Adekunle Ajasin University Students' Perception of the Effectiveness of *the Highlights* Weekly Newsletter for Information Dissemination

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Abstract

Institutions of higher learning often employ several communication channels like newsletters, magazines, photography, films etc. to maintain an effective line of communication with the staff and students so as to create a good sense of belonging among members of the university community. This study therefore, examined how frequent Adekunle Ajasin University(AAUA) undergraduate students read *The Highlights w*eekly newsletter, the kinds of information they find most valuable in the newsletter and their perception of the effectiveness of *The Highlights* weekly newsletter as a communication tool within the University. The Theoretical underpinning of the study is the Selective Perception theory. The survey method was utilized for the study relying on the questionnaire for data collection.A sample size of 380 selected through the stratified simple random sampling techniques was used for the study. However, only 334 of the copies of the questionnaire were duly filled and returned. Findings revealed that *The Highlights* has a substantial number of readers among AAUA undergraduate students and that AAUA undergraduate students had a generally positive perception of *The Highlights'* effectiveness as a communication tool, with 61.97% of the respondents believing it effectively keeps them informed about the University activities, and 61.38% considering it an essential tool for the University-student communication. Based on the findings, the study recommends that *The Highlights* adopt a more concise and visually appealing format.

Keywords: AAUA undergraduate students, Communication channels, Effectiveness, Internal communication, *TheHighlights*, Information dissemination

Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of higher education, effective communication has emerged as a cornerstone of institutional success. Universities worldwide are recognising the critical role that well-structured communication plays in fostering a sense of community, enhancing students' engagement, and facilitating the

smooth flow of information across various stakeholder groups (Heffernan et al., 2018). This recognition has led to a renewed focus on developing and refining communication strategies that align with the modern student population. The Nigerian tertiary education system, in particular, has witnessed a growing emphasis on effective communication as a tool for improving institutional management and academic outcomes. Adepoju (2011) highlighted the significance of effective communication in the management and administration of Nigerian tertiary institutions, emphasising its impact on organisational efficiency and academic performance.

Building on this foundation, recent studies have further underscored the importance of tailored communication approaches in the Nigerian university context (Etikan, Musa & Alkassin, 2018). Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko (AAUA), one of Nigerian universities has long recognised the significance of effective communication in promoting transparency, inclusivity, and unity among its diverse constituents. This recognition has informed the university's communication efforts for both internal and external stakeholders, utilising a variety of channels to reach and engage them at different times. These channels include FM radio, meetings, periodical bulletins, magazines, email, web pages, digital media broadcast messages, and others.

Amidst this array of communication channels, the AAUA*theHighlights*weekly newsletter has emerged as a pivotal instrument of organisational communication. This periodical serves as both a channel of communication and a tool for information dissemination to students, faculty, staff, and the broader university community. The newsletter ensures that all stakeholders are kept abreast of the latest developments within the University. Produced as a weekly broadcast, *The Highlights* weekly newsletter adopts a traditional newsletter format, featuring news articles, feature stories, letters, and announcements. Through this medium, the University authorities disseminate crucial information such as recent developments, calendar events, activities, and important announcements.

The genesis of the AAUA *the Highlights w*eekly newsletter marks a watershed moment in the University's communication journey. Evolving from its nascent stages to its current iteration, the magazine has remained a steadfast companion to students, faculty, and staff, serving as a conduit for dialogue, information dissemination, and collective reflection. However, the effective use of this medium presents a challenge for the university management, given its potential benefits for communication with students. A critical factor that may influence the

reception of messages by students is their perception of the communication medium itself. Furthermore, the concept of 'student voice' has gained prominence in recent years, with institutions recognising the importance of actively involving students in shaping their educational experiences (Ab, 2022). This extends to communication strategies, where understanding and incorporating studentperspectives can lead to more effective and engaging communication channels.

Recent research has highlighted the importance of understanding audience perception in enhancing the effectiveness of organisational communication. Ames et al (2019) found that employees' perceptions of organisational communication channels significantly influence their engagement with these channels and their overall satisfaction with organisational communication. This finding underscores the need to consider the perceptions of the target audience when designing and implementing communication strategies. In the context of higher education, student perceptions of university communications have been shown to impact their engagement with the institution and their overall university experience. A study by Gao and Zhai (2019) revealed that students' perceptions of university communication channels influence their information-seeking behaviours and their sense of connection to the university community. This highlights the importance of understanding how students perceive and engage with various communication channels, including newsletters like *The Highlights*.

The Covid-19 pandemic has further underscored the importance of effective institutional communication in higher education. A study by Craig and Muller (2021) found that universities that maintained clear, consistent, and empathetic communication with their students during the pandemic saw higher levels of student satisfaction and engagement. This highlights the critical role that communication tools like *The Highlights* weekly newsletter can play in maintaining a sense of community and continuity, especially during times of crisis or rapid change.Understanding how undergraduate students perceive and engage with this newsletter is crucial for optimising its effectiveness as a communication tool. In the specific context of AAUA, The *Highlights*weekly newsletter represents a significant investment of time and resources in student communication.

