sales. Sustainability as a consequence is growing in acceptance on a worldwide basis. Understanding the fundamentals of sustainability makes it obvious why communication is crucial for sustainable development. Social discourse is crucial in the first place for establishing the legitimacy of sustainable development (Tomy & Pardede, 2018).

Considering sustainability-related challenges often include high levels of complexity and ambiguity, communication is crucial for transferring information among the actors. For instance, Ofori et al. (2020) suggested new research paradigms that take into account high levels of discourse and communication, the general involvement of company stakeholders for growing the knowledge base, and more social values as a result of these high decision stakes. Furthermore, conflict of interest and conflicts of principles seem to be among the goals of sustainability. At this stage, communication is very helpful in developing a common understanding of the sustainability principles for society and specifying the precise goals that must be achieved. Last but not least, putting sustainable development measures into action might be difficult since managing sustainable development requires several levels of decision-making, is not centralised, and is widely dispersed among various participants in society (Tomy & Pardede, 2018).

Communication about sustainability is associated with different procedures through which knowledge, and ideas pertaining to sustainability concerns are shared and debated. On a wide range of levels, from interpersonal face-to-face interaction to the mediated level of

information dissemination, horizontal communication may alter and frame situations. By developing an agreement on the situation at hand, the objectives that must be achieved, and who should take action, CaS performs important roles of expressing concerns and organising facts, arguments, and assertions. These interactions are not always peaceful and inclusive; rather, they may be seen as conflictive organised fields of symbolic interaction where many players compete to impose their own views on the problems, their justifications, and the solutions (Kopnina, 2017; Kalfas et al, 2022; Kalogiannidis et al 2022; Matkevičienė & Jakučionienė, 2021).

García-Santiago (2022) revealed that the level of media coverage a topic gets may be used to gauge the quality or efficacy of CaS. Since efficacy relies on structural variables and the overall design of the communication process, it is also important to know who gets access to the discourse and determines the framing processes. The possibility for communication interchange across domains or communication subsystems is the last factor to consider while evaluating CaS. The likelihood of trying to transfer significant elements from one subsystem to another in order to realise sustainable development is typically measured as an indicator of communication effectiveness, as is the compatibility of the discourse in one sub - system, like the political system, with discourses in other components (Guo et al., 2020; Hoffstaedter, 2020; M. Nielsen et al., 2013).

Informing and educating people, as well as establishing some amount of social involvement and taking action, are some of the specialised tasks performed by CoS. From this vantage point, CoS adopts an elitist posture by drawing a crucial contrast between professionals and regular people in terms of their sustainability-related knowledge and skills (Saad & Yaaqoob, 2022). CoS must be evaluated in terms of efficacy since it has stated goals about the anticipated outcomes (Fragouli et al., 2016). It takes into account the issues of whether the intended audience has been reached, if they have comprehended the message, and whether they have adjusted their beliefs and actions appropriately. However, the scientific community is increasingly criticising this method of communication where specialists teach regular people (A.O. & A.A, 2016; M. Nielsen et al., 2013). Since the distinction between Communication for Sustainability (CfS) focuses on the normative aspect of sustainable development (Casey-Hardman, 2020; García-Santiago, 2022). In this sense, communication involves more than just disseminating knowledge about sustainability and promoting sustainability-related issues (Chatzitheodoridis et al, 2020; Deng et al., 2022; Scott, 2017).

The goal of CfS is to establish social change based on the normative ideals of sustainable development. CfS may share elements with CoS and CaS in terms of direction and senders, such as knowledge creation (or social) learning and collectively solving sustainability-related issues (Saad & Yaaqoob, 2022). The influence of CfS on quantifiable actions toward sustainable development is used to assess the program's efficacy (Chen, 2015; Padukkage et al., 2015a). Communication for Sustainability (CfS) has counterarguments in that it may overlook or even obstruct sustainable progress. Since no one publicly opposes sustainability, this is often accomplished through making symbolic gestures that seem to favour sustainability while secretly pursuing non-sustainable interests (Kalogiannidis et al, 2022; Dincer & Dincer, 2022; Primožič & Kutnar, 2022).

