Hochschule Kempten
University of Applied Sciences

Impact of Netiquette on Email Communication

MBA Master Thesis at the University of Applied Sciences

Kempten

Ramon Bartl

Buchenberg, September 2016

„The greatest strength a man can achieve is gentleness"

Monty Roberts

Author Note

Ramon Bartl, Professional School of Business and Technology, University of Applied Sciences, Kempten; Correspondence concerning this Master Thesis should be addressed to Ramon Bartl, University of Applied Sciences, Kempten. Email: ramon.bartl@stud.hs-kempten.de.

I hereby declare that:

- I have sincerely endeavored to produce a paper of outstanding academic quality.
- I have produced this paper myself without any outside assistance except from the people and documents I quote.
- I have not copied and/or pasted this paper from other papers or documents available, except where I have explicitly stated so.
- I have not used this paper for examination purposes in any other course or institute.

Buchenberg, 30.09.2016

Abstract

Today's organizations depend heavily on the use of email. Information is exchanged to reduce uncertainty and resolve equivocality to accomplish internal tasks or coordinate activities. Often issues are ill-defined in the brevity of emails and thus, the problem is a lack of clarity, not data. However, due to its text-based nature, email has also reduced availabilities to convey nonverbal cues, which might support understanding. This makes it especially difficult to convey emotion or ambiguity, such as irony or sarcasm over email. Nevertheless, senders' intentionally and unintentionally communicate emotion over email and emotions are likely to be the reason for miscommunication.

The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of Netiquette on the recipients' level of understanding, job satisfaction, amount of uncertainty and perception of senders' likability. An electronic questionnaire was developed, where participants (N=105) had to evaluate four email samples, which were ostensibly written by a superior or subordinate. All emails contained a negative message (rejection, criticism), but were either delivered just by their content or included common Netiquette rules. Results have shown, that the email samples with Netiquette significantly improved the understanding and job satisfaction, reduced uncertainty and let the sender appear more favorable. Additionally, the organizational status of the sender resulted in a leveraging positive effect on job satisfaction and evidence for gender differences were found in the results. Implications for managers and organizations are discussed.

Keywords: Email, Netiquette, Understanding, Satisfaction, Likability, Organizational Status, Media Richness, Uncertainty Reduction, Negativity Effect, Neutrality Effect, Courtesy, Greetings, Incivility, Emotion

Acknowledgement

This work would not have been possible without the love, support, and encouragement I received from my family and my wonderful girlfriend. I do not have words to adequately describe my gratefulness for all they have provided to me. Therefore, I would like to dedicate it to them, if this work will contribute to a better way in how we communicate in todays' fast paced world, where more and more people think they have no time to be nice anymore.

I would like to thank Dr. Mark Baker, who has been an illuminating mentor in four lectures during my MBA study and was a great assistance as a supervisor for this thesis.

I have also benefited greatly from the support of Michael Weikert, Reinhard Zacher, Stefan Birzle and several others, who reviewed my questionnaire numerous times and provided valuable feedback and helped to distribute it. Thank you all for your support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Today's organizations depend heavily on the use of email. It has replaced traditional communication including letters, faxes, and calls and has become the preferred tool of communication in all business environments (Block, 2009; Lafrance, 2012; Robb, 2008; Tassabehji & Vakola, 2005).

The reason for this development is likely due to the advantages that email has over other business communication media. It is fast, reliable, asynchronous and can be used with relative ease. But also the fact that email has become an integral component of modern mobile devices, like smartphones or tablets, which provide usually continual connectivity and accessibility, shifted the way how knowledge workers manage their business communication in the contemporary workplace (Mazmanian, Orlikowski, & Yates, 2013).

Email communication has been the topic of many studies since its inception. Many theories guided these studies, like the Information Richness Theory (IRT; Daft & Lengel, 1986), which categorizes media by its ability to resolve uncertainty and equivocality, or the Media Naturalness Theory (MNT; Kock, 2005), which follows an evolutionary approach based on Darwin's theory of evolution.

While prior studies focused more on the inherent characteristics of the medium and its resulting communication restraints, more recent studies were motivated by the contextual factors and how they may affect the emotional perception of the recipient.

Shapiro and Anderson (1985) realized already in the early days of email, that the effects and side-effects in using electronic mail and message systems can be significant. Maybe one of the most important observations they described was the possibility, that recipients respond negatively or inappropriately to electronic messages, which might have been likewise misinterpreted. This was often the beginning of a conversational phenomenon called "flaming", where people express strong opinions very emotionally and usually in a very disrespectful way. Characteristics of email, e.g. that casual and formal messages look virtually the same or that responses can be send near-instantaneous instead of reasoned, were identified as one of the main reasons that make this miscommunication likely.

Shapiro and Anderson (1985) wrote one of the first guidelines about the right "etiquette" of sending and receiving emails with the goal to increase the quality and appropriateness in electronic communication. Numerous authors followed and formulated similar, as well as additional

rules for the same purpose and soon the word "Netiquette" was established in the literature.

The word Netiquette is derived from combining the word network with the French word étiquette and describes a respectful and values driven way of behaving with others in emails or other computer mediated communications (CMC) (Oxford, 2016).

These rules encompass for example a precise subject line, greeting and salutation, a concise message text, conscious usage of the carbon copy fields and maybe most importantly, to "remember the human" within email communication (Shea & Shea, 1994). Although Netiquette is considered "an unwritten set of rules", non-compliance to these rules is perceived as a sign of disrespect (Kozík & Slivová, 2014, p. 67).

Regardless of the existence of proper Netiquette rules, prior studies have identified that it is challenging to deliberately and accurately communicate emotions in email messages and that emotions are likely to be the reason for miscommunication (Byron, 2008).

Kristin Byron, Ph.D. for Managerial Sciences and associate professor at Georgia State University's J. Mack Robinson College of Business, Atlanta, found evidence that "despite advice to avoid doing so, email senders intentionally and unintentionally communicate emotion. Email characteristics make miscommunication likely, and … receivers often misinterpret work emails as more emotionally negative or neutral than intended" (2008, p. 309). She based her propositions on a prior focus group study, where almost all of the participants reported difficulties with conveying emotions in emails. One of the reasons was that the used nonverbal cues to express positive emotions were often contradictory (e.g. the length of sentences) or identical (e.g., the usage of exclamation marks) to those cues used for negative emotions (Byron & Baldridge, 2005).

But why should organizations be interested in the accurate perception of emotions in emails between their employees? The positive emotional transfer of emotions and moods among people in a group improves cooperation, increases perceived task performance and decreases conflict and absenteeism (Barsade, 2002). It is therefore crucial for organizations to succeed to accurately communicate emotions in emails, and that all members of an organization, especially the upper management, know how to skillfully communicate with this medium.

Cyber incivility or even poor or unintentional communication of emotions in emails can have extensive and expensive consequences that only few organizations can afford. US $5 billion in health costs has been estimated to have been incurred by organizations due to stress-re-

lated illness of victims of rude emails (Lim & Teo, 2009) and US $50 thousand per exiting employee due to incivility (Pearson & Porath, 2005). Furthermore, without good communication managers can fail to gain commitment from employees, fail to achieve business goals and fail to develop rapport with the people on their team (Jay, 2012).

Although a large body of research identified a strong correlation between positive emotions and increased work satisfaction and productivity (Barsade, 2002; Barsade & Gibson, 2007), most studies in the field of CMC focused mainly on the limited availability to convey emotions.

This study focuses primarily on the differences between delivering only the content of a message and the usage of established and common Netiquette rules to "wrap" the message in a courteous way. The present paper gives evidence that Netiquette can be used as an effective communication strategy to significantly improve organizational email communication from a content-wise perspective as well as from an emotional point of view.

On the content level it will increase recipients' understanding and as Netiquette also builds on relationships, it helps on the emotional level to clarify the intent of the message, which correlates to employees' job satisfaction, uncertainty reduction, likability and emotional perception. Hence, this study concentrates primarily on the subjective perceptions of the receivers in email communication.

Strong evidence could be found that Netiquette has a significant impact on email communication from the analyzed results of a conducted electronic questionnaire where participants had to evaluate inter alia four email samples. Despite the fact, that all of the presented email samples contained a negative message (rejection or criticism), those that included Netiquette resulted in a considerably higher understanding, job satisfaction, reduced amount of uncertainty, more likable picture of the sender and the emails appeared more positive than the corresponding email samples without Netiquette.

Furthermore, evidence was found that the organizational status of the sender had a leveraging effect on all of the tested results, so that the email samples with Netiquette from the higher status sender were generally rated higher than the email samples from the lower status sender.

Additionally, evidence for gender differences were found in the results. Women significantly evaluated the email with Netiquette from the ostensible higher status writer more positive and perceived the sender as more likable than men.

Further differences in the evaluation of the email samples between the participants age,

email usage level or organizational status were not found in this research.

With such knowledge, managers can design and implement Netiquette based email policies and communication trainings, especially for the upper management, to assure that organizational email communication facilitates understanding and clarifies the emotional intent of the message among their members. This will not only lead to a higher productivity, as employees gain a better understanding and do not lose work time worrying about the right interpretation of the email, but may also increase their cooperation, work commitment and job satisfaction.

Theoretical background and research hypothesis

The relationship between Netiquette in email communication and employees' understanding, perception of emotions, job satisfaction, uncertainty, leverage of senders' organizational status and impression of likability, can be best understood by theoretical perspectives found in research and theory about the organizational information requirements, media richness, communication and miscommunication of emotion by email, effects of incivility at workplace, nonverbal cues in communication and the motivation to reduce uncertainty.

Research Model

The model of sender, receiver, social context, and message factor effects on receivers' emotion misperception in emails (Byron, 2008) serves as the framework of this study (*Figure 1*).

Derived from Berlo's Source-Message-Channel-Receiver (SMCR) Model (1960), Byron adopted the idea that the factors of source or sender (S), message (M), channel (C) and receiver (R) have an impact on the communication process, which contribute to a *neutrality* or *negativity* effect. The neutrality effect describes that the receivers perceive emails as less intense than intended by the sender, whereas the negativity effect is characterized by a more intense perception (Byron, 2008). Sender factors encompass the *gender*, *relationship length*, and *relative status within an organization*, while the receiver factors embrace the *age* and *negative affectivity* (how likely a person experiences negative emotional impression). Message factors, like Netiquette or the use of verbal cues, influence both, the sender and receiver factors and may override them. Consequently, this may have an impact on the neutrality and negativity effect.

These factors mainly guided the design of the developed questionnaire of this study. Therefore, the model can be seen as the architectural framework of this study and also provided

the theoretical foundation of this research. Nevertheless, the current study does not prove or discard the propositions made by Kristin Byron when she developed the model (2008), although some of the factors were considered in the current research. Rather it gives the theoretical background of factors that may affect the recipients' perception of an email and that might be considered and help to explain why Netiquette can be considered as a message factor.

Model of Sender, Receiver, Social Context, and Message Factor Effects on Receivers' Emotion Misperception in Emails (Byron, 2008)
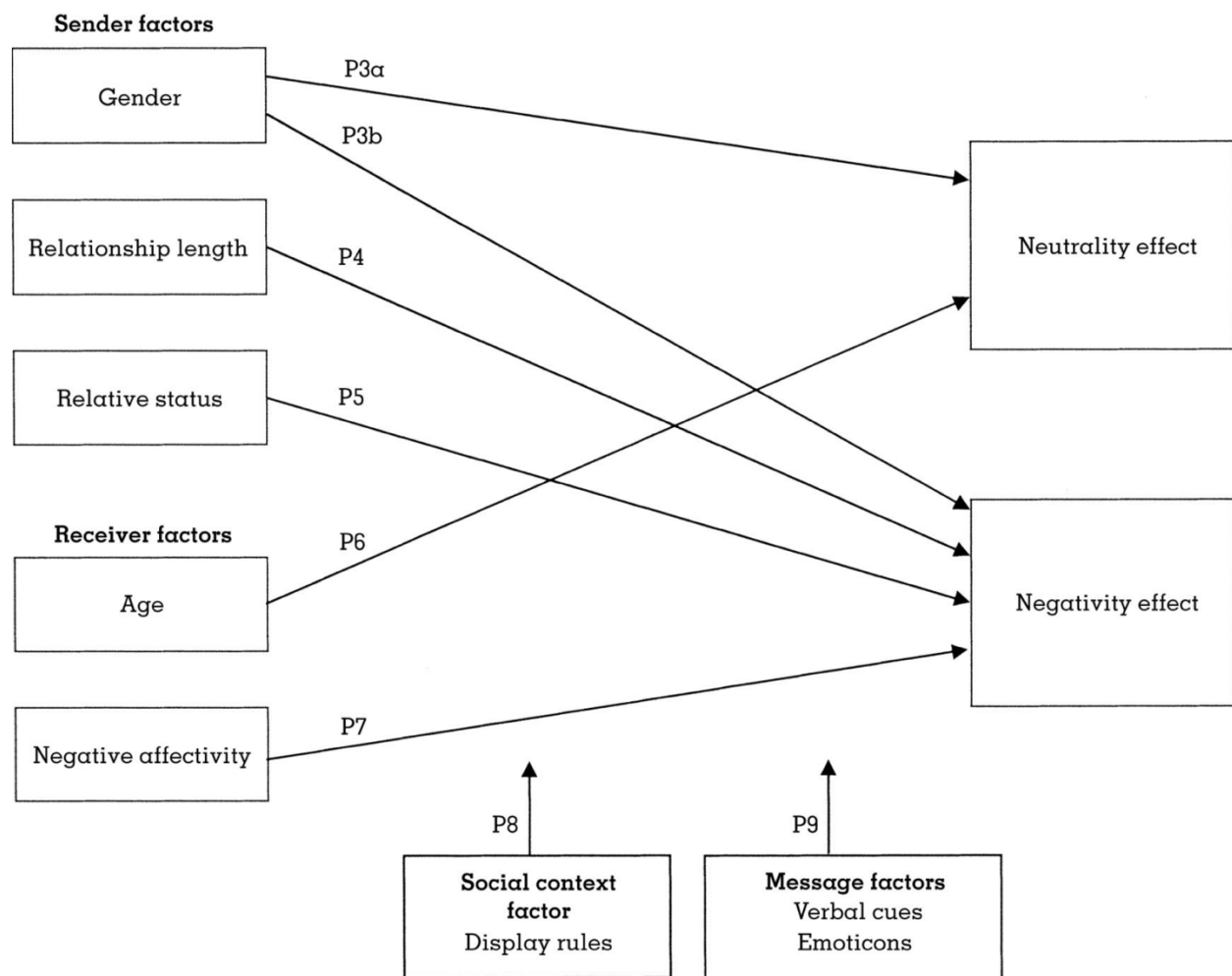

Figure 1. Research Model.

Model Overview

As mentioned before, the model was derived from Berlo's Source-Message-Channel-Receiver (SMCR) Model (1960) and can due to its simplicity and linearity relatively easily be adapted to email communication, where the sender (S) encodes a message (M) suitable to be sent through the email channel (C) to the receiver (R) who reads and subjectively evaluates the email. Each of these factors may affect the communication process and thus, the recipients' emotional perception of the email, which in turn may be likely interpreted as more neutral or negative than intended by the sender. Byron (2008) described some inherent factors of the sender and receiver, that may contribute to what she termed a neutrality and negativity effect, which will be described in more detail afterwards. Furthermore, she also introduced social context factors (*Figure 1*; Path P8) and message factors (*Figure 1*; Path P9) in her model, which are capable to override the described sender and receiver characteristics and thus, have an impact on the neutrality and negativity effect. For example, social context factors (*Figure 1*; Path P8) may be the existence of email policies or other norms how to write emails between people of the same group or organization, or in other words, of people who share the same context. A message factor (*Figure 1*; Path P9) might be the use of Netiquette, as will be described in this research. Thus, an email may very well contain a negative message, but it can also be delivered with the necessary courtesy and respect to the receiver and may therefore, reduce the already embodied negative effect.

Neutrality Effect

The neutrality effect may diminish positive emotions as more emotionally neutral than planned by the sender. Byron (2008) argued, that the neutrality effect might happen because of three reasons.

First, from the reduced availability of cues and feedback, that may make email communication in general less physiologically arousing than face-to-face communication. Byron underpinned this assumption by the evolutionary perspective of the Media Naturalness Theory, which contends that the usage of less natural media, like email, leads to the following effects:

(1) Increased cognitive effort, (2) increased communication ambiguity, and (3) decreased physiological arousal (Kock, 2005).

Second, that the emotional intensity is difficult to accurately deliver through email (Byron, 2008). This statement gets support from outcomes from researches about egocentrism.

"When people try to imagine the perspective, thoughts, or feelings of someone else, a growing body of evidence suggests that they use themselves as an anchor or reference point" (Kruger, Epley, Parker, & Ng, 2005, p. 925).

Hence, email receivers cannot "hear" the same voice as the senders "hear" when they composed the email message and tend to believe that they can communicate over email more effectively than they actually can (Kruger et al., 2005; Middaugh, 2015).

Third, business emails tend to be task oriented and impersonal. Due to the utilitarian nature of emails, recipients may develop a schema about emails and may therefore miss emotional content when it is present. Schemata are likely to fill the gaps when (1) no clear cues are given or (2) the data is disconfirming and therefore ignored by the recipient (Byron, 2008).

Furthermore, email transports beyond the plain message content also symbolic cues, which might be interpreted from the recipient and may contribute to the neutrality effect. For example, a superior who praises a subordinate via face-to-face rather symbolizes caring and concern for his/her subordinate than doing so via email (Trevino, Lengel, & Daft, 1987).

Byron (2008) adds to this statement, that the relative effortlessness or thoughtlessness of how emails are written today and their predominantly fugitive and informal characteristics leverage the symbolic meaning and make a neutrality effect more likely.

Negativity Effect

When people read emails, it is likely that they may cause negative reactions. This observation is not new and probably exists since the very first email. Indeed, Shapiro et al. (1985) noted already in their early drafted guidelines for ethics and etiquette for electronic mail, that:

> Perhaps the most important phenomenon in electronic mail systems is the likelihood that the recipient will react negatively or inappropriately in reading material that might well have been misinterpreted.
> The misinterpretation results from several attributes of the medium that allow casual and formal messages to look superficially the same; that allow near-instantaneous, rather than reasoned, response; that don't permit feedback during the delivery of a message (as in personal conversation); and that require modification to many old traditions of communi-

cation. A related phenomenon is "flaming," in which emotions are expressed via elec-
tronic mail, sometimes labelled as such, and sometimes not.

(Shapiro et al., 1985, p. 6)

In fact, what Shapiro et al. (1985) mentioned in their guidelines for electronic mail can be found in many studies and theories that followed as one of the main reasons that make miscommunication likely and why email can be characterized as rather a lean, than a rich medium (Daft & Lengel, 1986).

Byrons' argumentation is based on similar findings, when she described the negativity effect for her model of receivers' emotion misperception in emails (*Figure 1*). Emails are text-based and filter out nonverbal cues thus, their emotional tone is often equivocal. She argues further, that this equivocality leverages the salience of any negative information, especially because emotional content in emails may lead to an infringement of the recipients schemata of emails as emotionally neutral (2008).

Additionally, and aligned to the observations of Shapiro et al. (1985), the lack of feedback contributes to the negativity effect. Without accurate feedback of how recipients interpreted the emails from the senders, less information is available to the senders to write effective messages or adapt their writing style in future correspondences.

Message Effect

Message factors describe how the senders (S) encode their message (M) (*Figure 1*, Path P9), and therefore, have an impact on the neutrality and negativity effect. Byron argues, that senders may overcome the limitations of email to convey their intended emotions, by the use emoticons (usually text based cues symbolizing persons faces expressing an emotion when read sideways, e.g. laughing ":-)" or frowning ":-(") or by the verbalization of emotions (e.g. "This makes me happy/sad"). She claims further, that despite the lack of empirical research, emails are interpreted more precisely when they contain more verbal or nonverbal cues and proposes, that this will moderate the relationship between the sender and receiver as well as the emotional perception of the email (2008).

According to the model used for this study and the described definition of message factor characteristics (*Figure 1*, Path P9), Netiquette is considered a message factor within this study.

It can be seen as a way how senders encode their message, provide verbal and nonverbal cues, clarify the emotional intent and therefore build on relationships, which impacts the communication from a social and emotional perspective. Consequently, it is reasonable and assumed, that Netiquette has a positive impact on the neutrality and negativity effect.

Netiquette and the impact on Understanding

According to the Oxford dictionary definition, the term "understand" describes the ability of a person to "perceive the intended meaning of (words, a language, or a speaker)" (2016).

In terms of email communication, and also referring to the used framework of this study (*Figure 1*), the process to facilitate understanding or the effectiveness of communication attempts can be seen as the sequence of consecutive steps starting with the sender (S) who encodes a message (M) verbally or nonverbally through the channel (C) of email with the intent that the recipient (R) is able to decode and perceive the intended meaning of the provided information.

However, from an evolutionary point of view, human beings' communication apparatus was optimized to communicate synchronous and co-located with the ability to interpret speech, facial expressions and body language – cues which are filtered out by email due to its text based and asynchronous nature. Consequently, this makes email a less natural medium and understanding more difficult (Kock, 2005).

Furthermore, this makes it especially difficult to convey emotion or ambiguity, such as irony or sarcasm over email. Assuming that email senders intentionally and unintentionally communicate emotion (Byron, 2008) miscommunication is likely.

Nevertheless, organizations have the need to process information, but have limited resources and capabilities. Information is exchanged to reduce uncertainty and resolve equivocality to accomplish internal tasks, coordinate activities or interpret the external environment to attain an acceptable level of performance. Often issues are ill-defined in the brevity of emails and thus, the problem is a lack of clarity, not data (Daft & Lengel, 1986).

Much research in recent years has focused on the inherent and limited characteristics of email to facilitate understanding based on the Information Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986). According to Daft & Lengel:

Information richness is defined as the ability of information to change understanding

within a time interval. Communication transactions that can overcome different frames of reference or clarify ambiguous issues to change understanding in a timely manner are considered rich. Communications that require a long time to enable understanding or that cannot overcome different perspectives are lower in richness. In a sense, richness pertains to the learning capacity of a communication.

…

In order of decreasing richness, the media classifications are (1) face-to-face, (2) telephone, (3) personal documents such as letters or memos, (4) impersonal written documents, and (5) numeric documents. (Daft & Lengel, 1986, p. 560)

Therefore, this theory gives explanations why lean media, such as email, is less effective and efficient for resolving ambiguity and facilitating understanding. Hence, communication media aware users choose media of appropriate richness for tasks that involve communication.