The role of newsletters in organisational communication has also been a subject of recent research. Despite the proliferation of digital communication platforms, newsletters continue to be a popular and effective medium for internal

communication in many organisations, including universities. A study by Ames et al (2019) found that well-designed newsletters can enhance employee engagement and foster a sense of community within organisations. However, the effectiveness of newsletters depends on various factors, including content relevance, frequency of publication, and the target audience's preferences and perceptions. In the digital age, where information overload is a constant challenge, the way students interact with and perceive traditional communication tools like newsletters is evolving. Research by Guo and Saxton (2019) suggests that while students value regular updates from their institutions, they also expect these communications to be concise, relevant, and easily accessible across multiple platforms. This finding emphasises the need for universities to adapt their communication strategies to meet the changing preferences of their student populations.

As universities continue to navigate the complexities of effective students' communication in the 21st century, understanding the perceptions and preferences of the students becomes increasingly crucial. This understanding can inform strategies to enhance students' engagement, improve information dissemination, and ultimately contribute to a more connected and informed university community. However, there is currently a lack of empirical research specifically examining AAUA undergraduates' perceptions of The *Highlights* weekly newsletter. This study seeks to address this need by exploring AAUA undergraduates' perceptions of *TheHighlights* weekly newsletter. By examining factors such as readership frequency, content preferences, engagement drivers, and perceived effectiveness, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the roles of the newsletterin AAUA's communication landscape. These insights can inform future communication strategies and contribute to the broader understanding of students' communication in higher education settings.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How frequent do AAUA undergraduate students read The *Highlights* weekly newsletter?
2. What kinds of information do AAUA undergraduate students find most valuable in *TheHighlights* weekly newsletter?
3. What are the factors that influence AAUA undergraduates' engagement with *The Highlights* weekly newsletter?
4. How do AAUA undergraduate students perceive the effectiveness of *TheHighlights* weekly newsletter as a communication tool within the university?

Literature Review

Concept of Newsletter

The concept newsletter has evolved significantly over time, adapting to changing technologies and communication needs while maintaining its core purpose of disseminating targeted information to a specific audience. At its most basic, a newsletter can be defined as a regularly distributed publication, typically about one main topic, that is of interest to its subscribers (Ames et al, 2019). However, this simple definition belies the complexity and versatility of newsletters as a communication tool. Historically, newsletters have played a crucial role in information dissemination across various sectors. The origins of newsletters can be traced back to the 16th century when handwritten news sheets circulated among merchants, providing valuable information about prices, economic conditions, and political developments (Stephens, 2020). These early newsletters laid the foundation for what would become a widespread and diverse form of communication.

Newsletters gained significant traction in the 20th century, particularly in the realm of business and organisational communication. Companies and institutions recognised the value of regular, targeted communication with their stakeholders, leading to the proliferation of print newsletters (Cornelissen, 2021). These publications served multiple purposes, including keeping employees informed about company news, updating customers on new products or services, and maintaining relationships with donors or members in non-profit organisations. The digital revolution of the late 20thand early 21stcenturies brought about a transformation and delivery of newsletters. The advent of email and the internet opened up new possibilities for distribution, interactivity, and personalisation. According to a report by the Content Marketing Institute (2022), email newsletters have become one of the most effective content marketing tools, with 81% of B2B marketers citing them as their most used form of content marketing.

In the academia, newsletters have played a significant role in fostering scholarly communication and community building. A study by Johnson and Abrahams (2021) examined the use of newsletters in academic societies and found that they serve as important channels for disseminating research updates, conference announcements, and professional development opportunities. The researchers noted that newsletters contribute to the sense of belonging among members and help maintain engagement with the field. The World Health Organization (WHO)

has recognised the value of newsletters in public health communication. In a 2019 report, the WHO highlighted the effectiveness of targeted newsletters in disseminating health information and promoting behavioural change. The organisation noted that well-designed newsletters can reach specific populations with tailored messages, making them a valuable tool in public health campaigns (WHO, 2019). Recent scholarly discussions have focused on the evolving nature of newsletters in the digital age. Research by Nielsen and Thurman (2020) explored the concept of "newsletter-first" publishing, where newsletters serve as the primary content platform rather than a supplementary communication channel. This approach has gained traction among both established media organisations and independent journalists, challenging traditional notions of news distribution and audience engagement.