### **Business Communication**

Every business correspondence sent from a subordinate to a higher person in the organisational hierarchy relates to upward communication. Leaders need the flow of information upward in order to get real insight into the operations of the company. Upward communication mostly relies on well-organized forms, reports, surveys, templates, and other tools that let employees provide the necessary information (Hamsal & Ichsan, 2021; Scott, 2017). For instance, a sales report may include information on both actual sales and total pitch volume. Additionally, it could ask for feedback, such as a rundown of problems or successes that management should keep an eye on. For instance, employees in a company's HR department produce an attrition report and provide it to the HR Manager. An organization's staff turnover statistics, as well as the circumstances that led to it, are included in the attrition report. This helps the HR manager determine the cause of attrition and initiate early corrective action to reduce employee turnover (Akech, 2014; Goldston, 2020; M. Nielsen et al., 2013).

Business also makes use of downward internal communications, which include any correspondence from a supervisor to one or more subordinates. Forms of communication include memos, oral orders, and letters. Leaders should talk in a formal and open manner while addressing subordinates. For instance, a letter outlining a new operating procedure may include contain updated safety requirements. The language used to express the safety requirements must be exact and explicit, leaving no room for interpretation (Guo et al., 2020; Kopnina, 2017; Padukkage et al., 2015a).

In the workplace, chatting, texting, and emailing amongst employees is referred to as lateral or horizontal communication. This might be departmental or even interdepartmental

communication. An instance of cross-departmental communication would be when the fulfilment manager has a question about a specific order and contacts the sales representative through email or the office messaging system (Hamsal & Ichsan, 2021). Coworkers should always be encouraged to talk in an appropriate and professional manner while at work (Hamsal & Ichsan, 2021; Kloprogge et al., 2007).

Koç et al. (2022) argued that external communications are important in addressing uncertainties in business. External communication is any interaction with customers, prospective customers, suppliers, or partners. Government agencies or regulatory authorities may also become involved. In order to capture the customer's interest, sales presentations and marketing materials need to be entertaining, but they also need to be factually accurate. When interacting with outside parties for collaborations or other business management obligations, whether orally or in writing, be concise and straightforward (Papadopoulos et al., 2010).

### **Uncertainty and Sustainability in Companies**

According to DuFrene & Lehman (2014), a distinction between risk and uncertainty must be made when looking at the concepts of uncertainty. To be successful commercially, this difference must exist. This is true because probabilities, including conditional probabilities, can be used to quantify risk. However, uncertainty cannot be quantified since there are unknowns which calls for whole new managerial approaches, coping mechanisms, and entrepreneurial impulses. According to García-Santiago (2022), a shock like the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences on doing business need a rebalancing of entrepreneurial activity via both internal frugal mechanisms and external assistance mechanisms.

Salvioni & Bosetti (2014) argue that because of uncertainty, businesses can undertake different decisions than they normally would. In uncertain times, businesses may seek markets that are untouched by the scenario at hand. Typically, this would include looking at areas with rapid economic development or hunting for customers in safe sectors like the pharmaceutical and consumer goods industries (Boiral et al., 2021). In unpredictable times, getting rid of debt and fixed costs is a good idea (Boiral et al., 2021; Charalampides et al., 2013; The Economist, 2009). Despite the global unrest, it's feasible that some firms may elect to expand their debt burdens given the cheap interest rates in the present economic environment. The cost viewpoint is related to the third element. According to Tomy & Pardede (2018) using strategic alliances decreases the risk of fixed expenses and concurrently incorporates the goal of strengthening the value offer to clients during times of uncertainty.