Contradictory, other studies found out, that email is a richer medium than reflected in the scale of information richness theory (Panteli, 2002) and is hence, suitable for all types of communication (Wells & Dennis, 2016).

Lee (1994) even stated, that email

… might very well lack the capability for immediate feedback, use only a single channel, filter out significant cues from the message's author, tend to be impersonal, and incur a reduction in language variety. Yet, communication using e-mail does not necessarily lose richness. It can retain and even gain richness through distanciation, autonomization, social construction, appropriation, and enactment. (Lee, 1994, p. 151)

Consequently, email is neither rich nor lean and recipients of email are not just passive recipients of data, but active producers of subjective or interpreted meaning within the socially constructed world of the organization, exactly due to the lack of cues in email.

Nevertheless how rich or lean email is classified, it is widely known that people are able to overcome the shortages of email to convey especially equivocal or emotional content more or less precisely with contextual factors, e.g. emoticons (Skovholt, Grønning, & Kankaanranta,

2014; Walther & D'Addario, 2001) or by the usage of other textual markups (Byron & Baldridge, 2007). However, a common issue with such non-verbal cues is, that these markers are not uniformly interpreted and therefore, should be used cautiously or not at all (Munter, Rogers, & Rymer, 2003; Vincent, 1999).

Furthermore, Kruger et al. (2005) found in their study, that despite of the limitations of email to convey cues like in face-to-face communication, people tend to believe that they can communicate over email more effectively than they actually can. This overconfidence is born of egocentrism, the inherent difficulty of detaching oneself from one's own perspective when evaluating the perspective of someone else. Consequently, when people try to imagine the perspective, thoughts, or feelings of someone else, they use themselves as an anchor or reference point.

Kruger et al. referred in their paper the very vivid music tapping study of Elizabeth Newton (1990), where Newton asked the participants of her study to tap the rhythm of a well-known song to a listener and assess the likelihood that the listener would correctly identify the song. Only 3% of the listeners could identify the song accurately, whereas the tappers estimated beforehand an accuracy level of over 50%.

Ross & Ward (1996) found an answer for this dramatic overestimation that the tappers could inevitably "hear" the tune and even the words of the song, while the listeners could hear only an aperiodic series of taps.

A similar effect is likely to happen to the writers of emails, where the authors evidently hear their voice and tone during the composition of the email with all the richness that appears usually in face-to-face communication, while the recipients only see the text on the screen.

Drawing from the findings about the ability of email to convey cues, the inconsistent interpretation of markers and the overestimation of the senders of their communication skills, it is likely that miscommunications happen because of the subjective meaning of emails and not because of the objective dictionary sense or definition of the words transported in the message text.

Thus, Netiquette can be seen as the right communication tool for the sender to clarify the intent of the message without deviating from business communication norms. Common Netiquette rules provide additional textual cues to the recipient that deliver a respectful and valuable tone, which should have a positive effect on employees' understanding.

Netiquette and the Impact on Job Satisfaction

Email has become one of the most important means for business communication and this is not only true for geographically distributed organizations, which need to communicate independent from time and space. "Indeed, even when a whole project is undertaken on a single site, email is often regarded as essential to ensure communication and coordination between team members" (Jackson, Dawson, & Wilson, 2001, p. 82). Thus, it is very likely that email is used and preferred over other media for communications within organizations to communicate with coworkers, customers and other colleagues (Byron, 2008).

Much research in recent years have been conducted to analyze the negative effects of electronic communication on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, workplace deviance, intention to leave employment and productivity. However, few studies have focused which factors of email communication exist, that might have a positive impact.

Sarbaugh-Thompson and Feldman (1998) found on an early multiyear experiment on the impact of email, that while the use of email increased, the overall organizational communication decreased. Hence, the increase of email did not offset the decrease of face-to-face communication. They further identified, that most of the lost organizational communication involved greetings and that organizational members reported to feel less connected to their colleagues. Although, it remains unclear from this study if the decline in greetings was caused solely by email or whether the decrease in greetings refer exclusively to personal interactions, a correlation between greetings and job satisfaction is reasonable. Further, the important role of greetings or the level of formality in electronic communication was already emphasized more than 30 years ago (Shapiro et al., 1985), as well as by more recent experts of Netiquette (Kallos, 2007; Kozík & Slivová, 2014). Correspondingly, greetings might be a similar marker of respect for the communicators as in face-to-face communication and might have as well an impact on the perceived satisfaction for the recipients.

Similar effects caused by the lack respect and courtesy in email communication can be found in research about (cyber) incivility at workplace, or in other words, "communicative behavior exhibited in computer mediated interactions that violate workplace norms of mutual respect" (Lim & Teo, 2009, p. 419).

Pearson and Porath noted that contemporary workers think they have no time to be "nice" in impersonal modes of contact or that email communication does not require any respect or

courtesies. Reasons for this thinking is likely due to high email loads that knowledge workers need to handle within todays' fast-paced, global connected online work environment, but also due to their relative status within an organization. Targets of incivility are much more likely to be subordinates than superiors (2005). Further, high-status employees tend to express less positive, but more negative emotions to those of lower-status, which leverages according to Byron (2008) the negativity effect as shown in (*Figure 1;* Path P5).

While the costs caused by incivility cannot be accurately determined, but seem to be comparable to the annual costs caused by sexual harassment, about $6 million annually for a fortune 500 company in absenteeism, lost productivity and turnover (Pearson & Porath, 2005, p. 9), the negative impact on the organizational memory is far more worse. Targets who feel that they have been treated unvalued and disrespectful, will likely report this to their families and friends, lose work time worrying about how to interact in the future with the rude colleague, cut back work efforts, engage in deviant behavior against their organization or in the worst case, quit their job (Lim & Teo, 2009; Pearson & Porath, 2005).

While incivility at workplace usually comes in many forms, and cyber discourtesy may be just one of it, the effects are likely to be the same for all forms of rudeness. The affected employees feel disrespected and job satisfaction and organizational commitment erodes.

Consequently, it is reasonable, that the opposite might have a positive impact on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Netiquette defines rules to support a polite and respectful tone in email communication. Probably one of the most important rule which was defined is to "remember the human" (Shea & Shea, 1994), because every human has a need for self-esteem, respect and courtesy (Vincent, 1999, p. 10) when interacting with others.

One of the fundamental assumptions of this study is therefore, that the application of common Netiquette rules, e.g. greetings, respectful and polite tone etc., in email messages lead to a significant higher job satisfaction than delivering only the plain content.

Organizational status and the impact of Netiquette

Derived from the used framework for this study, the factor of the organizational status of the sender is considered (*Figure 1*, Path P5). According to Byron (2008), higher-status employees are less likely to send positive emotional content in emails, but are more likely than lower-status employees to express negative emotions. These assumptions also get support by several

studies that have reported that individuals of higher status and power are given the latitude to express anger toward those of lower status (Steelman, 2007).

Byron argued further, that lower-status employees may be more motivated to seek information about higher-status others because of being dependent on them for desired outcomes and are therefore, particularly sensitive to negative cues (2008).

Although several studies have argued that CMC limits cues indicating status and reduces the visibility of the status, others found out that email signals rather than alleviates hierarchical differences and that the organizational context intertwines with email message texts. People at higher ranks speak and write more freely than those at lower ranks (Panteli, 2002).

But even in the absence of cues, it is likely that recipients know the relative status of familiar senders, given the salience of status in organizations (Byron, 2008).

Research on the impact of cyber incivility suggests, that employees trust and commitment to the organizations are especially affected if the source of the incivility stems from someone of a relative higher status, such as a superior. Thus, when employees perceive that others do not treat them as they deem desirable, they respond in ways that may be detrimental to the organization (Lim & Teo, 2009).

Therefore, incivility is costly to organizations and their members in subtle but pervasive ways that may include reduction of job satisfaction, fading of organizational loyalty, and loss of leadership impact (Pearson & Porath, 2005).

It is expected that employees evaluate email messages without Netiquette from senders with a higher-status than themselves as more negative than messages received for example, from subordinates which were written without Netiquette. Furthermore, it is expected that emails coming from higher-status employees have a direct impact on the job satisfaction and that Netiquette as an approach to communicate in a values driven and respectful way might (a) reduce the negativity effect and (b) increases the perceived job satisfaction of the receiver.

It is reasoned that a respectful human behavior is the basis for civility (Carter, 1998) and that everyone has a need for self-esteem, respect and courtesy (Vincent, 1999) and that Netiquette has a higher impact on job satisfaction if communicated from higher organizational levels to lower organizational levels.

Netiquette and the impression of the senders' likability

Organizations can be seen as open social systems, with the need to share information to coordinate tasks and accomplish organizational goals. However, the information cannot be processed the same way as in lower level systems, because human systems are far more complex and require usually a similar interpretation and agreement of the data from several individuals or groups. The shared information must bridge disagreement and diversity from individuals to achieve an acceptable level of performance (Daft & Lengel, 1986).

Consequently, it can be said that the effectivity of the organizational communication process depends to a large degree on work relationships and thus, on the perception of others.

As email has become the preferred tool for communication in most modern business environments, it is likely that organizational members use it often to facilitate collaboration with coworkers and colleagues. Therefore, the impression of the senders' likability has become especially important to facilitate cooperation and commitment between the communicators, as there was found evidence, that receivers are more likely to respond to sender requests they perceive as likable (Byron & Baldridge, 2005).

Byron & Baldridge (2007) found evidence, that email recipients want to understand the person who is behind a message and want to evaluate the emotional meaning of the email, even when no or little information is available. Thus, email recipients rely on a variety of cues to form impressions of senders and contextual factors, like the use of correct capitalization or emoticons, help to reduce uncertainty and make the sender more favorable.

As it is likely that senders' intentionally or unintentionally communicate emotion and emails are often interpreted by recipients as more emotionally negative than intended (Byron, 2008), it is likely that this negative evaluation also influences the recipients' perception of the sender as a person. Subsequently, this might reduce the cooperation of the recipient to, e.g. reply in a timely manner to an email request.

Emotions in turn have a great impact on organizational productivity, such as to create and sustain work motivation, influence decision making, creativity, turnover, interpersonal behavior and leadership. Employees who experience positive emotions and moods are more willing to increase their work performance, engage in prosocial behavior, are more cooperative and are less absent. Positive moods of leaders are found to be associated with greater group performance and perceived similarity liking (Barsade & Gibson, 2007).

Furthermore, there exists evidence that moods tend to be transferred among people in a group and that a positive emotional contagion also influence cooperativeness as well as individual and group level dynamics (Barsade, 2002). It is therefore possible, that a contagion of moods and emotions also exist for email communication and that it will influence the receiver.

However, as email filters out important cues due to its asynchronous and text based nature, it is limited in its ability to convey an intended emotional meaning precisely (Byron & Baldridge, 2005; Byron & Baldridge, 2007) and misunderstanding is likely (Byron, 2008).

While it is widely known that people find ways to overcome those limitations in email communication to clarify their emotional meaning (Tidwell & Walther, 2002; Wells & Dennis, 2016), the interpretation of such attempts are far from consistent (Byron, 2008).

A great deal of research has been conducted in recent years that analyzed the impact of emoticons and how much they reflect senders' emotion or the intended emotional meaning of the email (Byron & Baldridge, 2007; Byron & Baldridge, 2005; Derks, Fischer, & Bos, 2008; Walther & D'Addario, 2001)

Other studies identified, that emoticons in workplace emails do not primarily indicate the writers' emotions, but rather how an statement should be interpreted. Thus, they can be markers of a positive attitude, joke/irony markers or they function as softeners and may be therefore used as a positive politeness strategy of the writer, or in other words, that the sender appears more likable to the recipient (Skovholt et al., 2014).

Although some authors of Netiquette recommend the usage of emoticons (see Aranda, 2007 for a review), they are not considered within this research, as emoticons are not uniformly interpreted (Byron, 2008) and other authors of Netiquette suggest to use them sparingly or not at all, as they might appear informal and may harm credibility of the sender (Munter, Rogers, & Rymer, 2003; Vincent, 1999).

It is therefore argued, that Netiquette provides additional cues without deviating from business communication norms and helps to clarify the emotional intent of the email. Furthermore, as it emphasizes on relationships, it will let the sender appear more likable, which in turn increase cooperation and facilitate collaboration between the communicators.

Uncertainty Reduction and the Motivation to search for Cues

Based on earlier research, there is evidence that people are always "interpreting" everything from their personal perspective. This suggestion gets further support from the symbolic meaning of email and that every symbol can be a carrier of meaning (Trevino et al., 1987).

Therefore, the time lapse until one answers an email request or the presence and accuracy of the subject line can be as well a carrier of meaning as writing an email instead of using another form of communication.

Indeed, even the use of email as a medium instead of another communication channel that is more natural or familiar, such as face-to-face or telephone, may be seen as distant, communicating a lack of concern or caring from the sender (Trevino et al., 1987) and may lead to uncertainty at the recipients' side.

Email recipients have a motivation to search and interpret all available cues in emails. This motivation has its origin in the desire to reduce uncertainty, or in other words, a "high uncertainty is a stimulus for seeking information as well as an inhibitor of attraction" (Kellermann & Reynolds, 1990).

Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT; Berger & Calabrese, 1975) serves as the supporting theory of this assumption and that individuals are always uncomfortable with uncertainty and have a general motivation to predict another's attitudes and behaviors (Byron & Baldridge, 2007).

Consequently, the more information one can observe or gather about his/her communication partner, the less uncertainty he/she has. However, the means how such information is exchanged is limited to the email message (Tidwell & Walther, 2002).

Thus, all available cues in email messages might be subject of the recipients motivation to reduce uncertainty and need to be considered as important in email messages.

Netiquette can be summarized as a set of rules to appear polite in email communication. Although these rules usually do not add additional objective information to the content of the message and thus, can be seen as time- or resource consuming, it is argued that Netiquette delivers additional cues to the email message, which creates a common experience in communicating with common meanings to reduce uncertainty and increase understanding. Hence, it is expected that Netiquette reduces uncertainty on the receivers' side.

Netiquette and the reduction of the negativity effect

A negativity effect may happen because of the reduced ability of email to convey nonver-bal cues and the often equivocal emotional meaning, which may lead to misunderstandings. Fac-tors like the writers' gender (*Figure 1*; Path P3a, P3b), relationship length (*Figure 1*; Path P4) and organizational status (*Figure 1*; Path P5) might leverage the negativity effect or make it more probable as well as the recipients age (*Figure 1*; Path P6) and negative affectivity (*Figure 1*; Path P7) (Byron, 2008).

However, the likelihood that recipients perceive emails more negative than intended by the sender might have many more reasons, like the symbolic meaning of email (Trevino et al., 1987), uncertainty (Berger & Calabrese, 1975), missing courtesy markers (Vincent, 1999), miss-ing capacity of the medium to allow immediate feedback (Daft & Lengel, 1986) or that the send-ers may compose near-instantaneous rather than reasoned responses (Shapiro et al., 1985).

Many of the reasons why emails have a tendency to appear more negative than intended by the sender, may have their cause in egocentrism. Senders' might project their own thoughts and feelings on the recipient, who is apparently hidden behind the email address (Kruger et al., 2005), which might be because senders' forget to "remember the human", as suggested by Shea & Shea (1994), in the email communication.

Netiquette fits in Byron's model (2008) as a message factor (*Figure 1*; Path P9) and may influence or override the sender as well as the receiver factors. In both cases it is assumed that it will have a positive impact on the emotional perception of the email on the receivers side.

Drawing on the prior assumptions, that the usage of common Netiquette rules will in-crease understanding as it builds on relationships, increases job satisfaction, reduces uncertainty and makes the writer appear more likable, it is likely that Netiquette might be capable to reduce the negativity effect and makes the email message appear more positive for the receiver. There-fore it is believed that Netiquette reduces generally the negativity effect of emails.

Summary

Email has become an omnipresent form of communication in today's fast-paced business world and it has conquered not only peoples' desktop computers, where email communication was bound to working hours within their organizations. In fact, it is now mobile and carried everywhere around on smartphones, tablets, watches and other communication devices, which usually provide a continuous connectivity with the world wide web (Mazmanian et al., 2013).

Although email could prevail its eligibility against other forms of message services, the way how people use it for communication is often indistinct and deviates from established forms of writing etiquette known from letter communications (Shapiro et al., 1985).

An explanation for this could be that contemporary workers think they have no time to be nice in the impersonal communication mode of emails and leave fewer cues for an appropriate social behavior (Pearson & Porath, 2005) and project their own thoughts and feelings on the recipient, who is apparently hidden behind the email address (Kruger et al., 2005). Consequently, it is likely that they "forget the human" on the other side of the communication channel.

However, humans have an inherent need for self-esteem, respect and courtesy (Vincent, 1999, p. 10) and an egocentric and uncourteous behavior will cost its tribute on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, cooperation and loss of leadership impact (Pearson & Porath, 2005).

Matters are even complicated further by the fact that senders' intentionally or unintentionally communicate emotion and emails are often interpreted by recipients as more emotionally negative than intended (Byron, 2008).

Consequently, the brevity of emails might not only reduce understanding, but make it also difficult for the recipient to grasp the emotional meaning of the message, which may lead to an increase of uncertainty, a less likable impression of the sender as a person, a negative emotional perception of the email and thus, lower job satisfaction.

This research will analyze the impact of Netiquette on business email communication and give evidence, that Netiquette is more than just a list of rules to appear polite in emails. It will show that despite the impersonal mode of email interaction we rely on nowadays, there are still humans on the other side of the channel, who are not just passive recipients of data (Lee, 1994).

Therefore, it is crucial for organizations to succeed to implement and maintain the right Netiquette in their email communication, as it likely increases productivity, work commitment and might even shape a value based organizational culture.

Methodology

Derived from the theoretical and empirical findings of this study, suggestions were made that Netiquette leads to a better business email communication on the content level, which increases employees' understanding and provides nonverbal cues on the relationship level, which corresponds with employees' job satisfaction, impression of the senders' likability, perceived level of uncertainty and overall emotional perception of the email. Furthermore, the organizational status of the sender was considered, as it is expected that it has a leveraging effect on employees' job satisfaction when emails are authored with Netiquette and were sent from a person who has a higher organizational status than the recipient of the email.

Hypothesis

This section presents six distinct hypothesis, resulting from the prior made suggestions about the impact of Netiquette on email communication. Each hypothesis is formulated pairwise and states the positive expectation first and in order to statistically test it later, the corresponding null hypothesis directly after it.

Impact of Netiquette on Understanding

Netiquette was suggested to have a positive impact on the recipients' understanding, as it provides additional cues to the recipient, which resolves equivocality and help to facilitate understanding. Therefore, the following pair of hypothesis is formulated:

H1   *"Netiquette in email communication increases recipients' understanding."*
$H1_0$ *"Netiquette has no effect on recipients' understanding."*

Impact of Netiquette on Job Satisfaction

Netiquette was expected to build on relationships and helps to clarify the emotional intent of the email, which will increase the recipients' job satisfaction. Thus it is stated:

H2   *"Netiquette in email communication increases employees' job satisfaction."*
$H2_0$ *"Netiquette has no effect on employees' job satisfaction."*

Impact of Organizational Status and Netiquette on Job Satisfaction

The organizational status of the sender was considered, because lower-status employees may be more motivated to seek information about higher-status others and higher-status employees are less likely to send positive emotional content in emails, but are more likely than lower-status employees to express negative emotions.

Consequently, it is expected, that emails with Netiquette from a superior leverage the recipients' job satisfaction, which resulted in the following two hypothesis:

H3   *"Netiquette has a higher impact on job satisfaction if it is communicated from higher organizational levels to lower organizational levels."*

$H3_0$ *"Organizational status has no effect on job satisfaction when using Netiquette."*

Impact Netiquette on the Impression of Senders' Likability

Receivers are more likely to respond to sender requests they perceive as likable. As Netiquette emphasizes on relationships, it will let the sender appear more likable. Hence, it is stated:

H4   *"Netiquette increases the recipients' impression of senders' likability."*

$H4_0$ *"Netiquette has no effect on recipients' impression of senders' likability."*

Impact of Netiquette on Uncertainty

Individuals feel always uncomfortable when they encounter uncertainty. Consequently, high uncertainty is a strong motivator to search for all available cues in emails to get information about the communication partner. As Netiquette delivers additional cues which creates a common experience with common meanings, it is believed that Netiquette reduces uncertainty, which was expressed with the following hypothesis:

H5   *"Netiquette reduces the receivers' level of perceived uncertainty."*

$H5_0$ *"Netiquette has no effect on the level of perceived uncertainty."*

Impact of Netiquette on the Negativity Effect

Senders are likely to project their own thoughts and feelings on the recipient and forget to "remember the human" in the communication process. Furthermore, miscommunication is likely as senders often unintentionally communicate emotions in emails. It is expected that Netiquette makes the email message appear more positive and thus, reduces the negativity effect. Therefore, the following two hypothesis are stated:

> $H6$ *"Netiquette reduces the negativity effect of emails."*
>
> $H6_0$ *"Netiquette has no effect on the sender's evaluation of the email."*

Sample Group

The initial survey sample group was invited via email and included 20 undergraduate and graduate student colleagues from the same business school as the researcher. All of the contacted persons did work in companies and had several years of work experience. Furthermore, five companies were invited, where the researcher had a direct contact to a person of the company and his/her email address. The companies were all based in Germany and included a large non-governmental organization, a subsidiary of a world-wide operating machine tool manufacturer, a company for financial logistics in the area of insurances, a consulting and software solutions company and lastly a media agency.

The invitation email included a short description of the survey and an invitation link to the web based survey system[1]. The contacted persons were also encouraged to forward this email invitation to their colleagues and coworkers.

A prior created and written Netiquette guide by the researcher, was offered as an incentive for the survey participation. This guide described the most important Netiquette rules starting from 1985 until today. The document was offered as a PDF file available through a download link on the last page of the questionnaire (see Appendix B).

The system was configured to inhibit a second participation of a same person. Only complete answers were considered for this research.