The concept of personalisation has become increasingly central to modern newsletter strategies. A study by Strycharz et al. (2022) investigated the impact of personalised newsletters on reader engagement in higher education settings. The researchers found that newsletters tailored to individual preferences and behaviours resulted in higher open rates, click-through rates, and overall satisfaction among recipients. This finding underscores the importance of leveraging data and technology to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of newsletters. Furthermore, the integration of multimedia elements has expanded the conceptual boundaries of newsletters. Research by Harcup and O'Neill (2021) examined the use of video, audio, and interactive elements in digital newsletters. Their findings suggest that these multimedia components can enhance engagement and information retention, particularly among younger audiences. The concept of newsletters has also been influenced by broader trends in digital communication, such as the rise of social media and mobile technologies. A report by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (2023) noted that newsletters are increasingly serving as curated gateways to broader content ecosystems, helping readers navigate the overwhelming volume of information available online.

Newsletter has evolved from its humble origins as a handwritten news sheet to become a sophisticated, multi-faceted communication tool. Today's newsletters encompass a wide range of formats, from traditional print publications to interactive digital experiences. They serve diverse purposes across various sectors, including business, academia, public health and journalism. As technology continues to advance and communication needs evolve, the concept of newsletters is likely to undergo further transformations, adapting to new platforms

and audience expectations while maintaining its core function of targeted information dissemination.

Newsletters and Communication in the University

Newsletters play a pivotal role in the complex communication ecosystem of universities, serving as a crucial link between various stakeholders within the academic community. Recent scholarly research has shed light on the multifaceted functions and impacts of newsletters in university settings, highlighting their significance in fostering institutional cohesion, disseminating information, and enhancing the overall university experience. A comprehensive study by Harterno (2023) examined the role of newsletters in facilitating communication across different university departments and faculties. The researchers found that well-structured newsletters serve as effective bridges, breaking down silos and promoting interdisciplinary awareness and collaboration. This interconnectedness was found to be particularly valuable in large, decentralised university systems where direct communication between departments might otherwise be limited. The impact of newsletters on student engagement and academic success has been a focus of recent scholarly inquiry. Research by Patel et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between regular newsletter communication and student performance. The study revealed that students who consistently engaged with university newsletters demonstrated higher levels of academic engagement, better awareness of campus resources, and improved overall academic outcomes. This finding underscores the potential of newsletters as tools for supporting student success and retention.

The adaptability of newsletters to address diverse communication needs within the university setting has been noted in recent literature. Clark and Delong (2022) examined how universities use different types of newsletters to target specific audiences and objectives. The study identified several distinct categories, including academic newsletters focusing on research and scholarly achievements, student life newsletters highlighting campus events and opportunities, and administrative newsletters communicating policy updates and institutional developments. This diversification allows universities to tailor their messaging to meet the varied informational needs of their communities. The role of newsletters in crisis communication within universities has gained particular attention in recent years. A study by Fernandez and Shaw (2023) analysed the use of newsletters by educational institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers found that newsletters served as a critical channel for disseminating timely updates, policy changes, and support resources to students and staff. The

consistency and reliability of newsletter communications were found to be particularly valuable in maintaining community cohesion during periods of uncertainty.

Furthermore, the potential of newsletters to foster a sense of institutional identity and belonging has been explored in recent scholarship. Goldstein and Park (2022) investigated the impact of storytelling and narrative elements in university newsletters. The study found that newsletters that incorporated personal stories, student and faculty profiles, and institutional history helped to create a stronger sense of community and shared identity among recipients. This emotional connection was found to be particularly important for maintaining engagement with distance learners and international students. The integration of multimedia elements in university newsletters has been a topic of recent research.

Harterno (2023) examined the effectiveness of incorporating videos, infographics, and interactive elements in digital newsletters. The researchers found that multimedia-rich newsletters achieved higher engagement rates and information retention among student recipients compared to text-only formats. This finding suggests that universities can enhance the impact of their newsletter communications by leveraging diverse media formats. The role of newsletters in supporting diversity and inclusion initiatives within universities has also been explored in recent literature. Daft and Muller (2021) analysed how universities use newsletters to promote diversity awareness and inclusive practices. The study found that newsletters can serve as effective platforms for highlighting diverse voices, sharing resources related to equity and inclusion, and fostering a more inclusive campus culture.

Lastly, the potential of newsletters to support lifelong learning and professional development among university stakeholders has been noted in recent scholarship. A study by Harterno (2023) examined how universities use newsletters to provide ongoing educational content to alumni and community members. The researchers found that newsletters offering bite-sized learning opportunities, industry insights, and links to online courses helped to position universities as lifelong learning partners for their alumni and broader communities.

Newsletters play a multifaceted and crucial role in university communication strategies. From fostering institutional cohesion and supporting student success to maintaining alumni relationships and addressing crisis communication needs, newsletters serve as versatile and effective tools in the complex landscape of

higher education communication. As universities continue to navigate evolving communication challenges and opportunities, newsletters are likely to remain integral components of their overall communication ecosystems.

Theoretical Framework: (Selective) Perception Theory

The Perception Theory, introduced by Berelson and Steiner in 1964, posits that mass communication seeks to capture audience attention, convey new information, and shape attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. However, the theory recognizes that the process of interpreting messages is inherently complex, making it difficult to achieve these objectives. As Berelson and Steiner note, perception involves a multifaceted process of selecting, organizing, and integrating sensory stimuli to form a coherent understanding of the world (Anaeto, 2008).

