

Media Richness and Feedback Seeking Behaviours

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Media Richness and Feedback Seeking Behaviours

Abstract

This study attempted to measure whether a relationship existed between media richness and feedback seeking behaviours. In a laboratory setting, university students (n = 45) completed a short E-tray exercise. Participants were separated into three groups, instant message, audio call, and video call each representing a differing level of media richness. Throughout the exercise, participants were presented with three opportunities in which they could choose to seek feedback on their work. Feedback was given by a task expert via the use of their groups' respective technology. This study found that there was no significant relationship between the richness of the communication technology and the frequency of feedback seeking by participants. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed in addition to directions for future research.

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Introduction

Pressure on organisations to adopt technology in their day-to-day functioning is growing. Globalisation and international competition push working individuals to be connected to their work at any time and any place (Acs & Preston, 1997; Gibson & Cohen, 2003; Hertel, Geister, & Konradt, 2005). This has led to a widespread technological reliance in organisations, where working individuals must engage with some level of technology to effectively complete their work. This reliance on communication technologies has seeped into nearly all professions (Bloom, Garicano, Sadun, & Van Reenen, 2014; Li, & Freeney, 2014), from baristas completing their time-sheets online to CEOs conducting meetings with their managers worldwide through video conference.

While some virtual media, such as email, have been present in organizations since the 1980s, new and increasingly complex media are continuously appearing. Workers have more options of communication methods than ever before, including emails, texts, snapchats, tweets, skype calls, and facetime to name a few. Communication technologies have even allowed for the creation of new professions. For instance, Virtual Assistants or Virtual PAs are individuals who rely on virtual communication media to provide the professional services of an executive assistant without meeting their clients face-to-face (Entrepreneur, 2017). As professions move towards greater or even complete technological reliance, it is important to gain understanding of how these technologies may affect work behaviours and performance. Each virtual medium creates a unique environment in which employees interact (Kiesler & Sproull, 1992). Research suggests that the extent to which individuals rely on communication technologies to conduct work related tasks, and the characteristics of these technologies, influence workplace behaviours (Gilson et al., 2015). Feedback seeking behaviours (FSB), for instance, may be affected by the extent to which individuals rely on technology media to perform their job (Ashford & Tsui 1991; Chen, Lam, & Zhong, 2007; Renn & Fedor, 2001). These behaviours

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can take a variety of forms, such as directly asking for a supervisor to critique work, or discreetly observing a co-worker to see how they complete a given task. FSB are deliberate attempts by individuals to improve their working behaviours, as the feedback is aimed at increasing performance and role clarity (Whitaker, Dahling & Levy 2007).

In 1986, Draft and Lengel (1986) proposed Media Richness Theory (MRT), a model that describes the amount and type of information conveyed by a given communication medium, and postulated that media richness interacts with task type to affect performance. Media richness theory classifies communication media along four dimensions: 1) feedback immediacy, or the ability to give and receive rapid feedback that is comprehensible by all parties involved in a communication exchange; 2) the medium's capacity to convey verbal and non-verbal cues; 3) the personalization of a medium, defined as the extent to which the sender can customize the message to the needs and wants of the receiver; and 4) language variety, or the types of language a medium can convey (e.g., written language, numeric language). These four dimensions are used to characterise communication media, and to place them along a media richness continuum. Media such as video conferencing are high in media richness due to their similarity to face-to-face communication, which is high in all four components of "richness". MRT principles can be used to pair certain media with certain tasks. For instance, the completion of ambiguous, complex, and decision-making tasks requires richer media (e.g. videoconferencing). Hence, media choice in organizations is now an important decision for managers to make and managing technology-mediated communications to maximise positive outcomes represents an important managerial activity.

Whether and how media richness influences feedback seeking has yet to be analysed. While research into virtual teams has provided many examples of how working with technology affects workplace behaviours (Gibbs, Sivunen & Boyraz 2017; Kirkman, Gibson & Kim 2012), studies directly examining FSB in a virtual setting are scarce. Existing studies

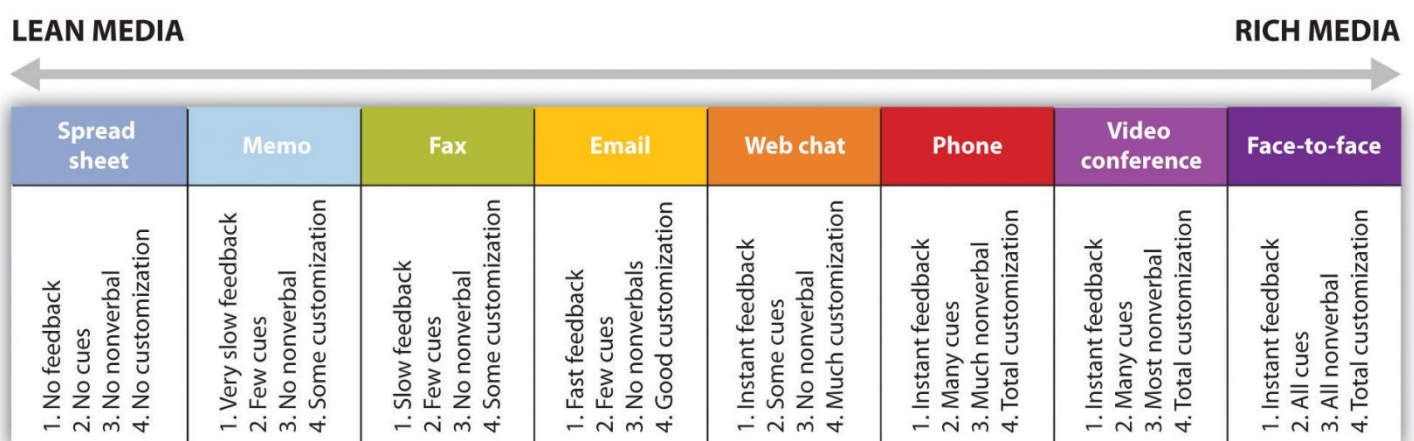
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either focus on feedback seeking in relation to a single technology medium (Hwang & Arbaugh, 2006), or view feedback seeking as a potential moderator on team issues such as conflict (Ayoko, Konrad & Boyle 2012). Thus, the aim of this study is to explore whether and how levels of media richness influence feedback-seeking behaviours in an individual performance task.

Media Richness Theory

Daft and Lengel (1986), in their seminal work on media richness, proposed the two main premises of MRT: 1) all media differ in "richness", and 2) performance improves when managers use richer media for equivocal tasks (i.e., tasks that have multiple interpretations such as writing reports or designing a website). Regarding the first premise, medium "richness" is classified along four dimensions: the immediacy of feedback provided, the ability to transmit multiple cues, personalization of a medium, and language variety. Figure 1 (Wrench, Carter & Ward, 2015) illustrates the traditional media richness continuum.

Figure 1. The Media Richness Continuum (Wrench, Carter & Ward, 2015)



The immediacy of feedback is the extent to which a medium enables users to give and receive rapid feedback that is comprehensible to all parties in a communication exchange (Daft

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& Lengel 1986). This feedback takes many forms such as head nodding in acknowledgment of agreement/understanding, or repeating messages to clarify details (Clarke 1992).

The second dimension of media richness refers to the number of ways a medium can communicate information. Daft and Lengel (1986) state that face-to-face interaction is the richest possible medium, as it allows not just the transmission of spoken word but also body language, tone of voice, and vocal cues. Less rich media, such as phone calls lack any visual cues but include tone and inflection, while text only media have even fewer cues relying solely on written text and perhaps accompanying images. There are a variety of ways in which the transmission of multiple cues can affect communication and the comprehension of messages. For instance, verbal and non-verbal cues allow the receiver to obtain information not contained in the words alone (Williams 1977). Written communication media suffer because of the inefficiency of written cues, and the fact that it requires significantly longer to convey information (Andres 2002; Fowler & Wackerbarth, 1980). Research has shown in group experiments that as the multiplicity of cues increases, task decision time decreases (Dennis & Kinney, 1998; Siegel et al. 1983,) and decision quality increases (Kahai & Cooper, 2003). Beyond speed of comprehension, media that have few cues have significant effects on the social perceptions of messages. This could include a loss of social presence, depersonalization between the communicators (Williams 1977), and the potential to increase anti-social behaviours (Siegel et al. 1983).

