Exploring the role of internal risk communication in decision-making within a food and beverages organisation

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Mini-dissertation accepted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Commerce in Applied Risk Management* at the North-West University

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NOTES TO EXAMINERS

- The mini-dissertation should demonstrate that the student has the ability to:
  - Do research
  - Constructively criticise own and others' research
  - Report the research results clearly, accurately and concisely with enough information to allow others to evaluate, and perform a similar study, should they wish to do so.
- This study represents the student's learning during a nine-month research project at master's degree level. It is therefore not necessary that the results represent a substantial contribution to the academic knowledge of the field.
- The mini-dissertation was written in article format and consists of three sections: Research project overview, Article and Reflection. The focus of the mini-dissertation is on the article written by the student.
- The research project overview section should provide a high-level introduction to the research project that adequately prepares the reader to understand the study.
- The reflection section should provide a critical evaluation of the study and allow the student to reflect on their personal learning during the project.
- The student should provide a study-specific summary of the literature related to the specific study in the article.
- The maximum word count for the article is 8000 words. This maximum word count excludes words used in tables and figures, the article abstract, references, and appendices. The maximum word count for the abstract is 300.
- The additional information in the appendices should be considered when evaluating the content of the three main sections of the dissertation.
- The supervisors' role was to provide guidance and assistance on project conceptualisation, data analysis, interpretation, and writing skills. The student was ultimately responsible for conceptualising, setting up, executing, and writing up the research project.
- Turnitin was used to assist with plagiarism checking before the student was allowed to submit for examination.

PREFACE

This mini-dissertation is the final deliverable for the Master of Commerce (MCom) in Applied Risk Management. The mini-dissertation was written in article format and consists of three sections: Research project overview; Article; and Reflection.

This mini-dissertation is the student's work. The student was responsible for the final concept, set up, execution of the research project and writing of the mini-dissertation. The supervisory team members contributed in an advisory and technical support capacity to the study's conception and design, analysis and interpretation of data, and critical revision of the manuscript. The mini-dissertation was language edited before submission for examination. However, the student is responsible for making these edits and for the grammatical correctness of the final document.

I declare that this mini-dissertation was done according to the NWU Guidelines on Responsible and Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence (https://www.nwu.ac.za/sites/www.nwu.ac.za/files/files/i-governance-management/policy/2024/November-2024/2P_2.4.3.2_Policy-on-Academic-Integrity.pdf)

The primary study supervisor permitted the student to submit this mini-dissertation for examination.

ABSTRACT

Risk communication is important for effective risk management; it is a vital component of risk analysis. Risk communication and decision-making are connected, as effective risk communication enables risk informed decisions. This study aims to explore how internal risk communication informs decision-making in a food and beverages organisation in South Africa. The study was conducted within a multinational food and beverages organisation, with offices in South Africa. The study was conducted using an exploratory interview-based qualitative research approach and the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews where 10 employees were selected. The results extracted from interviews are organised into six themes: Internal risk communication; risk communication channels; benefits, risks, challenges, and strategies for effective risk communication. The findings indicated that the participants have an understanding and can define risk communication. Additionally, the results suggested a number of positive themes relating to how internal risk communication informs decision-making. However, the majority of the participants interviewed experienced challenges to how risk communication is transmitted. This study provides useful information on and a review of risk communications that can be used by the employees in the organisation. The research objectives were achieved, the results answered the research questions, and the recommendations were also made specifically for the risk communication challenges identified. The research scope was limited to internal risk ccommunication, and further research should be conducted to source the views of employees on other levels and in other departments.

Keywords: Risk, risk communication, internal risk communication, risk information, decision-making, risk management

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RESEARCH PROJECT OVERVIEW

Risk communication is vital for improving overall risk management as it promotes transparency, builds trust, strengthens relationships among stakeholders, and enables stakeholders to make informed decisions (Boholm, 2019; Yoe et al., 2020; Enslin et al., 2025). The consumer goods industry in South Africa is facing various challenges including fluctuating demand levels, shifting consumer preferences, supply chain disruptions and unstable commodity markets (Hirsch et al., 2024). Therefore, organisations must be prepared for these challenges, and effective risk communication is vital to support decision-making. Literature has published on risk communication, however, there is limited literature on the topic of internal risk communication and how it informs decision-making within a food and beverages organisation, particularly in a South African context. This study explored employees' perceptions and experiences of internal risk communication. The participants were senior and middle managers from two departments in the organisation. The participants were selected as they are decision-makers who provide risk information and receive risk information in the organisation, and, therefore, have important views on the research topic.

The decision for choosing this specific topic was motivated by the Risk Data and Reporting module in the first year of the UARM MCom Applied Risk Management Programme, which sparked an interest with the researcher in how risk information is communicated and reported in the organisation. The results of this study will form the basis for the organisation under study. It will consider the recommendations on how to communicate risks effectively. The results of the study could also benefit and add value to the practice of risk communication in other food and beverages organisations. Additionally, this study provided the researcher with an opportunity to learn how to do an applied research project to demonstrate mastery of research at master's degree level within a research team context. The responsibilities of the different role players in this research project are described in Table 1.

Table 1. Role players in the mini-dissertation study

#	Team member	Role
1	Researcher	Phendulwa Mzizi
2	Supervisor I Co-supervisor	Dr Rudzani Magau Dr Emmanuel Mulambya
3	Editor	Dr Wena Coetzee

References

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ARTICLE

Exploring the role of internal risk communication in decision-making within a food and beverages organisation

Abstract

Risk communication is important for effective risk management; it is a vital component of risk analysis. Risk communication and decision-making are connected, as effective risk communication enables risk informed decisions. This study aims to explore how internal risk communication informs decision-making in a food and beverages organisation in South Africa. The study was conducted within a multinational food and beverages organisation, with offices in South Africa. The study was conducted using an exploratory interview-based qualitative research approach and the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews where 10 employees were selected. The results extracted from interviews are organised into six themes: Internal risk communication; risk communication channels; benefits, risks, challenges, and strategies for effective risk communication. The findings indicated that the participants have an understanding and can define risk communication. Additionally, the results suggested a number of positive themes relating to how internal risk communication informs decision-making. However, the majority of the participants interviewed experienced challenges to how risk communication is transmitted. This study provides useful information on and a review of risk communications that can be used by the employees in the organisation. The research objectives were achieved, the results answered the research questions, and the recommendations were also made specifically for the risk communication challenges identified. The research scope was limited to internal risk ccommunication, and further research should be conducted to source the views of employees on other levels and in other departments.

