



Managing and Leveraging Workplace Use of Social Media at a South African Supply Chain Company

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Abstract

The rapid growth of social media has drastically changed the way people communicate in their private lives and at work. Social media has become a part of our daily lives in both environments and serve as an emotional outlet on various topics. Due to this, there are legal risks associated with the use of social media in the workplace and proper management of this risk is required. Alternatively, this rapid growth also brings about numerous advantages which may be leveraged by organisations. Social media is expected to continue to evolve and expand. In the process, it will become more integrated into both business and personal lives. A qualitative approach was adopted and primary data gathered by means of interviews with the supply chain's employees. Content analysis methodology was chosen for the analysis of the qualitative data and themes were developed. These themes were also compared to theory and conclusions were made. The main finding of the study was that social media interaction is inevitable, whether the organisation denies access to this technology. Employees will find a way to communicate via social media. The recommendations resulting from this study will enable the company to implement a proper social media policy whereby the employee will know the legalities of using social media and both the employee and the organisation covered against any probable legal risk. The company may also leverage the advantages of social media to the benefit of the organisation.

Keywords: legal risks; risk management; social media.

1. INTRODUCTION

This research explores one of the most defining developments of our time, social media. Social media has basically changed people's private and professional lives and has become one of the most important corporate challenges of the twenty-first century. Employees function as powerful brand ambassadors via social media and can impact an organisation's reputation with everything they do and say online.

This study will assist in understanding the impact of social media as well as how to leverage the advantages of social media in the workplace. A qualitative method was adopted for the study because the research was aimed at understanding participants' beliefs and perceptions regarding their experience, feelings, and ideas. The interview with structured questions was selected as the data collection strategy for the research because this strategy was best suited in providing input on employee perception and experiences of social media and how accessing social media may impact their jobs either in a positive or negative way.

1.2 Background to the study

Technology is quickly changing and the way in which business is conducted is not exempted from this change. Social media has become the top form of communication and according to the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM) (2012), the rapid growth of social media has significantly changed the way people communicate at home and at work. Social media comprises sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Google+, Pinterest, Tumblr, Wikipedia, YouTube, Twitter, Yelp and Flickr. Some of the reasons for social media use are, but not limited to, employee learning, engagement and knowledge-sharing e.g. a corporate Facebook or blog page to keep employees in distant offices aware of new programs or policies; marketing to clients, potential customers and crisis management and for recruitment and hiring of new employees (SHRM, 2012:1).

The benefits of social media are quite evident. Social media can serve as a customer service tool that allows consumers to interact with businesses about their products. Social media marketing campaigns can be inexpensive and if successful, can increase brand awareness. Even though social media is so popular, organisations find it difficult to keep up with the changing technology. Employers find it progressively difficult to find a balance between an employee's privacy and the employer's security. An employee may not know that their online activities have the potential to affect their careers within the company and depending on the seriousness of the matter, may result in termination of their services within the company or result in legal complaints against the organisation. As a result, this requires proper management and implementation of policies and guidelines as well as training and education. Social media also brings with it numerous benefits for an organisation if used correctly. These include reduced costs for marketing, increasing brand awareness, talent search and acquisition, and the provision of a platform for employees to learn, communicate, and discuss issues from all over the world. Monitoring employees' use of social media can be overwhelming and difficult because communications are instantaneous, sometimes short-lived and these sites are often hosted on external or outside servers which are not controlled by the organisation (SHRM, 2012: 2).

The company falls under the fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry. This is an extremely competitive industry. Staying ahead of the pack using innovation and technology may set the organisation apart from the rest by providing the organisation with a competitive advantage. The company has many branches nationally and keeping the communication channels open both ways may sometimes prove difficult. The benefits of social media, to mention a few, can be adopted by the company to improve communication and knowledge sharing, talent acquisition, and

brand awareness, as well as low-cost marketing that is effective. In order to minimise the legal risk faced by organisations and their employees associated with the use of social media in the workplace, and to ensure that company-owned property is being properly utilised for the intended purpose, a social media policy which is effective and legal should be developed.

1.3 Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to explore the management of social media usage as well as how to leverage the advantages of social media in the workplace at the company. This study involved identifying whether there are sufficient rules/policies in place to control social media usage at work and to recommend the correct procedures to follow in order to safeguard the employer and employee.

1.4 Research questions

The research objectives led to the following research questions:

1. Can the use of social media be beneficial to the company?
2. How does social media networking/access affect staff performance and service delivery?
3. Should Internet/social media access be granted to all employees?
4. What is the role of the Human Resources department in policy formulation and enforcement and social media access?
5. What are the recommendations regarding company Internet policy when employees access the Internet?