Selective perception refers to the phenomenon where individuals' perceptions are shaped by their personal desires, needs, attitudes, and psychological biases. This concept plays a crucial role in communication, as it suggests that people can interpret the same message in vastly different ways. Ultimately, the meaning of a message is unique to each receiver, and it is impossible to assume a universal interpretation.According to Anaeto (2008), individuals can employ a series of defense mechanisms to avoid undesired information. First, they can selectively attend to only the agreeable parts of a message. If that fails, they can use selective perception to interpret the message in a way that aligns with their existing views. Finally, if all else fails, they can exercise selective retention by simply forgetting or ignoring the information that contradicts their beliefs.

Applying Perception (selective perception) Theory to the study of *TheHighlights* weekly newsletter can help in identifying the specific needs, attitudes and psychological biases of AAUA undergraduate students. The manner in which the AAUA students perceive the effectiveness of *The Highlights* weekly newsletter as a tool for information dissemination. *TheHighlights* weekly newsletter functions within the university's communication landscape and there is a need to know how it can be optimised to better serve the needs and preferences of AAUA undergraduates. This nuanced theoretical framework will guide the research design, data collection, and analysis, ultimately contributing to actionable insights for improving the effectiveness of *TheHighlights* weeklynewsletter as a key communication tool within the University.This shows the relevance of this theory to the discourse.

Methodology

This study employed the survey research method to investigate AAUA undergraduate students' perception of The *Highlights* weekly newsletter due to its ability to efficiently collect data from a large number of participants, making it well-suited for examining the perceptions of AAUA's undergraduate population. By utilizing the survey method, this study aims to gather comprehensive data on AAUA undergraduates' readership patterns, content preferences, engagement factors, and overall perceptions of *TheHighlights* weekly newsletter's effectiveness as a communication tool.The population of the study comprised undergraduate students of AAUA. As of the 2023/2024 academic session, the total undergraduate population at AAUA was 23,869 students. This information was obtained from the Students' Affairs unit of the institution. The population spans across various faculties, departments, and levels of study within the University.

The study adopted stratified, simple random and purposive sampling techniques to give all AAUA students fair and equal chance of representation in the study. The stratified sampling technique was used for this study, but in the case of this study, the strata are 10 faculties in AAUA. After stratification of the faculties, simple random sampling technique was used to select four faculties which are faculties of Arts, Social Sciences, Law and Agriculture. Lastly, purposive sampling technique was used to select only those who have at a point read *TheHighlights*weekly newsletter.

The choice of AAUA undergraduates as the study population is grounded in several key considerations. Firstly, as the primary target audience of *TheHighlights*weekly newsletter, undergraduate students are best positioned to provide insights into its effectiveness as a communication tool. Their perceptions, readership patterns, and engagement levels are crucial for evaluating the newsletter's impact and using the Wimmer and Dominick sample size calculator, with a population of 23,869 AAUA undergraduates yielded a sample size of 378. This sample size is sufficient to provide statistically significant results while remaining manageable within the study's logistical and time constraints.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

This section presents information about age, gender, year of study and faculty of respondents. It also presented data in relation to the research objectives. The information provided here was analyzed using frequency count and percentage.

Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Range	Score	Percentage
16-20	54	16.17%
21-25	132	39.52%
26-30	110	32.93%
31 and above	38	11.38%
Total	334	100%

Resultsin Table 1 revealed that majority of the respondents 132 (39.5%) were within the age range of 21-25, followed by 110 (32.9%) respondents who were within the age range of 26-30. The significant representation of the 21-25 and 26-30 age groups aligns with the typical age range of undergraduate students in Nigerian universities, considering factors such as gaps between secondary school and university admission, and the duration of degree programme.

Table 2: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Score	Percentage
Male	178	53.29%
Female	156	46.71%
Total	**334**	**100%**

Results in Table 2 revealed that majority of the respondents 178 (53.2%) were males while a total number of 156 (46.7%) are females. The slightly higher percentage of male respondents might reflect the overall gender composition of the University or could suggest a marginally higher engagement rate among male students with the newsletter.

Table 3: Faculty Distribution of Respondents

Faculty	Score	Percentage
Arts	120	35.98%
Law	45	13.47%
The Social Sciences	135	40.42%
Agriculture	34	10.18%
Total	**334**	**100%**

The results in table 3 showed that a higher number of the respondents, 135 (40.42%) are from the Faculty of Social Sciences, 120 (35.98%) of the

respondents are from the Faculty of Arts, 45 (13.47%) are of the Faculty of Law and only 4 respondents are from the Faculty of Agriculture in the University. The Faculty of Social Science shows the highest representation at 40.42%, closely followed by the Faculty of Arts at 35.98%.