Keywords: Risk, risk communication, internal risk communication, risk information, decision-making, risk management

1. Introduction

Risk communication is crucial in disseminating risk insights that promote awareness and the understanding of risks and enable organisations to make risk-informed decisions (Goerlandt et al., 2020; Enslin et al., 2025). Beasley et al. (2023) emphasised that in the exponentially changing risk landscape, timely dissemination of risk information has become a competitive advantage. For instance, the emergence of disruptive events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the monkeypox disease, as well as escalating geopolitical tensions like the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the US-China political relationship, has accelerated the significant role of risk communication in decision-making (Paulik et al., 2020). Risk communication is an interactive process of exchanging information and opinions on risks between individuals, groups, and institutions, which entails messages that express concerns, opinions, or reactions to risks (Dransch et al., 2010). Risk refers to the probability or likelihood of an event, and the severity of its consequences occurring (Lyon & Popov, 2022).

Risk communication is important as it helps organisations and individuals get relevant information about risks and enables them to prepare on how to manage them (Rabe et al., 2024). Risk communication transmits important information that enables stakeholders to interact over key decisions (Hooker & Leask, 2020). The sharing of risk information helps to recognize and understand common opportunities and threats in organisations (Hudin et al., 2024). Organisations with robust and efficient risk communication strategies have attributed their success to responding and adjusting their business and corporate strategies to the timely dissemination of risk information, which guided them through decision-making (Letshwenyo et al., 2019). Risk communication plays an important role in decision-making as it provides the necessary understanding of risks to stakeholders and increases preparednesss (Dehghani et al., 2024). Thus, risk communication is a key component of risk management and essential for decision-making.

However, research shows that most organisations are still struggling to establish and embed an efficient risk communication framework in the food and beverages industry (Zhu et al., 2021; Charlebois & Summan, 2015). According to Fakhruddin et al. (2020), organisations struggle to disseminate risk information in a timely and efficient manner to empower decision-making, due to risk communication being frequently at the tail end of the risk reduction process, rather than being integrated throughout. Additionally, this is problematic since major incidents in the process industries, where there is processing of raw materials into finished goods, are often a result of uninformed decisions, which were also not supported by risk insights (Zhu et al., 2021). The fast-moving consumer goods industry in South Africa is highly impacted by challenges such as poor infrastructure, unreliable electricity, and poor technological systems (Magagula et al., 2020). Risk communication is, therefore, crucial for decisions that affect productivity, safety, and efficiencies in a food and beverages organisation. Since organisations are struggling to disseminate risk information efficiently, this can result in a lack of transparency, delays, and misunderstandings,

which, in turn, may lead to vvarious threats that negatively affect the supply chain, such as disruptions or quality issues.

The reason for the study was that risk information between the internal departments in the organisation is not fully shared, resulting in departments managing risks in silos. This is pragmatic for organisational decision-making. The problem is crucial because the organisation is operating in an industry that is characterized by rapid changes in market demands and risk informed decision making is of high importance. The impact with risk communication not being transparent in the organisation is employees not making the risk informed decisions as they do not have a full picture of the risks. Therefore, the research is important to contribute to the improvement of risk management in the organisation.

Although articles have been published on risk communication, research is needed to gain insights into how internal risk communication informs decision-making within a food and beverages organisation, particularly in a South African context. Scholars such as Balog-Way et al. (2020) evaluated the state of risk communication in the United States and found that efforts to find a single and generic version of what represents risk communication is less effective than an open-minded exploration of the multiple forms. Likewise, Fathollahzadeh et al. (2024) explored the factors that create challenges for risk communication in Iran and found that the main factors that challenged risk communication of relief organisations was insufficient educational communication, inconsistencies in warning messages, ambiguity and distrust. Yoe et al. (2020) evaluated the lessons learnt from risk communication within the international food safety community and found that risk communication is essential to a successful risk management process, and there are opportunities to improve the quality of risk communication.

In an attempt to address or further understand these lessons from a South African context, a study by Dubihlela et al. (2021) provided a glaring gap. According to Dubihlela et al. (2021), fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) lack risk knowledge; they have risk management systems in place, but they are very simple and informal. FMCG involve food, daily chemical products, and medicines, which are an indispensable part of people's daily life (Guo & Liu, 2016). However, this study only focused on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) based in the Cape Metropolitan area, and the findings and proposed framework might not be adequate for multinational food and beverages organisations. None of these studies focused on how internal risk communication informs decision-making within a multinational food and beverages organisation. Therefore, does not address the problem of risk information not being fully shared in the organisation and how that results in risk management being managed in silos. The recommendations by participants in this study may assist to improve the risk management process in the organisation which will be beneficial for decision-making. To address these gaps, this study aims to explore how internal risk communication informs decision-making in a food and beverages organisation in South Africa through employees' experiences. The study seeks to answer the following research question: How

does internal risk communication inform decision-making within a food and beverages organisation in South Africa?

2. Background

The existing literature on risk communication and risk-informed decision-making was examined, focusing on the definitions, benefits, and challenges of risk communication, and the role of risk communication in decision-making.

2.1 Risk communication

There are various definitions of risk communication in the literature, and it is important to get an understanding of what the term means within the context of this study. Yoe et al. (2020) defined risk communication as the exchange of information and opinions concerning risk among stakeholders, wherein the purpose is to enable recipients to make risk-informed decisions. The main objective of risk communication is to raise awareness, promote adaptive behaviour, inform about risks, build trust, promote mutual dialogue, and involve stakeholders in decision-making (Attems et al., 2020). These definitions, postulated by Attems et al. (2010) and Yoe et al. (2020), clearly state that risk communication aims to give insights to decision-makers. These definitions are aligned with the objective of this study, which explored how internal risk communication informs decision-making within a foods and beverages organisation.

According to Bhuller and Trevithick-Sutton (2024), for risk communication to be effective, it is crucial to ensure that risk information is presented in a meaningful and useful manner. This entails identifying the gap between the knowledge of the decision-maker and the desired state of knowledge for decision-making and ensuring that the information meets the situational needs and matches the experience and knowledge of the decision-makers (Zhu et al., 2021). In addition, the intended purpose of the recipient must be considered when formulating risk information (Akande et al., 2023). This can be achieved by tailoring the content of the message to address the concerns and interests of the stakeholders the message is intended for (Sataøen et al., 2024). It is clear that for risk communication to be effective, the audience and their needs must be considered, and the message must be customised for the intended stakeholders for their decision-making process.

Risk communication is something that risk practitioners do as part of “risk work” in organisational settings, while in academic settings it focuses on how risk is, or should be communicated (Boholm, 2019). In this study, the focus will be on internal risk communication as part of the risk work, that is, routine internal communication, which entails the dissemination of risk information internally in the form of risk reports, risk circulars, hazard mappings, feedback sessions, and training programmes (Bourrier, 2018). The Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (COSO) framework (COSO, 2016) emphasises that internal communication facilitates the functioning of other components of internal control by sharing information up, down, and across the

entity. Thus, it is crucial to establish how internal risk communication informs decision-making in a food and beverages organisation within the South African context.