1.5 Significance of the study

The rationale for carrying out this study was to determine the impact of social media on the organisation and the employee. Social media usage has many benefits which the organisation may leverage. Embracing this new turn in technology will assist in giving the organisation a competitive advantage. No such study of this nature has been carried out previously at the company and would be beneficial to both the company and the employees.

The Marketing department and ultimately the organisation will benefit with a lower cost of marketing expenses which is generally one of the largest expenses in an organisation. The Human Resources department will find value in this research in terms of talent acquisition, employee learning, an array of employee communication channels and much more. Cyber-loafing which leads to productivity issues and time wastage can be curbed in an organisation as this research will assist in formulating an effective policy for social media, internet and email usage.

The results of this research will assist management in providing an overview of the advantages and disadvantages of social media so that recommendations may be made to management to ensure that the usage of social media can be optimised and leveraged to the advantage of the organisation. This is a small scale study conducted only at this company. As a result, the findings cannot be generalised to other companies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Cohen (2011:1), states that “Social Media are the platforms that enable the interactive web by engaging users to participate in, comment on and create content as means of communicating with their social contacts, other users and the public”. Cohen (2011:2) also mentions the following characteristics of social media:

- Includes a wide variety of content formats including text, video, photographs, audio, PDF and PowerPoint.

- Allows interactions across a large number of platforms through social sharing, email and feeds.
- Involves different levels of interaction by participants who can create, comment or lurk on social media networks.
- Facilitates improved speed of information distribution.
- Provides for one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many communications.
- Enables communication to take place in real time or asynchronously over time.
- It is device indifferent. It can take place via a computer (including laptops and netbooks), tablets (including iPads, iTouch and others) and mobile phones (particularly smartphones).
- Extends engagement by creating real-time online events, extending online interactions offline, or augmenting live events online (Cohen, 2011:2).

2.1 The history of social media

According to Hale (2015:1), the first social media site was a website called Six Degrees and the lifespan was from 1997 to 2001. This website allowed users to create a profile and then extend friend requests to other users. After Six Degrees came blogging and instant messaging. Although blogging isn't exactly social media, the term fits because people were now able to instantly communicate with a blog. Hale (2015:1), says that by the year 2000, around 100 million people had access to the internet and it became quite common for people to be socially online. At this point, it was probably noted as an odd hobby. Progressively more people began to use chat rooms for making friends, dating and discussing topics that they wanted to talk about. But the huge boom of social media was yet to come.

Back in the early 2000's, the website MySpace was popular for setting up a profile and making friends. MySpace was the original social media profile website and inspired websites like Facebook. Another website that was one of the initial social media websites was LinkedIn and is still a social media website today which is geared specifically towards professionals who want to network with each other. LinkedIn is meant for professional business people to connect with each other to network, find jobs and socialise (Hale, 2015:1).

As discussed by Digital Trends (2016), in 2004 Mark Zuckerberg launched Facebook which became the social media giant that set the bar for all other social media services. Facebook is the number one social media website today and it currently boasts over a billion users. Facebook was initially launched just for Harvard students. Zuckerberg realised the potential and released the service to the world as the website facebook.com (Digital Trends, 2016:1).

Soon after the launch of Facebook there were numerous other websites providing social media services of some kind. One of the earliest being Flickr and is still is one of the most popular photo sharing sites. Others, to name a few, include Photobucket and Instagram, with Instagram gaining popularity today as one of the top social media sites to include on business cards and other media (Digital Trends, 2016:2).

One of the things that started happening at the moment is that social media not only became widely used, it also became widespread in business. Websites were starting to list their social media addresses, businesses would include Facebook and Twitter addresses on their television commercials and many tools were being built to include social media on websites. Social media icons were seen everywhere and it became almost unusual to see businesses or brands without them (Digital Trends, 2016:2).

As mentioned by Digital Trends (2016:2), over the course of the past few years, “Fourth screen” technology i.e. smartphones, tablets, etc., has changed social networking and the way people communicate with one another completely.

In the past cumbersome ‘large’ desktops and laptops were utilised and now “fourth screen” technology conveniently fits in the palm of our hands, allowing us to effortlessly use functionality wherever we go which was once set aside for multiple devices. Given the rapid increase in mobile computing, it is not surprising that the most popular social media platforms of the past several years hinge on the capabilities of smartphones (Digital Trends, 2016:2).

Digital Trends (2016:3) further explains that the same goes with platforms such as Foursquare, an application in which users use their smartphones to check in to various locations around the globe and various matchmaking services. Tinder, for example, currently has more than 10 million daily users, each of which swipes for potential partners based on their location in relation to their smartphone. People essentially use the various services in conjunction with other platforms to build a comprehensive digital identity (Digital Trends, 2016:3).