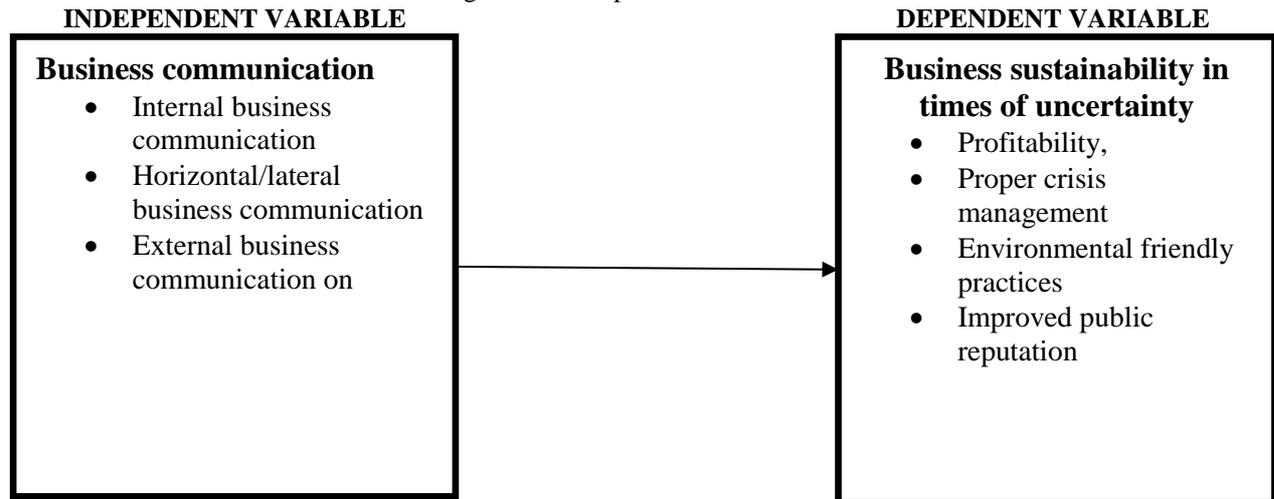
Casey-Hardman (2020) asserts that for managers to maintain their firms, they must manage their investments to secure both a short-term profit and a long-term income stream. Businesses that fail to manage different trade-offs effectively run the risk of experiencing problems at both the micro- and macro levels of analysis (Hamsal & Ichsan, 2021). Businesses at the micro level subject themselves to immediate risks by failing to manage their cash flow. Businesses, for instance, may see a loss in their long-term value if they underinvest in research and development (Guo et al., 2020; Padukkage et al., 2015b). When the system fails, enterprises are exposed to indirect risks because they collectively fail to balance the short- and long-term interests (Fragouli et al., 2016; García-Santiago, 2022).

Trade-offs are necessary for sustainability in times of uncertainty, particularly over time. Businesses must decide whether to invest more for future profits or less for now earnings. The same guidelines apply in times of deciding between exploitation and exploration (Charalampides et al., 2013; M. Nielsen et al., 2013). The concept of sustainability has made managers more open to adopting cutting-edge social, economic, and environmental initiatives (Sehnem, 2016). Businesses exploit their current products and services to increase sales, but they also need to engage in exploratory activities like development and research to guarantee a stable product and service supply in the future(Charalampides et al., 2013; Yustian, 2021).

### **Conceptual Frame Work**

The figure below shows the relationship between the different types of business communication as the independent variable and business sustainability in times of uncertainty as the dependent variable.

Figure 2: Conceptual framework



Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

The model shows that business sustainability in times of uncertainty is dependent upon the different types of business communication. The independent variable (Business communication) has three dimensions of internal business communication, horizontal business communication, as well as external business communication. On the other hand, the dependent (business sustainability in times of uncertainty) has three dimensions of profitability, proper crisis management, environmental friendly practices, and improved public reputation

## MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

A research design is a conceptual framework used to conduct research and create a foundation for data collecting, measurement, and analysis. Cross-sectional survey research design allowed for simultaneous observation of several variables. Quantitative methods of data collecting and hypothesis testing were used in the study. To achieve the different objectives of this study, guiding hypothesis were formulated as below:

H1; Effective internal business communication helps businesses survive in times of uncertainty.