---

[1] LimeSurvey: https://www.limesurvey.org

Procedure

An electronic questionnaire was designed with a total of 34 questions, including demographic data of the gender, age, branch of business, organizational status, usage of communication media at work, number of received negative emails, number of composed emails per work day and a list of seven common Netiquette aspects, where the participants were asked to rate them regarding their importance. The aspects included (1) usage of greetings and salutation (2) correct grammar and punctuation (3) speed of response (4) usage of emoticons (5) level of formality (6) correct signature and (7) format/readability.

Additionally, the participants had to evaluate four sample emails, where two were ostensibly written by a superior (*Figure 2*; *Figure 3*) and two were allegedly sent from a subordinate (*Figure 4*; *Figure 5*). A small story prior the presented email samples provided the fictional background story. The participants should imagine to work in a medium sized IT company since 11 months as of a project manager, where they received each presented email directly after they started their workstation and opened their email program in the morning.

Each email delivered a negative message, so that the superior declined the project proposal for the new intranet system and the subordinate criticized an elaborated project plan. Each pair of samples contained one message, where only the content was delivered (*Figure 2*; *Figure 4*) and one email sample where the content with Netiquette was presented (*Figure 3*; *Figure 5*). The used Netiquette rules included a greeting and salutation and tried to convey the message in a respectful and valuable tone. Generally, the emails with Netiquette were constructed on the idea to "remember the human" in the communication process (Shea & Shea, 1994).

All emails had, besides two allegedly common IT abbreviations, correct capitalization, grammar and punctuation and also contained a subject line. None of the messages delivered any further cues, like emoticons, verbalization of emotions or any other textual cues (colored text, bold or italic type face, repeating characters etc.), which might get interpreted by the candidates.

The participants were asked to rate each sample message, how favorable they perceive the email (positive/negative), the likeliness of the email to increase their understanding, the impact on their job satisfaction, the chance to feel uncertainty after reading it, and how likable they perceive the sender as a person.

The survey system was online available for two weeks and collected answers of 136 peo-

ple. After closing the survey, 27 data records were immediately eliminated due to incompleteness. Another four records were removed, because the associated persons indicated that they do not use email as a communication medium and thus, never compose any emails during their work time. This resulted in a total of 105 complete data records, which were used for this study. However, due to the used collection procedure, the participant characteristics were very heterogeneous in the end.

Email Samples

The following four email samples were presented in the electronic questionnaire to the participants. Each email sample contained a negative message (rejection or criticism), where two emails were ostensibly written from the direct superior and two from a direct subordinate. Each pair of emails contained one version with Netiquette and one that delivered only the plain content. Each email sample was introduced with a short story, so that the participants could imagine themselves as the recipient of the email within the particular organizational environment.

All email samples were completely fictional, but contained real fragments from the researchers' long year email experiences as a software developer. No further cues like emoticons or verbalized emotions were given in the text.

Email Sample 1: Superior Email without Netiquette.

"You work since 11 months for an IT company with a total of 400 employees. You have the role

of a project manager and are responsible for 20 employees and trainees.

Mister Peter is your direct superior and works since 25 years in the company. The following

email reaches you Tuesday morning, after you started your workstation":

From: Peter
Subject: Project proposal rejected

Your project proposal was rejected, because we decided to use another system.
--
With best Regards
P. Peter (Chairman)
IT AG

Figure 2. Superior Email Sample without Netiquette.
Note. This Email was translated from German into English.
Please see Appendix A for the complete questionnaire containing the original version.

Email Sample 2: Superior Email with Netiquette.

"The same situation as before, but you received the following email message":

From: Peter
Subject: Project proposal Intranet System

Good day …

Thank you very much for sending me your project proposal for the implementation of a new intranet system.
Good work!
Unfortunately, I have to decline this project anyhow, because we decided to use *PointShare* as our new intranet solution.
From an economical point of view, this system makes more sense at this moment in time, than doing a new implementation.

Thanks again for your work, which helped us very much in the decision finding process.

Best Regards
P. Peter
--
With best Regards
P. Peter (Chairman)
IT AG

Figure 3. Superior Email Sample with Netiquette.
Note. This Email was translated from German into English.
Please see Appendix A for the complete questionnaire containing the original version.

Email Sample 3: Subordinate Email without Netiquette.

"Same company and affiliation as before, but the following initial situation:

Mister Kaiser is one of your programmers. The following email reaches you Tuesday morning,

after you started your workstation":

From: Kaiser
Subject: Project plan unrealistic

The planned times for the BV API are at least 10 days too short.
The completion date is unrealistic.
--
With best Regards
K. Kaiser (Programmer)
IT AG

Figure 4. Subordinate Email Sample without Netiquette.
Note. This Email was translated from German into English.
Please see Appendix A for the complete questionnaire containing the original version.

Email Sample 4: Subordinate Email with Netiquette.

"The same situation as before, but you received the following email message":

From: Kaiser
Subject: Project plan: Please adjust times

Good day …

Thank you very much for the preparation of the project plan.

Unfortunately, I have to inform you, that your estimated times to develop the user management interface are calculated too tight.
Therefore, the planned completion date seems to me unrealistic.
In my opinion, 10 days more should be sufficient, to ensure a solid interface.

Please contact me if you have any further questions.
Thank you very much.

Best Regards
K. Kaiser
--
With best Regards
K. Kaiser (Programmer)
IT AG

Figure 5. Subordinate Email Sample with Netiquette.
Note. This Email was translated from German into English.
Please see Appendix A for the complete questionnaire containing the original version.

Measures

The main part of the questionnaire contained four email samples, which had to be rated by the participants. Control variables were added to analyze differences in the gender, email usage and organizational status.

Scales for Email Samples Measurement

Scale 1. Email Perception

Participants' perception of the presented email text.

| (1) Negative | (2) Slightly negative | (3) Neutral | (4) Moderately Positive | (5) Positive |

Note. The labels of the Likert scale were translated from German to English.
Please see Appendix A for the full questionnaire.

Scale 2. Increase of Job Satisfaction

Likeliness that the presented email increases the participants' job satisfaction.

| (1) Extremely unlikely | (2) Unlikely | (3) Neutral | (4) Likely | (5) Extremely likely |

Note. The labels of the Likert scale were translated from German to English.
Please see Appendix A for the full questionnaire.

Scale 3. Increase of Understanding

Likeliness that the presented email increases the participants' understanding.

| (1) Extremely unlikely | (2) Unlikely | (3) Neutral | (4) Likely | (5) Extremely likely |

Note. The labels of the Likert scale were translated from German to English.
Please see Appendix A for the full questionnaire.

Scale 4. Uncertainty

Likeliness that the presented email increases the participants' uncertainty.

| (1) Extremely likely | (2) Likely | (3) Neutral | (4) Unlikely | (5) Extremely unlikely |

Note. Items were reverse coded.
The labels of the Likert scale were translated from German to English.
Please see Appendix A for the full questionnaire.

Scale 5. Impression of Senders' Likability

Participants perception of the senders' likability.

| (1) Unlikable | (2) Slightly unlikable | (3) Neutral | (4) Moderately likable | (5) Likable |

Note. The labels of the Likert scale were translated from German to English.
Please see Appendix A for the full questionnaire.

Item Scale Reliability

In order to ensure that the five scales assess the impact of Netiquette properly, a reliability assessment was carried out using Cronbach's alpha to measure the internal consistency. A low value of Cronbach's alpha (<.6) would imply that the items are not internally related in the manner expected.

The first pair of emails from the superior, resulted in $\alpha=0.78$ for the version without Netiquette, and $\alpha=0.82$ for the message with Netiquette.

The second pair of emails from the subordinate, resulted in $\alpha=0.72$ for the version without Netiquette, and $\alpha=0.9$ for the message with Netiquette.

All items had a good internal consistency ($\alpha>.6$) and thus, were defined as sufficient reliable and were accepted within the questionnaire.

Control Variables

The participants' gender, email usage level and the importance of several Netiquette characteristics were added as control variables, because research suggests that gender differences exist in their use of nonverbal cues (Witmer & Katzman, 1997) and that people who are more familiar with email communication perceive this communication as richer (Lee, 1994) in terms of the information richness theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Furthermore, the participants' organizational status was considered, as research indicated that people at higher ranks speak and write more freely than those at lower ranks (Panteli, 2002).

Scale 6. Gender

Participants gender.

(1) Female   (2) Male

Note. The labels of the Likert scale were translated from German to English. Please see Appendix A for the full questionnaire.

Scale 7. Email Usage Level

Participants' estimated number of composed emails per workday.

(1) None   (2) Less than 5   (3) 6 to 24   (4) 25 to 49   (5) more than 50

Note. The labels of the Likert scale were translated from German to English. Please see Appendix A for the full questionnaire.

Scale 8. Netiquette Aspects

Importance of Netiquette characteristics.

	(1) Not Important	(2) Slightly Important	(3) Neutral	(4) Moderately Important	(5) Very Important
Response Time[2]					
Greeting and Salutation[3]					
Readability/Format[4]					
Formality[5]					
Signature[6]					
Correct Grammar / Spelling[7]					
Smileys / Emoticons[8]					

Note. The labels of the Likert scale were translated from German to English.
Please see Appendix A for the full questionnaire.

Scale 9. Organizational Status

Participants' current role within their organization.

(1) *Trainee*	*(2)* *Employee*	*(3)* *Middle Management*	*(4)* *Upper Management*	*(5)* *Managing Director*

Note. The labels of the Likert scale were translated from German to English.
Please see Appendix A for the full questionnaire.

Participant Characteristics

The entire result response set (N=105) comprised the answers of 76 male (72.4%) and 29 female (27.6%) participants. Most of the participants were between 30 to 45 years old (43.8%) (see Table 1; *Figure 6*) and had mainly an organizational status of an employee (43.3%), without managing responsibilities (see Table 2; *Figure 7*).

Email writing characteristics were measured to filter out participants who never write emails during their work time. Thus, the answers of two male and two female participants were filtered out, as they indicated to never use email as a communication medium in their work. Most of the other participants answered that they compose six to 24 emails during a usual work day

---

[2] How quick a reply is received from the recipient.
[3] E.g. "Hello", "Good day", "Hi" and "Best regards", "Bye" etc.
[4] E.g. length of the email, length of the sentences, usage of paragraphs etc.
[5] Correct usage of title, e.g. „Mr.", „Mrs.", „Dr." etc.
[6] Name, Address, Company etc. in the footer of the email.
[7] Correct wording, letter case etc.
[8] Usage of smileys ":-)" or emoticons "☺".

(70.5%) (see Table 3; *Figure 8*).

While the women of the sample group rated courtesy explained through Netiquette cues primarily higher than men (see Table 4; *Figure 9*), an analysis of variance (ANOVA) on the p<.05 level revealed that women only rank the aspects of greetings and salutations $F(1,103)=5.327$, $p=.023$ and the use of emoticons $F(1,101)=10.438$, $p=.002$ in emails significantly higher (see Table 5). No significant differences in the importance of specific Netiquette aspects could be found between groups of higher and lower email usage, amongst participants with managerial and non-managerial organizational status or between different ages.

Table 1
*Frequency Distribution: Age * Gender (Participants)*

			Gender		Total
			Female	Male	
Age	18-29	Count	14	12	26
		% of Total	13.3%	11.4%	24.8%
	30-45	Count	10	36	46
		% of Total	9.5%	34.3%	43.8%
	46-60	Count	4	25	29
		% of Total	3.8%	23.8%	27.6%
	above 60	Count	1	3	4
		% of Total	1.0%	2.9%	3.8%
Total		Count	29	76	105
		% of Total	27.6%	72.4%	100.0%

Note. This question was required and thus, it reflects the whole sample group (N=105).
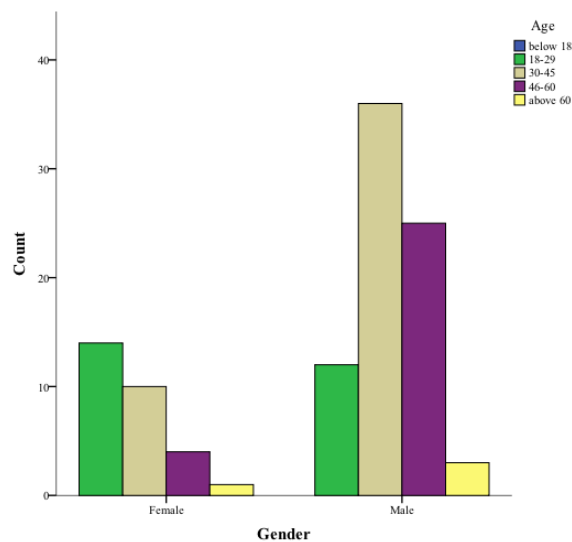
Figure 6. Age of participants grouped by gender.

Table 2

*Frequency Distribution: Organizational Status * Gender (Participants)*

			Gender		Total
			Female	Male	
Organizational Status [a]	Trainee	Count	1	1	2
		% of Total	1.0%	1.0%	1.9%
	Employee	Count	22	23	45
		% of Total	21.2%	22.1%	43.3%
	Middle Management	Count	3	25	28
		% of Total	2.9%	24.0%	26.9%
	Upper Management	Count	0	13	13
		% of Total	0.0%	12.5%	12.5%
	Managing Director	Count	3	13	16
		% of Total	2.9%	12.5%	15.4%
Total		Count	29	75	104
		% of Total	27.9%	72.1%	100.0%

Note. [a] This question was optional and resulted in one missing response.
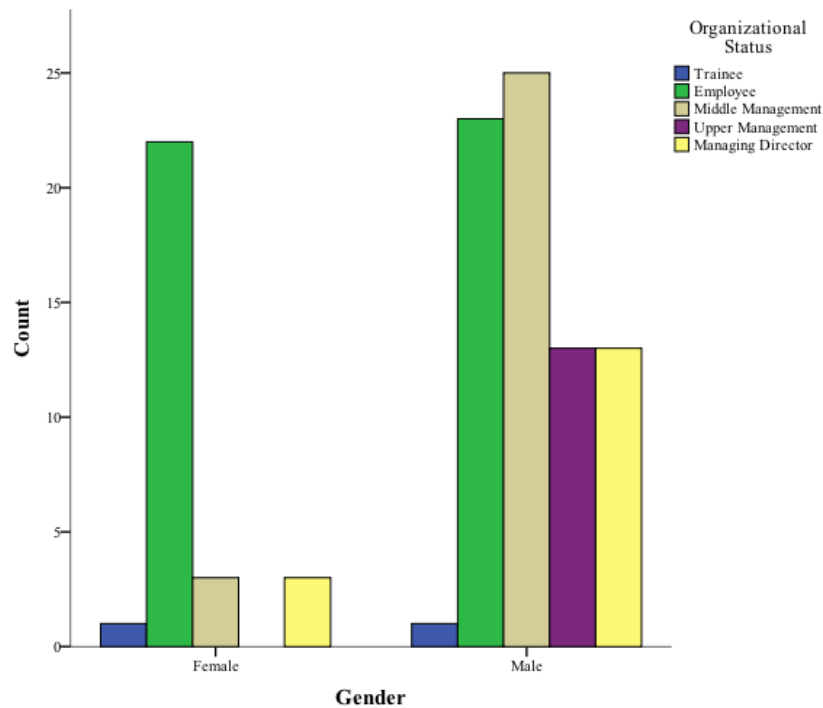
Figure 7. Organizational status of participants grouped by gender.

Table 3

*Frequency Distribution: Composed Emails * Gender (Participants)*

			Gender		Total
			Female	Male	
Composed emails per day [a]	Less than 5	Count	3	12	15
		% of Total	2.9%	11.4%	14.3%
	6 to 24	Count	21	53	74
		% of Total	20.0%	50.5%	70.5%
	25 to 49	Count	5	7	12
		% of Total	4.8%	6.7%	11.4%
	more than 50	Count	0	4	4
		% of Total	0.0%	3.8%	3.8%
Total		Count	29	76	105
		% of Total	27.6%	72.4%	100.0%

Note. [a] The original scale in the questionnaire contained also *1-None* as an option. These records were eliminated in this study, therefore it is not displayed anymore in this table.
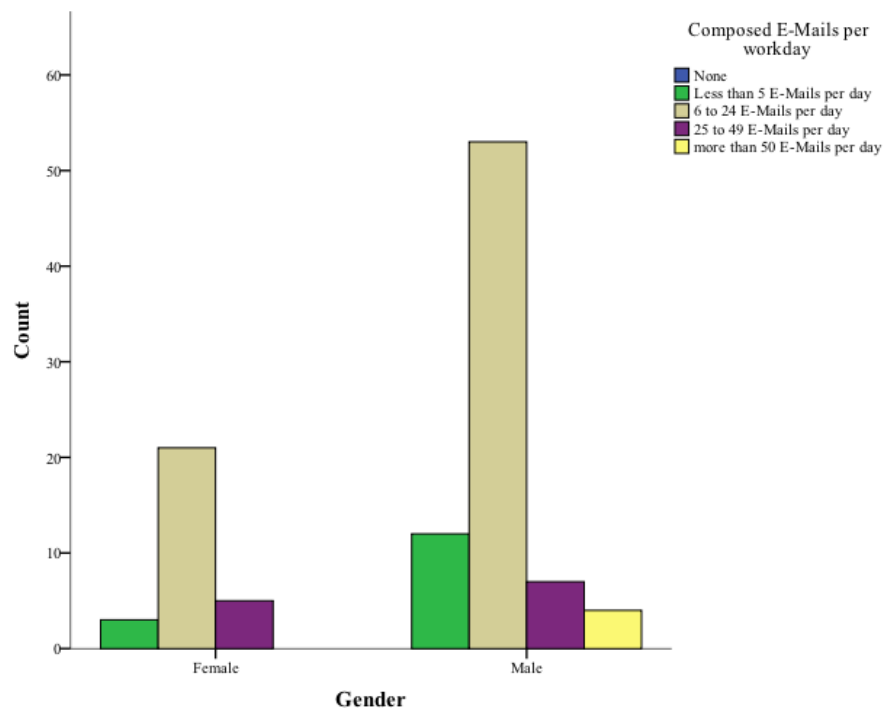
Figure 8. Distribution of participants grouped by gender and email usage level.

Table 4
*Descriptive Statistics: Netiquette Aspects * Gender (Participants)*

| | Gender | | | | | | | | |
| | Female | | | Male | | | Total | | |
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Response Time	29	4.03	.626	76	3.92	.876	105	3.95	.813
Greeting and Salutation	29	3.83	.889	76	3.33	1.025	105	3.47	1.010
Readability/Format	29	3.90	.976	76	4.11	.858	105	4.05	.892
Formality	29	3.24	1.123	75	3.09	1.187	104	3.13	1.166
Signature	29	3.59	1.211	76	3.49	1.149	105	3.51	1.161
Correct Grammar/Spelling	28	4.14	.848	76	3.89	1.078	104	3.96	1.023
Smileys/Emoticons	29	2.21	1.048	74	1.64	.694	103	1.80	.844

Note. SD = Standard Deviation;

Netiquette aspects were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *not important* (1), to *very important* (5).

The mean was chosen by purpose, since it reflects the differences between men and women better than the median. The items within this question were optional.

Not all participants (N=105) provided answers to all items.
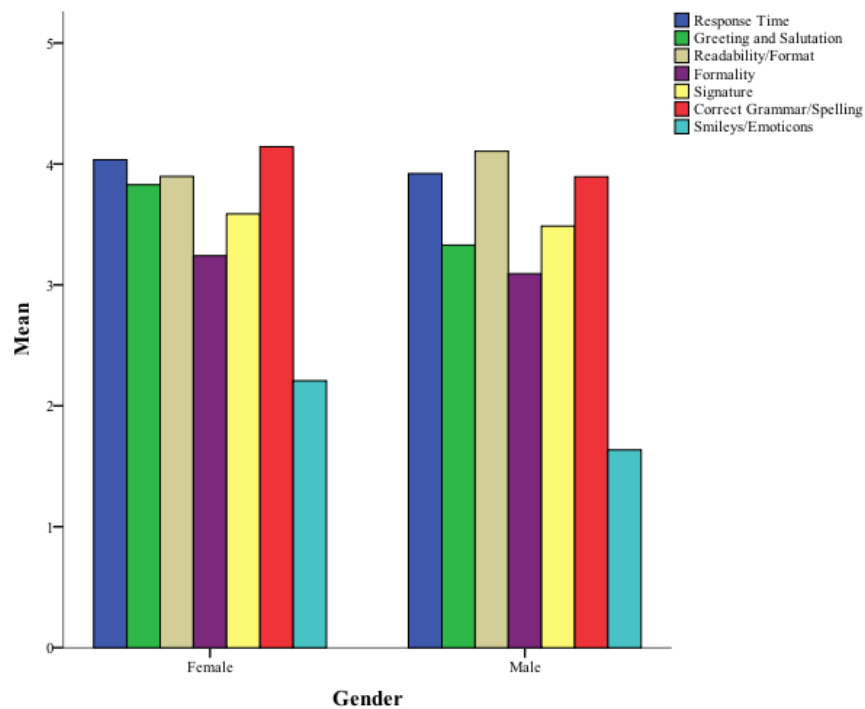
Figure 9. Importance of Netiquette aspects (mean) grouped by gender.

Table 5
*ANOVA: Netiquette Aspects * Gender (Participants)*

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Response Time	Between Groups	.270	1	.270	.406	.525
	Within Groups	68.492	103	.665		
	Total	68.762	104			
Greeting and Salutation	Between Groups	5.219	1	5.219	5.327	.023
	Within Groups	100.914	103	.980		
	Total	106.133	104			
Readability/Format	Between Groups	.914	1	.914	1.151	.286
	Within Groups	81.848	103	.795		
	Total	82.762	104			
Formality	Between Groups	.458	1	.458	.335	.564
	Within Groups	139.657	102	1.369		
	Total	140.115	103			
Signature	Between Groups	.207	1	.207	.152	.697
	Within Groups	140.021	103	1.359		
	Total	140.229	104			
Correct Grammar/Spelling	Between Groups	1.260	1	1.260	1.205	.275
	Within Groups	106.586	102	1.045		
	Total	107.846	103			
Smileys/Emoticons	Between Groups	6.811	1	6.811	10.438	.002
	Within Groups	65.907	101	.653		
	Total	72.718	102			

Note. MS = Mean Square; SS = Sum of Squares
The items within this question were optional. Not all participants provided answers to all items.

Results

The main purpose of this research was to prove that Netiquette has a significant positive impact on business email communication. It was hypothesized that Netiquette leads to (1) a better communication on the content level, which substantially improves employees' understanding and (2) builds up on the relationship level, which in correlation with the organizational status of the sender, leverages and increases the recipients' job satisfaction and affects the perception of the senders' likability, the experienced magnitude of uncertainty and therefore, reduces the negativity effect and makes the email appear more positively to the recipient.