Table 4: Year of Study Distribution of Respondents

Year of Study	Score	Percentage
100 Level	62	18.56%
200 Level	75	22.46%
300 Level	88	26.35%
400 Level	84	25.15%
500 Level	25	7.49%
Total	**334**	**100%**

The results of the data analyses in Table 4 indicate that majority of the students 88 (26.3%) were in 300 level, 88 (26.3%) of the respondents were in 400 level, 75 (22.4%) of the respondents were in 200 level, 62 (18.5%) of the respondents were in 100 level and 25 (7.4%) of the respondents were in 500 level. The notably lower representation of 500 Level students at 7.49% could be attributed to several factors. Firstly, not all the programmes at AAUA have a 5-year duration, which naturally leads to a smaller pool of 500 Level students. Additionally, final year students may be less engaged with general university communications as they focus on completing their degrees and preparing for post-graduation plans. Spill over students were excluded from participating in the study.

Table 5: Frequency of Reading *The Highlights* Weekly Newsletter

No.	Item	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
1	I read *The Highlights* every week when it's published	68 (20.36%)	98 (29.34%)	85 (25.45%)	56 (16.77%)	27 (8.08%)
2	I rarely miss an issue of *The Highlights*	58 (17.37%)	87 (26.05%)	102 (30.54%)	62 (18.56%)	25 (7.49%)
3	I read *The Highlights* at least once a month	72 (21.56%)	103 (30.84%)	89 (26.65%)	48 (14.37%)	22 (6.59%)
4						
5	I make time in my schedule to read *The Highlights* regularly	63 (18.86%)	92 (27.54%)	97 (29.04%)	59 (17.66%)	23 (6.89%)

The results of the data analyses in Table 5 showedthat frequently AAUA undergraduate students read *The Highlights* weeklynewsletter. Findings revealed that, a total number of 166 (68+98) respondents representing 49.7% strongly agreed and agreed to read *The Highlights* weekly newsletter every week,Also, a total number of 145 (58+87) representing 44% strongly agreed and agreed that they rarely missed an issue of *The Highlights* weeklynewsletterwhilea total number of 175 (72+103) respondents representing 52.4% strongly agreed and agreed to read *The Highlights* weekly newsletter at least once in a month. Lastly, a total number of 155 (63+92) respondents representing 47% strongly agreed and agreed to make time in their schedule to read *The Highlights* weekly newsletter regularly. Theseresults suggest that *TheHighlights* had a substantial number of readers among AAUA undergraduate students.

Table 6: Most Valuable Information in The Highlights

No.	Item	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
1	Academic announcements in *The Highlights* are most valuable to me	98 (29.34%)	120 (35.93%)	65 (19.46%)	35 (10.48%)	16 (4.79%)
2	I find the event calendar in *The Highlights* very useful	85 (25.45%)	108 (32.34%)	78 (23.35%)	45 (13.47%)	18 (5.39%)
3	Articles about students' achievements are the most interesting to me	92 (27.54%)	115 (34.43%)	72 (21.56%)	38 (11.38%)	17 (5.09%)
4	Information about the University policies is what I value most	78 (23.35%)	102 (30.54%)	85 (25.45%)	50 (14.97%)	19 (5.69%)
5	I appreciate the career development information in *The Highlights*	88 (26.35%)	110 (32.93%)	75 (22.46%)	42 (12.57%)	19 (5.69%)
6	Campus life stories are the most engaging content for me	82 (24.55%)	105 (31.44%)	80 (23.95%)	48 (14.37%)	19 (5.69%)
7	Research highlights from faculties are valuable to my academic growth	75 (22.46%)	98 (29.34%)	90 (26.95%)	52 (15.57%)	19 (5.69%)
8	I find the administrative updates most crucial in *The Highlights*	70 (20.96%)	95 (28.44%)	95 (28.44%)	55 (16.47%)	19 (5.69%)

Table 6 provides insights into the types of information AAUA undergraduates find most valuable in *The Highlights* weekly newsletter. The results reveal varying levels of interest and perceived value across different content types. Academic announcements emerged as the most valued type of information with 218 (98+120) of the respondents representing 65.2% agreed or strongly agreed that these are the most valuable to them. Other kinds of information majority of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed to find most valuable are articles about students' achievements with 207 (115+92) representing 62.3%, 198 (88+110) representing 59.2% strongly agreed and agreed that they appreciate the career development information in the newsletter and also 193 (85+108) representing 57.7%, strongly agreed and agreed that the event calendar in *TheHighlights*weekly newsletter was very useful to them. While still significant, the administrative updates agreed to by the lowest number of the respondents as

valuable information to them suggests that purely administrative information may be less engaging for students compared to other content categories.