H2: There is a direct connection between horizontal business communication and a company's ability to survive in times of uncertainty.

H3: External business communication has a positive impact on business sustainability in uncertain times

## **Study Population**

The study majorly targeted employees in different manufacturing SMEs in Kozani, Greece. This population was targeted since the different owners and employees of manufacturing SMEs are associated with great knowledge concerning the impact of business communication in times of uncertainty.

## **Sample Size**

The sample size determination was based on the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) model. The sample size was 138 respondents from the different manufacturing SMEs in Kozani in Greece. Estimate total population size of 215.

## **Sampling techniques and procedure**

Stratified and simple random techniques of sampling were utilized. Stratified sampling is basically a probability sampling technique in which the researcher divides the study's target population into discrete subgroups, or "strata," and then randomly selects a proportionate number of the strata for the final sample. The final sample of the study was taken from the strata using simple random sampling procedure after the target sample had been determined using stratified sampling

## **Data Collection**

### **Questionnaire Survey**

One of the easiest and most often used techniques of data collecting is the questionnaire. This is due to the fact that it is less expensive because a huge number of respondents are covered quickly, and it allows respondents to freely respond to sensitive topics without worrying about the researcher's judgment or disapproval. Since it was assumed that since they were employed in manufacturing SMEs they would have a wealth of knowledge to aid in addressing the various goals of the study, a questionnaire was used to gather insight into the phenomenon of Business communication and business sustainability in times of uncertainty.

## **Measurement of Variables**

Variables were operationally defined in order to measure the variables. For instance, questions concerning business communication and business sustainability in times of uncertainty were constructed as surveys. To enable the creation of an index idea, these were

transformed into quantifiable and observable components. A likert scale of 1 to 5 was used representing 5 for strongly agree; 4 for Agree; 3 for Not sure; then 2 for Disagree; and 1- Strongly disagree.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis involves giving data organisation and order. For each of the study's questions, frequencies, percentages, standard deviations, and means were used to arrange, categorise, and evaluate the quantitative data scores from the questionnaire. To examine associations with a 99% level of confidence, Pearson's correlation statistics were used. In order to determine the general predictive potency of the various independent factors on the study's dependent variable, regression analysis was carried out. A multiple regression model was crucial in this situation for estimating various predictive values.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon \dots \dots \dots 3.1$$

Where;  
Y= Business sustainability in times of uncertainty  
 $\beta_0$ = constant (coefficient of intercept);  
 $X_1$ = Internal business communication  
 $X_2$ = Horizontal business communication  
 $X_3$ = External business communication  
 $\varepsilon$  = Shows the model's the error term

$\beta_1 \dots \beta_3$ = Shows the regression coefficient for the independent variables and how this helps to predict business sustainability in times of uncertainty. The hypotheses of this study were tested and consequently interpreted at the 5% level of significance (0.05), and the null hypotheses were accepted or rejected based on the P-value.

### Ethical Considerations

The respondents gave their informed permission by providing them with information about the study's specifics and then evaluating their desire to participate. This was in addition to processing the information gathered from responders with a high level of privacy. The respondents were permitted to interpret the various opinion questions in order to react to questions in their own way. This facilitated getting comprehensive replies, particularly for open-ended inquiries.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

This chapter presents a detailed account of the analysis, presentation and interpretation of the research findings obtained using the different quantitative research tools.

#### Background Characteristics

The results on characteristics of the respondents of the study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Background characteristics of the study participants

Item	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	88	63.8
	Female	50	36.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Age	18-28 years	6	4.3
	29-39 years	82	59.4
	Above 39 years	50	36.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Level of education	Certificate	36	26.1
	Diploma	43	31.2
	Degree	59	42.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Years spent in the manufacturing company	Less than 5 years	45	32.6
	5-10 years	63	45.7
	Above 10 years	30	21.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

Results of the study in Table 1 revealed that most participants were males 88(63.8%) while females were represented by 50(36.2%). The results also revealed that most of the respondents (59.4%) were aged between 29-39 years followed by 36.2% aged above 39 years and the rest (4.3%) were aged 18-28 years. In regard to years spent in the manufacturing company, majority (45.7%) has spent 5-10 years in the manufacturing company followed by 32.6% who had spent less than 5 years in business and only 21.7% had spent above 10 years in business.