Therefore, the methodology section formulated hypothesis, which were derived from theory and research taken for this study and their according null hypothesis which will be statistically tested hereafter.

Impact of Netiquette on Understanding

In this study the extent of understanding was obtained from the evaluation of four email samples, which were presented in an electronic questionnaire. Half of the email samples delivered just the content of the message and the other half included Netiquette. Each email contained a negative message (rejection or criticism) and was allegedly written by the direct superior or the subordinate. The survey participants had to rate for each email sample the likelihood of an increase in understanding on a 5-point Likert scale. The scale was ranging from *extremely unlikely* (1) to *extremely likely* (5).

Table 6 provides descriptive statistics for the superior email samples (Email 1: *without Netiquette*, Email 2: *with Netiquette*). As can be seen from the mean deviations, the email with Netiquette was rated considerably higher (M=4.35, SD=.620) than its counterpart without Netiquette (M=1.90, SD=.898). *Figure 10* and *Figure 11* visualize through the yellow and purple areas the amount of understanding that the participants perceived after reading the emails. Almost all participants (94.28%) gained a greater understanding from the email including Netiquette (*Figure 11*) than from the email without Netiquette (*Figure 10*).

Next and throughout this study, parametric tests were chosen, although the analyzed data was measured on a non-continuous scale and not normal distributed. This was practiced, because a recent study provided reasonable tests, where no large differences were found between parametric and nonparametric tests when using 5-point Likert scales (De Winter & Dodou, 2010).

In support of Hypothesis 1, Table 7 displays the results of a parametric paired samples t-test of the two superior email samples. The superior email sample with Netiquette resulted in a significant higher understanding t(104)=22.344, p=.000 than the message without Netiquette.

Similar results were found for the email samples from the subordinate by analyzing the descriptive statistics in Table 8 and the paired samples t-test in Table 9. The email sample including Netiquette (M=3.35, SD=1.074) resulted in a significant higher understanding t(104)=12.042, p=.000 than the email sample without Netiquette (M=1.87, SD=0.878). This difference in understanding is also reflected by the yellow and purple pies of *Figure 12* and *Figure 13*, which represent the likelihood of an increase in understanding. For 52.38% of the participants the subordinate email with Netiquette resulted in a higher understanding compared to 7.62% for the complementary email sample without Netiquette.

An analysis of the variances (ANOVA) between the level of understanding and the participants' age, gender, email usage per day and status revealed no additional significant differences of understanding in these groups.

The results demonstrate that there is a statistically significant difference between the participants response on understanding when the email is written with Netiquette and when it is not. Consequently, the null hypothesis *$H1_0$:"Netiquette has no effect on the recipients' understanding"* was rejected within a 95% confidence interval and the alternative hypothesis *H_1: "Netiquette in email communication increases recipients' understanding"* was accepted.

This indicates that Netiquette may increase the richness of email, as it may help to clarify ambiguous issues and change understanding in a timely manner (Daft & Lengel, 1986) and that recipients of email are not just passive recipients of data, but active producers of subjective or interpreted meaning within the socially constructed world of the organization (Lee, 1994).

However, the actual relationship between understanding and emails may be far more complex. For example, it could be possible that only the amount of data presented in the email samples increased the understanding of the participants. The results nevertheless suggest that Netiquette may serve as an effective communication strategy for organizations and might likely increase recipients understanding.

Statistics for Understanding (Superior Email Samples)
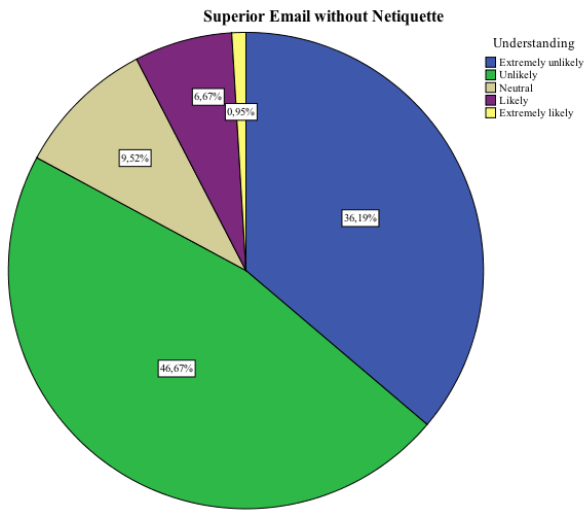
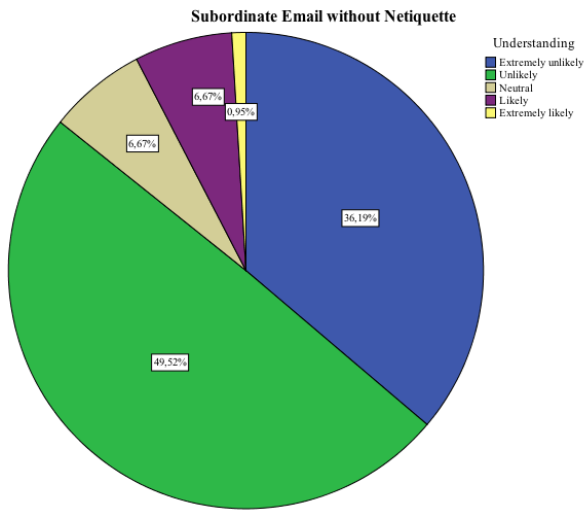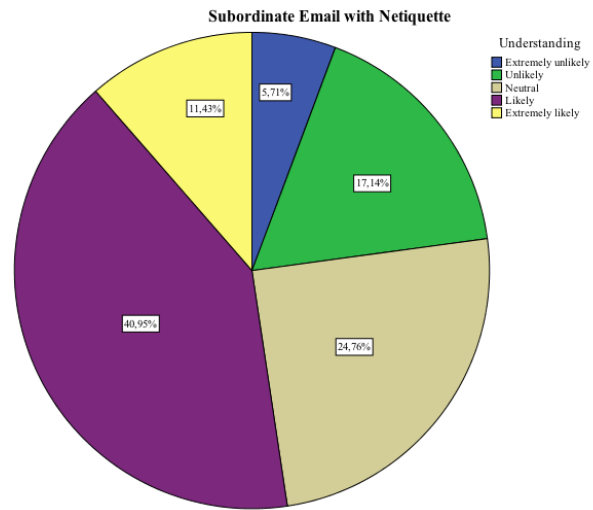*Figure 10.* Impact on Understanding: Superior Email Sample w/o Netiquette.
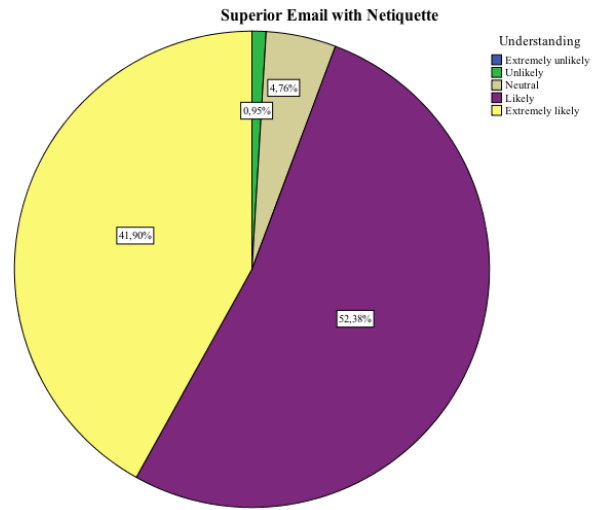
Figure 11. Impact on Understanding: Superior Email Sample with Netiquette.

Table 6

*Descriptive Statistics: Netiquette * Understanding (Superior Emails)*

	Mean	SD	SE
Understanding Email 1 [a] (Superior Email w/o Netiquette)	1.90	.898	.088
Understanding Email 2 [a] (Superior Email with Netiquette)	4.35	.620	.060

Note. [a] N = 105; SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean

Table 7

Paired Samples T-Test: Superior Email with Netiquette - Superior Email w/o Netiquette

	Paired Differences							
				95% CI				
	Mean	SD	SE	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig.
Understanding (Superior Emails)	2.457	1.127	.110	2.239	2.675	22.344	104	.000

Note. SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean; CI = Confidence Interval of the Difference; Sig. = Significance

Statistics for Understanding (Subordinate Email Samples)

Figure 12. Impact on Understanding: Subordinate Email Sample w/o Netiquette.

Figure 13. Impact on Understanding: Subordinate Email Sample with Netiquette.

Table 8

*Descriptive Statistics: Netiquette * Understanding (Subordinate Emails)*

	Mean	SD	SE
Understanding Email 3 [a] (Subordinate Email w/o Netiquette)	1.87	.878	.086
Understanding Email 4 [a] (Subordinate Email with Netiquette)	3.35	1.074	.105

Note. [a] N = 105; SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean

Table 9

Paired Samples T-Test: Subordinate Email with Netiquette - Subordinate Email w/o Netiquette

	Paired Differences							
				95% CI				
	Mean	SD	SE	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig
Understanding (Subordinate Emails)	1.486	1.264	.123	1.241	1.730	12.042	104	.000

Note. SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean; CI = Confidence Interval of the Difference; Sig. = Significance

Impact of Netiquette on Job Satisfaction

As described earlier, the electronic questionnaire included four email samples, which the participants had to evaluate. Job satisfaction was measured on a 5-point Likert scale, where the survey attendees had to rate the chance of the presented email to increases their job satisfaction. The scale was ranging from *extremely unlikely* (1) to *extremely likely* (5).

Table 10 shows the results of descriptive statistics of the perceived job satisfaction after reading the superiors' email samples (Email 1: *without Netiquette*, Email 2: *with Netiquette*). Comparing the mean scores, the superior email with Netiquette (M=4.02, SD=.734) was considerably rated higher than its counterpart without Netiquette (M=1.66, SD=.618). As visible in *Figure 14* and *Figure 15*, the yellow and purple areas symbolize a greater likelihood of job satisfaction than the other areas. In fact, 78.09% of the participants perceived a greater job satisfaction from the superior email sample including Netiquette (*Figure 15*) than from the email sample without Netiquette (*Figure 14*), where only 0.95% of the participants felt that the email would increase their job satisfaction.

In support of Hypothesis 2, Table 11 displays the results of a paired samples t-test from the two superior emails. The email sample from the superior with Netiquette resulted in a significant higher job satisfaction t(104)=22.892, p=.000 than without Netiquette.

Analogous results were found by analyzing the descriptive statistics (Table 12) and the paired samples t-test (Table 13) of the second pair of email samples which were allegedly written from a direct subordinate. The email sample written with Netiquette (M=3.09, SD=1.001) resulted in a significant higher job satisfaction t(104)=12.374, p=.000 than the corresponding email that delivered only the plain message without Netiquette (M=1.76, SD=.701). As can be seen from the yellow and purple areas in *Figure 17*, 35.24% of the participants indicated that the email sample from the subordinate with Netiquette would lead to an increase of their job satisfaction compared to 2.86% of the participants for the other email without Netiquette (*Figure 16*).

An analysis of the variances (ANOVA) of the rated job satisfaction and the participants' age, gender, email usage and status discovered no further differences in these groups.

The results demonstrate that there is a statistically significant difference between the participants' response on job satisfaction when the email is written with Netiquette and when it is not. Consequently, the null hypothesis *H2₀: "Netiquette has no effect on employee's job satisfac-*

tion" was rejected within a 95% confidence interval and the alternative hypothesis H_2: *"Neti-quette in email communication increases employees' job satisfaction"* was accepted.

Although employees' job satisfaction is a factor which depends on many variables, the results give evidence that every human has a need for self-esteem, respect and courtesy when communicating with others. Netiquette may serve as the basis of organizational email policies to ensure such cues are delivered, as it is likely that they increase employees' job satisfaction.

Statistics for Job Satisfaction (Superior Email Samples)
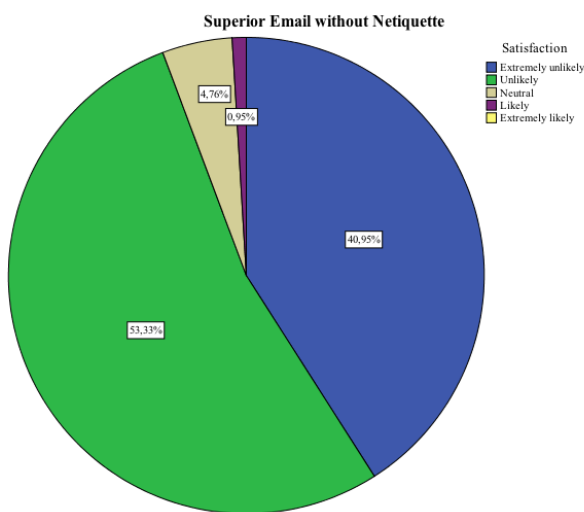
Figure 14. Impact on Job Satisfaction: Superior Email Sample w/o Netiquette.
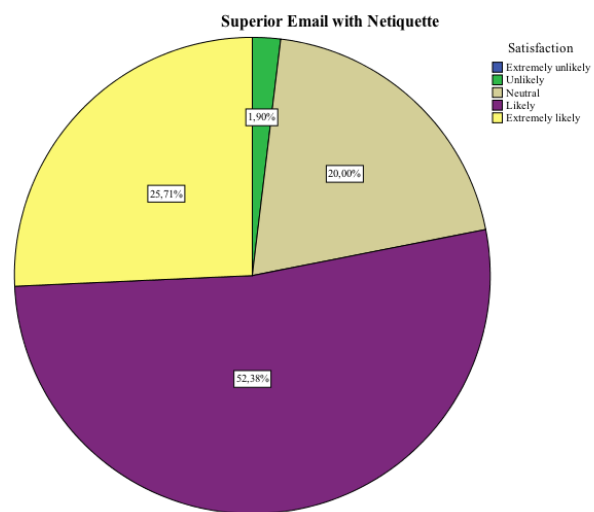
Figure 15. Impact on Job Satisfaction: Superior Email Sample with Netiquette.

Table 10
*Descriptive Statistics: Netiquette * Job Satisfaction (Superior Emails)*

	Mean	SD	SE
Satisfaction Email 1 [a] (Superior Email w/o Netiquette)	1.66	.618	.060
Satisfaction Email 2 [a] (Superior Email with Netiquette)	4.02	.734	.072

Note. [a] N = 105; SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean

Table 11
Paired Samples T-Test: Superior Email with Netiquette - Superior Email w/o Netiquette

				Paired Differences				
					95% CI			
	Mean	SD	SE	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig.
Satisfaction (Superior Emails)	2.362	1.057	.103	2.567	2.157	22.892	104	.000

Note. SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean; CI = Confidence Interval of the Difference; Sig. = Significance

Statistics for Job Satisfaction (Subordinate Email Samples)
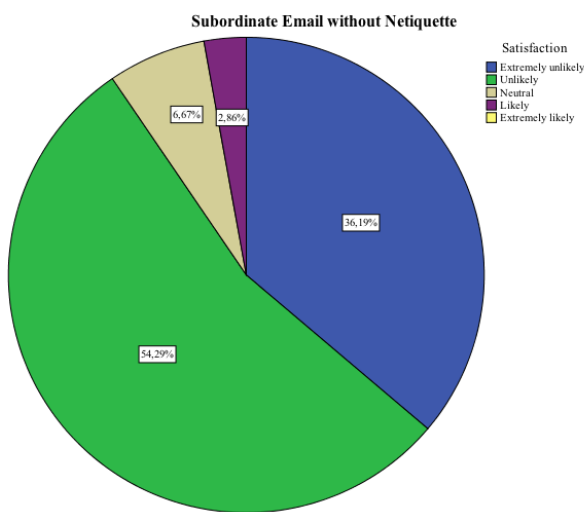
Figure 16. Impact on Job Satisfaction: Subordinate Email Sample w/o Netiquette.
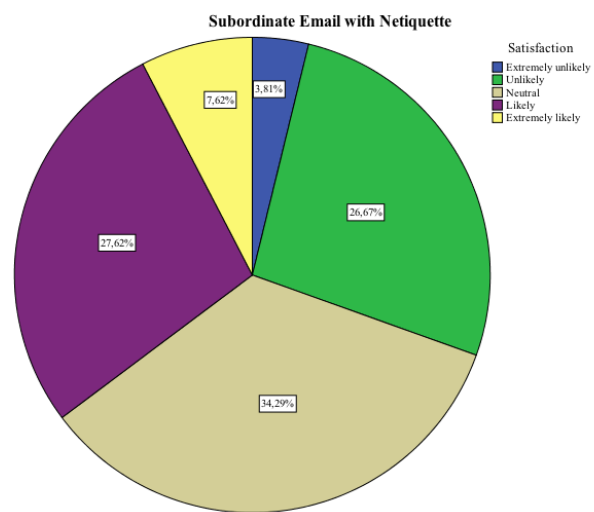
Figure 17. Impact on Job Satisfaction: Subordinate Email Sample with Netiquette.

Table 12
*Descriptive Statistics: Netiquette * Job Satisfaction (Subordinate Emails)*

	Mean	SD	SE
Satisfaction Email 3 [a] (Subordinate Email w/o Netiquette)	1.76	.701	.068
Satisfaction Email 4 [a] (Subordinate Email with Netiquette)	3.09	1.001	.098

Note. [a] N = 105; SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean

Table 13
Paired Samples T-Test: Subordinate Email with Netiquette - Subordinate Email w/o Netiquette

| | Paired Differences | | | | | | | |
| | | | | 95% CI | | | | |
	Mean	SD	SE	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig.
Satisfaction (Subordinate Emails)	1.324	1.096	.107	1.112	1.536	12.374	104	.000

Note. SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean; CI = Confidence Interval of the Difference; Sig. = Significance

Impact of Organizational Status and Netiquette

Table 14 provides descriptive statistics of the job satisfaction for the superior and subordinate email samples including Netiquette (Email 1: *Superior Email with Netiquette*, Email 2: *Subordinate Email with Netiquette*). An inspection of the means indicates, that the superior email sample with Netiquette leads to a higher job satisfaction (M=4.02, SD=.734) than the email sample with Netiquette from the subordinate (M=3.09, SD=1.001). A conducted paired samples t-test of these two emails (Table 15) indicated a significant difference in the participants' ratings of their evaluated job satisfaction t(104)=8.347, p=.000. This result is also reflected by the yellow and purple pies in *Figure 18*, which visualize that 78.09% of the participants felt an increase of job satisfaction resulting from the superior email sample with Netiquette compared to only 35.24% who felt the same for the subordinate email sample with Netiquette (*Figure 19*).

However, as can be seen in Table 17, this effect does not amplitude statistically significant in both of the directions t(104)=-1.465; p=.146, so that for example the superior email without Netiquette produces a significant lower job satisfaction than the respective email sample from the subordinate. Although, as can be observed from the mean differences in Table 16 (Email 3: *Superior Email w/o Netiquette*, Email 4: *Subordinate Email w/o Netiquette*) the superior email sample without Netiquette (M=1.66, SD=.618) resulted in a lower job satisfaction than the subordinate email sample without Netiquette (M=1.76, SD=.701).

An analysis of the variances (ANOVA) of the rated job satisfaction leveraged by the organizational status of the sender and the participants' age, gender, email usage or status has not shown any further differences in the mentioned groups.

The results demonstrate that there is a significant difference between the participants response on job satisfaction of the superior email sample with Netiquette and the subordinate email sample with Netiquette. Consequently, the null hypothesis *H3₀: "Organizational Status has no*

effect on Job Satisfaction when using Netiquette" was rejected within a 95% confidence interval and the alternative hypothesis H_3: *"Netiquette has a higher impact on job satisfaction if communicated from higher organizational levels to lower organizational levels"* was accepted.

However, the significant difference of the superior and subordinate email samples on the perceived job satisfaction may be also caused by the valence of the negative messages presented in the different email samples, so that for example the rejection of the superior is rated higher than criticism of the subordinate and thus, caused a higher impact on job satisfaction. Nevertheless, the results give evidence that the organizational status is communicated in emails and managers should consider Netiquette especially for higher level employees.

Statistics for Organizational Status on Job Satisfaction (with Netiquette)
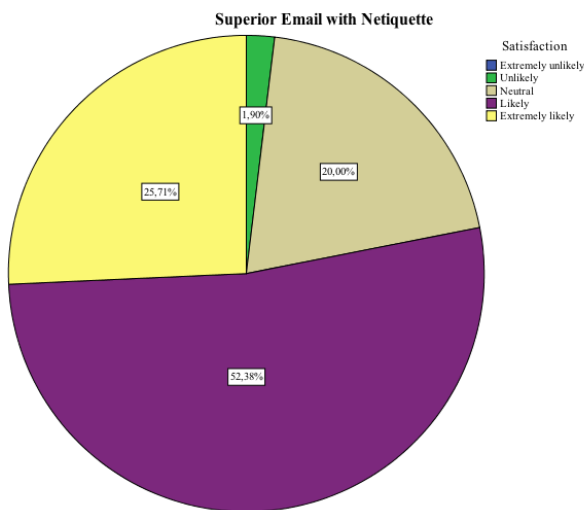
Figure 18. Org. Status * Job Satisfaction: Superior Email Sample with Netiquette.
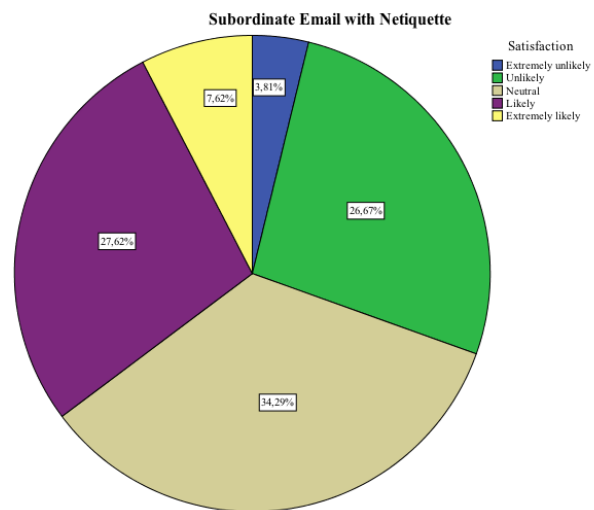
Figure 19. Org. Status * Job Satisfaction: Subordinate Email Sample with Netiquette.