Personalization of medium or the "personal focus" is the extent to which the sender can customize the message to the needs and wants of the receiver. Messages which lack personalization such as companywide forum posts must be tailored to be understood by a large and varied group of individuals, often reducing their effectiveness. Alternatively, an email sent to a single individual can be tailored to the understanding of that individual's knowledge, communication style, interests, and expertise. That allows for a more effective delivery.

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Language variety is the extent to which a medium can convey multiple language types. Draft et al. (1987) identified two broad categories of language type; natural language consisting of art, images, non-verbal cues, verbal expression, and number language comprising numerical information. Richer media hold the potential to transmit a variety of language types while leaner media transmit fewer.

The second main premise of MRT is that performance improves when managers use richer media for equivocal tasks. In this context, equivocality means ambiguity (Draft & Lengel, 1986) defined as the existence of multiple and conflicting interpretations about an organizational situation (Downey & Slocum, 1975; Tushman & Nadler, 1978). Important to MRT is the distinction between equivocal tasks and uncertain tasks. Draft and Lengel (1986) define uncertainty as the absence of information; if an individual does not possess the necessary information to complete a task then it is uncertain. Uncertain tasks have a definitive answer that needs to be reached. For example, Draft and Lengel describe a game of "twenty-questions" where an individual must ask a series of questions to identify an object. Here each question reduces the uncertainty of the task until the object is identified, at that point uncertainty is gone and further questions provide no information. Contrastingly, in equivocal tasks, there is no one correct answer, which creates multiple or conflicting interpretations on how to solve it.

Draft and Lengel (1986) state that richer media when used for tasks of high equivocality, will increase performance. While this statement follows from their conceptualization of media richness, research has struggled to provide evidence of greater media richness increasing performance in high equivocality tasks (Bostrom, Kinney & Watson, 1992; Dennis and Kinney 1998; Suh, K S. 1999; Vickery, Droge, Stank Goldsby & Markland, 2004; Valacich et al. 1994). Despite these non-supportive empirical findings on media richness and performance, most research into MRT continues in the vein of Draft et al. (1987), focusing on whether media choice in organizations follows MRT (Barnard 1991, Rice 1992, Hunter &

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Allen, 1992). In conclusion, MRT provides a solid conceptual framework for examining how different forms of communication affect how information is transmitted and received via technology media, but the evidence to support the theory is thus far limited, and seldom focuses on the extent to which medium richness influences task-oriented behaviours.

Feedback Seeking Behaviours

Research into media richness theory, virtual work, and virtual teams has explored many of the potential effects communication technologies have on the individual (Gibbs, Sivunen & Boyraz 2017; Kirkman, Gibson & Kim 2012). One area that has not been examined is the effect of media richness on feedback seeking behaviours. Feedback-seeking behaviour (FSB) has been the subject of research from the early 1950s, with early research focusing on the positive link between feedback seeking and performance (Chapanis 1964; Payne & Hauty, 1955). In 1983, Ashford and Cummings published their seminal work on FSB conceptualizing it as an organizational resource of great value. They stated that individuals engage in FSB to obtain mastery, self-evaluate, reduce uncertainty, and correct errors. Later they defined FSB as “the conscious devotion of effort towards determining the correctness and adequacy of behaviour for attaining valued end states” (Ashford 1986 p. 466). Feedback seeking has also been shown to improve performance by specifying behaviours that are favourable or unfavourable for goal attainment (Ashford & Tsui 1991; Chen, Lam, & Zhong, 2007; Renn & Fedor., 2001 p. 27). Therefore, feedback acts to both reinforce and regulate behaviours (Ashford 1986).

Mainstream FSB literature identifies three different methods in which individuals can seek feedback; inquiry, monitoring and indirect inquiry. Inquiry is where individuals proactively seek feedback by directly asking for it either in person or via a virtual medium. Monitoring is where individuals indirectly observe cues in the environment to infer information. Finally, through indirect inquiry individuals take steps to stimulate feedback from

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others without directly asking (Ashford, Stobbeleir & Nujella, 2016; Miller & Jablin, 1991). These different approaches to feedback seeking are important to consider in a technology mediated setting, as monitoring or indirect inquiry are often not possible in environments where employees work remotely.

Feedback-seeking is a proactive behaviour, meaning individuals consciously choose to seek feedback (Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Grant & Ashford, 2008). For an individual to seek feedback, the information gained must be of perceived value. It is presumed that for feedback to be requested, there must be some degree of uncertainty experienced by the individual. Heslin et al. (1972) propose that individuals will experience feelings of uncertainty whenever information about phenomena is inadequate, inconsistent, or overly complex. In such situations, appropriate the response to the environment is unclear, resulting in a motivation to seek feedback. Most researchers have conceptualized FSB through a cost-value framework (for example, Ashford, 1986; Morrison & Vancouver, 2000; Anseel et al. 2013; Park, Schmidt, Scheu, & DeShon, 2007; VandeWalle, Ganesan, Challagalla, & Brown, 2000). This framework proposes that employees weigh the costs and value of FSB before engaging in it. For example, a new employee may weigh the value of reducing uncertainty about the role against the potential cost of conveying a negative image of low expertise to new colleagues. Hence, individual and situational variables of FSB act either to increase the perceived value of feedback seeking or to increase its perceived cost.

Individual antecedents of feedback seeking include a wide range of factors. Research has shown that age, tenure in position, and experience are negatively correlated with feedback seeking behaviours (Ashford, 1986; Brown, Ganesan & Challagalla, 2001; London, Larsen & Thisted, 1999; VandeWalle, et al, 2000). Unsurprisingly, individuals differ on their tolerance of ambiguous, uncertain situations (Budner, 1962; MacDonald, 1970; Furnham & Marks, 2013). Tolerance for ambiguity refers to an individual's preference for clear-cut answers and

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expectations in uncertain situations (Ashford & Cummings 1985). Individuals who have a low tolerance for ambiguity are likely to find uncertainty in work a source of discomfort and so the value of FSB which aim to reduce this uncertainty are of higher value to them. Research has shown that an individual's tolerance for ambiguity has a negative relationship with feedback seeking behaviours. (Ashford & Cummings 1985; Bennet, Herold & Ashford, 1990; Fedor, Rensvold & Adams, 1992; Madzar, 2001.) Individuals with high self-confidence and high self-efficacy have also been shown to be more willing to seek feedback (Ashford 1986; Crommelinck & Anseel et al 2013; Bernichon et al 2003; Karl & Kopf, 1994; Moss, Valenzi, Taggart, 2003). This has been theorized to be due to individuals with low self-confidence being less likely to seek feedback out of fear of negative feedback and an attempt to protect their ego whereas individuals with high self-confidence may be more resilient to negative feedback.

Feedback Seeking and Technology

Despite its considerable literature scope and variety of conceptualizations, FSB research has focused mainly on face-to-face or co-located working environments. Very little research has examined FSB in relation to communication technologies. A 1993 study conducted by Ang, Cummings, Straub, and Earley examined whether the perceived mood of the feedback giver affected feedback seeking frequency of individuals in face-to-face compared to instant messaging conditions. They found that individuals in all conditions sought feedback more frequently when they perceived the feedback giver was in a good mood. They also found that individuals in the computer mediated conditions sought feedback more frequently than their face-to-face counterparts. This could suggest that communication media may play a role in encouraging FSB, as they allow individuals to avoid some of the drawbacks of face-to-face communication. Another study examined "virtual" feedback seeking in a classroom environment, here feedback seeking over an online forum was shown to have a significant

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relationship with performance when compared to face-to-face feedback seeking (Hwang & Arbaugh, 2003).

Whether working from home or another country, virtual work presents a potential roadblock to feedback seeking. In a typical virtual setting, feedback seeking via monitoring is not possible and indirect inquiry may be limited. As such direct inquiry presents itself as the only avenue for which individuals can feedback seek through technology. In addition to this, a variety of the findings of FBS literature may or may not transfer to the virtual setting. Using a cost-value approach, the virtual context may influence individual perceptions of the costs and values associated with feedback seeking. Is feedback seen as less valuable or credible when delivered via technology? Or is the cost of engaging in a lengthy written exchange seen as higher than as a face-to-face counterpart?