The food and beverage sector in South Africa plays an important role in the growth of the economy and contributes significantly to the country's manufacturing gross domestic product (Masena et al., 2024). However, the industry faces several challenges, such as the risk of product spoilage, product recalls and demand uncertainty. These unique challenges cause disruptions that can lead to a shortage of certain products in the market or a stoppage in production (Ermes et al., 2022). Risk communication is then important in the industry as sharing of information can assist making informed decisions during disruptions. One of the findings from the study by Ermes et al. (2022) was that sharing of timely and accurate information could prevent the spread of disruptions as stakeholders can find solutions quickly and prevent major disruptions. Therefore, risk communication strategies are vital in the food and beverages industry. There are also numerous crises in the field of food safety at global level, for example in South Africa, the Listeria monocytogene food crises in 2017–18 which resulted in some product re-calls as they caused major health risks. Food safety risk communication is one of the key parts of risk analysis in a foods and beverages environment and during a crisis, it informs individuals to protect their health from food safety risks and make informed decisions about food risks (Baba et al., 2023). It is apparent that risk communication is vital in a food and beverages organisation whether it is providing information on disruptions or demand uncertainties, or providing information about food safety risks, as the information is important for decision-makers.

The basic steps of risk communication are: identifying which risk information needs to be disseminated, identifying the stakeholders and their concerns, and forming and delivering the risk insights (Mansour et al., 2023). It is also important how the risk messages are transmitted to different target audiences to ensure the information reaches the relevant decision-makers (Fakhruddin et al., 2020). According to Lundgren and McMakin, (2018), the audience must find the communication credible and trustworthy, and actions, policies, and the language must be appropriate for risk communication to succeed. According to the King Report on Corporate Governance (IoDSA, 2016), transparent and meaningful integrated annual reports is encouraged. Furthermore, Section 13 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993 (Act No. 85 of 1993), emphasises that employers must communicate to employees any hazards that may affect their health and safety. It is clear that risk communication is essential for best practices and that when risk insights are disseminated efficiently, there are positive benefits.

2.2 Benefits of risk communication

Efficient communication enables organisations to make informed decisions and protects them from risks and losses caused by hazards (Fathollahzadeh et al., 2024). Risk information provides information to enable stakeholders to make informed decisions about a company, such as setting strategic objectives, investment decisions, and strategic partnerships (Enslin et al., 2025). Risk

communication promotes consistency and transparency, improves the effectiveness and efficiency of risk management decisions, and strengthens working relationships between stakeholders (Letshwenyo et al., 2019). The ISO 31000 (2018) standard emphasises that risk communication promotes responsibility and ownership of risk and should be an essential part of any organisation's risk management strategy, and that effective risk communication is a crucial part of the risk management process and risk assessment.

Additionally, risk communication provides clarity and specificity around the multi-dimensional attributes of risk; it helps stakeholders think both creatively and broadly about both risk problems and risk management options (Árvai, 2014). According to Yoe et al. (2020), risk communication strengthens working relationships, trust, and mutual respect amongst stakeholders. Within the supply chain, risk information sharing is crucial for decision-makers as it contributes to minimising risks such as poor quality, increased prices, late deliveries, and damaged reputation (Hudin et al., 2019). Sharing of risk information in the supply chain involves providing the supply chain partners the current status of the inventory levels, defective materials, market volatility, transportation delays, production and purchasing constraints, and labour disputes (Kim et al., 2011). It is clear that where risk insights are disseminated efficiently and timeously, organisations could be empowered to make risk-informed decisions. However, Obonadhuza et al. (2021) argued that organisations also face challenges with risk communication.

2.3 Challenges of risk communication

Risk communication is complicated because it requires one to take into account all the layers and attributes in the decision-making process, and how the audience will receive the message (Bhuller & Trevithick-Sutton, 2024). The environment in which most modern risk communications take place, and the active role of the media, can be a challenge for risk communication (Bouder, 2022). Akande et al. (2023) emphasised that media sensationalism and the propagation of myths and misinformation are some of the challenges in risk communication. One of the major challenges in risk communication is how to adequately tailor content that addresses the interests and concerns of different stakeholders (Sataøen et al., 2024). Another challenge of risk communication is that audiences can be extremely broad and diverse. It is difficult to craft a message that is easy to understand for a diverse audience (Bhuller & Trevithick-Sutton, 2024). It is clear that risk communication can be a challenge if not disseminated timely and efficiently, which could result in uninformed risk decisions.

2.4 Risk-informed decision-making

Decision-making entails considering many choices and selecting the best possible option that would result in a desired outcome. It is goal-oriented, and the decision-maker seeks to attain certain outcomes (Sharma, 2022). In any large organisation, many decision-makers are involved in risk-related decisions, and they face different risk-related decisions based on their distinct positions

and responsibilities (Zhu et al., 2021). With emerging technologies and the rapidly changing risk operating environment, organisations require decision-makers to consider risks in their decision-making process to drive change and continuous improvement (Lyon & Popov, 2017). To be able to make risk-informed decisions, the managers in the organisation should have the risk information that will assist them in making those decisions.

High risk industries such as nuclear, aerospace, aviation, and oil, use risk-informed decision-making processes to make the best decisions for achieving their objectives, taking into account the constraints of social, technical, commercial, safety, security, and environmental requirements (Vasconcelos et al., 2023). According to Dezfuli et al. (2010), the NASA risk-informed decision-making process is an element of risk management, and it consists of three parts: alternative identification, alternative risk analysis, and alternative selection based on risk-informed selection. It is clear that it is crucial for organisations to have risk-informed decision-making processes in place to ensure the best decisions are made.

2.5 The role of risk communication in decision-making

Effective risk communication is an essential next step in risk assessment implementation to link results to risk-informed decision-making (Hu et al., 2021). Risk communication aims to raise awareness for the decision-makers to make informed decisions (Baty, 2009). Balog-Way et al. (2020) argued that effective multiway risk communication is a resource or means for individuals, groups, or organisations to help achieve desired results, which is achieved by making informed decisions. Furthermore, Zipkin et al. (2014) highlighted that the effective communication of risks and benefits is critical for decision-making; the information about benefits and harms maximises the understanding, satisfaction, and decision-making ability of decision-makers. Dissemination of information such as external environment analysis and emerging risks enables management to make risk-informed decisions on the strategic direction of the organisation (Citroen, 2011). By having the relevant risk information, management can align its decisions to contribute positively to the organisation's objectives. Operationally, Simba et al. (2017) emphasised that consumer goods organisations need to consider risk insights in their day-to-day operating activities. Therefore, risk communication is crucial for decision-making as it enables stakeholders to make informed decisions, which is why the objective of this study was explore how internal risk communication informs decision-making within a foods and beverages organisation. The study methods and approach are described next.