Results on effect of internal business communication on business sustainability in times of uncertainty

Table 2: Effect of internal business communication on business sustainability during times of uncertainty

Statement	F/ %	SD	D	N	A	SA
Business information is disseminated internally for the benefit of employees	F %	1 0.7	19 13.8	25 18.1	71 51.4	22 15.9
Customers and business staff are easily updated about business changes through internal communication	F %	0 0.0	3 2.2	13 10.1	71 50.7	51 37.0
Internal communication facilitates the effective flow of information among coworkers and departments within a company	F %	5 3.6	32 23.2	16 11.6	61 44.2	24 17.4
Effective crisis communication is possible through internal business communication	F %	0 0.0	2 1.4	12 8.7	76 55.1	48 34.8
Internal communication facilitates proper decision-making in times of uncertainty	F %	1 0.7	7 5.1	3 2.2	75 52.2	55 39.9

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

The results in Table 2 regarding whether business information is disseminated internally for the benefit of employees, majority of the respondents (51.4%) agreed, and 13.8% disagreed. With respect to whether Customers and business staff are easily updated about business changes through internal communication, the larger percentage (50.7%) agreed, and 2.2% disagreed. Also 44.2% agreed that internal communication facilitates the effective flow of information among coworkers and departments within a company. Majority of the participants (55.1%) agreed that effective crisis communication is possible through internal business communication and finally 52.2% agreed that internal communication facilitates proper decision-making in times of uncertainty.

#### Results for Horizontal/Lateral Business Communication

Results about horizontal business communication in times of uncertainty are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Horizontal/Lateral Business communication in times of uncertainty

Statement	F/%	SD	D	N	A	SA
Horizontal communication supports effective interactions between teams, departments, or individuals working at the same level in business	F	0	3	13	71	51
	%	0.0	2.2	9.4	51.4	37.0
One of the most important factors in a company's success is effective horizontal communication.	F	5	32	16	61	24
	%	3.6	23.2	11.6	44.2	17.4
The organizational structure is made more flexible via horizontal communication.	F	0	2	12	76	48
	%	0.0	1.4	8.7	55.1	34.8
Horizontal communication allows direct communication between customers and the business.	F	1	7	3	72	55
	%	0.7	5.1	2.2	52.2	39.9
Horizontal communication encourages information sharing and issue resolution amongst various work groups.	F	1	3	2	73	59
	%	0.7	2.2	1.4	52.9	42.8

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

From Table 3, most participants (251.4%) agreed that horizontal communication supports effective interactions between teams, departments, or individuals working at the same level in business. Majority of the participants (44.2%) agreed that one of the most important factors in a company's success is effective horizontal communication. Furthermore it was revealed by 55.1% that the organizational structure is made more flexible via horizontal communication. Majority of the participants (52.2%) agreed that horizontal communication allows direct communication between customers and the business. Finally, it was agreed upon by 52.9% that horizontal communication encourages information sharing and issue resolution amongst various work groups.