2.2 Human resources management and social media

According to Creative Commons (2012:12), human resource management (HRM) can be defined as the process of employing people, training them, compensating them, developing policies relating to them and developing strategies to retain them. HRM has undergone many changes in the past twenty years which has redefined it and gave it an even more important role. *The Development of Workplace Policies*

According to Creative Commons (2012:14), every organisation has policies in place to ensure equality and continuity within the organisation. One of the functions of HRM is to develop the wording around these policies. The policy development process involves input from HRM, executives and management. The HRM representative will identify the need for a policy or a change of policy. The HRM representative will then seek opinions on the policy, write the policy and then communicate that policy to all the employees. A crucial point to note is that the HR department does not and cannot work alone. Involvement of all other departments within the organisation is required in all that they do.

2.3 Social media and HRM

The traditional train of thought and feelings among Human Resource professionals when social media is mentioned is that it is a “waste of time” and a “distraction”. Even though social media offers advantages such as free advertising and customer engagement, it also allows employees to carry out unproductive activities online at the expense of the organisation. While it is true that some employees display such behaviour, it is also true that some employees use social media effectively to the benefit of their organisation (Linacre, 2017:41-43).

According to Linacre (2017:41-43), there is evidence that the use of integrated platforms for employees such as internal blogs helps retain staff and also enables them to develop themselves via online learning and development activities. These platforms provide a place where useful information can be stored and kept updated instead of using the old-fashioned intranet sources. State of the art knowledge sharing apps can be created to include employees in the decision making processes of the organisation. This assists the employees in knowing that his or her opinion counts in the organisation.

Linacre (2017:41-43) advises on how to optimize social media for four HRM functions as follows:

- The use of websites such as LinkedIn, which contain a vast number of individuals who share their qualifications and skills which makes selection and headhunting easier. New techniques such as adaptive learning which are supported by social media technology provide benefits to training and development.
- The dissemination of information such as health and safety communiqué within the organisation via apps such as Yammer.
- Motivation may be improved by measuring performance through the use of social media depending on how relevant to an individual's role it is (Linacre, 2017:41-43).

Linacre (2017:41-43) advises that all the above functions consolidated can assist in transforming the culture of an organisation as well. This is a difficult change to bring about within an organisation due to different habits, actions and mindsets.

2.4 The benefits of using social media for recruitment

According to Kluemper, Mitra and Wang (2016:153), the rapid growth of social media has impacted the human resources management sector in a number of ways. Social media can reduce recruitment costs. Recruitment via social media increases the talent pool of applicants. Through social media, employers have the opportunity to advertise job postings via employee networks which enables the employee to spread the word about vacancies that may exist. Kluemper *et al.*, (2016:153) call this the “digital version of word-of-mouth” but this is faster, on a larger scale and covers a larger geographical area.

According to an article by Whitelegg (2017:1), recruiters are experiencing difficulty in accessing emerging or young talent. This is especially so for industries experiencing skill shortages. Almost all school and university leavers have a presence on social media. Therefore social media provides a gateway for young talent. Apart from attracting young talent, social media may be used to connect with passive candidates. Passive candidates are candidates that are not in the market actively looking for a job but can be persuaded to change their minds if the right opportunity presented itself. LinkedIn is the most valuable platform for content marketing. The effectiveness of Facebook and Twitter dropped between 2015 and 2016.

Dreher (2014:344) advises that management or leaders should accept that the employees' social media activities shape the organisation's reputation. An organisation's reputation may no longer be controlled by a dedicated communications department but instead is now controlled by the organisation's entire workforce. Social media can be helpful in company branding efforts in building a good reputation. This is an important factor that establishes a link between a positive corporate reputation and the applicant's intention to apply for a job. A well designed and professional social media site may assist potential applicants to discover information of interest about an organisation thus providing positive feedback about the organisation as a potential employer.

Social media is definitely changing the manner in which recruiters communicate with employees and job seekers. Social networks are a valuable resource in the recruitment sector. Recruiters will need to learn how to maximise the use of social media in order to thrive in the digital market (Whitelegg, 2017:2).

2.5 The impact of social media on productivity in the workplace

Dreher (2014:345) advises that employees embody the organisation's corporate character and also function as powerful representatives of their organisations hence employee participation in social media is crucial. Their participation in social media is essential in leveraging the benefits social media brings to an organisation.

According to Agresta and Bonin (2011), one of the reasons why employees play a crucial role in this era of social media is that they function as corporate advocates and brand ambassadors. They are fully informed and educated on their company's spirit and business which is what makes them dependable representatives of their organisation. Their participation in social media cannot be avoided and is basically impossible to eliminate.