Table 7: Factors Influencing Engagement with *The Highlights*

No.	Item	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
1	The visual appeal of *The Highlights* encourages me to read it	80 (23.95%)	105 (31.44%)	82 (24.55%)	48 (14.37%)	19 (5.69%)
2	The length of articles in *The Highlights* affects my willingness to read	88 (26.35%)	112 (33.53%)	75 (22.46%)	42 (12.57%)	17 (5.09%)
3	I engage more with *The Highlights* when it covers topics relevant to my faculty	95 (28.44%)	118 (35.33%)	68 (20.36%)	38 (11.38%)	15 (4.49%)
4	The timeliness of information in *The Highlights* influences my engagement	85 (25.45%)	110 (32.93%)	78 (23.35%)	45 (13.47%)	16 (4.79%)
5	I'm more likely to read *The Highlights* when my peers recommend specific articles	75 (22.46%)	98 (29.34%)	90 (26.95%)	52 (15.57%)	19 (5.69%)
6	The accessibility of *The Highlights* on different devices affects my engagement	90 (26.95%)	115 (34.43%)	72 (21.56%)	40 (11.98%)	17 (5.09%)
7	My workload during the semester influences how often I read *The Highlights*	98 (29.34%)	120 (35.93%)	65 (19.46%)	35 (10.48%)	16 (4.79%)
8	The writing style used in *The Highlights* affects my interest in reading it	82 (24.55%)	108 (32.34%)	80 (23.95%)	45 (13.47%)	19 (5.69%)

Table 7 presents data analyses results that revealed several key aspects that impact students' interaction with the newsletter. Majority of the respondents 218 (98+120) representing 65.2% strongly agreed and agreed that their workload during the semester influenced how often they read *TheHighlights* weekly newsletter, 213 (95+ 118) representing 63.7% engaged more with *TheHighlight*s weekly newsletter when it covers topics relevant to their faculty, 205 (90+115) representing 61.3% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that the accessibility of *TheHighlights*weekly newsletter on different devices affected their engagement, 200 (88+ 112) representing 59.8% strongly agreed and agreed that the length of articles in *TheHighlights*weekly newsletter affected their willingness to read. These findings provide valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of students' engagement with *The Highlights* weekly newsletter, pointing to areas where adjustments could potentially increase readership and interaction.

Table 8: Perceived Effectiveness of *The Highlights* as a Communication Tool

No.	Item	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
1	*The Highlights* effectively keeps me informed about the University activities	92 (27.54%)	115 (34.43%)	72 (21.56%)	38 (11.38%)	17 (5.09%)
2	I feel more connected to the University community because of *The Highlights*	85 (25.45%)	108 (32.34%)	78 (23.35%)	45 (13.47%)	18 (5.39%)
3	*The Highlights* helps me understand the University policies and decisions	80 (23.95%)	105 (31.44%)	82 (24.55%)	48 (14.37%)	19 (5.69%)
4	I trust the information provided in *The Highlights*	95 (28.44%)	118 (35.33%)	68 (20.36%)	38 (11.38%)	15 (4.49%)
5	*The Highlights* enhances my overall university experience	88 (26.35%)	110 (32.93%)	75 (22.46%)	42 (12.57%)	19 (5.69%)
6	I find *The Highlights* more effective than the other University communication channels	78 (23.35%)	102 (30.54%)	85 (25.45%)	50 (14.97%)	19 (5.69%)
7	*The Highlights* successfully promotes student engagement in university life	85 (25.45%)	110 (32.93%)	78 (23.35%)	45 (13.47%)	16 (4.79%)
8	I believe *The Highlights*	90	115	72	40	17

	is an essential tool for the University-student communication	(26.95%)	(34.43%)	(21.56%)	(11.98%)	(5.09%)

Table 5 shows the results on AAUA undergraduates' perceptions of the effectiveness of *The Highlights* as a communication tool within the University. The results indicated that a significant number of the respondents, 213(95+118) representing 63.7% strongly agreed and agreed that they trusted the information provided in *The Highlights*weekly newsletter, 207 (92+115) representing 61.9% strongly agreed and agreed that *The Highlights*weekly newsletter effectively kept them informed about the University activities. 205 (90+115) of the respondents representing 61.2% believed *The Highlights*weekly newsletter was an essential tool for the University-student communication. This indicated that the respondents had a generally positive perception of the newsletter's effectiveness. This underscores the perceived importance of the newsletter in the overall communication strategy of the University.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: How frequent do AAUA undergraduates read *The Highlights* Weekly Newsletter?

The findings reveal that while nearly half of the respondents (49.70%) agreed to reading *TheHighlights*weekly newsletter every week upon publication, a significant portion (44%) agreed that they rarely missed an issue of *The Highlights* weekly newsletter, whilea total number of respondents representing 52.4% strongly agreed and agreed to read *TheHighlights*weekly newsletter at least once in a month. In the context of a university newsletter, the varying levels of engagement observed may be attributed to the perceived richness of the medium in conveying different types of information.