### Results on external business communication on in times of uncertainty

The results about Sustainable Financial Inclusion Strategies are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4: External business communication in times of uncertainty

Statement	F/ %	SD	D	N	A	SA
External communication aids in brand recognition and marketing, improves the public's perception of the brand, and ultimately increases sales	F	10	55	19	39	15
	%	7.2	39.9	13.8	28.3	10.9
External communication allows use of Email, brochures, newsletters, posters, and advertising to entice customers	F	5	21	26	44	42
	%	3.6	15.2	18.8	31.9	30.4
Businesses are able to thrive with strong customer base through external communications	F	14	43	19	42	20
	%	10.1	10.2	13.8	51.4	14.5
An important external communication tactic that might advance a company in crises is investing in internet.	F	4	16	8	67	43
	%	2.9	11.6	5.8	48.6	31.2
Times of uncertainty can be managed by creating strong business brands through external communications	F	20	51	26	31	10
	%	14.5	17.0	18.8	42.5	7.2

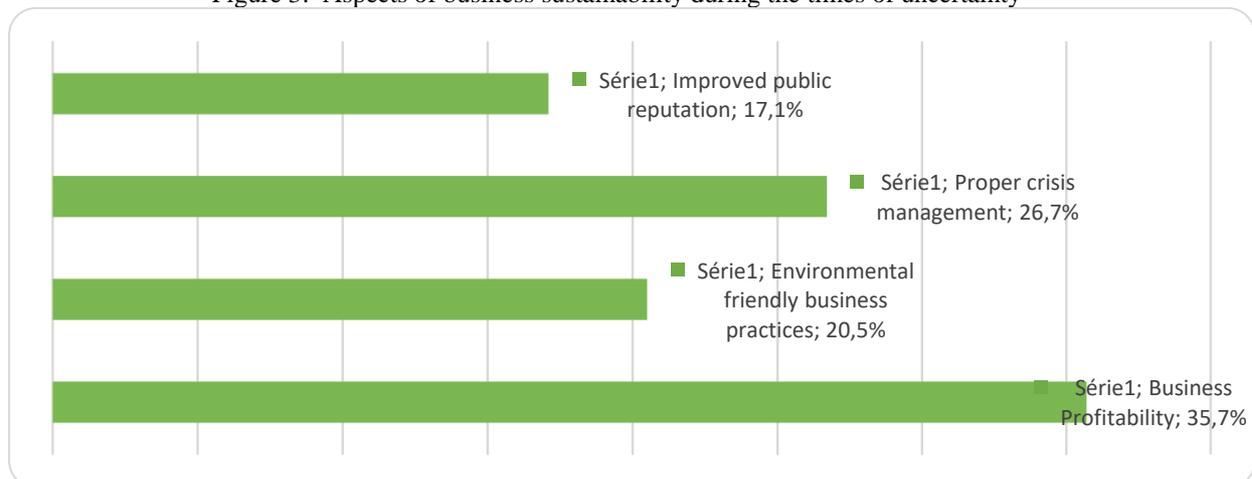
Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

The results in Table 4 regarding whether external communication aids in brand recognition and marketing, improves the public's perception of the brand, and ultimately increases sales, majority percentage (39.9%) disagreed while 28.3% agreed. Majority of the participants (31.9%) agreed that external communication allows use of Email, brochures, newsletters, posters, and advertising to entice customers. Regarding whether businesses are able to thrive with strong customer base through external communications, the larger percentage (51.4%) agreed and only 10.2% disagreed. Furthermore, the largest percentage (48.6%) agreed that an important external communication tactic that might advance a company in crises is investing in internet. Finally, majority of respondents (45.2%) agreed that times of uncertainty can be managed by creating strong business brands through external communications.

### Results on business sustainability in times of uncertainty

The results about business sustainability on in times of uncertainty are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Aspects of business sustainability during the times of uncertainty



Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

The results in Figure 3 regarding aspects of business sustainability on in times of uncertainty show that business profitability is the major aspect (35.7%) followed by proper crisis management (26.7%), environmental friendly business practices (20.5%) and then improved public reputation (17.1%).

### Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis helped to find out the relationship between study variables as in Table 5

Table 5: Cross-tabulation results

	Internal business communicatio n	Horizontal Business Communication	External Business communicat ion	Business sustainability
Internal business communication	1			
Horizontal Business Communication	0.648** 0.00	1		
External Business communication	0.551* 0.02	0.649* 0.000	1	
Business sustainability (dep.)	0.715* 0.00	0.905* 0.00	0.846* 0.00	1 0.00

\*\* and \* respectively indicate statistical significance at a 5% significance level. Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

There is a positive correlation between internal business communication and business sustainability ( $r = 0.715$ ) and significant at 0.05 level of significance. There was a positive correlation between horizontal business communication and business sustainability in times of uncertainty ( $r = 0.905$ ) and significant at 0.05. External business communication gave a positive correlation with Business sustainability in times of uncertainty ( $r = 0.846$ ) at a 0.05 level of significance ( $p=0.00<0.05$ ), showing that business can utilize brochures, newsletters, posters, advertising, and other types of multimedia marketing to engage with customers during times of uncertainty

#### Results of regression analysis

Regression analysis helped to find out the level to which business sustainability in times of uncertainty is predicted by the different components of business communication and the results are presented in table 6. There was a positive multiple correlation coefficient (R) which is an indication that three independent variables in this study are positively correlated to business sustainability in times of uncertainty. Also, the value of R-Square confirms that the independent variables for this study cater for a 58.9% change in business sustainability in times of uncertainty.

Table 6: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	.513 <sup>a</sup>	589	.591	2.0141

<sup>a</sup> **Predictors: (Constant):** Internal business communication, horizontal Communication, external Business communication

The one-way ANOVA was used to assess if the three independent variables were superior predictors of the dependent variable or whether the linear regression model well fitted the data.  $F(3, 135) = 149.136, p < 0.05$ , indicating that the model and data are a good fit.

Table 7: ANOVA analysis

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	23.210	3	17.182	149.136	.015
Residual	3.258	135	.046		
Total	21.073	138			

**Dependent Variable:** Business sustainability in times of uncertainty

**Predictors: (Constant),** Internal business communication, horizontal Communication, external Business communication

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

The unstandardized coefficients obtained after regression analysis helped to decide on the relationship between Business communication and business sustainability in times of uncertainty

Table 8: Regression coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.318	0.136		2.438	0.026
Internal business communication	0.218	0.057	0.397	3.736	0.003
Horizontal Communication	0.276	0.067	0.213	3.195	0.021
External Business communication	0.172	0.049	0.282	3.511	0.002

*Dependent Variable:* Business sustainability in times of uncertainty. *Predictors: (Constant).* Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

Internal business communication, horizontal Communication, external Business communication.

The beta coefficient of internal business communication is 0.397, which meant that a unit change in internal business communication may result in a 39.7% change in business sustainability in times of uncertainty. Similarly, the beta coefficient of horizontal communication is 0.213, meaning that a unit change in horizontal communication resulting in a 21.3% change in business sustainability in times of uncertainty. Also, a specific change in external Business communication would lead to a 28.2% change in business sustainability in times of uncertainty.

The significance threshold was met by the p-value (0.003), which was less than the beta coefficient (1) of 0.397. (0.05). We agree with hypothesis 1 that effective internal business communication helps businesses survive in times of uncertainty.

The significance level was met based on the p-value (0.021), which was more significant than the beta coefficient (2) of 0.213. (0.05). We accept hypothesis 2, according to which there is a direct connection between horizontal business communication and a company's ability to survive in times of uncertainty.

The association between the various facets of external business communication and business sustainability in uncertain times is strongly correlated, as indicated by the Beta coefficient (3) of 0.002 and the variable's significance at P-value (0.005). Therefore, we concur with hypothesis 3 that, external business communication has a positive impact on business sustainability in uncertain times