Using media richness theory as a framework allows us to compare technologies with varied information richness to explain their effects on FSB. As such this study examines whether a relationship exists between media richness and feedback seeking behaviours in an individual-based problem-solving task. Central to MRT is the concept that equivocal or uncertain tasks, because of their open ended and more abstract nature should be paired with richer media. The richer the media, the more rapid varied information it reproduces and so the greater uncertainty it reduces (Daft & Lengel 1986). Richer media can communicate complex ideas, reduce miscommunication and allow for rapid back and forth exchanges. FSB literature consistently identifies uncertainty as a necessary motivation for FSB (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). This means for an individual to seek feedback the task they are working on must contain complex and uncertain elements, additionally, they must also have a degree of incentive to perform well in the task. Since FSB is, in essence, an uncertainty reducing strategy and as richer media are more suited to reducing uncertainty in equivocal tasks it theoretically stands

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that richer media would be more suited to facilitating feedback seeking and so would be preferred by individuals. As such the research question follows:

***RQ:** Is high media richness related to greater feedback seeking frequency?*

Method

Participants

A total of 45 Undergraduate students from the University of Canterbury agreed to participate in this study. Participants were recruited through the undergraduate psychology participant pool or through advertisement. A copy of the advertisement used in recruitment can be seen in Appendix A. Participants recruited through the participant pool did so to earn 100-level course credit, while participants from outside this pool were rewarded with a \$10 voucher. An additional participant inducement of a \$200 voucher prize was rewarded to the single participant who scored the highest on the E-tray exercise in the experiment. The purpose of this inducement was to give participants an incentive to perform well during the E-tray exercise and to focus their attention on performance.

Equipment

E-tray exercise

During the experiment, participants completed a version of an E-tray exercise. E-tray exercises (sometimes referred to as In-tray exercises) are a type of work sample exercise that task individuals with assuming a fictitious position within an organization. Individuals are then presented with a series of items in memo form (e-mails, letters, transcripts, documents etc.) for each item they must detail an appropriate response. E-tray exercises are commonly used in selection processes and assessment centres as a method of providing work samples for administrative

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and management roles. The E-tray exercise used in this experiment was a shortened and amended version of an "example" E-Tray exercise from www.AssessmentDay.co.uk. The website provides a variety of mock assessment measures aimed at individuals practising for selection processes. The original E-tray Exercise placed participants in the role of a Manager of a mid-range hotel branch in a popular travel destination. In the original exercise, individuals are presented with 12 items of a variety of type and are required to write a detailed response to each item and assign a level of priority to the urgency of each item (High, Medium, and Low). For this experiment, the E-tray was shortened to just 3 items. Additionally, some minor amendments were made to the text to place the exercise within a modern New Zealand context. An E-tray exercise was chosen for this experiment as it is a task that is relatively challenging and equivocal. The task is an open-ended problem-solving task that has multiple viable solutions. The E-tray exercise is also aimed at adult working professionals which would make it suitable if not challenging for the undergraduate students who comprised most of the participants. Both the challenge and the equivocal-ness of the task make it suitable for use within the feedback seeking context. A copy of the amended E-tray exercise can be seen in Appendix B.

Computer set-up

Participants completed all pre-experiment surveys and the E-Tray exercise online within a Google Chrome browser. All materials were built and presented within *Qualtrics*. Participants viewed the experiment on a Dell E2414Hx 24-inch monitor. Participants in all conditions communicated with the *Task Expert* via the program *Skype*. Participants in the instant message condition communicated via the chat box within the program. This chat box allows for instant written communication in addition to providing the user with feedback on when their messages have been received and viewed. Participants within the audio condition communicated via the telephone call feature using a *Logitech Stereo Headset H110*. This

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allowed for an audio call that allowed the participants and task expert to speak to each other but provided no visual communication. Participants in the video conference condition communicated using the video chat feature via a *Logitech HD Webcam C310* and the *Logitech Stereo Headset H110* which allowed them to both speak to each other and see each other via webcam.

Task Expert.

The task expert in the experiment was a paid confederate. A single, male task expert was used for all participants. For the video condition where the task expert was visible to the participant, the task expert dressed in the same business casual attire. To create consistency between participants, the task expert worked from a loose script when giving feedback. This script consisted of a brief introduction, a general comment on the current state of the participants work and then a suggestion which was derived from the marking schedule of the E-tray exercise. A copy of this confederate script can be viewed in Appendix C. The script helped to provide a degree of standardization to the feedback seeking experience. The feedback itself was always derived from the marking schedule of the assessment day test ensuring that all participants' feedback was equally useful, in that by incorporating the feedback they would improve their score. A Copy of the marking schedule used by the task-expert can be seen in Appendix H

Procedure

Before beginning the experiment, participants were randomly assigned into one of the three different media richness conditions: instant message, voice call and video call. Participants were greeted by the experimenter in the laboratory where they were presented with a consent form and information sheet (a copy of both can be seen in Appendix F). Participants were told via the recruitment advertisement, information sheet, and experimenter that the study was attempting to assess undergraduate student's performance in completing

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an E-tray exercise as an attempt to evaluate the validity of the test. Participants were also told that they should attempt to complete the task to the best of their ability and of the grand prize awarded to the single highest score of the experiment. Finally, participants were also told that before the end of each memo item they will be presented with the option of seeking feedback on their answer from their designated “*task expert hotline*” and that they could seek a maximum of 3 minutes of feedback on their answer in which the “*task expert*” would view and then provide feedback on their answer. Before beginning the E-Tray exercise, participants completed a short questionnaire which measured self-esteem and tolerance for ambiguity, age, and gender. To avoid contamination of the experiment, participants were told that the questionnaire was a part of an independent study by another PG student and that it was included to help fill the one-hour time block of the study. Additionally, a distraction measure of preferred leadership style was included in the pre-survey to help disguise the real variables of interest.

The experimental task consisted of an adapted computer based E-tray memo exercise in which participants assume the role of a project manager. Participants were first presented with a short description detailing the project they are managing, the team members and the organizational context. They were also presented with instructions that detailed how to structure their answers and reiterated the option to seek feedback at the end of items. They were then presented with a text memo that required their response (e.g. customer complaint, results of a customer satisfaction survey). Participants detailed in brief what action(s) they would take to resolve this issue. Upon completing their initial response to the question, and submitting the answer via the on-screen proceed button, participants were presented with a screen which gave the option of requesting feedback on their current decision. If the participants chose to request feedback, they were returned to their previous answer and contacted by the *task expert*. The *task expert* initiated contact via skype in the communication medium of

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their respective experimental condition. For example, participants in the low media richness condition (instant messaging) were contacted by the *task expert* via *Skypes'* instant message feature. During feedback seeking, the “task-expert” was able to see the participants’ current answer and provide feedback on how it could be improved. Feedback was given in a structured manner to provide a degree of standardized experience between participants. The *task expert* would briefly comment on the current state of the participant's answer (good, great, needs improvement) and then provide a suggestion from the marking schedule of something that could be added to improve the participants’ score. The feedback seeking ended either by the participant choosing to exit the chat forum/voice call/video conference, or when the feedback seeking reached the maximum allotted time of 3 minutes. The participants returned to their task to amend their answer. Following that, participants were taken immediately to the next item in the E-tray exercise. This process then continued for the remaining 2 items in the E-tray exercise. Upon completion of the exercise, the participants were greeted again by the experimenter who then de-briefed the participant before providing their reward. A copy of the de-briefing sheet used to reveal the true nature of the experiment can be seen in Appendix G

Measures

Tolerance of Ambiguity.

Participants’ tolerance for ambiguity was measured by the Measure of Ambiguity Tolerance (MAT-50) developed by Norton (1975). The MAT-50 is a 61-item measure that consists of 8 sub-scales that measure an individual's tolerance for ambiguity in a variety of areas such as job-related, problem solving, social, philosophical etc. The MAT-50 has demonstrated a high internal validity ($r = .88$) and high test-retest reliability ($r = .86$) (Norton, 1975). For this experiment, the 9-item Problem-Solving subscale was used. All items were answered on a 7-point Likert

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scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. A copy of the MAT-50 subscale used can be found in Appendix D

Self-Esteem.

Participants' self-esteem was measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE). The RSE is a 10-item scale originally designed to measure the self-esteem of high school students. However, since its development, the scale has been adapted for use with adult populations. The RSE demonstrates a reliability coefficient of .92, indicating excellent internal consistency. Test-retest reliability over a period of 2 weeks reveals correlations of .85 and .88, indicating excellent stability (Rosenberg, 1979). The RSE also demonstrates validity correlating significantly with other measures of self-esteem such as the Coppersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Rosenberg, 1965). All items were answered on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. A copy of the RSE can be seen in Appendix E.

Feedback Frequency.