3. Method

3.1 Study type

The study followed an exploratory interview-based qualitative research approach to answer the research question. The study focuses on understanding how internal risk communication informs decision-making within a foods and beverages organisation and an exploratory qualitative research approach allows for an in-depth exploration. This method was used to solicit input and insights from the participants. The study was based on the participants' experiences; the interviews provided a space for extended conversations with the participants that allowed the researcher insight into how the participants think and what they believe (Knott et al., 2022). The method enabled the researcher to explore the perceived role of internal risk communication on decision-making within a food and beverages organisation. An exploratory qualitative study was deemed most suitable for obtaining insights from the least-researched phenomenon or industry (Hunter et al., 2019; Olawale et al., 2023). This was attributed to the limited-research completion period of two and a half months.

3.2 Target study population and sample

The study targeted both senior and middle managers from two departments in the organisation to scale down the research, as the organisation is large with approximately 60 middle and senior managers in the two earmarked departments in South Africa**.** Purposive sampling was preferred for this study. In the purposive sampling technique, the researcher does not seek to randomly sample participants (Bekele & Ago, 2022). This is because the objective of purposive sampling is to strategically select research participants so that they are relevant to the research questions that are being asked (Bekele & Ago, 2022).

The study targeted and recruited 15 participants, and 12 participants agreed to the interviews. However, 10 participants (67% participation ratio) attended the interviews. The 10 participants were from the Operational Control Team, with representation from the two departments, Control Shared Services and Commercial Compliance. According to Ahmed (2025), an exploratory study often benefits from smaller samples; in-depth interviews with 10 to 15 participants can provide sufficient depth to identify key themes. Therefore, the 10 interviews were deemed sufficient. Additionally, the managers were selected because they are risk and compliance managers who are decision-makers, and their views about internal risk communication were important for the study. The researcher targeted participants who are involved in decision-making, as the study aims to explore how internal risk communication informs decision-making. This approach was adopted as the participants provide risk information, receive risk information, and are decision-makers in the organisation, therefore, they have important views on the research topic. Though the sample size was small, it was sufficient to reach data saturation – the point at which no new themes or insights emerge from data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). In addition, Squire et al. (2024) indicated there is no

agreement on the minimum number of interviews needed to achieve saturation. Most research on saturation has been based on in-person data collection.

3.3 Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted for this study as they provide the researcher with an opportunity to acquire in-depth information and evidence from interviewees, and allow flexibility and adaptability (Elhami & Khoshnevisan, 2022; Ruslin et al., 2022). The interviews were held one-on-one, virtually, or in person, where it was feasible. The interviews were conducted because the participants' experiences were sufficient to understand the problem being researched and in-depth information could be gathered on the follow-up questions (Mthuli et al., 2022; Knott et al., 2022). The interviews followed the interview protocol provided in the interview guide **(Appendix A)**. The interviews were recorded and transcribed; the recordings were deleted to protect confidentiality, and the transcriptions will be stored safely for a period of three years from the date of publication/examination **(Appendix B)**. Time invested in transcription helps the researcher observe the data set closely and develop a better understanding of it (Majumdar, 2022). The earmarked participants were recruited prior to the interviews in person, or via email to participate in the study, and were provided the context of the study and the interview. They were also requested to sign or provide consent using the informed-consent form **(Appendix B)**.

The questions contained in the interview guide were the following:

- How would you describe internal risk communication?
- What are the most used channels of communication for the dissemination of risk information within the organisation?
- What are the perceived benefits of internal risk communication within your department?
- What are the perceived challenges of internal risk communication within your department?
- How can the organisation improve internal risk communication to help your decision-making process?
- How do you think internal risk communication informs decision-making?

3.4 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted, and a code book was created out of the data/responses from the interviews. Thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analysing, and interpreting qualitative data. Thematic analysis provides a clear and systematic method of producing codes and themes from qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The aim of the coding is sorting and structuring the data, which enable the researcher to acquire deep, comprehensive and thorough insights into the data (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Thematic analysis provides a detailed description and interpretation of the themes and patterns from a data set (Majumdar, 2022). Six themes and 18 subthemes were consolidated (Figure 1) and further discussed in the results section.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Obtaining consent is an important ethical consideration in social science research (Sahin & Kesik, 2020). Permission was requested and granted from the university with ethics clearance number: NWU-00725-25-A4. Permission was further obtained from the organisation to conduct the research. The permission from the organisation was shared with the Ethics Committee, however, was not indexed to ensure anonymity of the site where the study was conducted. The participants were requested to read and sign a consent form before the interviews. The consent form explains the purpose of the study and emphasises that participation in the study was voluntary, and that the participant could withdraw at any time. Anonymity and confidentiality were also assured and communicated to the participants. There is no undue influence in this research as the participants were not incentivised and were participating voluntarily.

The recordings were deleted after the study to protect confidentiality, and the transcriptions will be kept in a safe place to allow for the confidentiality of organisation-specific information. Neither the organisation nor the interviewees were identified in the study transcriptions. The study has adhered to and meets the requirements of the South African Protection of Personal Information Act (Act 4 of 2013) (POPIA) to protect the personal information of the participants and the organisation.

4. Results and discussion

The results extracted from the interviews are organised into six themes: Internal risk communication; risk communication channels; benefits of risk communication; risk communication challenges; strategies for effective risk communication, and risk-informed decision-making. The detailed thematic codebook has been included in the appendix **(Appendix C).** Figure 1 summarises the six themes that emerged from the interviews and each theme is supplemented by subthemes.

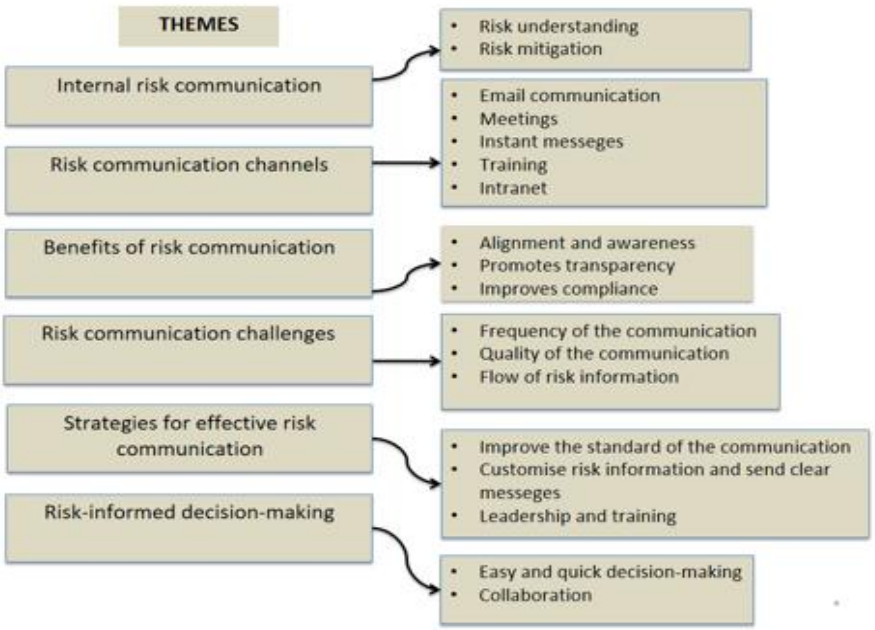


Figure 1: Visual representation of the overarching themes and subthemes

4.1 Internal risk communication

The participants were asked to define internal risk communication, and there were similarities in their definitions, which were risk understanding and risk mitigation.