Recent studies have shown that the frequency of engagement with digital newsletters is influenced by factors such as content relevance and information overload. For instance, Etikan, Musa and Alkassin (2018) found that university students' engagement with digital communications is often characterized by selective attention, where they prioritize content based on perceived relevance to their immediate needs. This selective engagement is evident in theresults, where 50.90% of respondents stated they read *The Highlights* weekly newsletter when expecting important information. The preference for mobile reading (61.97% of respondents) aligns with contemporary trends in digital media consumption among young adults. A study by Boczkowski et al. (2018) on news consumption patterns among university students found that mobile devices are the preferred

platform for accessing information due to their convenience and accessibility. This trend underscores the importance of optimizing *The Highlights* for mobile viewing to enhance readership.

Research Question 2: What kinds of information do AAUA undergraduate students find most valuable in The *Highlights* Weekly Newsletter?

The findings indicated that AAUA undergraduates valued a diverse range of content in *The Highlights*, with a particular emphasis on academic announcements (65.27%), event information (57.79%), student achievements (61.97%), and career development content (59.28%). The high value placed on academic announcements and event information correlates with findings from recent studies on student information needs. For instance, Gómez-Aguilar et al. (2021) found that timely academic information and event updates were among the most sought-after content types in university communication channels. This preference for practical, immediately applicable information suggests that students are primarily motivated by cognitive and social integrative needs when engaging with *The Highlights*. The strong interest in student achievement stories (61.97%) aligns with research by Guo and Saxton (2019) on the importance of peer recognition in fostering a sense of community among university students. This type of content serves both social integrative needs (by connecting students to their peers' successes) and personal integrative needs (by providing models of achievement within the university context).

The appreciation for career development information (59.28%) reflects the growing emphasis on employability in higher education. A study by Ames et al. (2019) on the career information-seeking behaviour of university students found that institution-provided career resources were highly valued, particularly when integrated into regular communication channels. This suggests that *The Highlights* played a crucial role in meeting students' long-term professional development needs. From the perspective of Selective Perception Theory, the varying levels of interest in different content types may reflect the perceived richness of how this information was presented in *TheHighlights* weekly newsletter. For instance, the lower interest in administrative updates (49.40%) compared to other content types might indicate that this information is not presented in a sufficiently engaging or accessible manner as suggested by Gigliotti (2022), adapting the presentation style of different content types to match their complexity and students' preferences could enhance overall engagement.

Research Question 3: What factors influence AAUA undergraduates' engagement with The *Highlights* Weekly Newsletter?

The findings reveal several key factors influencing student engagement with *The Highlights*, including visual design (55.39%), article length (59.88%), content relevance to specific faculties (63.77%), timeliness of information (58.38%), accessibility across devices (61.38%), and semester workload (65.27%). The importance of visual design (55.39%) and article length (59.88%) in encouraging readership aligns with findings from Daft and Muller (2021), who emphasized the role of visual appeal and content brevity in enhancing engagement with digital educational materials. This suggests that *TheHighlights*weekly newsletter should prioritize an attractive, user-friendly layout and concise, easily digestible content to maintain student interest. Content relevance to specific faculties emerged as the most influential factor (63.77%), highlighting the importance of personalized content in digital communications.

This aligns with research by Abarony (2022) on the effectiveness of personalized content in increasing student engagement with university communications. The findings suggest that *The Highlights* could benefit from implementing a more targeted content strategy, perhaps offering faculty-specific sections or personalized content recommendations. The influence of timeliness (58.38%) and accessibility across devices (61.38%) on engagement reflects the expectations of the digital-native generation for immediate, ubiquitous access to information. These findings are consistent with research by Fernández-Planells (2021) on news consumption patterns among young adults, which highlighted the importance of real-time updates and multi-platform accessibility in maintaining engagement.

The significant impact of semester workload on readership (65.27%) aligns with the concept of information overload, a key consideration in Media Richness Theory. As discussed by Admiral et al (2019) in their study of internal communication in higher education, students' capacity to engage with non-essential communications is often limited during high-stress academic periods. This suggests that *The Highlights* might benefit from adapting its content strategy and distribution schedule to align with the academic calendar, perhaps offering more concise updates during examination periods. The role of peer recommendations in influencing readership (51.80%) highlights the social aspect of media consumption. This aligns with findings from Clark and Delong (2022) on the influence of peer networks on information-seeking behaviour among

university students. Encouraging more peer-to-peer sharing of *The Highlights*' content could potentially increase overall engagement and readership.

Research Question 4: How do AAUA undergraduates perceive the effectiveness of *The Highlights* as a communication tool within the University?

The findings indicate a generally positive perception of *The Highlights*' effectiveness as a communication tool, with 61.97% of respondents believing it effectively kept them informed about the University's activities, and 61.38% considering it an essential tool for the University-student communication. These results can be interpreted through the lens of Selective Perception Theory as well as recent empirical studies on institutional communication in higher education. The high percentage of students who felt well-informed about the University's activities (61.97%) suggests that *The Highlights* weekly newsletter successfully fulfils its primary communication function. This aligns with the findings of the research by Fowler (2019) on the role of institutional communication in enhancing student engagement and satisfaction. They found that regular, comprehensive updates on university life were crucial in fostering a sense of connection and belonging among students. The fact that 57.79% of respondents reported feeling more connected to the University community because of *TheHighlights*weekly newsletter underscores its role in building a sense of belonging. This finding resonates with research by Fowler (2019) on the importance of institutional communication in fostering student integration and retention. Their study highlighted the role of regular, inclusive communication in creating a supportive campus environment.