Feedback seeking was measured by the number of times feedback was sought throughout the task, when given the opportunity to do so. Throughout the E-tray exercise participants were presented with three points in which they could seek feedback on the current state of their answer. As such feedback frequency is a measure out of four with 1 representing no feedback opportunities taken, 2 representing a single feedback opportunity taken and so on.

Results

To test the internal consistency of the self-esteem and tolerance for ambiguity scales, Cronbach alphas were calculated. The Cronbach alpha for the Rosenberg Self-esteem scale was good at .78. The Cronbach alpha for the Measure of Ambiguity Tolerance problem-solving subscale was .64, and it was improved to .69 by removing item 9 "A group meeting functions best with

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a definitive agenda". For the context of this experiment, an individual's tolerance for ambiguity in group meeting is not particularly relevant, as such removing the item is acceptable.

Means and standard deviations were calculated for participant age as well as the duration of the experiment in minutes. Table 1 presents this data in addition to the distribution of gender within groups.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics for Age, Gender, and Duration

	Message (N=15)	Audio (N=15)	Video (N=15)
Gender			
Male	7	7	2
Female	8	8	13
Age			
Mean (S.D)	22.47 (7.13)	21.73 (2.63)	21.2 (4.63)
Task duration in minutes			
Mean (S.D)	69 (26)	74 (32)	65 (26)
N = 45			

To access any differences in task duration and feedback seeking frequency between gender groups, independent-samples t-tests were conducted. There was no significant difference in task duration between males ($M = 66.52$, $SD = 17.98$) and females ($M = 70.76$, $SD = 31.61$); $t(43) = .27$, $p = .63$. Additionally there was no significant difference in frequency of feedback seeking between males ($M = 2.63$, $S.D = 1.31$) and females ($M = 2.07$, $S.D = 1.16$); $t(43) = -1.47$, $p = .15$.

A Pearson's correlation was computed to assess relationships between age, task duration and feedback seeking frequency. There was no significant correlation between age and task duration in minutes $r = -.04$, $p = .81$, nor was there a significant correlation between age and frequency of feedback seeking $r = .148$, $p = .333$.

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Feedback Seeking Frequency

Table 2

Feedback Seeking Frequency Distribution

	Message (N=15)	Audio (N=15)	Video (N=15)
Feedback Seeking Frequency			
Never	5	7	6
Once	1	4	3
Twice	4	1	3
Three Times	5	3	3

As evidenced in Table 2, a sizeable proportion of participants chose to seek no feedback whatsoever across all three media richness conditions. The distribution of feedback sought appears to differ greatly across the three conditions. For the message condition, the greatest proportion of individuals who sought feedback sought it at all three opportunities followed closely by individuals who sought it twice. Participants in the audio condition sought feedback less than any other condition with the second highest proportion being seeking feedback only once. Finally, in the video condition, the distribution was evenly split between options. The frequency distribution shows that patterns of feedback-seeking frequency appear to vary as a function of media used, though overall roughly the same number of participants sought feedback across the three conditions.

Media Richness and Feedback Seeking.

This study's main research question was to test whether a significant relationship existed between media richness condition (i.e. instant message, audio call, and video conference) and feedback seeking frequency. Controlling for individual differences, a one-way ANCOVA was conducted. Results indicated that there was no significant difference in feedback seeking frequency across media richness conditions, considering self-esteem and

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tolerance for ambiguity as covariates $F(2,42) = 1.18, p = .318$. This indicates that feedback seeking frequency did not significantly vary across media richness conditions.

Discussion

This study explored the relationship between media richness and feedback seeking frequency. By placing individuals in a problem-solving task, the study examined whether the rate of feedback-seeking on the task was affected by the communication technology they had the option of seeking feedback through. This study posited that increased media richness would be related to increased frequency of feedback seeking. The richness of a communication technology (or media) refers to that technology's ability to convey more information more rapidly than its less rich counterparts (Draft and Lengel, 1986). Therefore, it was reasoned that feedback would be sought more frequently by individuals using richer technology, as those technologies could reduce uncertainty faster and more accurately. However, this study found no significant relationship between media richness and feedback seeking frequency. Nevertheless, when examining the distribution of feedback seeking frequency across the three conditions, some patterns can be observed. In all three conditions, individuals who sought feedback at least once outnumbered individuals who never sought feedback, showing a general trend towards FSB. This may be due to FSB representing an uncertainty reduction strategy employed by individuals wishing to gain a greater understanding of the behaviours needed to perform favourably in a complex task (Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Grant & Ashford, 2008). Further, individuals in the instant message condition tended to seek feedback at all three opportunities, more so than individuals in the audio and the video conditions. In the video condition, the distribution of feedback seeking frequency was evenly split between once, twice, and three times.

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There could be several possible interpretations of why media richness seems to have no effect on FSB. It is very possible that a relationship does exist between media richness and FSB and that this study simply failed to capture that. Sample size and the sample demographic would be an obvious culprit. This study had a total of 45 participants using a university student sample. The E-tray exercise used for the experiment was aimed at working professionals. Considering the mean age of participants and the population it is possible that the participants may have lacked significant working experience and so failed to engage fully with the task. Perhaps, more importantly, the student demographic may have lacked the significant incentive to engage fully with the task. While incentives were designed to encourage participants to maximise performance it is unlikely that this would fully match a real-world setting. Future studies should aim to dress this by increasing the sample size, and by using a sample that includes working professionals. Future studies could also address this by including a measure of work experience and comparing that directly with feedback frequency.

This study is the first study to directly examine FSB across multiple communication technologies varying in media richness. The experimental design used in this study provides a strong framework for which future research can use to employ experimentation in the virtual FSB space. There are however many ways in which the design of this experiment could be expanded or improved. Most notably, this experiment lacks a face-to-face feedback-seeking condition. All three conditions in this experiment presented participants with a technology mediated communication. While this would require a greater sample size, the inclusion of a face-to-face condition would act as a control measure allowing researchers to compare multiple virtual communications against a non-virtual method and traditional method of FSB. One potential issue with the inclusion of a face-to-face FSB condition is creating standardization between conditions. In this study, the participants' experience between conditions was kept as standardized as possible; participants initiated feedback through the same method, over the

Media Richness and Feedback Seeking Behaviours

same program, and interacted with the same individual. Importantly, each feedback seeking condition disrupted the task to the same extent. A face-to-face condition may present itself differently as the initiation and interaction may require significant disruption to the task process. A 1993 study by Ang, Cummings, Straub, and Earley that examined feedback seeking employed a face-to-face condition in a similar problem-solving task. This study required participants to in the face-to-face condition to physically move away from the task at hand to receive feedback. This action represents a significant cost to the participant much greater than that presented in the technology mediated conditions and perhaps much more than is seen in face-to-face feedback seeking in a real-world context. Future studies comparing face-to-face with virtual FSB should either attempt to standardize the processes as much as possible or to have any differences in process represent the differences experienced by individuals in real world settings.

The few studies of FSB in a virtual context have compared a single communication technology against conventional face-to-face feedback seeking (Ang, Cummings, Staub & Early, 1993; Hwang & Arbaugh, 2003). It could be the case that individuals tend to perceive “virtual communications” similarly regardless of the range richness covered by this study. That is, while differences can be detected between face-to-face and virtual FSB, differences within the virtual spectrum of media richness (instant messages vs. video conference) are either non-existent or perhaps more likely much smaller and harder to detect. The cost-benefit approach to FSB assumes that individuals weigh the benefits and costs of FSB before engaging in them (Morrison & Vancouver, 2000; Anseel et al. 2013; Park, Schmidt, Scheu, & DeShon, 2007; VandeWalle, Ganesan, Challagalla, & Brown, 2000). As such individuals’ perceptions of that feedback (e.g., its usefulness) are an important aspect of the cognition of FSB (Grant & Ashford, 2008). In this sense, virtual communication media may affect the perception of the feedback seeking process. This effect may be inherent to communication technologies