4.1.1 Risk understanding

The participants defined risk communication as an exchange or sharing of risk information within the organisation. P2 and P3 indicated that it is sharing or exchange of information. P1 added that internal risk communication is a constant exchange of information to highlight potential risks.

“Exchange of information in the organisation ... share with supply chain teams about safety risks, quality and packaging risks and regulatory requirements ...” (P3).

“Strategic way on how to share important information about potential challenges and the treats that will enable the employees within an organisation to make informed decisions or taken from the informed action.” (P2).

The participants’ insights are aligned with the literature as Dransch et al. (2010) described risk communication as an interactive process of exchanging information and opinions on risks between individuals, groups, and institutions, which entails messages that express concerns, opinions, or reactions to risks. Thus, the definitions by the participants are in line, risk communication is the sharing of risk information. P7 also shared the same sentiments.

“Risk Communication is a way of sharing information about the potential dangers or losses that an organisation might encounter in different divisions within the organisation.” (P7).

4.1.2 Risk mitigation

The participants elaborated in their definitions that the aim of internal risk communication is to mitigate risk. P7 added that the communication is to ensure employees devise systems to prevent the risks. Therefore, risk information helps the stakeholders make informed decisions to prevent or minimise risks.

“Risk communication enables the employees within an organisation to make informed decisions or take informed actions.” (P2)

“To make employees aware of what actions need to be taken in any sort of situation.” (P1)

“Internal risk communication is the guidelines on how to mitigate risk.” (P5)

The participant’s views are in line with the literature. Boholm, (2019), Yoe et al. (2020), and Enslin et al. (2025) indicated that risk communication is vital for improving overall risk management and enables stakeholders to make informed decisions. Overall, the results indicate that the participants

have an understanding and can define internal risk communication, and the understanding is aligned to the literature.

4.2 Risk communication channels

The second question of the interviews aimed to identify the most used channels of communication in the departments, and the participants identified similar channels. The channels identified are email communication, meetings, instant messages, training, and the intranet.

4.2.1 Email communication

All the participants revealed that most of the risk information is disseminated via emails in the organisation. The risk information shared via emails is reports, dashboards and newsletters. P5 indicated that most communication is via email, while P1 added that the most used channels are also emails.

“Risk is communicated via email with reports … credit reports, bad debt provisions ...” (P7).

“Within the organisation is emails … it is a lot of emails…” (P10)

There was however a concern regarding the communication via email as P7 and P10 mentioned that there is too much information communicated in emails. The channel identified is in line with the literature as Zhu et al. (2021) stated that risk information is disseminated through formal reports, newsletters, and digital alerts. This information is communicated via email as indicated by the participants.

4.2.2 Meetings

The participants identified meetings as another channel of internal risk communication in the organisation. P2 indicated that business communicates risk via scheduled meetings. P8, P10 and P4 also added that risk information is communicated in the townhalls. Townhalls are when the senior leadership communicate with the whole organisation to give an overall update on what is happening in the organisation.

“Some employees do not have access to emails in the distribution centres…briefings and debriefings meetings …” (P3).

“It could be global emails and townhalls…every second or third month...” (P9)

Bourrier (2018) highlighted that routine internal communication entails the dissemination of risk information internally in the form of feedback sessions. The daily check-ins scheduled meetings and townhalls are all forms of feedback sessions where teams receive and share risk information. P6 added that they have daily check-ins with their teams as there are numerous activities in their daily operations, and risks must be identified early.

“Every morning, the day starts with a team meeting…daily operations as risk must be identified early.” (P6).

4.2.3 Instant messages

Instant messages were another channel of communication identified in the results. P4 indicated that internal risk communication is also communicated via the instant-messaging tool, which is an internal instant-messaging tool used in the organisation. P6 added that their teams use WhatsApp messages to communicate some risk information especially in urgent situations.

“Internal risk communication is also communicated via … the internal instant-messaging tool.” (P8).

“Teams, emails and WhatsApp ... that is how things get communicated … important to be in touch for risk situations…” (P6)

Talamayan et al. (2024) stated that the increased use of mobile and messaging apps allowed for consistent and timely communication, and improved coordination during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the use of instant messaging by the organisation, as highlighted by the participants, matches the literature.

4.2.4 Training

The participants identified training as one of the channels for communicating risks in the organisation. P4 indicated that internal risk communication is communicated via training sessions or workshops.

“Other channels of risk communication are face to face and virtual training … and the online training platform with assessments.” (P1).

Dehghani et al (2022) highlighted that training should be included in all the phases of the disaster management programme to establish and improve the effectiveness of the risk communication process. Therefore, the participant’s insights are aligned with the literature. P4 added more channels including training.

“Newsletters and emails…training sessions or workshops...” (P4)

4.2.5 Intranet

The intranet was also identified as one of the communication channels. P1 mentioned the enterprise control tool is used to communicate risk, and the tool has training about risk available.

“… One of the communication channels is the intranet; the intranet is where you find most of the communication ... (P2).

“Communication on the intranet on the ping mobile…” (P8)

Fish et al. (2017) highlighted the intranet as one of the communication channels to issue risk messages, therefore, the results from the participants support the literature. The organisation’s intranet is convenient for sharing risk information as it is a focal point and all employees have access to it at various locations.

4.3 Benefits of risk communication

The participants agreed that risk communication has numerous benefits for the organisation. These include alignment and awareness, promoting transparency, and improving compliance.

4.3.1 Alignment and awareness

Most of the participants highlighted that one of the benefits of risk communication is to ensure that stakeholders are aligned. P2 highlighted that when teams are aligned it creates a sense of collective purpose and helps teams align their efforts with company goals. They further added that risk communication minimises chances of misinformation and panic and ensures that stakeholders are aligned during a crisis.

" … When the risk has been communicated in time, you know it helps with preparedness and aligning the efforts with the company goals." (P2)

"If we're having effective internal risk communication … it allows us to make better decisions and improve operational efficiency…" (P1)

The participants were also of the view that internal risk communication benefits the organisation because when the employees are aware of risks, they can look out for them. P3 indicated that when the teams know what is coming, it is easy to prepare.