Table 14
*Descriptive Statistics: Organizational Status * Job Satisfaction (with Netiquette)*

	Mean	SD	SE
Satisfaction Email 1 [a] (Superior Email with Netiquette)	4.02	.734	.072
Satisfaction Email 2 [a] (Subordinate Email with Netiquette)	3.09	1.001	.098

Note. [a] N = 105; SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean

Table 15
Paired Samples T-Test: Superior Email with Netiquette - Subordinate Email with Netiquette

| | Paired Differences | | | | | | | |
| | | | | 95% CI | | | | |
	Mean	SD	SE	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig.
Satisfaction (with Netiquette)	.933	1.146	.112	.712	1.155	8.347	104	.000

Note. SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean; CI = Confidence Interval of the Difference; Sig. = Significance

Statistics for Organizational Status on Job Satisfaction (without Netiquette)
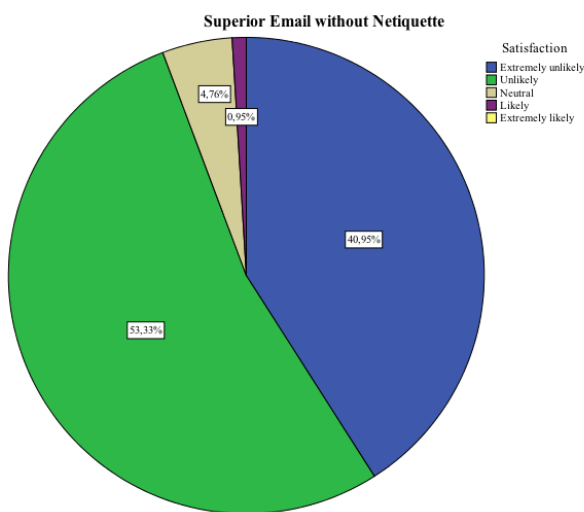
Figure 20. Org. Status * Job Satisfaction: Superior Email Sample w/o Netiquette.
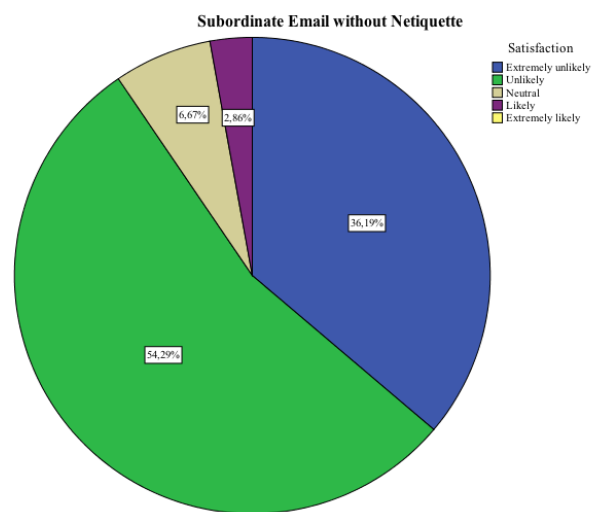
Figure 21. Org. Status * Job Satisfaction: Subordinate Email Sample w/o Netiquette.

Table 16
*Descriptive Statistics: Organizational Status * Job Satisfaction (w/o Netiquette)*

	Mean	SD	SE
Satisfaction Email 3 [a] (Superior Email without Netiquette)	1.66	.618	.060
Satisfaction Email 4 [a] (Subordinate Email without Netiquette)	1.76	.701	.068

Note. [a] N = 105; SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean

Table 17
Paired Samples T-Test: Superior Email w/o Netiquette - Subordinate Email w/o Netiquette

| | Paired Differences | | | | | | | |
| | | | | 95% CI | | | | |
	Mean	SD	SE	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig.
Satisfaction (without Netiquette)	-.105	.733	.072	-.247	.037	-1.465	104	.146

Note. SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean; CI = Confidence Interval of the Difference; Sig. = Significance

Impact of Netiquette on the impression of senders' likability

The participants of the questionnaire had to evaluate their impression of the senders' likability for each of the four email samples on a 5-point Likert scale. The scale was ranging from *unlikable* (1) to *likable* (5).

Descriptive statistics of the participants' impressions of likability for the two superior email samples are represented in Table 18 (Email 1: *without Netiquette*, Email 2: *with Netiquette*). As can be seen in the mean differences, the scores for the superior email sample with Netiquette was noticeable higher (M=4.29, SD=.703) than for the emails sample without Netiquette (M=2.04 SD=.854). The difference is also illustrated in *Figure 22* and *Figure 23*, where the yellow and purple areas represent a high likability. Almost all participants (87.61%) perceived the sender from the sample including Netiquette (*Figure 23*) as moderately likable or likable, while barely no one (.95%) did so for the email sample without Netiquette (*Figure 22*).

In support of Hypothesis 4, the results of a paired samples t-test of the two superior email samples (Table 19) proved that the email with Netiquette resulted in a significant higher impression of the senders' likability t(104)=18.365, p=.000 than the email without Netiquette. The yellow and purple regions of *Figure 22* and *Figure 23* illustrate that only .95% of the participants perceived the sender of the superior email sample without Netiquette as likable, while almost all (87.61%) participants did so for the email sample with Netiquette.

Table 20 contains the descriptive statistics and Table 21 the results of the paired samples t-test for the subordinate emails, where comparable results were found (Email 3: *without Netiquette*, Email 4: *with Netiquette*). The email written with Netiquette rules (M=3.33, SD=0.873) lead to a significant higher senders' likability (104)=14.604, p=.000 than the email without Netiquette (M=1.87, SD=0.797). Comparing the yellow and the purple areas of *Figure 24* and *Figure 25*, only 2.86% of the participants found the sender of the subordinate email without Netiquette

likable, while 44.77% of the participants rated the sender of the email with Netiquette as likable or moderately likable .

An analysis of the variances (ANOVA; Table 22) of the rated likability and the participants' gender resulted in a significant difference between men and women $F_{(1,103)}=6.009$, $p=0.16$. As can be observed from Table 23, men were slightly reluctant to evaluate the sender of the superior email sample with Netiquette as likable (M=4.18, SD=.706) compared to women (M=4.55, SD=.632). However, this might be as well caused by the fact, that both of the senders were introduced as men in the opening story before each email sample or due to the unequal group size of men (N=76) and women (N=29).

The results demonstrate that there is a statistically significant difference between the participants response on likability when the email is written with Netiquette and when it is not. Consequently, the null hypothesis $H4_0$: *"Netiquette has no effect on recipients' impression of senders' likability"* was rejected within a 95% confidence interval and the alternative hypothesis *"H4: "Netiquette increases the recipients' impression of senders' likability"* was accepted.

Statistics for Likability (Superior Email Samples)
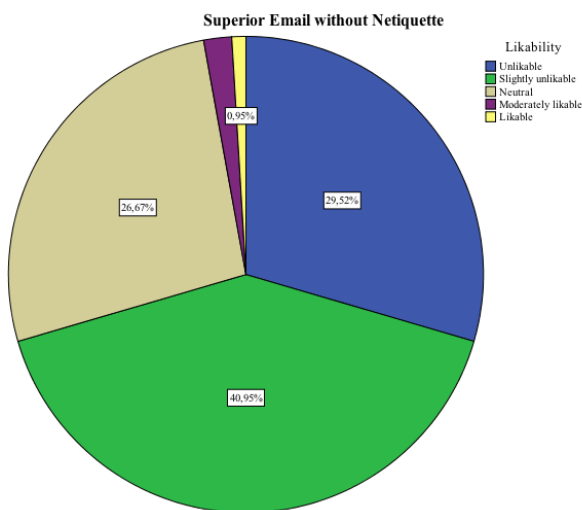
Figure 22. Impact on Senders' Likability: Superior Email Sample without Netiquette.
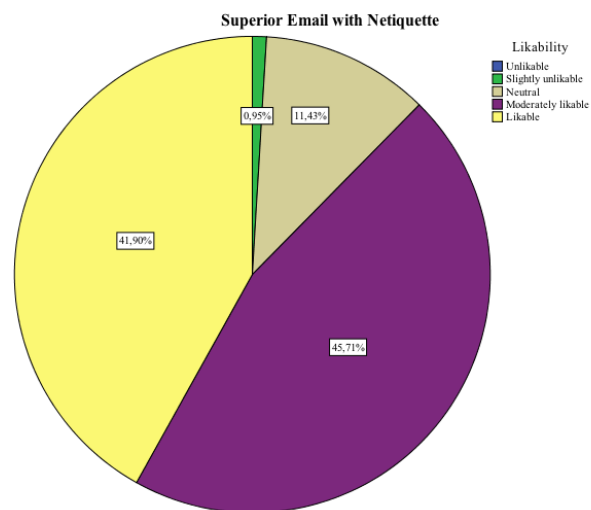
Figure 23. Impact on Senders' Likability: Superior Email Sample with Netiquette.

Table 18
*Descriptive Statistics: Netiquette * Senders' Likability (Superior)*

	Mean	SD	SE
Likability E-Mail 1 [a] (Superior Email without Netiquette)	2.04	.854	.083
Likability E-Mail 2 [a] (Superior Email with Netiquette)	4.29	.703	.069

Note. [a] N = 105; SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean

Table 19
Paired Samples T-Test: Superior Email with Netiquette - Superior Email without Netiquette

	Paired Differences							
				95% CI				
	Mean	SD	SE	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig.
Likability (Superior Emails)	2.248	1.254	.122	2.005	2.490	18.365	104	.000

Note. SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean; CI = Confidence Interval of the Difference; Sig. = Significance

Statistics for Likability (Subordinate Email Samples)
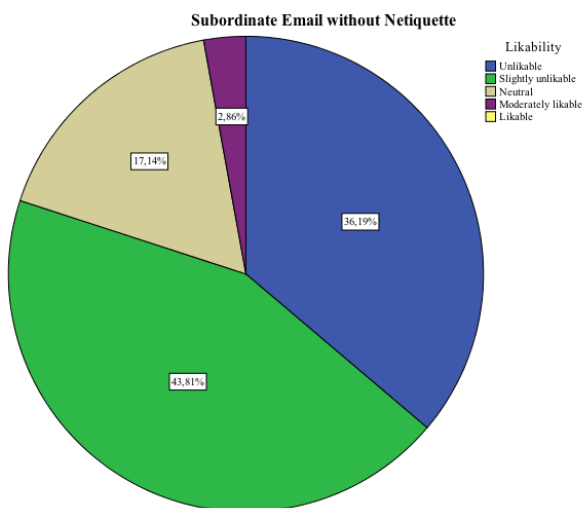
Figure 24. Impact on Senders' Likability: Subordinate Email Sample w/o Netiquette.
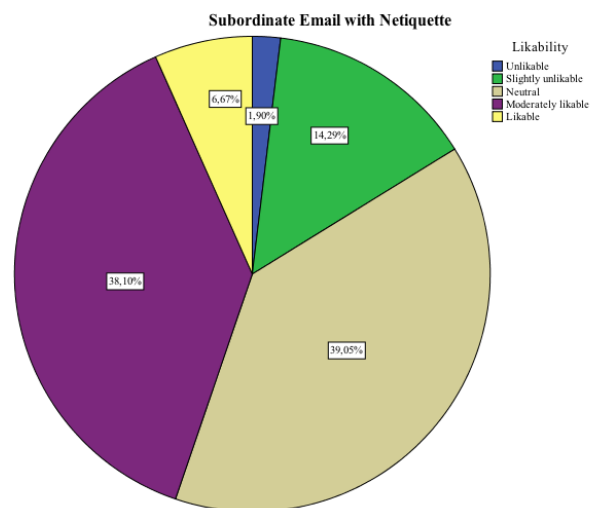
Figure 25. Impact on Senders' Likability: Subordinate Email Sample with Netiquette.

Table 20

*Descriptive Statistics: Netiquette * Senders' Likability (Subordinate Emails)*

	Mean	SD	SE
Likability E-Mail 3 [a] (Subordinate Email w/o Netiquette)	1.87	.797	.078
Likability E-Mail 4 [a] (Subordinate Email with Netiquette)	3.33	.873	.085

Note. [a] N = 105; SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean

Table 21

Paired Samples T-Test: Subordinate Email with Netiquette – Subordinate Email w/o Netiquette

	Paired Differences							
				95% CI				
	Mean	SD	SE	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig.
Likability (Subordinate Emails)	1.467	1.029	.100	1.268	1.666	14.604	104	.000

Note. SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean; CI = Confidence Interval of the Difference; Sig. = Significance

Table 22

*ANOVA: Likability * Gender (Superior Emails)*

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Likability (Superior w/o Netiquette)	Between Groups	.211	1	.211	.287	.593
	Within Groups	75.637	103	.734		
	Total	75.848	104			
Likability (Superior with Netiquette)	Between Groups	2.835	1	2.835	6.009	.016
	Within Groups	48.593	103	.472		
	Total	51.429	104			

Note. SS = Sum of Squares; MS = Mean Square; Sig = Significance

Table 23

*Descriptive Statistics: Netiquette * Likability * Gender (Superior Emails)*

	Gender					
	Female [a]			Male [b]		
	Mean	SD	SE	Mean	SD	SE
Likability (Superior w/o Netiquette)	1.97	.778	.145	2.07	.884	.101
Likability (Superior with Netiquette)	4.55	.632	.117	4.18	.706	.081

Note. [a] N = 29; [b] N = 76; SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean

Impact of Netiquette on Uncertainty

The participants' likelihood that an email raises uncertainty was measured on a 5-point Likert scale for each of the four email samples. The scale was reverse coded and ranging from *extremely likely* (1) to *extremely unlikely* (5). Thus, higher values represent lower uncertainty.

Table 24 lists the descriptive statistics for the uncertainty scores of the two superior email samples (Email 1: *without Netiquette,* Email 2: *with Netiquette*). The mean score of the superior email sample (M=4.5, SD=.622) is noticeable above its counterpart without Netiquette (M=2.70, SD=1.091). *Figure 26* and *Figure 27* reveal through the yellow and purple areas, that 95.24% of the participants felt almost no uncertainty from the superior email sample with Netiquette (*Figure 27*), while the email sample without Netiquette (*Figure 26*) caused that almost half of the participants (46.67%) perceived uncertainty.

In support of Hypothesis 5, a paired samples t-test (Table 25) was conducted and a significant difference t(104)=15.625, p=.000 in the participants' perceived uncertainty for the two superior email samples were found.

Table 26 shows descriptive statistics for the second pair of emails from the subordinate (Email 3: *without Netiquette*, Email 4: *with Netiquette*). As can be observed from the conducted paired samples t-test in Table 27 the subordinate email sample with Netiquette (M=4.04, SD=.843) caused significant lesser uncertainty t(104)=7.616, p=.000 than the email sample without Netiquette (M=3.09, SD=1.194). This is also reflected by the yellow and purple areas of *Figure 28* and *Figure 29*, where 78.1% of the participants felt almost no uncertainty resulting from the subordinate sample with Netiquette, while only 39.05% of the participants felt like this for the corresponding email sample without Netiquette.

An analysis of the variances (ANOVA) of the superior email with Netiquette between the perceived uncertainty and the participants' organizational status resulted in a significant difference F(4, 99)=4.168, p=.004 between trainees (M=3.5, SD=.707) and upper management (M=4.77, SD=.439) in a Tukey HSD post-hoc test p<.05. However, this finding was ignored as being not representative enough, because only two of the participants were trainees. The participants' gender, age and email usage discovered no further differences in the participant groups.

The results demonstrate that there is a statistically significant difference between the participants response on uncertainty when the email is written with Netiquette and when it is not.

Consequently, the null hypothesis $H5_0$: *"Netiquette has no effect on the level of perceived uncertainty"* was rejected within a 95% confidence interval and the alternative hypothesis H_5: *"Netiquette reduces the receivers' level of perceived uncertainty"* was accepted.

However, the correlation of uncertainty and the presented email samples may have a variety of reasons. For example, it might have been caused by the fewer data presented in the email sample without Netiquette, so that the reason is more objective in nature or by the perceived emotional uncertainty, so that the participants felt that their work was not valued or that they have been personally offended, which would be more subjective in nature. Nevertheless, the results show that Netiquette provides more cues for the recipient and this might likely reduce his/her amount of uncertainty.

Statistics for Uncertainty (Superior Email Samples)
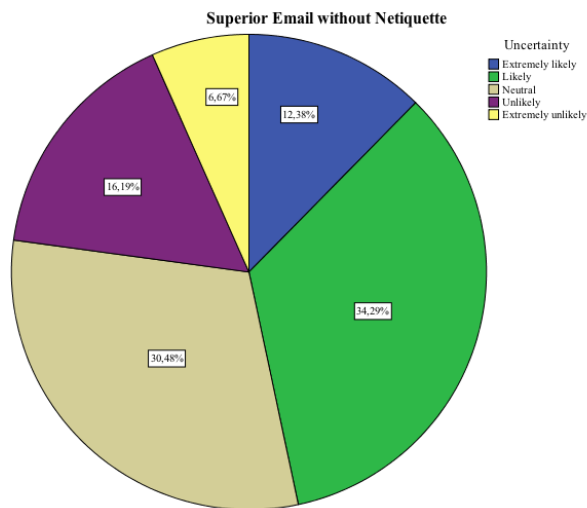
Figure 26. Impact on Uncertainty: Superior Email Sample without Netiquette.
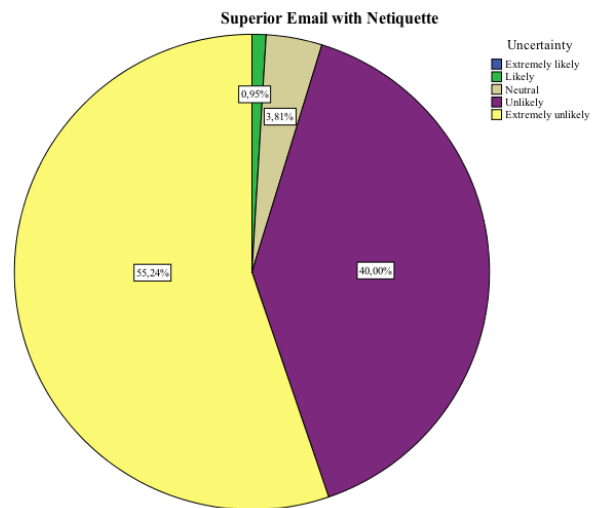
Figure 27. Impact on Uncertainty: Superior Email Sample with Netiquette.

Table 24
*Descriptive Statistics: Netiquette * Uncertainty (Superior Emails)*

	Mean	SD	SE
Uncertainty E-Mail 1 [a] (Superior Email w/o Netiquette)	2.70	1.091	.106
Uncertainty E-Mail 2 [a] (Superior Email with Netiquette)	4.50	.622	.061

Note. [a] N = 105; SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean

Table 25
Paired Samples T-Test: Superior Email with Netiquette – Superior Email without Netiquette

| | | | | 95% CI | | | | |
| | | | | Paired Differences | | | | |
	Mean	SD	SE	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig.
Uncertainty. (Superior Emails)	1.790	1.174	.115	1.563	2.018	15.625	104	.000

Note. SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean; CI = Confidence Interval of the Difference; Sig. = Significance

Statistics for Uncertainty (Subordinate Email Samples)
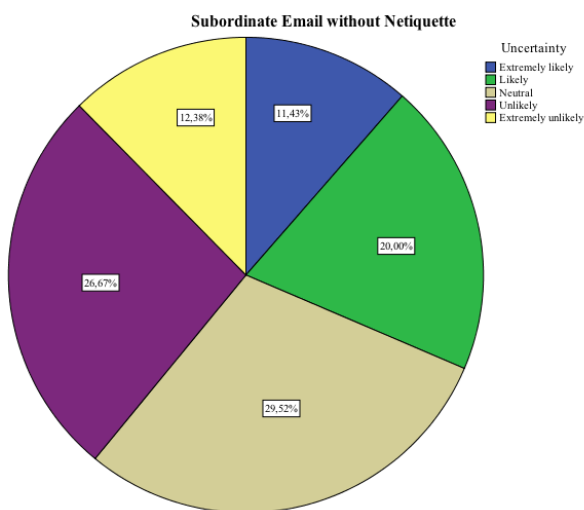
Figure 28. Impact on Uncertainty: Subordinate Email Sample w/o Netiquette.
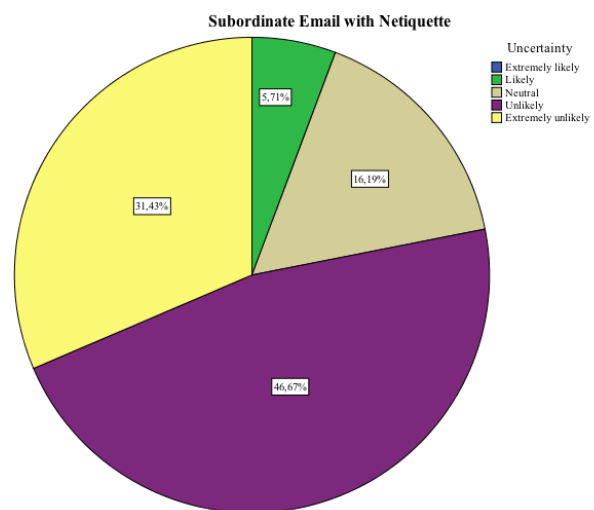
Figure 29. Impact on Uncertainty: Subordinate Email Sample with Netiquette.

Table 26
*Descriptive Statistics: Netiquette * Uncertainty (Subordinate Emails)*

	Mean	SD	SE
Uncertainty E-Mail 3 [a] (Subordinate Email w/o Netiquette)	3.09	1.194	.117
Uncertainty E-Mail 4 [a] (Subordinate Email with Netiquette)	4.04	.843	.082

Note. [a] N = 105; SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean

Table 27
Paired Samples T-Test: Subordinate Email with Netiquette - Superior Email without Netiquette

	Paired Differences							
				95% CI				
	Mean	SD	SE	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig.
Uncertainty. (Subordinate Emails)	.952	1.281	.125	.704	1.200	7.616	104	.000

Note. SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean; CI = Confidence Interval of the Difference; Sig. = Significance

Impact of Netiquette on the Negativity Effect

In the electronic questionnaire used for this research, the participants had to evaluate four different email samples regarding their perceived appearance. This evaluation was done on a 5-point Likert scale. The scale was ranging from *negative* (1) to positive (5).