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themselves, such as the additional effort posed by communicating through a virtual technology, or a lack of familiarity with the technology. Interestingly, in the observation of the distributions of feedback seeking, certain technologies were used more frequently than others. The low richness condition (instant message) was the most frequently used option while the video and audio conditions were less so. MRT would predict that the high richness condition would prove more favourable considering the equivocal nature of this task (Draft and Lengel, 1986). This finding then may suggest features of, or perceptions of the low richness condition made it more favourable to participants. Examples of this could be that low richness communication avoids many of the social aspects of higher richness communication, and so individuals feel more at ease receiving potential criticism. Support for this idea can be found in research (Ashford 1986; Anseel et al 2013; Bernichon et al 2003; Hwang & Arbaugh, 2003; Karl & Kopf, 1994; Moss, Valenzi, Taggart, 2003). Another possible factor could be that instant messaging, despite being leaner, is more familiar to the demographic of this study, reducing the associated cost of engaging with it. It is also a possibility that leaner media like instant messaging are more suited to FSB, contrary to what MRT might suggest. Even if richer media is more suited to equivocal tasks, it could be that the type of FSB expressed in this study were more suited to leaner media. In this study, FSB consisted mainly of a general statement about the current quality of the work (good, average, needs improvement) followed by a suggestion to improve the current answer. It is possible that this type of exchange (and perhaps FSB more generally) is more suited to leaner media regardless of the equivocality of task being discussed. Virtual communication may also affect the FSB process by altering perceptions of the feedback giver or the feedback itself. Research has shown that virtual teams can produce more extreme evaluations between individuals than face-to-face teams (Walther, 1997). This study used scripting as well as other methods to ensure that participants' feedback seeking experience was highly standardized. All participants received feedback from the same source and all feedback was of equal usefulness

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to participants. Future studies should attempt to address the issue of feedback perception through manipulation of the feedback itself or through manipulation of the feedback giver (for example, gender, perceived mood etc.).

Another possible factor in participant perceptions of the feedback giver would be the limited time exposure to the feedback giver. In this experiment participants only had a maximum of three, 3-minute sessions with the *task expert*. This lack of rapport could certainly have affected participant FSB. FSB literature has shown that perception of and familiarity with the feedback giver can affect FSB (Ashford & Tsui, 1991; Ang, Cummings, Staub & Early, 1993). Future studies could help mitigate this effect by increasing time spent with the feedback giver. Another possible factor in the lack of detectable relationship could be that the technologies used in this study may be too close in media richness to affect FSB. Three different levels of media richness were used in this study; instant message, audio call and video conference. While these three technologies were picked to represent a range of media richness they were still all rapid synchronous communication mediums with their main differences being in the number of visual and audio cues they could reproduce. While introducing media that are asynchronous or that varied in language type, such as e-mails or forum posts, would require a re-structuring of the experiment design, it would create a greater range in media richness and so may increase any potential effect of media richness on FSB.

A lack of significant relationship between media richness and FSB has many potential implications for organizations and working individuals. Firstly, pairing individuals who work partially or completely, remotely with media that is high in richness will not necessarily increase their frequency of feedback seeking. Organizations must pursue methods other than media choice when attempting to encourage FSB in individuals. This has both negative and positive implications for organizations. Media choice in organizations is a relatively clear variable for which organizations can attempt to change. A technological change in an

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organization while disruptive, and requiring some re-training can be physically changed overnight. The lack of relationship means that organizations must use other subtler methods when attempting to increase FSB. These methods may be more difficult or take longer to implement such as changes organizational culture or leadership (Levy, Cober & Miller, 2002). However, this potential lack of a significant relationship between media richness and FSB also presents benefits to organizations. When selecting media, organizations may feel more confident in selecting a greater range of communication technologies. Communication technologies that are leaner in richness do reproduce less information than their richer counterparts, however, they are also generally less time consuming for the user, allow a delayed response, and can allow for simultaneous communication to multiple individuals. Additionally, certain working environments may not allow for high richness technologies (e.g., locations with weaker internet connections) and so the ability to use a broader spectrum of technologies without performance implications is of benefit. The difference in feedback distribution seen in this study would require much further study before any real implications could be drawn. However, at face value, a preference for leaner media in this context could suggest that individuals prefer communication media that allow for less face-to-face simulation when in settings that centre on personal evaluation. This line of theorizing could allow for interesting exploration. If differences in FSB frequency across conditions were due to ego protection (Anseel et al 2013; Bernichon et al 2003; Karl & Kopf, 1994; Moss, Valenzi, Taggart, 2003) then leaner media may play an important role in creating environments where individuals are more comfortable seeking and receiving potentially negative feedback.

As previously mentioned, there are a multitude of avenues future research could follow to expand and improve upon the experimental design used in this research. Most notably, the inclusion of a face-to-face condition, the inclusion of a wider range of technologies, and a professional working demographic to name a few. Moving away from simple expansions of

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this experimental design, there are many ways in which research should proceed when in investigating FSB in a virtual setting. When looking at the current state of FSB literature, FSB within virtual settings is not yet a major focus (Anseel et al 2015). Technological reliance has seeped into so many professions that the modern FSB research needs to progress into virtual settings to maintain relevance. Although FSB represents a large and well-developed pool of literature, future research should aim to investigate how that pool of research transfers into the virtual work setting. This could take the form of either re-creating FSB experiments with the addition of virtual conditions or through re-creating FSB studies with the demographic of virtual teams/ virtual workers. Another important element to examine in the future of virtual FSB is that of media richness. While this study found no link between media richness and feedback seeking frequency, media richness should still play an important role in the research of FSB. Media richness allows researchers to classify communication technologies on a spectrum that define their ability to reproduce information. This classification is important when compared to studies which classify communication technologies simply by media choice. Studies that examine technologies at the level of media choice run the risk of selecting technologies that prove limited in scope as technologies progress. What communication technologies are used in organizations is still rapidly changing and by examining media across various levels of richness researchers are more likely to produce results which are generalizable, even if the technologies themselves become outdated in years to come.

Conclusion

In this experiment, no significant relationship was found between the richness of a communication medium and the frequency of feedback sought by participants. The first experimental study to examine FSB across multiple levels of media richness, this study hopefully will be one of many studies that bring FSB literature into the realm of virtual work.

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As FSB play a vital role in allowing employees to improve their own behaviours as work becomes more and more technologically reliant, research must attempt to assess how this technology impacts FSB and how organizations can best encourage and foster these behaviours. Future studies should aim to expand the size and scope of this experiment and to assess FSB from a wide array of virtual contexts.

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Appendix

Appendix A. Advertisement

Participants Wanted



Want to earn a \$10 Westfield voucher, have the chance to win \$200, and gain valuable experience for future job applications?

Participate in my study investigating Undergraduate Performance in Recruitment Tasks.

What will you need to do?

- Attend a 1-hour lab session to complete a decision-making task commonly used by employers in the areas of Project Management, Management, and Human Resources.

Where?

- Psychology Room 439

If you are interested in being a part of this research email Richard Barber at Richard.Barber@pg.canterbury.ac.nz to organize a session

Richard.Barber@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

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Media Richness and Feedback Seeking Behaviours

Appendix B. Amended E-Tray Exercise.

Instructions

You are about to complete a shortened version of a E-Tray exercise designed to be used in the selection process of individuals for management and administrative roles. E-Tray exercises are a common selection tool that attempt to gauge your ability to respond to a variety of workplace related issues.

Please read the instructions on this page before proceeding to the exercise.

Your assistant has left you 3 items (documents) marked for your attention. These appear in a variety of forms just as you would use in a office environment. Some of these items may appear to describe isolated issues while others may link to previous items.

You need to review each item and then provide the following:

- A list of actions written in brief, which include your analysis of the key issues in each of the items.
- The priority that you would assign for dealing with each item. Please use these 3 categories: high priority, medium priority, and low priority. When determining these, a balance needs to be struck between urgent tasks (that need to be completed as soon as possible) and important tasks (that have a high impact on the business).
- **Please include who should be involved. For example, if you want to forward an item to a colleague, or if you want to call a meeting.**
- **At the end of each question you will be given the option of seeking feedback on your answer from a task expert who will provide advice on how to improve your answer. There is no penalty for seeking feedback, and following their advice will likely improve your score.**

You have 50 minutes to complete this task.

Media Richness and Feedback Seeking Behaviours

Appendix B. Amended E-Tray Exercise continued.

Background Information

Role

Your name is Jamie Rawlings and you joined Rest Well Lodges through its Graduate Trainee Program. As the company's top performing Graduate Trainee you were appointed to a Assistant Manager position in Auckland at one of the chains flagship hotels. Your rapid ascent has continued and you have just been appointed as General Manager of the struggling Rest Well Lodges in Wellington. The outlet has been given 6 months to increase its profitability or it faces closure.

Rest Well Lodges is a chain of mid-range hotels that has suffered over recent years due to the proliferation of value hotel chains and the high levels of competition at both the high and low ends of the hospitality industry. Furthermore, the rise of high end pubs and craft breweries has affected profits from external customers using the hotel restaurant facilities.