"One of the benefits of internal risk communication is that it promotes awareness of risks; sharing information with teams ensures that teams avoid risky situations …Teams are aligned on what to do and can add value." (P8)

Management in the organisation must align the decisions with the company objectives, therefore, effective internal risk communication is crucial, when the employees are prepared and there is a collective purpose that contributes to better decision-making. This is aligned with the literature. As highlighted by Zhu et al. (2021) and Sharma (2022), it is important for the right information to be available, as an effective communication system is crucial for risk decisions to meet the objectives.

4.3.2 Promotes transparency

Other factors indicated by the participants is that internal risk communication promotes transparency, and being proactive with decision-making aligns with the business objectives. P10 indicated that teams can be innovative and open-minded about the actions to be taken when they have the necessary risk information. Letshwenyo et al. (2019) indicated that risk communication promotes consistency and transparency, improves the effectiveness and efficiency of risk management decisions, and strengthens working relationships between stakeholders. With the challenges that have been indicated by the participants, the organisation needs to ensure there is transparent communication, which will also improve trust between employees and the leadership.

"Transparent communication … it helps build trust between employees and the leadership." (P2).

"Communication is upfront…everyone knows exactly what they are expected to do…" (P9).

4.3.3 Improves compliance

Some of the participants highlighted that one of the benefits of risk communication is that it mitigates risk. P3 indicated that effective communication promotes compliance.

“Some benefits of risk communication are that it helps with proper reporting, and the team to comply with SOX controls.” (P5).

“Benefits of risk communication...continuous improvement in controls…strong compliance culture, doing the right thing…”. (P4)

This is in line with the COSO framework, which emphasises that internal communication facilitates the functioning of other internal control components by sharing information throughout the organisation up and down (COSO, 2016). Risk communication is beneficial for ensuring compliance; the organisation should therefore ensure that internal risk communication is effective. P01 added the same sentiments regarding promoting compliance.

“Risk communication promotes operational efficiency… and promotes regulatory compliance.” (P1).

4.4 Risk communication challenges

The participants agreed that there were some challenges with risk communication in the organisation and had various common responses. The challenges identified were the frequency of the communication, the quality of the communication and the flow of the information.

4.4.1 Frequency of the risk communication

There were common responses about the frequency of risk communication within the departments; some of the participants revealed that sometimes there is no communication. P9 and P10 added that sometimes there is no communication at all, and the teams must source the information themselves. A further point made by some of the participants is that there is delayed communication. P4 indicated that there is delayed communication; P10 added that sometimes information is withheld until the last minute.

“The letter about the potato shortages that will increase prices was received five days later and that impacts planning.” (P6).

“Sometimes communication is after the fact, meaning after the event has taken place and the actions required are not clear”. (P8).

“Silos between departments, working separately with no proper follow ups from each party” (P7)

This is in line with literature as Fakhruddin et al. (2020) and Ross et al. (2024) argued that organisations struggle to disseminate risk information in a timely and efficient manner to empower decision-making.

4.4.2 Quality of the risk communication

The participants also highlighted that there is poor communication. P3 and P9 indicated that communication that is received is not clear. P10 added that communication is not clear and sometimes employees have to source information themselves. This causes misinterpretations and employees have different versions of the issues and what needs to be actioned.

“Information is not cascaded properly from senior management, and the relevant people are not getting a clear message, which causes misunderstandings.” (P8).

“There is a barrier to the flow of communication...messages are distorted creating misinterpretations”. (P1).

This is problematic – poor communication can lead to disruptions in the supply chain. Hudin et al. (2019) highlighted that risk information sharing is crucial with the supply chain for decision-makers as it contributes to minimising risks such as poor quality, increased prices, late deliveries, and damaged reputation. It is therefore important for the organisation to communicate good quality information for the relevant employees to action.

4.4.3 Flow of risk information

The results also revealed that there were challenges about the flow of the information and the messages being communicated. There is a challenge of information not being cascaded properly from senior management, which then results in relevant people not getting the message and, in other instances, the information is not forthcoming. P1 indicated that there is a barrier to the flow of information, and the messages are distorted, which leads to misinterpretations and confusion. P1, P4 and P7 were of the view that there is an information overload.

“There are too many emails and reports causing employees to miss important risk messages preventing timely action.” (P7).

“Sometimes there is no transparency and important risk information is not shared with the relevant stakeholders, like what is going now with…the communication is very last minute”. (P3).

“Sometimes the information is not forthcoming and not reaching the relevant people…leaves teams unaware of the actions to be taken”. (P8)

Bhuller and Trevithick-Sutton (2024) emphasised that it is crucial to ensure that risk information is presented in a meaningful and useful manner, for risk communication to be effective. Therefore, it is important for the organisation to address these challenges to empower decision-making that is aligned with company objectives.

4.5 Strategies for effective risk communication

Question five aimed for participants’ opinions on how the organisation can improve internal risk communication to help their decision-making process. Participants took the opportunity to provide strategies based on the challenges that had been identified in question four. The strategies were to

improve the standard of the communication, customise risk information, send clear messages, and leadership and training.

4.5.1 Improve the standard of the communication

Most of the participants indicated that the risk information being shared should be clear on time and easy to understand. P2 indicated that the communication must be clear and understandable. P8 added that accurate and clear information must be shared, and it must be on time as that will enable the teams to know what actions need to be taken. P6 added that the communication must be on time.

“It goes back to the definition … or the elements of communication to say communication has to be clear … it has to be understandable.” (P2)

Four of the participants highlighted that the organisation should also improve on transparency in the communication. P9 said that communication must be transparent to everyone. P1, P3 and P8 also added that there should be transparency.

“The organisation can improve on transparency…communicate on time and must be clear.” (P3).

Árvai (2014) indicated that risk communication provides clarity and specificity around the multi-dimensional attributes of risk and helps stakeholders think broadly about risk problems and risk management options. The insights by the participants are important for the business to ensure the internal risk communication is improved as this will help improve the overall risk management process.

4.5.2 Customise risk information and send clear messages

The participants made some suggestions to address the misinterpretations, confusion and information overload, challenges. P1 suggested that risk information must be customised for the roles and responsibilities of the recipients. P10 added that there should be clear instructions, the messages should be direct. What the participants have indicated is in line with the literature, as Sataøen et al. (2024) indicated that for effective communication, the contents of the message must be tailored to address the concerns and interests of the stakeholders the message is intended for.

“ … and risk information must be customised for roles and responsibilities … a person should know what their risks are and how to prevent those risks and take proactive measures.” (P1)

The participants also underlined strategies for flow of information. P1 indicated that the most relevant communication channels should be used in the organisation or for the people within a department. P9 and P2 added that two-way dialogue can improve communication as there is a lack of communication.