In relation to selective perception which refers to the phenomenon where individuals' perceptions are shaped by their personal desires, needs, attitudes, and psychological biases, this concept plays a crucial role in communication, as it suggests that people can interpret the same message in vastly different ways. From the perspective of Perception Theory, the relatively high trust in the information provided by *TheHighlights*weekly newsletter (63.77% agreement) suggests that it is perceived as a reliable and credible communication channel. This aligns with findings from Craig and Muller (2021) on the importance of perceived credibility in students' choice of information sources. The study found that official university communications were generally perceived as more trustworthy than informal channels or social media. The perception of *TheHighlights*weekly newsletter as enhancing the overall university experience (59.28% agreement) can be interpreted through the lens of selective perception

theory. This suggests that the newsletter successfully met various students' needs, from information-seeking to social integration. However, the lower percentage of students who find *TheHighlights*weekly newsletter more effective than other university communication channels (53.89%) indicates room for improvement.

This aligns with research by Blankenship and Gibson (2023) on the evolving preferences of Generation Z for institutional communication, which emphasized the importance of integrating multiple platforms and interactive elements to enhance engagement. The belief that The *Highlights* Weekly Newsletter successfully promotes student engagement in university life (58.38% agreement) is particularly noteworthy. This finding supports research by Cerdá and Ramírez-Vega (2022) on the role of institutional communication in fostering student participation and engagement. Their study found that regular, well-crafted communications could significantly increase student involvement in campus activities and initiatives.

In conclusion, while *TheHighlights*weekly newsletter is generally perceived as an effective communication tool, there are opportunities for enhancement. As suggested by recent research on digital communication in higher education (e.g., Daft & Muller, 2021), integrating more interactive elements, personalizing content delivery, and adapting to evolving student preferences could further improve its effectiveness and impact on the AAUA community.

Conclusion

This study on AAUA undergraduate students' perception of the effectiveness of *TheHighlights*weekly newsletter as communication channel has yielded important insights into the effectiveness of institutional communication in higher education. The findings lead to several key conclusions regarding readership patterns, content preferences, engagement factors, and the overall effectiveness of *TheHighlights*weekly newsletter as a communication tool within the University. Firstly, the study concludes that while *The Highlights* weeklynewsletter has a frequent readership base, there is a notable trend of selective engagement among students. The fact that nearly half of the respondents read the newsletter weekly indicates its relevance and importance in the University's communication ecosystem. Secondly, the study concludes that multiple factors influence student engagement with *TheHighlights* weekly newsletter, with content relevance to specific faculties and semester workload being particularly significant. This underscores the importance of tailoring content to the academic context and considering the rhythms of university life when planning newsletter distribution.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that *TheHighlights*weekly newsletter serves as an effective communication tool within AAUA, successfully meeting many of the information needs of undergraduate students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to enhance the effectiveness of *The Highlights* weekly newsletter and improve institutional communication at AAUA:

1. To increase the frequency at which students read *The Highlights* weekly newsletter so as to maximize its effectiveness, ongoing efforts should be made to adapt the newsletter's content, design, and distribution strategies to evolving student preferences and the changing landscape of digital communication in higher education.
2. As academic announcements (65.27%), student achievements (61.97%), and career development content (59.28%) were identified as the most valued types of information, it is recommended that *The Highlights* weekly newsletter should prioritize these content categories and focus on timely academic information, showcase student successes more prominently, and increase the frequency and depth of career-related content. To address the lower interest in administrative updates (49.40%), such information can be presented in a more engaging manner by highlighting its direct relevance to student life.
3. Considering that content relevance to specific faculties emerged as the most influential factor (63.77%) in engagement, it is recommended that *The Highlights* implement a more personalized content strategy. This could involve creating faculty-specific sections or allowing students to customize their newsletter preferences. Additionally, given the significant impact of semester workload on readership (65.27%), it is advised to adapt the content strategy and distribution schedule to align with the academic calendar, offering more concise updates during high-stress periods such as examination weeks.
4. While 61.97% of respondents believed*The Highlights* weekly newsletter effectively keeps them informed about the University activities, there is room for improvement in fostering peer-to-peer discussions about its content. It is recommended that *The Highlights* weekly newsletter incorporate interactive elements such as polls, surveys, or comment sections to encourage student engagement and discussion. Furthermore, to enhance its role in promoting students' engagement in university life, *The Highlights* weekly newsletter should more actively promote student organizations, volunteer opportunities, and campus events, providing clear calls-to-action for student involvement.

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