Rest Well Lodges has been slow to pick-up on trends in hospitality, such as outsourcing and online check-in. This is particularly true of the smaller Rest Well Lodges outlets. Each outlet is run relatively independently from the Head Office, although each is expected to adhere to brand values.

Your immediate team consists of the Restaurant Manager and the Hotel Manager; each of whom supervises three Team Leaders. You have overall responsibility for all hotel functions. You and your colleagues also deal with a range of external suppliers.

Managing the Wellington outlet is just the opportunity that you have been waiting for. This is your chance to hone your leadership and problem-solving skills and put your managerial training and experience into practice. You have the Area Manager's authority to take whatever decisions you feel are necessary. She has asked you for regular updates, so you are advised not to defer any important issues.

Today is the 26th of July 2017 - your first day as General Manager of the Wellington Hotel.

Media Richness and Feedback Seeking Behaviours

Appendix B. Amended E-Tray Exercise continued.

Item 1 - Customer Complaint

General Manager
Rest Well Lodge
58 Fosse Way
Wellington

21st March 2017

Dear Sir

I recently stayed three nights at the Rest Well Lodge, Wellington while on business in the area. I chose your hotel because I assumed it would be a cut above the many budget hotel chains that offer cheaper room rates. Unfortunately, I felt very disappointed with the level of service offered to business travellers such as myself.

While booking my room, I was assured that the hotel has Wi-Fi, but on arrival that was only available in the lobby and not in the guest rooms. I thus had to work in the evenings in a noisy and rather shabby lobby. I also felt that the reception staff did not go out of their way to assist me when I requested directions and restaurant recommendations. The long queues to speak to the reception staff were extremely frustrating, particularly when I was rushing to morning meetings. On my last morning, I had to wait nearly twenty minutes before I could check out because only one person was manning the desk at what must surely have been the busiest time of the day. I cannot fault the quality of the food at your Eat Well restaurant. However, with my early start I would have preferred a self-service breakfast option that I could take-away with me.

In future when I return to the Wellington area I will be choosing a different hotel - one that caters to a businessman's needs.

Best regards,

John Powell
Sales Director, Tech solutions.

Please:

- Identify the key issues.**
- Present a brief list of recommended actions.**
- Assign a level a priority to this item.**

Media Richness and Feedback Seeking Behaviours

Appendix B. Amended E-Tray Exercise continued.

Item 2 - Email Chain Between Employees

From: brian.parker@restwell.co.uk
To: paolo.diaz@restwell.co.uk
CC: pat.rawlings@restwell.co.uk
Date: 20th July 15:06
Subject: specials

Terific – there's no shortage of ideas there. Let's talk these over when Jamie starts. We need to focus on changes that will attract local customers into the restaurant. Have you given any thought to updating the children's menu, like I asked last week?

Regards,
 Brian

From: paolo.diaz@restwell.co.uk
To: brian.parker@restwell.co.uk
Date: 20th July 14:11
Subject: specials

Brian

Glad the steak went down well with the punters. Did you know that we ran out of beef on Friday night? We had to do an express butcher's order to re-stock for Saturday and Sunday –bit pricey, I'm afraid.

This really isn't the ideal time to run a deep clean – **back of house is short-staffed at the moment.** I'm sure Adam can get in some temp cleaners quickly, as long as you don't mind turning a blind eye about work permits. The last lot he got in didn't speak much **English, so they may not have had health and safety training.** Marie and I have been busy developing new recipes and menu ideas. I know Stuart wasn't keen on running theme nights, but could we look at it again **with the new manager? I love the idea of a mid-week curry night – my jalfrezi is out of this world!** A Friday fish and chips special might also be fun. And tapas is very hot in **New Zealand right now – how about a special** gourmet Spanish tasting menu? Korean barbecue is also very trendy, but we'd need to **install charcoal grills at every table. I can get a quote if you are interested.** Have you given any thought to my request to install an industrial wood-fired pizza oven? I know **\$5,500 is a lot, but the pizzas would be really tasty and authentic.** Cheers,
 Paolo

From: brian.parker@restwell.co.uk
To: paolo.diaz@restwell.co.uk
Date: 20th July 13:13
Subject: deep clean

Media Richness and Feedback Seeking Behaviours

Appendix B. Amended E-Tray Exercise continued.

I just wanted to let you know that the steak special we ran last weekend was a big success. Many customers mentioned how delicious it was! Well done! We had a few complaints that it was served cold, but I know that wasn't the kitchen's fault – Nikki had too few waiters working over the weekend. By the way, we really need to schedule a deep clean of the kitchen. We got called up on a number of points in the Food Hygiene report last month, and need to rectify them ASAP as the inspectors could return any time.

**Best,
Brian**

Please:

- Identify the key issues.**
- Present a brief list of recommended actions.**
- Assign a level a priority to this item.**

Media Richness and Feedback Seeking Behaviours

Appendix B. Amended E-Tray Exercise continued.

Item 3 - Customer Satisfaction Survey result excerpts

Hotel customers are offered the opportunity to complete a customer satisfaction survey in their room. This survey uses the following rating scale: '1' Very dissatisfied; '2' Somewhat dissatisfied; '3' Neither Satisfied nor dissatisfied; '4' Somewhat satisfied; '5' Very satisfied

No.	Question	Average (Jan-June 2010)
3	How satisfied were you with the following? - Hotel facilities - Your room facilities - Your room decor - Lobby decor - Car parking facilities	2.8 2.0 2.5 2.6 2.9
6	How satisfied were you with the warmth and friendliness of the staff working in the following areas? - Reception - Restaurant - Housekeeping - Room Service	2.1 2.9 3.1 3.2
7	How satisfied were you with the availability and helpfulness of the staff working in the following areas? - Reception - Restaurant - Housekeeping - Room Service	2.2 2.4 3.0 3.3
9	How satisfied were you with the cleanliness of the following areas? - Reception - Restaurant - Your Room	4.4 2.3 4.0
10	If you used the restaurant how would you rate the following? - Your menu prices - Your menu's choices - The speed of service - The quality of the service - The quality of the food	3.1 4.2 2.2 2.3 4.5
16	Did you use our room service?	9% said Yes
17a	Did you use our restaurant?	19% said Yes
17b	If yes, do you have any comments about our restaurant? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I only used the restaurant for breakfast and the staff were very helpful. They did seem to be very overworked, but were doing their best! ➤ We all liked our dinner. That said I wasn't expecting to have to wait so long time to get it. Not great when you're eating with two impatient toddlers. ➤ The excellent food served in the restaurant exceeded my expectations for this class of hotel. ➤ We came to your restaurant when we heard about your new chef. We'll be back since we only live around the corner. We shall also recommend it to our friends living locally! 	

continued...

Media Richness and Feedback Seeking Behaviours

Appendix B. Amended E-Tray Exercise continued.

19	<p>What did you like or dislike about your stay?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>I found the housekeeping staff to be very efficient and well-organised, but your hotel could offer more additional services/facilities.</i> ➤ <i>I stay with you a lot but last time I was informed upon arrival that I did not have a reservation. Whilst I then had to pay a higher rate for my room (ever heard of corporate rates?) this was covered by my business expenses anyway.</i> ➤ <i>Your Reception staff did not seem interested in helping me find a taxi quickly – one even suggested that I make the call myself.</i> ➤ <i>My kettle was not in working order and the coffee sachets were not refilled after my first night. I really needed some caffeine to work on my report.</i> ➤ <i>The desk in my room was a little small for working with my laptop and spreading out my documents. Also, most of the hotels I've stayed in have provided at least some writing paper for business travellers. A trouser press would have been useful as my suit got wrinkled in my case.</i> ➤ <i>Your restaurant decor is starting to look a bit tired. The children's playground could also do with a lick of paint.</i> ➤ <i>Only one complaint. Call me fussy but the soap was not replaced in my bathroom after my first night and the housekeeper didn't seem to understand me when I requested a replacement.</i> ➤ <i>When I visit a hotel for business I only ask for two things. Firstly, having Wi-Fi in my room. Secondly, a reliable wake-up service. Your hotel had neither.</i> ➤ <i>I am a big fan of Rest Well Lodges and stay in the one in Watlington when I visit my parents. I just wish I could use www.extramile.co.uk to book my stays!</i> ➤ <i>The other Rest Well Lodges we have stayed at were always very family friendly. While it is great that you provide cots and high-chairs, your reception staff were not very welcoming to my children and one even asked them to quiet down.</i>
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Please:

- Identify the key issues.**
- Present a brief list of recommended actions.**
- Assign a level a priority to this item.**

Media Richness and Feedback Seeking Behaviours

Appendix C. Confederate Script.