Descriptive statistics for the two superior email samples can be found in Table 28 (Email 1: *without Netiquette*, Email 2: *with Netiquette)*. Comparing the mean score of the superior email with Netiquette (M=4.58, SD=.662) indicates that it is far above the participants' evaluation of the email sample without Netiquette (M=1.87, SD=.784). This high result can be also observed in *Figure 31*, where the yellow and purple colored areas represent a positive appearance in the participants' perception, while the blue and green areas of *Figure 30* signify a negative evaluation. 94.28% of the participants evaluated the email sample with Netiquette from the superior as positive although the message contained a negative content (rejection of the project), while 81.9% rated the email without Netiquette as negative.

In support of Hypothesis 6, Table 29 contains evidence from a paired samples t-test, that the differences between the superior email samples are significant t(104)= 26.845, p=.000.

An analogous effect was also observed by analyzing the second pair of emails from the subordinate (Email 3: *without Netiquette*, Email 4: *with Netiquette)*. Table 30 shows the descriptive statistics and comparing the means shows that the email written with Netiquette (M=3.52, SD=1.029) was evaluated higher than the email without Netiquette (M=1.69, SD=0.711). Table 31 displays the results of a conducted paired samples t-test, which gave evidence, that the differences between the two email samples are also statistically significant t(104)=15.883, p=.000. This difference is also visualized in *Figure 32* and *Figure 33*. While over the half of the participants (52.38%) perceived the subordinated email with Netiquette as positive, only 2.86% did so for the email sample without Netiquette.

An analysis of the variances (ANOVA; Table 32) of the email evaluations and the partici-
pants' gender resulted in a significant difference between men and women $F(1,103)=5.821$,
$p=0.18$ for the superior email with Netiquette. As can be observed in Table 33, while women
evaluated the email generally more positive (M=4.83, SD=.384), men were a little bit more
muted in their evaluation (M=4.49, SD=.721). The participants age, email usage or organiza-
tional status discovered no further differences in the different participant groups.

The results demonstrate that there is a statistically significant difference between the par-
ticipants response on the superior and subordinate email evaluation when it is written with Neti-
quette and when it is not. Consequently, the null hypothesis $H6_0$: *"Netiquette has no effect on the
sender's evaluation of the email"* was rejected within a 95% confidence interval and the alterna-
tive hypothesis H_6: *"Netiquette reduces the negativity effect of emails"* was accepted.

Statistics for Negativity Effect (Superior Email Samples)
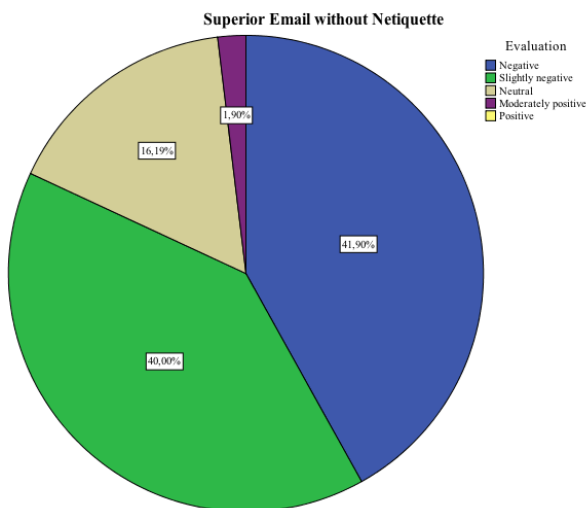
Figure 30. Impact on Negativity Effect:
Superior Email Sample w/o Netiquette.
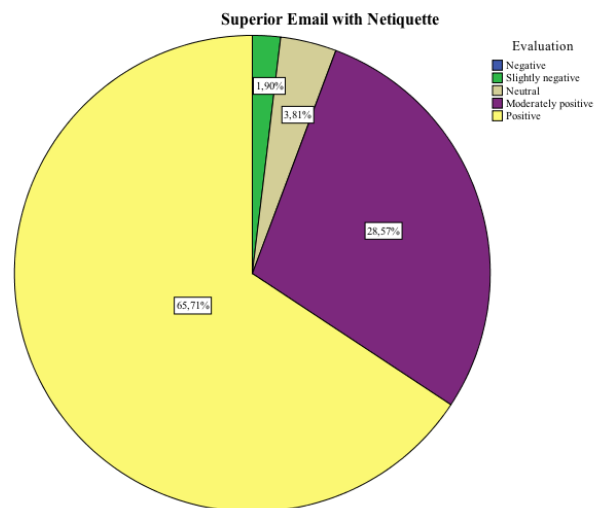
Figure 31. Impact on Negativity Effect:
Superior Email Sample with Netiquette.

Table 28
*Descriptive Statistics: Netiquette * Evaluation (Superior Email Samples)*

	Mean	SD	SE
Evaluation E-Mail 1 [a] (Superior Email w/o Netiquette)	1.78	.784	.077
Evaluation E-Mail 2 [a] (Superior Email with Netiquette)	4.58	.662	.065

Note. [a] N = 105; SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean

Table 29
Paired Samples T-Test: Superior Email with Netiquette – Superior Email without Netiquette

	Paired Differences							
				95% CI				
	Mean	SD	SE	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig.
Evaluation. (Superior Emails)	2.800	1.069	.104	2.593	3.007	26.845	104	.000

Note. SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean; CI = Confidence Interval of the Difference; Sig. = Significance

Statistics for Negativity Effect (Subordinate Email Samples)
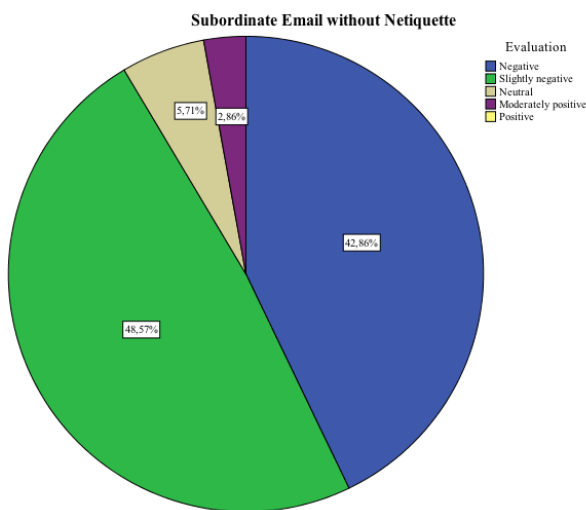
Figure 32. Impact on Negativity Effect: Subordinate Email Sample w/o Netiquette.
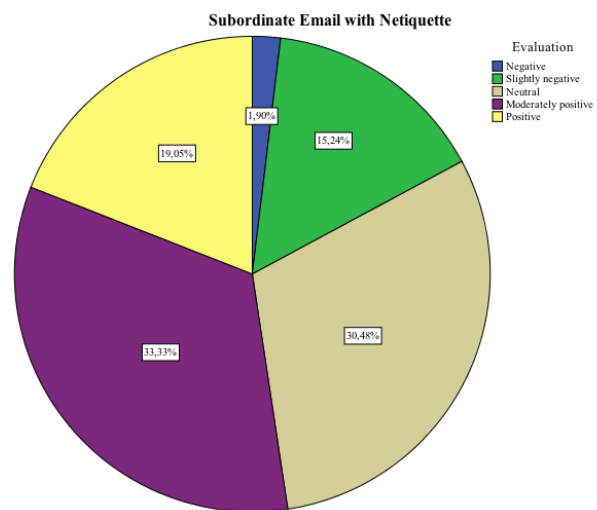
Figure 33. Impact on Negativity Effect: Subordinate Email Sample with Netiquette.

Table 30
*Descriptive Statistics: Netiquette * Evaluation (Subordinate Email Samples)*

	Mean	SD	SE
Evaluation E-Mail 3 [a] (Subordinate Email w/o Netiquette)	1.69	.711	.069
Evaluation E-Mail 4 [a] (Subordinate Email with Netiquette)	3.52	1.029	.100

Note. [a] N = 105; SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean

Table 31
Paired Samples T-Test: Subordinate Email with Netiquette – Subordinate Email w/o Netiquette

	Paired Differences							
				95% CI				
	Mean	SD	SE	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig.
Evaluation. (Subordinate Emails)	1.838	1.183	.116	1.609	2.068	15.883	104	.000

Note. SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean; CI = Confidence Interval of the Difference; Sig. = Significance

Table 32
*ANOVA: Evaluation * Gender (Superior Email with Netiquette)*

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Evaluation (Superior with Netiquette)	Between Groups	2.437	1	2.437	5.821	.018
	Within Groups	43.125	103	.419		
	Total	45.562	104			

Note. SS = Sum of Squares; MS = Mean Square; Sig = Significance

Table 33
*Descriptive Statistics: Evaluation * Gender (Superior Email with Netiquette)*

Gender	Mean	SD	SE
Female [a]	4.83	.384	.071
Male [b]	4.49	.721	.083
Total	4.58	.662	.065

Note. [a] N = 29; [b] N = 76; SD = Standard Deviation Mean; SE = Standard Error Mean

Discussion

This research tested the impact of Netiquette on organizational email communication with regard to recipients' understanding, job satisfaction, organizational status, level of uncertainty, impression of senders' likability and general perception of the email. An electronic questionnaire tested these factors and collected the answers of 105 participants (29 females; 79 males) who evaluated four ostensibly written emails from a superior and subordinate which contained all a negative message (rejection from the superior, criticism from the subordinate).

The participants rated in all cases the superior and subordinate email samples with Netiquette significantly higher than the corresponding email samples without Netiquette. Statistical analyses discovered further, that the email samples with Netiquette significantly increased the participants' amount of understanding and job satisfaction, reduced their uncertainty and let the sender appear more likable. This suggests that Netiquette does not only lead to a better communication on the content level, but also builds on the relationship level, which corresponds to job satisfaction, uncertainty reduction, sender likability and the emotional perception of the email.

Evidence was found for the hypothesized leveraging effect between the organizational status of the sender and the recipients' job satisfaction. The email sample with Netiquette from the direct superior resulted in a significant higher job satisfaction than the email sample with Netiquette from the subordinate. Conversely, the superior email sample without Netiquette did not lead to much less job satisfaction than the analogous subordinate email sample. While in fact the superior email sample without Netiquette resulted in a lower evaluated job satisfaction than the equivalent version of the subordinate, no significant differences were found between these two emails. Therefore, there was no evidence that the described leveraging effect of organizational status of the sender and recipients' job satisfaction amplifies in the both of the directions.

Further, it was found that the organizational status of the sender was correlated with all of the tested aspects, so that the superior email samples resulted generally in higher evaluations from the participants than the subordinate email samples. A conducted analysis of variances between the gender and the impression of senders' likability revealed that women perceived the email of the higher status sender with Netiquette significantly more positive than men. A similar result was found for the emotional perception of the email sample from the allegedly superior sender. While women evaluated the email generally more positive, men were a little bit more muted in their evaluation, which suggests that gender differences exist in email communication.

Besides of the participants' gender also the age, email usage and organizational status was considered to be able to observe differences in these groups in combination with the tested factors. However, no significant differences were found within or between these groups and the dependent tested variables. This might suggest, that business related emails are mostly uniformly interpreted between persons with different email usage levels, ages or organizational roles.

A conducted Spearman's correlation analysis between the amount of perceived uncertainty and the level of understanding and job satisfaction indicated, that the level of uncertainty is significantly positive correlated to the perceived amount of understanding and job satisfaction for the superior email sample with Netiquette, as well as for the subordinate email sample with Netiquette. This suggests that parts of the employees' perceived level of understanding and job satisfaction can be explained through the amount of uncertainty the recipient recognizes.

A similar correlation could be identified between the subjective perception of the email and the recipients' understanding and job satisfaction. Consequently, superior and subordinate email samples which were evaluated more favorable by the participants, were also rated higher in understanding and job satisfaction. As before, this indicates that understanding and job satisfaction have overlapping causes with the emotional perception of the email communication.

Although, this research focused mainly on the negativity effect and tested only email samples which contained already a negative message (rejection or criticism), the findings still fit in the underlying research model from Kristin Byron (2008), where Netiquette acts as a message factor (*Figure 1*, Path P9) and significantly improves the recipients' emotionally evaluation of emails in an organizational context.

The role of Netiquette as a message factor, which is able to reduce the negativity effect and able to override individual sender and receiver factors (*Figure 1*) gets even clearer, when the tested conditions of this study are recaptured. All tested email samples contained negative messages and were ostensibly written by men (*Figure 1*, Path P3b), where the superior sample indicated also a higher status (*Figure 1*, Path P5). Although all these factors were assumed to contributed to the negativity effect (Byron, 2008), the email samples with Netiquette were evaluated significantly more positive than the email samples without Netiquette. The capability of Netiquette to reduce the negativity effect is further underlined by the correlation of the emotional evaluation of the email on the perceived job satisfaction and understanding.

According to Daft & Lengel understanding can be best facilitated through "rich" communication media, because only such media can effectively reduce uncertainty and resolve equivocality. Since email filters out non-verbal cues compared to face-to-face communication, it is defined as a rather lean than a rich medium on the scale of media richness. Consequently, email is a less suitable communication media to reduce uncertainty and resolve equivocality in terms of the information media richness theory (1986). However, this research gives evidence that Netiquette increases the richness of email as it provides additional cues to reduce uncertainty and increase understanding. Consequently, Netiquette makes email more suitable for organizational communication than suggested on the scale of media richness. This gets further support by the found correlation between uncertainty reduction and the level of understanding, where the application of Netiquette rules in the tested email samples resulted in significantly less perceived uncertainty of the participants and also significantly increased their amount of understanding.

Summarizing the findings suggest that Netiquette is more than just a list of rules to appear polite in business email communication. In fact it can be seen as (1) an effective communication tool for organizations to process information in order to facilitate understanding among their members and (2) as a strategy to clarify the emotional meaning of the senders.

Limitations

Although all stated hypothesis were supported statistically, some limitations are worth noting. First of all, the selection of the sample group was not randomly chosen. The initial set of invitations was conveniently chosen by the researcher and contained almost only MBA colleagues, who had extended knowledge of proper business communication. Thus, their responses might be different than those of people without such background knowledge.

Additionally, the further spreading of the sent invitation email by the invited persons could not be controlled anymore by the researcher. While the survey system was configured to inhibit multiple responses of the same person, it might still be that a noticeable part of the participants joined from the same organization and thus, shared the same organizational culture and work background. This might have influenced the results due to a similar way of thinking or an already implemented display rule, like an email policy.

Next, emails were based on a fictional story, where the participants should imagine to work as a project manager within an IT company. It is possible that the participants were not able

to imagine themselves either within this business or in the role as a superior with managerial responsibilities. Especially the amount of understanding could have been affected by this.

Furthermore, the email samples were presented embedded in a web page within the questionnaire and not within the usual look and feel of the participants' email clients. This might let the email message appear more like a text on a common homepage rather than a supposedly personal message to the participant, which might have affected the emotional part of the message.

Despite the fact that all four emails contained a negative message, it was not tested if the superior and subordinate case were comparable in their valence. It could be that the rejection of the project proposal by the superior caused a higher emotional arousal for the participants than the criticism of the subordinate on the project plan.

Moreover, the email samples without Netiquette contained only a short reason, e.g. "we decided to take another system", while the email samples with Netiquette explained further reasons, e.g. "… because it makes economically more sense at the moment". While this is not directly related to an explicit Netiquette rule, it can be argued, that providing a proper reason fulfills the principle to "remember the human" and that it is part of a respectful and valuable tone in email communication. However, this fact could have been the most important reason for the difference between the email evaluations, as most of the participants mentioned this in a comment.

Actually, a variety of Netiquette rules have been applied to the email samples with Netiquette, like a proper greeting and salutation, correct spelling, grammar, punctuation and capitalization, readable formatting and a general usage of respect and recognition markers, such as "Thanks" or "Good work". This limits this study to be able to say which of these Netiquette aspects had a greater impact. However, the email samples without Netiquette were also written with correct grammar, spelling, capitalization, company signature and subject line, so that there also existed overlapping Netiquette rules in both of the email samples.

Another limitation was due to the given initial story of the email samples, where it was written that the email samples were all authored by male senders. The first story of the allegedly superior email sample also indicated that "Mr. Peter is since 25 years within the company", what might have given cues to his age to the participants. Therefore, it cannot be said if the senders' gender or the implicit indication to the senders' age had an impact on the evaluations from the participants, especially due to the fact that gender differences were analyzed in the results.

Finally, the study only tested email samples which contained negative messages. Therefore, only the negativity effect was considered from the underlying research model (*Figure 1*) and the impact of Netiquette on the neutrality effect was not considered. The influence of Netiquette on positive email messages, e.g. acceptance of a project proposal or appreciation of a project plan, remains therefore unknown.

Conclusion

This study has shown that Netiquette improves email communication on two levels. Firstly on the content level where it supports recipients' understanding and secondly, as it also builds on relationships, it clarifies the emotional intent of the sender.

Recalling that email senders intentionally and unintentionally communicate emotion and that emails are often interpreted by recipients as more emotionally negative than intended (Byron, 2008), but the positive emotional transfer of moods among people in a group improves cooperation, decreases conflict and increases perceived task performance (Barsade, 2002) makes it obvious, why organizations should implement an email policy which integrates Netiquette in its core. Especially to "remember the human" (Shea & Shea, 1994) should be considered as the most important Netiquette rule.

Email communication filters out non-verbal cues compared to face-to-face communication, which defines it as a lean medium in terms of the media richness theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986) as well an unnatural medium in the media naturalness theory (Kock, 2005). Both of the theories describe why communicating over email is difficult for humans, especially when it comes to convey equivocality or more precisely, the emotional intent of the sender.

Due to the lean and unnatural characteristics of email, it is easy for the sender to forget the human on the other side of the communication, as people tend to project their own thoughts and feelings on the receiver. This makes it likely that people believe that they can communicate more effectively over email than they actually can (Kruger, Epley, Parker, & Ng, 2005, p. 925).

Despite the fact that people can overcome the limitations of email with the use of emoticons to clarify the emotional meaning of their message, research has found out that emoticons are not uniformly interpreted (Byron, 2008) and might also appear informal and even harm credibility of the sender in business related emails (Munter, Rogers, & Rymer, 2003; Vincent, 1999).

This study provided evidence, that the use of Netiquette in email communication leads to

a higher understanding and helps clarify the emotional intent of the sender without deviating from business communication norms. The findings of this research demonstrate, that Netiquette resulted not only in a better understanding, but also in a higher job satisfaction, a lower uncertainty, a more favorable impression of the sender and a positive perception of the email message.

Especially the upper management should be aware of using Netiquette in their email communication and should trained regularly, as it was found in this research, that the emails from the superior had a significant higher impact on the recipients' job satisfaction than the analogous emails from the subordinate. Moreover, the emails with Netiquette from the superior resulted also in a significant higher understanding, lower perception of uncertainty, a more favorable impression of the senders' likability and a positive emotional perception of the email than the corresponding email from the subordinate. Social cognition that can be all defined as essential for a functioning organization.

The implications of Netiquette and the upper management gets particularly evident when recalling that higher-status employees are less likely to send positive emotional content in emails, but are more likely than lower-status employees to express negative emotions (Byron, 2008). Communication aspects which might lead likely to a workspace deviant behavior of the subordinates and might as well erode organizational commitment.

The results of this study provide a compelling evidence for the positive impact of Netiquette in business email communications. Organizations should carefully implement proper email policies based on Netiquette and provide communication trainings, particularly for the upper management, to increase employees understanding and job satisfaction, as it likely increases productivity, work commitment and might even shape a value based organizational culture.

Future Directions

As this this study analyzed the impact of Netiquette in fictional emails, where the participants had to visualize themselves as the receivers and having a work and responsibility different from their own, there are effects and side-effects that could not be well explored.

Future work should therefore consider to analyze the impact of Netiquette on email communication within the participants' organization, based on more realistic or even real email samples, where the participants are more likely to identify themselves with.

It could be for example feasible to make a longitudinal study within the same organization before and after a Netiquette based email policy was implemented. Further distinctions could be made on the hierarchical level where such an email policy gets introduced, so that for example only the upper management is considered. In this way it could be possible to measure the leveraging effect found in this study under more realistic circumstances or even find a contagion effect to the lower level employees.

It would be also interesting for future research to assess the impact on the emotional perception of individual Netiquette rules in a more isolated way. From such knowledge, it would be possible to develop a mathematical formula to be able to score emails regarding their politeness and even consider sender and receiver effects, like gender, age or organizational status. Furthermore, email plugins could be developed to display this score as a real-time feedback for the sender during the composition of a new email inside the email program.

Another interesting research topic would be to analyze if the increase of understanding through the usage of Netiquette, as it was found in this study, lead to a lower level of email load in organizations. Email overload and techno-stress are topics of many studies nowadays and it could be, that the near-instantaneous or chat like rather than reasoned usage of email users are reasons for this phenomenon.

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Scales

References

Aranda, J. F. (2007). Netiquette and Online Communication. *Journal of Instruction Delivery Systems*, *21*(4), 11–14.

Barsade, S. G. (2002). The ripple effect: Emotional contagion and its influence on group behavior. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *47*(4), 644–675. JOUR.

Barsade, S. G., & Gibson, D. E. (2007). Why does affect matter in organizations? *Academy of Management Perspectives*, *21*(1), 36–59. http://doi.org/10.5465/AMP.2007.24286163

Berger, C. R., & Calabrese, R. J. (1975). Some Explorations In Initial Interaction And Beyond : Toward A Developmental Theory Of Interpersonal Communication. *Human Communication Research*, *1*(2), 99–112. article. http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.1975.tb00258.x

Berlo, D. K. (1960). *The Process of Communcation: An Introduction to Theory and Practice* (RPRT).

Block, J. (2009, December). E-Mail Efficacy. *InsideCounsel*, *20*(216), 8. JOUR.

Byron, K. (2008). Carrying too heavy a load? The communication and miscommunication of emotion by email. *Academy of Management Review*, *33*(2), 309–327. JOUR.

Byron, K., & Baldridge, D. C. (2005). Toward a Model of Nonverbal Cues and Emotion in Email. In *Academy of Management Annual Meeting Proceedings* (pp. B1–B6). CONF, Academy of Management.