## DISCUSSION

The study established the relationship between business communication and business sustainability in times of uncertainty. The results show that internal, horizontal and external approaches to business communication have a positive effect on business sustainability in uncertain times. Numerous studies have sought to establish a connection between an organization's commercial success and its external communication tactics, but it is more challenging to do so when focusing on internal communication (FAO, 2020; García-Santiago, 2022; Primožič & Kutnar, 2022). Non-financial factors, such as employee happiness, engagement, turnover rate, and long-term commitment, must be taken into account rather than concentrating on the conventional financial method to evaluating return on investment (Kopnina, 2017; C. Nielsen & Aagaard, 2021; Scott, 2017). Organizations must, however, resist "resting on their laurels" and refrain from assuming that communication tactics that have been successful in the past will continue to be successful while managing change. Dincer & Dincer (2022) for instance, advised organisations to be wary of relying too much on techniques and procedures that have proven successful in the past, which constricts the potential for effective reaction. Business communication during times of uncertainty must include both parties hence should be bith external and internal. Even though it's crucial in any communication circumstance, listening is especially necessary when a change is being made (Genç, 2017; Padukkage et al., 2015a). People who are immersed in uneasy and uncertain circumstances have anxieties that they need to communicate and require reassurance that their fears are being taken seriously. Fragouli et al., (2016) offered some advice on how to listen effectively in difficult situations, including refraining from multitasking or interrupting the speaker, paying attention to nonverbal cues to look for possible hidden messages, reserving judgement, summarising

frequently for empathy and understanding, and waiting until the speaker has finished speaking (Fragouli et al., 2016; Matkevičienė & Jakučionienė, 2021; Yustian, 2021). Obviously, listening involves more than just the physical activity that occurs during face-to-face interactions. It entails being open to the numerous channels via which workers express their ideas, issues, and concerns, whether they are conventional or facilitated by technology (Koç et al., 2022; Zanini et al., 2009). Email, texting, video chat, social media, and other new communication methods have internal communication, which might be advantageous (UN, 2021; Zheng et al., 2022). Employees and management are increasingly collaborating to establish internal communication which has an impact on the reputation of businesses and their ability to remain sustainable. Organizations that exclusively utilise standard corporate channels to communicate with workers are limited to outdated push methods and lose valuable possibilities to engage staff in conversation with management and one another as well as include them in tackling problems and contributing to the solution (Boiral et al., 2021; Scott, 2017).

## CONCLUSION

The study confirmed that there is a relationship between business communication and business sustainability in times of uncertainty. How management deals with employees in times of upheaval and uncertainty may reveal a lot about an organization's core principles and long-term viability. During difficult circumstances, employees may feel intimidated, overworked, disregarded, and scared about what the future may hold. The difficult task of encouraging workers to remain content and productive despite changing circumstances without sugarcoating the reality of the situation falls on managers at all organisational levels. Strategic planning and in-depth audience study are essential to ensuring that message content, timing, and delivery method are acceptable. Even though they are challenging to measure, the benefits of effective internal communication may be officially assessed by looking at employee commitment, satisfaction, and effort throughout the transition process. The most crucial conditions for successful business communication during times of uncertainty are ethical disclosure and openness. Instead of attempting to spin communication, a unified management team must concentrate on helping workers through the difficulties. Instead than depending on the news media or employee (or ex-employee) blogs and postings, management should constantly provide employees with important information. Those who are going through transition might find energy within themselves and from one another if optimism is encouraged among them.

Employee participation in the transformation process boosts employee happiness and advances the organization's objectives. In times of uncertainty, businesses should use a variety of strategies for creating a feeling of community inside the business via internal and external business communication.

The results show that business communication is an important element of an organization's ability to remain sustainable. Therefore owners of businesses or business managers should always focus on implementing the most effective form of business communication to enable an organization or business thrive in times of crisis or uncertainty.

For this research, the sample and the methodological issue were additional limitations. Another constraint that has to be taken into account is the respondents' reluctance to complete and submit the questionnaire completely and on time. It may be conceivable to examine the viewpoints of a sample that encompasses the whole region or the entire country in a follow-up research that is similar to this one. To improve the generalizability of the research's results, a Stratified and simple random techniques approaches were used to select a suitable sample for the investigation.

The current study focused on how the different forms of business communication relate with sustainability of businesses in times of uncertainty. Future research should therefore focus on the strategies that can be employed to improve communication and sustainability in business during a crisis.

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