Introduce self:

- *First time greeting participant.*
Hi there! My name is Joe and I'm the task expert for this assessment...
- *Subsequent feedback seeking.*
Hello again...

Provide basic feedback of work so far (based upon marking schedule):

- So far, your response is looking [x].
(great, good, okay, like it might need some improvement).

Suggest an addition that could be made to the answer (from the marking schedule):

- Have you considered mentioning that... [x]

Example for item 1.

(Writing to John Powell to apologise specifically for the delay as the complaint was dated back as far as 3 months ago).

- For this question, it might be good to mention that... [x]

Example for item 2.

(Email the restaurant manager and hotel manager to establish if any staff have been employed without work permits. Check with team leaders to ensure they are fully aware of all legal requirements).

- One thing I might add is... [x]

Example for item 3.

(One thing you did miss was that the survey you received was only an excerpt, therefore emailing HR director and asking for the full survey would be recommended).

To conclude:

- *If participant ends the feedback seeking.*
You're welcome. Feel free to continue working on this question for as long as you like. Remember that you can't return to old questions once you proceed.
- *If feedback seeking reaches the 3-minute limit.*
That all the feedback time you have for this question. Feel free to continue working on this question for as long as you like. Remember that you can't return to old questions once you proceed.

General points:

- 3 minutes is the maximum time allotted for feedback. If you reach this time. Politely wrap up the conversation using the "To conclude" script.
- Consistency is key to the confederate's role. Try treat all confederates the same. Use the script as much as possible. Be friendly but professional.

Media Richness and Feedback Seeking Behaviours

Appendix D. MAT-50 Problem Solving Subscale (*Norton, 1975*)

Please select the appropriate answer for each item, depending on whether you Strongly agree, Agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with it.

1. Once I start a task, I don't like to start another task until I finish the first one.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. Before any important job, I must know how long it will take.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. In a problem-solving group, it is always best to systematically attack the problem

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. A problem has little attraction for me if I don't think it has a solution.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. I do not like to get started in group projects unless I feel assured that the project will be successful.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. In a decision-making situation in which there is not enough information to process the problem, I feel very uncomfortable.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. I don't like to work on a problem unless there is a possibility of coming out with a clear-cut and unambiguous answer

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. Complex problems appeal to me only if I have a clear idea of the total scope of the problem.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. A group meeting functions best with a definite agenda.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Media Richness and Feedback Seeking Behaviours

Appendix E. RSE Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (*Rosenberg, 1979*).

Please select the appropriate answer for each item, depending on whether you Strongly agree, Agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with it.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. At times, I think I am no good at all.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. I certainly feel useless at times.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Media Richness and Feedback Seeking Behaviours

Appendix F. Consent Form and Information Sheet

Psychology Department

Email: richard.barber@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

25/05/17

Undergraduate Performance in Recruitment Tasks.

Information and Consent

You are invited to take part in an experiment testing undergraduate performance in a problem-solving task that models the decision making required by project managers in real-world settings. Your participation in this experiment allows us to better understand the performance of undergraduate students in tasks developed for graduate applicants for project management positions. This may lead to recommendations that effect how organizations select for graduate positions. The project is being carried out as a requirement for a dissertation in the partial fulfilment of a Master of Science in Applied Psychology by Richard Joseph Barber under the supervision of Dr. Joana Kuntz, who can be contacted at joana.kuntz@canterbury.ac.nz. She will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project.

If you choose to take part in this study, your involvement will require you to participate in a **single 1 hour lab session** where you will complete **one questionnaire** which will take **approximately 5 – 10 minutes** and complete a **problem-solving task**.

If you complete the lab session you will be **rewarded** with a **\$10 Westfield Voucher OR 100 level Psych Course Credit**

Participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. If you withdraw after the experiment is completed, I will remove all information relating to you.

The results of the project may be published in a peer-reviewed journal, and the thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation: your identity will not be made public. To ensure confidentiality, only the lead researchers will have access to your data, which will be assigned a unique identifier, rather than your name.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, and participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

Media Richness and Feedback Seeking Behaviours

Appendix F. Consent Form and Information Sheet Continued

Psychology Department

Email: richard.barber@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

Undergraduate Performance in Recruitment Tasks. Consent Checklist

- I have been given a full explanation of this project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I understand what is required of me if I agree to take part in the research.
- I understand that participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without penalty. Withdrawal of participation will also include the withdrawal of any information I have provided should this remain practically achievable.
- I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researchers and that any published or reported results will not identify the participants. I understand that a thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.
- I understand that all data collected for the study will be kept in locked and secure facilities and/or in password protected electronic form and will be destroyed after five years.
- I understand the risks associated with taking part and how they will be managed.
- I understand that I can contact the researcher Richard Barber (richard.barber@pg.canterbury.ac.nz) or the supervisor Dr Joana Kuntz (joana.kuntz@canterbury.ac.nz) for further information. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)
- I would like a summary of the results of the project.
- By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

Name: _____ Signed: _____ Date: _____

Email address (*for report of findings, if applicable*): _____

Media Richness and Feedback Seeking Behaviours

Appendix G. De-briefing Sheet

Department of Psychology
Telephone: +64 3 364 2987 extn 7282
Email: richard.barber@pg.caterbury.ac.nz

Undergraduate Performance in Recruitment Tasks. Debriefing Sheet

Thank you for participating in this study. The true purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between media richness and feedback seeking behaviours. As our lives increasingly rely upon virtual communication (e-mail, text message, and skype) to communicate with peers and co-workers there is much interest in how different communication media affect user behaviours.

In the workplace, feedback seeking behaviours such as asking for a superior to review work completed are commonly linked with improved performance. There are a variety of factors (both individual and environmental) that can affect an individual's likelihood to seek feedback on their work. One such factor that has not been explored yet in literature is the communication medium used to seek and receive this feedback. By giving you a decision-making task to complete, with prompted intervals in which you could have chosen to seek feedback, we wanted to see whether there would be a difference in feedback seeking frequency and duration between individuals who communicated over low richness media (e.g. instant message) and high richness media (voice call or video call).

To gain a better understanding of how media richness affects feedback seeking, we could not tell you the full purpose of the tasks you completed. Informing you of the true purpose of the tasks might have inadvertently affected your feedback seeking, thus biasing the results, so we had to withhold this information until now. Additionally, we could not tell you about the true meaning of each of the measures you completed at the beginning of the exercise. The pre-task survey was not part of another study. It was measuring your tolerance for ambiguity and self-confidence, both linked with individual's rates of feedback seeking. Obscuring the true nature of the survey helped ensure a less biased response. It was therefore vital to the integrity of the study that you were not aware of its true nature.

Considering this new information provided, if you wish to withdraw from this study without any consequences, simply let us know now and your information will be deleted. Please inform us before the date of 1st November 2017 as following that date your information will not be able to be removed from the study. However, please note that even if you choose to have your responses included in this study, your name or identity will not be connected to your responses at any time as we will only use aggregate data for any presentation of the finding. Moreover, your responses will only be stored on file with a randomly generated code and no other personal information about you will be on any record of the study.

Any inquiries or complaints can be addressed to The Chair, Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch, New Zealand, (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz) or (03 364 2987). If you are interested in learning more about the study, or if you have any concerns regarding any aspect of this study, please feel free to contact Richard Barber (richard.barber@pg.canterbury.ac.nz). If any distress was experienced due to the study, please contact either Lifeline (0800 543 354) or the UC Health Centre (03 364 2402).

Thank you again for your participation.

Media Richness and Feedback Seeking Behaviours

Appendix H: E-Tray Exercise Marking schedule

Item 1. Customer Complaint.