“... two-way dialogue as well can improve ... risk communication challenges.” (P9)

The organisation is a multinational food and beverages organisation, therefore the strategies to customise for certain groups of stakeholders and using the most relevant communication channel

for those recipients are important. These can improve the issues of relevant people not getting the message, misinterpretation, distorted messages and information overload. Employees can concentrate on what concerns them and what they need to action, and that will add value to the organisation.

4.5.3 Leadership and training

The participants also highlighted that the leadership of the organisation should lead the charge in improving internal risk communication. P4 indicated that leadership should lead by example in the communication of risks and P8 added that everyone must take risk management seriously, and that senior management must drive this to improve internal risk communication. P3 also added that leadership should take risk seriously.

“Senior leadership need to take risk seriously … sometimes they cannot give direction to what has been communicated …” (P3).

Kabuye et al. (2019) highlighted that top management is believed to have a strong influence on establishing overall risk governance within an organisation. When the leadership takes risk management seriously, it will encourage the employees to do the same – both the communicators and recipients of risk information.

The participants further added that training for staff can improve internal risk communication. P8 highlighted that there must be training on risk and communication to empower employees. P5 added that for improvement there must be training and access to proper information.

“Training about risk and communication…to empower empleyees and communicators.” (P8)

These strategies are in line with the literature as Bourrier (2018) highlighted that routine internal communication entails training programmes, therefore the organisation should consider this feedback. The leadership can also drive training and awareness from the top and ensure there are training programmes, and that employees have access to the information. This will improve the knowledge and awareness of risks in the organisation.

4.6 Risk-informed decision-making

Question six of the interview questions aimed to establish how participants think internal risk communication informs decision-making, and the participants were of the view that decisions are informed by risk communication.

4.6.1 Easy and quick decision-making

The participants were of the view that decision-making and communication go hand in hand. P3 indicated that communication and decision-making co-exist; the decision-making process does not exist without communication. P8 indicated that timely risk communication can help avoid making incorrect decisions and when people have information, decisions are informed, and they make better decisions. P10 added that one needs information to make wise decisions. P7 added that clear communication ensures that decision-makers understand the full picture of risks involved.

“ … proper communication makes it easy to make a decision, … why it's important for it to be timely, so decisions can be made on time also makes it easy to make a decision” … (P9).

Zipkin et al. (2014) highlighted that effective communication of risks and benefits is critical for decision-making; the information maximises the understanding, satisfaction, and the decision-making ability of decision-makers. Therefore, the insights from the participants are in line with the literature – risk communication does inform decision-making.

“Risk decisions need risk information, and we cannot make decisions without facts. When managing … we need all the information, and we do investigations before making decisions.” (P3)

Easy and quick risk decisions can be beneficial for the organisation as it can improve efficiencies by focusing on what is important. Quick decision-making is crucial in the supply chain as there are multiple processes in manufacturing, warehousing, logistics, etc, and when quick risk decisions can be made, it contributes positively to the whole supply chain.

4.6.3 Collaboration

The participants further added that when the decisions are informed by risk information, it builds good relationships and trust among the stakeholders in the organisation. P5 indicated that internal risk communication improves efficiencies and performance. Furthermore, P1 added that risk communication helps the stakeholders formulate strategies that can lead to effective solutions. Collaboration and responsibility was one of the six main criteria of effective risk communication as identified by Boholm (2019), therefore, the results are in line with the literature. Collaboration increases employee engagement and innovation in organisations.

“Overall internal risk communication … it helps with decisions for meeting company goals.” (P8)

“Internal risk communication encourages collaboration...it is not like a one-way communication and it builds trust.” (P4)

The participants confirmed that internal risk communication informs their decision-making and highlighted that it builds trust and collaboration, which is important among stakeholders in the organisation. Collaboration improves performance and contributes positively to company goals; therefore, internal risk communication is crucial for the organisation.

5. Conclusion

The study explored the role of internal risk communication in decision-making in a food and beverages organisation from a South African context. The study was conducted to respond to the question: How does internal risk communication inform decision-making within a food and beverages organisation in South Africa? The literature reveals that risk communication is a broad concept, which has been researched extensively, however, more studies in different organisational contexts should be conducted. Overall, the findings mean internal risk communication is vital for

decision-making in the organisation, as with effective communication decision-making is easier and quicker. If the organisation can improve on the frequency, quality and flow of risk information as discussed by the participants that can improve efficiencies and performance which is a positive for the organisation's goals. Improved internal risk communication can enable employees to be proactive and will encourage collaboration which can lead to good relationships and trust amoung the stakeholders. Boholm (2019) identified six main criteria of effective risk communication, which are organisational planning and strategic decision-making, collaboration and responsibility, knowledge and understanding, the message, connection to risk management, and trust. The recommendations from participants in the present study for effective risk communication are aligned with the literature.

The study provides useful information and a review of risk communication that can be used by employees in the organisation to help them perform their duties effectively. The study objectives were achieved, the results answered the research questions. The findings can improve internal risk communication in the foods and beverages organisation in the South African context as the study has highlighted how timely communication, accurate information and proper flow of information results to quick, easy and informed decision-making. Organisations in the foods and beverages industry can help improve their decision-making processes by ensuring that their risk communication is effective.

However, due to the study population's small size, the results could not be generalised. The study was limited to two departments in the organisation; therefore the findings may not represent the wider organisation. The recommendations to the challenges identified may not be relevant to other departments or other foods and beverages organisations in South Africa. Further research could involve employees at other levels that had not been consulted, as well as other departments as the organisation is large. There is also an opportunity to conduct further research pertaining to risk communication and risk management in the organisation. The potential contribution for this study is to the organisation as the study has provided insights on what the organisation needs to improve in it's internal risk communication which will contribute to improved decision-making. A study on risk communication and decision-making in a foods and beverages organisation is expected to be relevant to other foods and beverages organisations. The research intends to make a theoretical contribution by adding insights to the existing literature on risk communication.

6. Recommendations of the study

Based on the results, the study indicated that internal risk communication plays a vital role in decision-making. Effective risk communication makes decision making quicker and easier and the decisions are informed. The challenges that were highlighted have must be addressed for the overall improvement of internal risk communication and decision-making. Senior management in the organisation need to drive the issue of overall risk management from the top, and, furthermore,

address the challenge of departments and business units operating in silos as this contributes to poor risk communication. Lastly, the organisation must ensure there is adequate risk management training, programmes and workshops, which can contribute positively to the organisation. The research conducted provides the foundation for future research pertaining to risk communication in the organisation, using a quantitative research approach with a larger sample. Research on how risk communication influences decision-making in a different industry is also a possibility for future research.

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REFLECTION

The objective of this study was to establish how internal risk communication informs decision-making within a food and beverages organisation in South Africa. What sparked interest in this topic was the results of an assignment in year one of the programme for the Risk Data and Reporting module where I conducted a small survey about communication of risk data in the organisation. I decided to conduct further research on the topic of risk communication but scaled it down to internal risk communication as this is a mini-dissertation and there is limited time.