Byron, K., & Baldridge, D. C. (2007). E-Mail Recipients' Impressions of Senders' Likability: The Interactive Effect of Nonverbal Cues and Recipients' Personality. *Journal of Business Communication*, *44*(2), 137–160. JOUR. http://doi.org/10.1177/0021943606297902

Carter, S. L. (1998). *Civility: Manners, Morals, and the Etiquette of Democracy. CI, New York: Basic Books, 1998. xiv+338 pp.* BOOK, Basic Books (AZ).

Daft, R., & Lengel, R. (1986). Organizational Information Requirements, Media Richness and Structural Design. *Management Science*, *32*(5), 554–571. JOUR.

De Winter, J. C. F., & Dodou, D. (2010). Five-point Likert items: t test versus Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, *15*(11), 1–12. JOUR.

Derks, D., Fischer, A. H., & Bos, A. E. R. (2008). The role of emotion in computer-mediated communication: A review. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *24*(3), 766–785. JOUR. http://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2007.04.004

Jackson, T., Dawson, R., & Wilson, D. (2001). The cost of email interruption. *Journal of Systems and Information Technology*, *5*(1), 81–92. http://doi.org/10.1108/13287260180000760

Jay, J. K. (2012). Communicate Well: Five Strategies to Enhance Your Managerial Communication Skills | PDA Career Center. Retrieved from http://careers.pda.org/2012/08/communicate-well-five-strategies-to-enhance-your-managerial-communication-skills/

Kallos, J. (2007). WHY YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS AN E-MAIL POLICY. *Management Quarterly*, *48*(4), 40–43. JOUR.

Kellermann, K., & Reynolds, R. (1990). When Ignorance Is Bliss The Role of Motivation to Reduce Uncertainty in Uncertainty Reduction Theory. *Human Communication Research*, *17*(1), 5–75. article. http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.1990.tb00226.x

Kock, N. (2005). Media richness or media naturalness? The evolution of our biological communication apparatus and its influence on our behavior toward e-communication tools. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, *48*(2), 117–130. JOUR. http://doi.org/10.1109/TPC.2005.849649

Kozík, T., & Slivová, J. (2014). Netiquette in Electronic Communication. *International Journal of Engineering Pedagogy (iJEP)*, *4*(3), 67. http://doi.org/10.3991/ijep.v4i3.3570

Kruger, J., Epley, N., Parker, J., & Ng, Z.-W. (2005). Egocentrism over e-mail: can we communicate as well as we think? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *89*(6), 925–936. JOUR. http://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.89.6.925

Lafrance, D. (2012, September). E-mail for business success. *Journal - American Water Works Association*.

Lee, A. S. (1994). Electronic Mail as a Medium for Rich Communication: An Empirical Investigation Using Hermeneutic Interpretation. *MIS Quarterly*, *18*(2), 143–157. http://doi.org/10.2307/249762

Lim, V. K. G., & Teo, T. S. H. (2009). Mind your E-manners: Impact of cyber incivility on employees' work attitude and behavior. *Information & Management*, *46*(8), 419–425. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2009.06.006

Mazmanian, M., Orlikowski, W. J., & Yates, J. (2013). The Autonomy Paradox : The Implications of Mobile Email Devices for Knowledge Professionals. *Organization Science*,

24(5), 1337–1357. http://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1120.0806

Middaugh, D. j. (2015). The Voice - of Email. *MEDSURG Nursing*, *24*(4), 277–279. JOUR.

Munter, M., Rogers, P. S., & Rymer, J. (2003). Business E-mail: Guidelines for Users. *Business Communication Quarterly*, *66*(1), 26–40. http://doi.org/10.1177/108056990306600104

Netiquette. (2016). *Oxford Dictionaries*. Retrieved from http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/netiquette

Newton, E. (1990). Overconfidence in the Communication of Intent: Heard and Unheard melodies. *Ph.D. Thesis, Stanford University, Stanford, CA*. JOUR.

Panteli, N. (2002). Richness, power cues and email text. *Information & Management*, *40*(2), 75–86. http://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-7206(01)00136-7

Pearson, C. M., & Porath, C. L. (2005). On the nature, consequences and remedies of workplace incivility: No time for "nice"? Think again. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, *19*(1), 7–18. http://doi.org/10.5465/AME.2005.15841946

Robb, P. (2008, January). E-tiquette. *OfficePro*, *68*(1), 24–27. JOUR.

Ross, L., & Ward, A. (1996). Na{ï}ve Realism in everyday life: Implications for social conflict and misunderstanding. *Values and Knowledge*, 103–135. JOUR.

Sarbaugh-Thompson, M., & Feldman, M. S. (1998). Electronic Mail and Organizational Communication: Does Saying "Hi" Really Matter? *Organization Science*, *9*(6), 685–698. JOUR.

Shapiro, N. Z., Anderson, R. H., & Rand Corp, S. M. C. A. (1985). *Toward an ethics and etiquette for electronic mail*. BOOK, ERIC.

Shea, V., & Shea, C. (1994). *Netiquette*. book, Albion Books.

Skovholt, K., Grønning, A., & Kankaanranta, A. (2014). The Communicative Functions of Emoticons in Workplace E-Mails: :-). *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *19*(4), 780–797. JOUR. http://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12063

Steelman, L. A. (2007). Organizational Status on Workplace Anger Expression, 297–315.

Tassabehji, R., & Vakola, M. (2005, November). Business Email: The Killer Impact. *Communications of the ACM*.

Tidwell, L. C., & Walther, J. B. (2002). Computer-Mediated Communication effects on self-disclosure, impressions, and interpersonal evaluations. *Human Communication Research*, *28*(3), 317–348.

Trevino, L. K., Lengel, R. H., & Daft, R. L. (1987). Media symbolism, media richness, and media choice in organizations: A symbolic interactionist perspective. *Communication Research*, *14*(5), 553–574. JOUR. http://doi.org/0803973233

Understand. (2016). *Oxford Dictionaries*. Retrieved from http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/understand

Vincent, A. (1999). Business communication: are the rules different for e-mail. *Supervision*, *60*(9), 10. JOUR.

Walther, J. B., & D'Addario, K. P. (2001). The impacts of emoticons on message interpretation in computer-mediated communication. *Social Science Computer Review*, *19*(3), 324–347. JOUR.

Wells, T. M., & Dennis, A. R. (2016). To email or not to email: The impact of media on psychophysiological responses and emotional content in utilitarian and romantic communication. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *54*, 1–9. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.07.036

Witmer, D. F., & Katzman, S. L. (1997). On-line smiles: Does gender make a difference in the use of graphic accents? *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *2*(4), No-Specified. JOUR. http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.1997.tb00192.x

Appendix A

Questionnaire: Impact of Netiquette on Email Communication

Einfluss von Netiquette in Email Kommunikation

Diese Umfrage ist Teil einer MBA Master Thesis der [Professional School of Business and Technology](#) (PSBT) Kempten und dient der Analyse, wie die [E-Mail Etikette (Netiquette)](#) die E-Mail Kommunikation beeinflusst.

Die Ergebnisse werden ausschließlich für die Master Thesis verwendet und nicht an Dritte weitergegeben. Sämtliche Inhalte werden außerdem verschlüsselt an den Server übermittelt und auf einem gesicherten Server innerhalb von Deutschland gespeichert.

Sollten Sie Fragen haben, wenden Sie sich bitte an:
Ramon Bartl
ramon.bartl@stud.hs-kempten.de

Vielen Dank, dass Sie sich die Zeit nehmen, an dieser Umfrage teilzunehmen.
Ihre Teilnahme ist ein wichtiger Beitrag zu einer besseren E-Mail Kommunikation.

Als Dankeschön erhalten Sie im Anschluss der Umfrage exklusiv einen **E-Mail Netiquette Guide** zum Download bereitgestellt, mit dessen Hilfe Sie garantiert effektivere E-Mails schreiben werden.

Vielen Dank und viel Spaß bei diesem Fragebogen
Ramon Bartl

Diese Umfrage enthält 34 Fragen.

Persönliche Angaben

[]Wie alt sind Sie? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ◯ unter 18
- ◯ 18-29
- ◯ 30-45
- ◯ 46-60
- ◯ über 60

Bitte wählen Sie den passenden Bereich, der Ihrem Alter seit dem letzten Geburtstag entspricht.

[]Welches Geschlecht haben Sie? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ◯ weiblich
- ◯ männlich

Bitte klicken Sie auf die entsprechende Schaltfläche.

Kommunikationsverhalten

[]Welche Kommunikationsmedien verwenden Sie am häufigsten in Ihrer täglichen Geschäftskommunikation?

Bitte wählen Sie die zutreffende Antwort für jeden Punkt aus:

	äußerst selten / nie	selten	gelegentlich	oft	sehr oft / immer
Telefon	○	○	○	○	○
E-Mail	○	○	○	○	○
Persönlich (Face To Face)	○	○	○	○	○
Sonstige (Falls gegeben, bitte im nächsten Feld angeben)	○	○	○	○	○

Bitte nennen Sie die Häufigkeit pro Kommunikationsmedium Ihrer täglichen Nutzung.

[]Welche Medien verwenden Sie sonst noch?

Bitte geben Sie Ihre Antwort hier ein:

Sie können auch mehrere Medien durch Komma getrennt angeben.

[]Wie viele E-Mails schreiben Sie während eines Arbeitstages? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ○ keine
- ○ weniger als 5 E-Mails pro Tag
- ○ 6 bis 24 E-Mails pro Tag
- ○ 25 bis 49 E-Mails pro Tag
- ○ mehr als 50 E-Mails pro Tag

Ungefähre Anzahl der versendeten E-Mails während eines durchschnittlichen Arbeitstages.

Netiquette

[]Wie häufig bekommen Sie Emails, die Sie negativ empfinden? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ○ äußerst selten / nie
- ○ selten
- ○ gelegentlich
- ○ oft
- ○ sehr oft / immer

Zum Beispiel E-Mails, die Ihnen respektlos erscheinen oder die Sie in sonstiger Weise als unangemessen empfinden.

[]Welche Aspekte sind Ihnen bei E-Mail Nachrichten besonders wichtig?

Bitte wählen Sie die zutreffende Antwort für jeden Punkt aus:

	nicht	wenig	mittelmä- ßig	ziemlich	sehr
Antwortzeit (Wie schnell Sie eine Rückmeldung auf eine E-Mail Nachricht vom Empfänger erhalten)	○	○	○	○	○
Begrüßung und Verabschiedung	○	○	○	○	○
Lesbarkeit (Formatierung, wie z.B. Länge der gesamten E-Mail, Absätze, Satzlänge)	○	○	○	○	○
Förmlichkeit (z.B. Siezen, korrekte Anrede mit Titel etc.)	○	○	○	○	○
Signatur (Name, Adresse, Firma etc. am Ende der Email)	○	○	○	○	○
Korrekte Rechtschreibung, Grammatik, Satzzeichen	○	○	○	○	○
Verwendung von Smileys/Emoticons, z.B. :-) oder ☺	○	○	○	○	○
Sonstiges (Falls zutreffend, bitte im nächsten Feld angeben)	○	○	○	○	○

[]Welche Aspekte sind Ihnen bei E-Mail Nachrichten sonst noch wichtig?

Bitte geben Sie Ihre Antwort hier ein:

Sie können auch mehrere Aspekte durch Komma getrennt angeben.

Email Bewertung 1 – Vorgesetzter

Sie arbeiten seit **11 Monaten** für ein IT Unternehmen mit insgesamt 400 Mitarbeitern. Sie sind als Projektleiter unter anderem verantwortlich für 20 Mitarbeiter und Auszubildende.

Herr Peter ist ihr **direkter Vorgesetzter** und **seit 25 Jahren im Unternehmen**. Diese E-Mail erreicht Sie Dienstag früh, nachdem Sie Ihren Arbeitsrechner gestartet haben.

```
Von: Peter
Betreff: Projektvorschlag abgelehnt
Ihr Projektvorschlag wurde abgelehnt, weil wir uns für ein anderes System entschieden
haben.
--
Mit freundlichen Grüßen
P. Peter (Vorstand)
IT AG
```

[]Wie empfinden Sie diese E-Mail? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ○ positiv
- ○ eher positiv
- ○ neutral

- ○ eher negativ
- ○ negativ

Bitte lassen Sie die angezeigte Email kurz auf sich wirken, bevor Sie antworten.
[]Warum empfinden Sie diese E-Mail so?

Bitte geben Sie Ihre Antwort hier ein:

Welche Merkmale finden Sie besonders gut oder schlecht bei dieser E-Mail? Diese Angabe ist optional.

[]Fördert diese E-Mail Ihr Verständnis (im Sinne von "verstehen") am Arbeitsplatz? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ○ keinesfalls
- ○ wahrscheinlich nicht
- ○ vielleicht
- ○ ziemlich wahrscheinlich
- ○ ganz sicher

Bitte lassen Sie die angezeigte Email kurz auf sich wirken, bevor Sie antworten.

[]Fördert diese E-Mail Ihre Zufriedenheit am Arbeitsplatz? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ○ keinesfalls
- ○ wahrscheinlich nicht
- ○ vielleicht
- ○ ziemlich wahrscheinlich
- ○ ganz sicher

Bitte lassen Sie die angezeigte E-Mail kurz auf sich wirken, bevor Sie antworten.

[]Führt diese E-Mail bei Ihnen zu einer Verunsicherung? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ○ keinesfalls
- ○ wahrscheinlich nicht
- ○ vielleicht
- ○ ziemlich wahrscheinlich
- ○ ganz sicher

Beispielsweise wie Sie diese E-Mail auf zwischenmenschlicher Ebene werten sollen.

[]Wie empfinden Sie den Absender als Person? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ○ sympathisch

- ◯ eher sympathisch
- ◯ neutral
- ◯ eher unsympathisch
- ◯ unsympathisch

Bitte lassen Sie die angezeigte E-Mail kurz auf sich wirken, bevor Sie antworten.

Email Bewertung 2 – Vorgesetzter

Situation wie zuvor, aber Sie haben folgende E-Mail in Ihrem Posteingang:

```
Von: Peter
Betreff: Projektvorschlag Intranet System

Guten Tag Herr ... ,

Vielen Dank für die Zusendung Ihres Projektvorschlags für die Implementation eines
neuen Intranet Systems. Gute Arbeit!

Leider muss ich Ihnen dennoch eine Absage für dieses Projekt erteilen, da wir uns ent-
schieden haben, PointShare als Intranetlösung einzusetzen.
Dieses System ist für uns zum jetzigen Zeitpunkt wirtschaftlich sinnvoller, als eine
Neuimplementation.

Vielen Dank nochmals für Ihre Arbeit, die uns bei der Entscheidungsfindung sehr gehol-
fen hat.

Schöne Grüße
P. Peter
--
Mit freundlichen Grüßen
P. Peter (Vorstand)
IT AG
```

[]Wie empfinden Sie diese E-Mail? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ◯ positiv
- ◯ eher positiv
- ◯ neutral
- ◯ eher negativ
- ◯ negativ

Bitte lassen Sie die angezeigte Email kurz auf sich wirken, bevor Sie antworten.

[]Warum empfinden Sie diese E-Mail so?

Bitte geben Sie Ihre Antwort hier ein:

Welche Merkmale finden Sie besonders gut oder schlecht bei dieser E-Mail? Diese Angabe ist optional.

[]Fördert diese E-Mail Ihr Verständnis (im Sinne von "verstehen") am Arbeitsplatz? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ⬤ keinesfalls
- ⬤ wahrscheinlich nicht
- ⬤ vielleicht
- ⬤ ziemlich wahrscheinlich
- ⬤ ganz sicher

Bitte lassen Sie die angezeigte Email kurz auf sich wirken, bevor Sie antworten.

[]Fördert diese E-Mail Ihre Zufriedenheit am Arbeitsplatz? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ⬤ keinesfalls
- ⬤ wahrscheinlich nicht
- ⬤ vielleicht
- ⬤ ziemlich wahrscheinlich
- ⬤ ganz sicher

Bitte lassen Sie die angezeigte E-Mail kurz auf sich wirken, bevor Sie antworten.

[]Führt diese E-Mail bei Ihnen zu einer Verunsicherung? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ⬤ keinesfalls
- ⬤ wahrscheinlich nicht
- ⬤ vielleicht
- ⬤ ziemlich wahrscheinlich
- ⬤ ganz sicher

Beispielsweise wie Sie diese E-Mail auf zwischenmenschlicher Ebene werten sollen.

[]Wie empfinden Sie den Absender als Person? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ⬤ sympathisch
- ⬤ eher sympathisch
- ⬤ neutral
- ⬤ eher unsympathisch
- ⬤ unsympathisch

Bitte lassen Sie die angezeigte E-Mail kurz auf sich wirken, bevor Sie antworten.

Email Bewertung 3 – Untergebener

Unternehmen & Zugehörigkeit wie zuvor, aber folgende Ausgangssituation:

Herr Kaiser ist einer ihrer **Programmierer**. Diese E-Mail erreicht Sie Dienstag früh, nachdem Sie Ihren Arbeitsrechner gestartet haben:

```
Von: Kaiser
Betreff: Projektplan: Bitte Zeiten anpassen

Guten Tag Herr ... ,

vielen Dank für die Erstellung des Projektplans.

Allerdings muss ich Ihnen mitteilen, dass die Zeiten für die
Schnittstelle zur Benutzerverwaltung von Ihnen zu knapp bemessen wurden.

Die geplante Fertigstellung erscheint mir daher unrealistisch.

Meines Erachtens sollten 10 Tage mehr ausreichen, um eine solide Anbindung zu gewähr-
leisten.

Falls Sie Fragen haben, können Sie mich gerne kontaktieren.

Vielen Dank

Gruß, K. Kaiser
--
Mit freundlichen Grüßen
K. Kaiser (Programmierer)
IT AG
```

[]Wie empfinden Sie diese E-Mail? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ○ positiv
- ○ eher positiv
- ○ neutral
- ○ eher negativ
- ○ negativ

Bitte lassen Sie die angezeigte Email kurz auf sich wirken, bevor Sie antworten.

[]Warum empfinden Sie diese E-Mail so?

Bitte geben Sie Ihre Antwort hier ein:

Welche Merkmale finden Sie besonders gut oder schlecht bei dieser E-Mail? Diese Angabe ist optional.

[]Fördert diese E-Mail Ihr Verständnis (im Sinne von "verstehen") am Arbeitsplatz? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ○ keinesfalls
- ○ wahrscheinlich nicht
- ○ vielleicht
- ○ ziemlich wahrscheinlich
- ○ ganz sicher

Bitte lassen Sie die angezeigte Email kurz auf sich wirken, bevor Sie antworten.
[]Fördert diese E-Mail Ihre Zufriedenheit am Arbeitsplatz? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ○ keinesfalls
- ○ wahrscheinlich nicht
- ○ vielleicht
- ○ ziemlich wahrscheinlich
- ○ ganz sicher

Bitte lassen Sie die angezeigte E-Mail kurz auf sich wirken, bevor Sie antworten.

[]Führt diese E-Mail bei Ihnen zu einer Verunsicherung? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ○ keinesfalls
- ○ wahrscheinlich nicht
- ○ vielleicht
- ○ ziemlich wahrscheinlich
- ○ ganz sicher

Beispielsweise wie Sie diese E-Mail auf zwischenmenschlicher Ebene werten sollen.

[]Wie empfinden Sie den Absender als Person? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ○ sympathisch
- ○ eher sympathisch
- ○ neutral
- ○ eher unsympathisch
- ○ unsympathisch

Bitte lassen Sie die angezeigte E-Mail kurz auf sich wirken, bevor Sie antworten.

Email Bewertung 4 – Untergebener

Situation wie zuvor, aber Sie haben folgende E-Mail in Ihrem Posteingang:

```
Von: Kaiser
Betreff: Projektplan unrealistisch

Geplante Zeiten für die BV API sind mindestens 10 Tage zu kurz.
Abgabetermin ist unrealistisch.

--
Mit freundlichen Grüßen
K. Kaiser (Programmierer)
IT AG
```

[]Wie empfinden Sie diese E-Mail? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ○ positiv
- ○ eher positiv
- ○ neutral
- ○ eher negativ
- ○ negativ

Bitte lassen Sie die angezeigte Email kurz auf sich wirken, bevor Sie antworten.

[]Warum empfinden Sie diese E-Mail so?

Bitte geben Sie Ihre Antwort hier ein:

Welche Merkmale finden Sie besonders gut oder schlecht bei dieser E-Mail? Diese Angabe ist optional.

[]Fördert diese E-Mail Ihr Verständnis (im Sinne von "verstehen") am Arbeitsplatz? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ○ keinesfalls
- ○ wahrscheinlich nicht
- ○ vielleicht
- ○ ziemlich wahrscheinlich
- ○ ganz sicher

Bitte lassen Sie die angezeigte Email kurz auf sich wirken, bevor Sie antworten.

[]Fördert diese E-Mail Ihre Zufriedenheit am Arbeitsplatz? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ○ keinesfalls
- ○ wahrscheinlich nicht
- ○ vielleicht
- ○ ziemlich wahrscheinlich
- ○ ganz sicher

Bitte lassen Sie die angezeigte E-Mail kurz auf sich wirken, bevor Sie antworten.
[]Führt diese E-Mail bei Ihnen zu einer Verunsicherung? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ○ keinesfalls
- ○ wahrscheinlich nicht
- ○ vielleicht
- ○ ziemlich wahrscheinlich
- ○ ganz sicher

Beispielsweise wie Sie diese E-Mail auf zwischenmenschlicher Ebene werten sollen.

[]Wie empfinden Sie den Absender als Person? *

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ◯ sympathisch
- ◯ eher sympathisch
- ◯ neutral
- ◯ eher unsympathisch
- ◯ unsympathisch

Bitte lassen Sie die angezeigte E-Mail kurz auf sich wirken, bevor Sie antworten.

Abschließende Angaben

[]In welcher Branche sind Sie beruflich tätig?

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ◯ Medien
- ◯ Finanzen
- ◯ Handwerk
- ◯ IT
- ◯ Öffentlicher Dienst
- ◯ Soziales
- ◯ Handel
- ◯ Industrie
- ◯ Medizin
- ◯ Dienstleistung
- ◯ Wissenschaft

Bitte wählen Sie die Branche, die Ihrer aktuellen Tätigkeit am ehesten entspricht.

[]Welchen Status haben Sie in Ihrem Unternehmen?