Item No.	Key Issues and Recommended Actions	Priority
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write to John Powell to apologise for the delay in responding (letter was dated just over three months ago) and to thank him for his useful feedback – stating that he highlighted a number of improvements that I am considering taking further. Stress that, as the new General Manager, I am aiming to make the hotel more attractive to business customers. Consider offering him a free stay whilst next on business in the area, but make sure the improvements are in place if he accepts. • In my joint meeting with the Restaurant Manager and Hotel Manager, use this complaint letter to raise several key issues. Establish Watlington's procedure for responding to such letters and why the letter was not responded to earlier. Stress the need to have a set turnaround time to such complaints in future – particularly in the light of the hotel's threat of closure. • When meeting Brian, ask for his opinion about whether the customer's specific restaurant-related feedback (offering a self-service, take-away breakfast option) would improve the restaurant's facilities. Ask Brian to investigate this proposal and to feedback his findings to me when we meet next week i.e. how easy would it be to offer such a service? Would there be any potential staff cost savings? Could external catering suppliers be used at a cheaper price? • When meeting Susie, discuss how offering Wi-Fi in the guest rooms could be something that business customers take for granted now and that business custom is needed for the hotel to turn performance around. Ask Susie to establish costs and put together a basic business case for installing Wi-Fi in the guest rooms by next Tuesday – so I can present it to Chris next Wednesday. • Also, explore with Susie possible reasons with Susie why the Reception staff member showed such a poor attitude towards such simple, everyday customer requests as giving directions/restaurant recommendations. How effectively is the Reception Team Leader managing his staff? Are Reception staff aware of the brand value of customer service? Additional training in this area may be required. Tell Susie to investigate the date that this particular guest stayed at the hotel with those staff members concerned and to report back to me within a week. Discuss Reception staffing levels and whether Susie believes these to be adequate – particularly at busy check-in and check-out times. 	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate whether the Watlington branch offers favourable corporate rates – as room price is mentioned in the customer's letter. Email Marketing Director, copying in Area Manager, to enquire about adopting corporate rates - and other ideas for attracting more business guests e.g. loyalty schemes or group bookings. Area Manager asked for innovative ideas so present a range of these. • Take this complaint letter to my Area Manager meeting. Whilst I hope that this is a one-off I suspect that there may be other business customers having similar experiences at the hotel. Explore Chris's perspective on orientating the hotel more towards business customers. 	
	<p>Note: As a customer complaint item this is an excellent opportunity for you to demonstrate your customer service skills – in particular your awareness of how to handle a dissatisfied customer. The letter is dated 21 April 2010 and you need to have demonstrated that you have realised that there has been an unnecessary delay in responding to the complaint. You also need to cross-reference this information to see if similar complaints appear elsewhere in the in-tray.</p>	

*Some of the marking schedule refers to items or aspects of the E-Tray exercise that were removed for the experimental version.

Media Richness and Feedback Seeking Behaviours

Appendix H: E-Tray Exercise Marking schedule continued

Item 2. E-mail Chain Between Employees.

Item No.	Key Issues and Recommended Actions	Priority
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email Adam to investigate the allegation that he is willing to employ temp staff without work permits. Ensure that he understands the need to always adhere to all legal requirements. • Email both the Restaurant Manager and Hotel Manager to establish if any staff have been employed without work permits. Run immediate checks on all current temporary staff who may need work permits. Check that Team Leaders are fully aware of legal requirements when employing temporary staff. • Send a group email to all staff emphasising the importance of following all food hygiene regulations. Stress that I intend to monitor this situation by carrying out my own regular checks. Include this as a feature of my regular walks around the hotel to keep myself "visible" to staff. • In my meeting with the Restaurant Manager, talk through the most recent Food Hygiene Inspection Report. Set deadline for urgent deep clean – must be completed within 1 week, even if this needs to be outsourced. Instruct Brian and Paolo to conduct this on a regular basis in future. • Set Brian clear action to complete against urgent deadlines for all outstanding recommendations made in the inspection report. Make sure that Brian takes responsibility for each of these. He must be aware of this being of the utmost importance, as the inspectors could return any time. Ask for Brian to confirm each of the following points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All kitchen and restaurant staff have received sufficient food hygiene training. If not, then implement full training ASAP. Staff will need to cover for each other, so run 2-3 separate training sessions. ○ All kitchen/restaurant staff are adhering to the hotel's food hygiene standards. • Call Chef Paolo today to explain that Brian and I are concerned that the hotel's legal requirements for food hygiene and work permits are not being adhered to. Also, explore whether kitchen staffing levels are affecting health & safety/food hygiene. Insist that Paolo takes up my offer of the additional training that I've arranged for him next month. 	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask Brian to arrange a meeting next week with Paolo and me. In the meeting, congratulate them both on their innovative ideas – particularly the theme nights. As long as customers can still order from the standard menu, these theme nights may increase revenue and improve the hotel's financial performance. Propose running 2-3 theme nights a week in the restaurant. Stress that each theme night needs to be as profitable as possible. Explain that we will only be pursuing ideas that do not require investment in new facilities – so no pizza ovens or Korean charcoal grills. Each week, we will review restaurant takings to evaluate whether the theme nights proved successful – and will only continue with those that meet targets. • Advertise theme nights both internally throughout the hotel and externally (e.g. local newspapers and online). • Ask Paolo to present a new children's menu to me and Brian in two week's time. Consider why he didn't respond to Brian's initial request. • Investigate current procedures for stock control/ordering. Discuss the effectiveness and regularity of Brian /Paolo's communication regarding ordering. Why are last minute orders being placed (outside normal stock ordering procedures)? How often is this occurring? Emphasise the need to manage costs and to keep the use of more expensive delivery options to a minimum. 	Medium
Note:	<p>This item covers several issues that form core aspects of a managerial role in the hotel/leisure industry: ensuring that efficient and cost-effective stock control processes are in place; the effective performance management of all staff; and the need to adhere to strict legal requirements in several areas.</p> <p>When considered alongside items 9 and 11, there is clearly a failing company standards/controls theme.</p> <p>The theme of employing unsuitable temporary staff is addressed in more detail in the answer to Items 11 and 13.</p> <p>With email chains it is a good idea to start reading from the end, i.e. start with the oldest and work towards the most recent.</p>	

Media Richness and Feedback Seeking Behaviours

Appendix H: E-Tray Exercise Marking schedule continued

Item 3. Customer Survey.

Item No.	Key Issues and Recommended Actions	Priority
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>In summary, there are many customer suggestions which add support to my analysis/actions on other items: staffing levels and/or rotas need to be reviewed (long queues in Reception, overworked Restaurant staff, long waits for food); additional hotel facilities offered e.g. Wi-Fi in rooms); and an extramile.co.uk relationship to be investigated.</i> • <i>No. 3 Room facilities score could relate to lack of Wi-Fi. No. Reception tallies with Item 4 complaint.</i> • <i>Email HR Director, copying in Area Manager, to ask for a full copy of the Survey. State that I am analysing the figures and will be preparing an action plan, with my managerial team, to improve the poor ratings in time for the next survey.</i> • <i>There are a number of poor results in the range 2.0-2.4, as follows: Your room facilities; warmth and friendliness of the Reception staff; availability and helpfulness of the Reception and Restaurant staff; the restaurant's speed and quality of service. Overall, Reception's results were particularly low (except for cleanliness). Forward these excerpts to the Restaurant Manager and Hotel Manager. Assign a high priority project to both managers to improve these low ratings. Set a target of achieving all 3's or above on next survey. Support them on any training required.</i> • <i>Amongst those guests who responded the usage figures for both the restaurant (19%) and room service (9%) are low - particularly Room Service. Place a restaurant menu or flyer in the rooms to help increase customer's use if the restaurant.</i> • <i>Arrange with the Reception Team Leader for additional customer service training for all Reception staff. The current high level of customer complaints cannot continue. Ask for their explanations of Reception staff losing a business customer's reservation; being</i> 	High
	<p><i>rude to a customer's children and being uninterested in finding a taxi for another customer. Such behaviour is deserving of a verbal warning.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Forward the results to the Housekeeping Team Leader and praise their positive ratings. Ask for their explanation of soap and coffee sachets not being replaced. Establish whether the current training offered to her team makes any allowance (e.g. using translators) for those trainees for whom English is not their first language. Demonstrate cultural sensitivity and highlight the need to adapt our processes accordingly.</i> • <i>Praise Brian and Paolo on the quality of food. Highlight slow service and discuss if re-organising staff shifts could improve this.</i> 	
<p>Note: There are poor customer service and health/safety themes, when considered alongside items 4 and 7 respectively.</p> <p>The positive feedback about the restaurant food links with item 5.</p> <p>The Room Service issues are addressed in full in Item 6's answer.</p> <p>Note there is no date from this satisfaction survey excerpt. For the purposes of the in-tray exercise you can either assume that it is recent or endeavour to find out how recent (and therefore relevant) it is.</p>		