The recommendations can be taken into consideration by the organisation to improve the internal risk communication process which will assist improve the decision-making process of the employees. The study provides information on how the organisation can improve risk communication by ensuring communication it is clear on time, understandable and transparent. By also customising risk information, sending clear risk messages, the leadership to take accountability and lead by example, and for the organisation to conduct some training on this topic.

I enjoyed some parts of the journey especially the part about interviewing the participants who were my colleagues. I liked the excitement they gave when providing responses, especially about what the organisation can improve internal risk communication to help your decision-making process. Everyone wanted to provide solutions. However, there were challenges and one my challenges was securing the interviews with some of the participants. Initially I had aimed to interview about 15 participants and ended up securing and scheduling 12 interviews, but along the way two interviews kept being cancelled and I was running out of time. I then ended up with 10 interviews instead.

The other challenge was finding a work-study-life balance. Work was extremely busy this year and with a lot of challenges of its own and in most cases, I found myself behind and having to put long hours to finalise my work. This taught me resilience and improved my multi-tasking skills.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE:

Phedulwa Mzizi

Exploring the role of Internal risk communication in decision-making within a food and beverages organisation

I am Phendulwa Mzizi, an MCom (Masters in Commerce) student at the North-West Centre for Applied Risk Management. This interview we are about to conduct seeks to explore the the role of internal risk communication in decision-making within a food and beverages organisation.

Thank you, we will now start with the interview.

1 .How do you describe internal risk communication?

Probe: I will provide a standard definition of risk communication.

Probe: Could you please elaborate on your definition of risk communication?

2. What are the most used channels of communication for the dissemination of risk information within the organisation?

3. In your experience, what are the perceived benefits of internal risk communication within your department?

Probe: Can you share specific examples of these benefits of internal risk communication within your department

4. In your experience, what are the perceived challenges of internal risk communication within your department?

Probe: Can you share specific examples of these challenges of internal risk communication within your department

5. In your opinion, how can the organisation improve internal risk communication to help your decision-making process?

6. Finally, how do you think internal risk communication informs decision-making?

Probe: In your experience is internal risk communication informing decisions within your department?

Thank you so much. Is there something else that we might have left out or that you might want to add?

This is the end of the interview. Thank you for your time.

Appendix B: Informed-consent Form

01 March 2026

To whom it may concern

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW

Date: _____

Participant code:

Consent: _____

Dear Participant,

I, Phendulwa Mzizi, am a final-year MCom candidate at the North-West University (NWU) Centre for Applied Risk Management (UARM). The purpose of this research study is to explore the role of internal risk communication in decision-making within a food and beverages organisation. The culmination of this study will result in the development of a mini-dissertation, which forms a mandatory part of the requirements for the successful completion of my Master's in Commerce degree.

The findings from this study will be presented in the form of a mini-dissertation, which will be submitted to the university as part of the fulfilment criteria for a Master's in Commerce degree. The NWU is an esteemed and internationally accredited institution with a strong commitment to ethical research standards and practices.

Please be informed that this research adheres to the guidelines outlined in the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act. The POPI Act ensures that your personal information is treated with the utmost care and that your rights to privacy are upheld.

Furthermore, it's essential to understand that your participation in this research is completely voluntary, and you possess the right to discontinue your involvement at any point. You are under no obligation to respond to questions that make you uncomfortable, and there will be no compensation offered for your participation.

The interview is expected to last approximately 1 hour and will be audio-recorded. However, rest assured that your name will not be included in the recording. The recording can be made available to you upon request.

In addition to audio recordings, the interviewer will be taking notes for the purpose of data analysis. These notes will be transcribed and stored on a password-protected computer to ensure confidentiality. Both transcripts and recordings will be securely deleted after three years.

To further safeguard your privacy, all individual identifiers will be removed from hard copies of the transcripts, and participant identities will be concealed using coding methods. It is important to note that while excerpts from the interview may be incorporated into the final dissertation report or other subsequent publications, your name and identifying details will never be disclosed in these publications. The interviewer may request limited demographic information for profiling interview participants, but no additional statistical analysis will be conducted with this information.

Please be aware that this research has received approval from the Optentia Scientific Committee of the NWU. Professor Ian Rothman serves as the Chairperson and can be reached at Ian.Rothmann@nwu.ac.za.

Furthermore, the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) has granted ethical clearance for this study, with the ethical clearance number NWU-00725-25-A4. Prof Diana Viljoen-Bezuidenhout chairs this committee and can be reached at Diana.Viljoen@nwu.ac.za.

I am supervised by Dr Rudzani Maga for this MCom research study. If you have any questions or concerns regarding my credentials or the research, please feel free to contact him. He can be reached at 0722685534 or rudzani.magau@outlook.com.

Note that the researcher will comply to the relevant POPI Act requirements and guidelines.

We sincerely appreciate your participation in this study. Your candid contributions are greatly valued.

Best regards,

Phendulwa Mzizi

MCom Candidate (North-West University)

Appendix C: Codebook

Theme	Subthemes	Codes
Internal risk communication	Risk understanding	Exchange or sharing of information
		Potential risks or challenges
	Risk mitigation	Minimise or prevent risk
		Decision to prevent risks
Risk communication channels	Email Communication	Newsletters
		Dashboards
		Reports
	Meetings	Townhalls
		Team or departmental meeting
	Instant messages	WhatsApp
		PING (internal communication tool)
		Enterprise control tool
	Training	In person
		Virtual
		Workshops
	Intranet	Enterprise control tool
Benefits of risk communication	Alignment and awareness	Operational efficiency
		Alignment during a crisis
		Sense of collective purpose
		Adapt and align efforts with the company goals
		Minimises chances of misinformation
		Minimises panic
		Preparedness
		Awareness on risks
		Proactive actions
	Promotes Transparency	Trust between employees and the leadership
	Improves compliance	Promotes compliance
		Continuous improvement in controls
		Strong compliance culture
		Proper reporting

Risk communication challenges	Frequency of the communication	Late communication, after the fact Information withheld until the last minute Delayed escalations
	Quality of the communication	Communication not clear Silos between departments Sourcing own information
	Flow of risk information	Not cascaded properly from senior management Relevant people not getting the message Information not forth coming Information partially communicated Information overload Misinterpretation of the message Distorted messages
Strategies for effective risk communication	Improve the standard of the communication	Clear Communication Understandable communication Timely communication Transparency communication
	Customise risk information and send clear messages	Roles and responsibilities Suitable channels of communication Clear instructions Direct messages
	Leadership and training	Lead by example Take charge Empowerment Access to information
Risk-informed decision-making	Easy and quick decision-making	Improve efficiencies Improves performance Proactive
	Collaboration	Builds good relationships Contributes to company goals