Bitte wählen Sie nur eine der folgenden Antworten aus:

- ◯ Auszubildender
- ◯ Angestellter/Mitarbeiter
- ◯ Mittleres Management
- ◯ Oberes Management
- ◯ Geschäftsleitung

Bitte wählen Sie den Status, der Ihrer aktuellen Organisationsebene am ehesten entspricht.

Vielen Dank für Ihre Teilnahme an dieser Umfrage.

Sie können den [Netiquette Guide](#) jetzt herunterladen.

Viel Spaß beim Lesen!

Appendix B

Netiquette Guide

Netiquette

Netiquette beschreibt den respektvollen und höflichen Umgang mit anderen Menschen in der E-Mail Kommunikation.

Aber nicht nur der gute Ton wird unter dem Begriff Netiquette verstanden, sondern auch die Strukturierung, Darstellung, korrekte Schreibweise, Satzzeichen und Grammatik des Textes, welche Personen als Empfänger hinterlegt wurden oder wie lange es dauert bis auf eine E-Mail geantwortet wird.

Netiquette umfasst somit den verantwortungsvollen und bewussten Umgang sowohl mit den verbalen, wie auch mit den nonverbalen Aspekten elektronischer Kommunikation.

Was ist E-Mail?

E-Mail kann als eine Art Kreuzung zwischen geschriebener und gesprochener Kommunikation beschrieben werden. Es ist viel schneller als herkömmliche Briefe auf dem Postweg, jedoch langsamer als das gesprochene Wort und beinhaltet keine nonverbalen Kommunikationshinweise, wie bei persönlichen Unterhaltungen.

Doch was ist E-Mail eigentlich und welche Regeln gelten für den Umgang? Sind die Regeln anders als für das gesprochene oder handschriftlich geschriebene Wort?

Auch wenn es keine eindeutigen Regeln für den Umgang mit E-Mails gibt, sollte einem dennoch bewusst sein, dass E-Mails mehr transportieren als nur die digitalen Buchstaben und Wörter. Es ist ein formelleres Medium als SMS oder Chat und dabei bequemer und alltagstauglicher als Briefpost. Es ist in der Lage über den nächsten Auftrag eines Unternehmens zu entscheiden und kann sogar dessen ganze Firmenkultur nach außen übermitteln. Es ist mittlerweile so stark verbreitet, dass wir es für jegliche geschäftliche wie auch private Kommunikation tagtäglich verwenden, ohne darüber nachzudenken.

E-Mail Kommunikation

E-Mails übertragen weder Mimik, Gestik, Stimmlage, Sprechgeschwindigkeit noch andere nonverbale Hinweise des Senders an den Empfänger. Die innere Stimme, die der Sender beim Schreiben einer E-Mail oft als deutlich und unmissverständlich wahrnimmt, wird beim Senden nicht mitübermittelt und bleibt dem Empfänger somit verborgen. Das macht dieses Medium sehr anfällig für Missverständnisse und Fehlinterpretationen, vor allem bei der Kommunikation von Emotionen oder doppeldeutiger Aussagen.

Im Vergleich zu persönlicher Kommunikation mit anderen Menschen, wird E-Mail daher als ein verhältnismäßig wenig reichhaltiges Kommunikationsmedium eingestuft, da sowohl die Übermittlung dieser nonverbalen Hinweise fehlt, wie auch die Möglichkeit der unmittelbaren Rückmeldung der Kommunikationspartner. Somit kann eine ironische Anmerkung, ein sarkastischer Kommentar oder eine hastig geschriebene E-Mail schnell eine Emotion beim Empfänger auslösen, die vom Sender so nicht beabsichtigt war.

Zwar gibt es Hilfsmittel wie Smileys :-) oder Emoticons ☺, welche die beabsichtigte Emotionen des Senders verdeutlichen sollen, aber selbst diese können vom Empfänger falsch interpretiert, beziehungsweise als unpassend wahrgenommen werden.

Die Kommunikation über E-Mail muss daher mit all seinen Vor- und Nachteilen sorgfältig bedacht und ausgeführt werden, um die richtige Nachricht zu übermitteln und Missverständnissen vorzubeugen.

Warum ist Netiquette wichtig?

Jeder Mensch hat ein Bedürfnis nach Achtung, Respekt und Höflichkeit. Diese grundlegenden Bedürfnisse enden nicht bei der elektronischen Kommunikation und sollten daher besonders bei der allgegenwärtigen Verständigung per E-Mail beachtet werden.

E-Mails entziehen sich nach dem Absenden der Kontrolle des Senders und beginnen somit ein „Eigenleben". Sie können weitergeleitet, gespeichert, zitiert, gedruckt oder anderweitig verarbeitet werden und können somit beispielsweise bei Rechtsfragen wieder hervorgeholt werden. Daher sollten E-Mails immer als permanent angesehen

werden, selbst wenn sie schon lange aus dem Postfach des Senders oder des Empfän-
gers gelöscht wurden.

Eine unhöfliche oder im Zorn geschriebene E-Mail kann dabei weitreichende
Konsequenzen, sowohl für den Sender, wie auch für eine gesamte Organisation nach
sich ziehen, die zum Zeitpunkt des Sendens für den Sender nicht ersichtlich waren.
Eine ausgedruckte E-Mail mit der offiziellen Firmensignatur darunter wirkt dabei schnell
formeller als ursprünglich beabsichtigt.

E-Mail Netiquette Guidelines

Die folgenden E-Mail Netiquette Guidelines und Regeln sind eine Zusammenfas-
sung der aktuellen Literatur und aus mehr als 20 Jahren E-Mail Erfahrung des Autors.
Die einzelnen Punkte können dabei von Unternehmen oder Einzelpersonen für ihren ei-
genen Gebrauch adaptiert werden und die Grundlage einer eigenen Richtlinien bilden.

Empfänger

Wenn sie eine neue E-Mail verfassen, ist der Empfänger üblicherweise das erste
Feld, das sie ausfüllen und das bei gängigen E-Mail Programmen wie Outlook oder
Apple Mail als erstes Eingabefeld angezeigt wird. Beachten sie hier folgende Punkte:

- ✓ Ist es der korrekte Empfänger?
- ✓ Wer ist die Person hinter der E-Mail Adresse?
- ✓ Auf welchem Gerät liest der Empfänger Ihre E-Mail?
- ✓ Ist es dem Empfänger wichtig, wann Sie antworten?
- ✓ Versteht der Empfänger Ihre (Fach-) Sprache?

Die Auto-Vervollständigung der E-Mail Adresse ist sehr hilfreich, aber achten sie
darauf, dass sie auch wirklich den richtigen Empfänger auswählen. Es gibt wohl nichts
schlimmeres, als eine E-Mail, die für Ihre Kollegin *Schmidt* gedacht war, an den Kunden
Schmid zu versenden. Besonders wenn es im Inhalt um Betriebsinterna geht oder sie

eine abwertende Bemerkung über einen Kunden geäußert haben. Am besten sie lassen dieses Feld bis zuletzt leer und füllen es erst vor dem Absenden aus.

Visualisieren sie sich die Person, die sich hinter der E-Mail Adresse verbirgt. Das hilft ihnen, den richtigen Ton, die richtige Sprache und eine passende Strukturierung des Textes zu wählen. Verdeutlichen sie sich, dass nicht nur der Text in ihrer E-Mail kommuniziert, sondern auch nonverbale Aspekte, wie die Antwortzeit oder die gewählte Sprache. Die Sprache sollte außerdem passend für den Empfänger gewählt werden. Vermeiden sie daher Jargon oder Abkürzungen, die der Empfänger eventuell nicht versteht.

Kopie Empfänger

Diese Funktionalität ist oft Auslöser für Diskussionen und sollte daher mit sehr viel Sorgfalt ausgefüllt werden. Das Carbon Copy (CC) Feld ist das Pendant zum früheren Kohlepapier, um einen Abschrieb des verfassten Textes zu generieren. Während damals allerdings nur ca. 5 leserliche Kopien mit einem Kohlepapier erzeugt werden konnten und der Sender sich daher gut überlegt hat, an wen er diese versendet, kann diese Funktion heute für beliebig viele Empfänger eingesetzt werden.

Stellen sie sich beim Verwenden dieses Feldes folgende Frage:

✓ Ist die Information wichtig für diese(n) Empfänger?

Doch nicht nur das Versenden kann mit Leichtigkeit bewerkstelligt werden, sondern auch das „Antworten an alle". Hier können schnell sehr viele E-Mails generiert werden, die für den Empfänger ebenso schnell lästig und überfordernd werden können.

Stellen sie sich vor, sie schreiben 20 Personen an, mit der Bitte, einen Kommentar auf einen von ihnen verfassten Artikel zu schreiben. Würden alle 20 Empfänger die „An alle Antworten" Funktion verwenden, würden insgesamt 421 Emails in jedem E-Mail Postfach erzeugt werden, was im E-Mail System zu einer Gesamtmenge von 16.421 E-Mails führen würde[1]. Verursacht jede E-Mail eine Unterbrechung von 2 Minuten beim

---

[1] Beispiel kopiert von: Shapiro, N. Z., Anderson, R. H., & Rand Corp, S. M. C. A. (1985). *Toward an ethics and etiquette for electronic mail*.

Empfänger, welcher im Durchschnitt 2.000 Euro pro Monat verdient, dann kostet dieser E-Mail Verkehr dem Unternehmen ca. 3.500 Euro[2].

Gehen sie daher immer sorgsam mit der Zeit anderer um und verwenden sie diese Funktion nur dann, wenn es sinnvoll ist. Vermeiden sie also E-Mails an alle mit einer Zeile, wie zum Beispiel „Danke" zu versenden. Alle wissen, dass sie höflich sind und werden ihnen die Vermeidung unnötigen E-Mail Verkehrs wahrscheinlich mehr danken.

Blindkopie Empfänger

Das Blindkopie Empfänger Feld (BCC) funktioniert gleich wie das CC Feld. Allerdings verbirgt das BCC Feld dem Empfänger die zusätzlichen Empfänger und kann daher schnell „politisch" wirken. Es gilt als unhöflich andere Empfänger zu verbergen und daher sollte diese Funktion äußerst sparsam verwendet werden.

Betreff

Wahrscheinlich kennt jeder solche Betreff Zeilen wie „Update", „Meeting", „Fehler" oder überhaupt keinen Betreff. Spätestens nach der dritten E-Mail, weiß keiner mehr was gemeint war, geschweige denn, dass man eine so betitelte E-Mail jemals leicht wiederfindet. Stellen sie sich daher immer die folgende Frage:

✓ Beschreibt der Betreff den Inhalt der Nachricht präzise genug?

Visualisieren sie sich hier wieder den Empfänger und wählen sie einen Betreff, der es ihm/ihr leichter macht, den Inhalt ihrer E-Mail zu verstehen und wiederzufinden. Sie wollen ja schließlich, dass ihre E-Mail schnell gelesen und beantwortet wird. Wählen sie den Betreff daher mit Bedacht.

Vermeiden sie allerdings unnötige Priorisierungen, wie beispielsweise ALLES IN

---

[2] Obwohl dieses Beispiel überzogen erscheinen mag, zeigt es dennoch sehr deutlich, dass durch unachtsame E-Mail Kommunikation die Empfänger bei ihrer Arbeit unterbrochen werden, was wiederum zu erheblichen Kosten für das Unternehmen führen kann.

GROSSBUCHSTABEN, viele Ausrufezeichen (!!!), Fahnen (Flags) oder farbig/fett formatierte Betreff Zeilen. Sollte es wirklich eine so hohe Dringlichkeit haben, sollten sie möglicherweise ein anderes Kommunikationsmedium wählen.

E-Mail Text

Der Text ist das Herzstück ihrer E-Mail und bedarf besonderer Aufmerksamkeit. Bei einer E-Mail wird nämlich keineswegs immer nur die Aussage der Nachricht übermittelt, sondern allzu oft auch die Emotionen des Senders, die er während des Schreibens hatte, oder wie dieser zwischenmenschlich zum Empfänger steht. Berücksichtigt man außerdem, dass E-Mails tendenziell eher negativ beim Lesen wirken, ist die Wahrscheinlichkeit für Missverständnisse besonders groß.

Daher sollte keine E-Mail ihren Computer verlassen, ohne eine respektvolle Begrüßung und Verabschiedung, ihrer korrekten E-Mail Signatur und einer zuvor durchgeführten Fehlerkorrektur der Rechtschreibung, Satzzeichen und Grammatik. Ebenso sollten sie keineswegs die Wirkung von „Bitte" und „Danke" vergessen, wenn die Zusammenarbeit des Empfängers benötigt wird – setzen sie diese nicht als selbstverständlich voraus.

Vergessen sie nicht, dass *alles* in ihrer E-Mail kommuniziert. Das was für sie unwichtig erscheint, kann für den Empfänger als sehr wichtig empfunden werden und unter Umständen ein falsches Bild von ihnen erzeugen. Beachten sie daher die folgenden Punkte:

- ✓ Ist eine Begrüßung vorhanden?
- ✓ Ist eine Verabschiedung vorhanden?
- ✓ Ist die korrekte E-Mail Signatur angefügt?
- ✓ Ist die Kernaussage ihrer E-Mail in den ersten Zeilen ersichtlich?
- ✓ Ist die Rechtschreibung, Grammatik, Satzzeichen korrekt?
- ✓ Ist der Text klar strukturiert und die Sprache verständlich für den Empfänger?
- ✓ Ist die Sprache eindeutig / ohne doppeldeutige Anmerkungen?
- ✓ Ist ein „Bitte" und „Danke" vorhanden?

Vergleichen sie nun die nachfolgende E-Mail Texte und lassen sie diese auf sich wirken.

E-Mail ohne Netiquette

Von: Peter
Betreff: Projektvorschlag abgelehnt

Ihr Projektvorschlag wurde abgelehnt, weil wir uns bereits für ein anderes System entschieden haben.

--
Mit freundlichen Grüßen
P. Peter (Vorstand)

E-Mail mit Netiquette

Von: Peter
Betreff: Projektvorschlag Intranet System

Guten Tag Herr ... ,

Vielen Dank für die Zusendung Ihres Projektvorschlags für die Implementation eines neuen Intranet Systems. Gute Arbeit!

Leider muss ich Ihnen dennoch eine Absage für dieses Projekt erteilen,
da wir uns entschieden haben, *PointShare* als Intranetlösung einzusetzen.

Dieses System ist für uns zum jetzigen Zeitpunkt wirtschaftlich sinnvoller,
als eine Neuimplementation.

Vielen Dank nochmals für Ihre Arbeit, die uns bei der Entscheidungsfindung sehr geholfen hat.

Schöne Grüße
P. Peter

--
Mit freundlichen Grüßen
P. Peter (Vorstand)

Netiquette Cheat-Sheet

- Antworten Sie zeitnah auf eine E-Mail – zu spät antworten, bzw. es ganz zu unterlassen gilt als unhöflich und wird vom Empfänger auch so wahrgenommen.

- Schreiben Sie Ihre E-Mails mit voller Aufmerksamkeit und nicht während Sie mit einer anderen Person sprechen oder während eines Meetings.

- Verwenden Sie das volle Potential Ihrer Schreibfertigkeiten.

- Erinnern Sie sich an den Menschen hinter der E-Mail Adresse.

- Seien Sie selektiv bei den Kopie Empfängern.

- Verwenden Sie eine kurze und sinnvolle Betreffzeile, die den Inhalt Ihrer E-Mail aufgreift – machen Sie den Empfänger neugierig auf den Inhalt der E-Mail.

- Schreiben Sie natürlich und freundlich, so wie Sie mit einer Person sprechen würden, die Sie respektieren.

- Respektieren Sie die Zeit des Empfängers.

- Beginnen Sie Ihre Nachricht mit einer angemessenen Begrüßung, egal wie kurz Ihre Nachricht für Sie auch erscheinen mag.

- Überlegen Sie, welche Stufe an Formalität für den Empfänger angebracht ist.

- Vergessen Sie nie „Bitte" und „Danke" zu sagen, schließlich wollen wir alle mit Achtung und Respekt behandelt werden.

- Senden Sie positive E-Mails – das ist auch bei schlechten Nachrichten möglich. Es ist nicht die Nachricht die negativ wirkt, sondern die Art und Weise wie sie übermittelt wird.

- Vermeiden Sie Emoticons und Smileys in geschäftlichen E-Mails – je klarer Sie sich ausdrücken, desto weniger gibt es Bedarf für diese Hilfsmittel.

- Bleiben Sie professionell und vermeiden Sie Abkürzungen (FYI, LOL, IMHO, etc.)

- Gehen Sie davon aus, das Ihre E-Mail für immer lebt, selbst wenn Sie oder der Empfänger sie bereits gelöscht hat – irgendwo existiert immer eine Kopie.

- Wenn sich ein Telefonanruf oder ein persönliches Gespräch besser anfühlt, ist es wahrscheinlich auch so.

- Fehlerkorrektur, Fehlerkorrektur und nochmals Fehlerkorrektur.

- Senden sie niemals eine E-Mail an die falsche Person.

- Formatieren Sie Ihre E-Mail sinnvoll in Absätze und fügen Sie nach ca. 80 Zeichen einen Zeilenumbruch ein. Somit bleibt die E-Mail auch auf kleinen Bildschirmen lesbar und das Scrollen nach links und rechts wird vermieden.

- Schreiben Sie maximal 8 Sätze pro Paragraph.

- Schreiben Sie keine Romane, sondern seien Sie kurz und präzise.

- Verweisen Sie auf den Anhang im Text und achten Sie auf das Format und die Größe des Anhangs – nicht jeder hat beispielsweise Microsoft Word installiert oder verfügt über die Bandbreite, um einen 20 Megabyte Anhang herunterzuladen.

- Verwenden Sie eine Standardschrift, welche auf allen Computern verfügbar sind.

- Verwenden Sie vorhergehende E-Mails für die Korrespondenz und zitieren und kürzen Sie vorhergehende Texte sinnvoll – keine Angst, es geht nichts verloren, da ja jeder die vorhergehende Texte bereits ebenfalls hat.

- Lesen Sie sich Ihre E-Mail vor dem Senden laut vor.

- Lachen Sie beim Schreiben der E-Mail.

- Ihre E-Mails kommunizieren Ihr Ansehen nach außen, ähnlich wie die Kleidung die Sie tragen.

- GROSSBUCHSTABEN werden als schreien wahrgenommen – vermeiden Sie es.

- Nicht alle Menschen können rot und grün sehen, vermeiden Sie daher diese Farben.

- Vermeiden Sie Zeichenwiederholungen (!!!)

- Fragen Sie nicht aktiv um eine Bestätigung Ihrer E-Mail, das wirkt anmaßend.

- Geschäftliche E-Mails sind Firmendokumente und somit Eigentum der Firma.

- Schreiben Sie nicht „Guten Morgen" oder „Guten Abend". Sie wissen nicht, wann der Empfänger Ihre E-Mail liest.

- Verbalisieren Sie Emotionen, z.B. „Ich bin glücklich" oder „Es macht mich im Moment wütend, dass ..."

- Vermeiden Sie Witze per E-Mail zu versenden, egal wie lustig Sie diese finden.

- Denken Sie nochmals nach, bevor Sie auf den Senden Button drücken und hören Sie auf Ihr Bauchgefühl.

- Schreiben Sie keine E-Mail wenn Sie starke Emotionen empfinden – drucken Sie sie aus und lesen Sie sie am nächsten Tag nochmals.

- Seien Sie „verzeihend" mit den Fehlern anderer.

- E-Mails sind nicht geeignet für einen Streit.

- Beenden Sie die Nachricht mit einem positiven Satz.

- Vermeiden Sie Clichés die das Ende der E-Mail hinauszögern, wie zum Beispiel „Lass mich wissen, wenn ich dir behilflich sein kann" oder „Ich hoffe das beantwortet deine Fragen".

Referenzen

Ahmed, S. (2008). E-mail policies of the 50 states: a content analysis. *Public Personnel Management*, *37*(1), 1–13 13p. JOUR.

Aranda, J. F. (2007). Netiquette and Online Communication. *Journal of Instruction Delivery Systems*, *21*(4), 11–14.

Baer, M. (2013). 5 ways to avoid email disasters: Don't let gaffes sabotage your career. *Public Relations Tactics*, *20*(1), 17. JOUR.

Buelens, H., Totté, N., Deketelaere, A., & Dierickx, K. (2007). Electronic discussion forums in medical ethics education: the impact of didactic guidelines and netiquette. *Medical Education*, *41*(7), 711–717 7p. JOUR.

Dedor, R. (2015, March). The five rules of email etiquette. *OfficePro*, *75*(2), 24–25. JOUR.

Hardy, J. (2012, September). Netiquette: It's a job skill. *Business in Calgary*, *22*(9), 26–31. JOUR.

Kallos, J. (2007). WHY YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS AN E-MAIL POLICY. *Management Quarterly*, *48*(4), 40–43. JOUR.

Kozík, T., & Slivová, J. (2014). Netiquette in Electronic Communication. *International Journal of Engineering Pedagogy (iJEP)*, *4*(3), 67. http://doi.org/10.3991/ijep.v4i3.3570

Lafrance, D. (2012, September). E-mail for business success. *Journal - American Water Works Association*.

Munter, M., Rogers, P. S., & Rymer, J. (2003). Business E-mail: Guidelines for Users. *Business Communication Quarterly*, *66*(1), 26–40. http://doi.org/10.1177/108056990306600104

Robb, P. (2008, January). E-tiquette. *OfficePro*, *68*(1), 24–27. JOUR.

Shapiro, N. Z., Anderson, R. H., & Rand Corp, S. M. C. A. (1985). *Toward an ethics and etiquette for electronic mail*. BOOK, ERIC.

Shea, V., & Shea, C. (1994). *Netiquette*. book, Albion Books.

Sikula Andrew, S., Sikula Dodds, A., & Sikula, J. (2012, May). eleven email etiquettes. *Supervision*, *73*(5), 8–11. JOUR.

Spinks, N., Wells, B., & Meche, M. (1999). Netiquette: a behavioral guide to electronic business communication. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, *4*(3), 145–155. JOUR. http://doi.org/10.1108/13563289910288465

Tedre, M., & Kamppuri, M. (2006). an Approach To Global Netiquette Research. In *Human Performance* (pp. 2004–2007). CONF.

Vincent, A. (1999). Business communication: are the rules different for e-mail. *Supervision*, *60*(9), 10. JOUR.