2.6 Social media access

According to Linke and Zerfass (2012:24), most companies grant access to social media at the workplace while many still believe that blocking or restricting access can help protect their reputation. This is a serious misconception as restricting or blocking social networking sites at the workplace only shifts the problem but does not provide a solution to mitigate the risks (Linke & Zerfass, 2012:24). Organisations must be aware that, irrespective of workplace restrictions, mobile devices allow employees to access social media at any time or place. If social media cannot be accessed via work devices, employees will access it via their personal devices. Hence, it is unrealistic, in this day and age, to restrict social media at the workplace. By doing so, organisations cannot prevent their employees from participating in social conversations. Social media is an essential part of an employee's professional and private life which cannot and should not be restricted. Appropriate steps should be taken to prevent the risks and leverage the benefits (Dreher, 2014:345-346).

An important observation made by Lees (2017:3), is that social media in South Africa and other African countries show different results when compared to first world countries. First world countries are seeing a decline in Facebook usage but in South Africa, Facebook has now become the biggest social network with 9.4 million active users. This is up from 6.8 million users a year ago. Data and technology costs pose a barrier to entry but most South Africans are accessing social media platforms via mobile devices. WhatsApp is the most popular app in the Android, Apple and Windows app stores. In SA, the usage of social media has also become a business tool. Marketers are now using social media to promote brand awareness and messaging. The benefit of using social media is increasingly growing as it stimulates a one-on-one relationship with possible customers and allows for the implementation of marketing tactics or content strategies.

2.7 Advantages and disadvantages of social media

According to the Society for Human Resource Management (2012:1), the benefits of social media differ based on the type of features, company type and platform. Below are possible advantages and disadvantages of social media use by workplaces.

The advantages, according to the SHRM (2012:1), include and are not limited to:

- Facilitates open communication Allows employees to discuss ideas, post news, ask questions and share links.
- Creates an opportunity to increase business contacts.
- Targets a wide audience making it a useful and effective recruitment tool.
- Improves business reputation and client base with minimal use of advertising.

- Expands market research, implements marketing campaigns, delivers communications and directs interested people to specific websites (SHRM, 2012:1).

The disadvantages, according to the SHRM (2012:1) include and are not restricted to, the following:

- Opens up the possible gateway for hackers to commit fraud and launch spam and virus attacks.
- Increases the risk of people falling prey to online scams that seem genuine, resulting in data or identity theft.
- May result in negative comments from employees about the company or possible legal consequences if employees use these sites to view objectionable, illicit, or offensive material.
- May result in lost productivity, if employees are busy updating profiles etc. (SHRM, 2012:1).

2.8 Potential risks

Following Smith, Wollan and Zhou, (2010:5) there are three main problems that make social media difficult for organisations to address internally and externally. Firstly, social media cannot be fully regulated, monitored or controlled, nor can its impact be stopped or undone hence this requires organisations to give up control. Social media presents a public platform of an employee to create and exchange content despite communication strategies or other policies. This poses considerable risk which can lead to costly and dire consequences, including workplace lawsuits, public relations and social media crises, loss of employee productivity, regulatory audits and fines, message and brand voice insistency, loss of confidential data, exposure of company secrets, mismanaged and misplaced business records and security breaches (Dreher, 2014:346). Secondly, organisations have to accept that social media is everywhere and it goes beyond geographic, demographic and economic boundaries (Smith *et al.*, 2010:5). This is why social media risk has far-reaching effects on the company's reputation or an entire industry. Once something is said on social media, it may last forever and be accessible to everyone (Agresta & Bonin, 2011). Lastly, according to Smith *et al.*, (2010:5), social media is highly emotional and useful. Employees can express both happiness and frustration on this platform and force organisations to make decisions much more quickly and with less accurate information. It transforms the internet into real-time communications outlets that require 24/7 monitoring with quick and meaningful responses.

He (2012:175) advises that there are many security risks associated with the use of social media in organisations. He (2012:178) identifies four key insights to assist organisations in effectively mitigating security risks with the use of social media:

- Involve all relevant stakeholders – involve representatives from the business units, sales and marketing, human resources, risk management, legal, information technology departments as well as some random employees. This ensures an even coverage with input from the entire organisation to bring about an effective policy.
- Enforce social media security policy – social media security policies must be enforced and compliance with security policies must be made a part of the job requirements and performance review process. An effective social media policy must have a clear and unambiguous warning about sharing confidential corporate information. Employees must also be educated to fully understand security risks and the consequences of being non-compliant.
- Update and communicate your social media policy regularly – due to social networking technology evolving on a daily basis, all the stakeholders need to review the policy and make the changes accordingly. Policy

changes need to be communicated clearly using multiple methods such as meetings, training workshops or newsletters.

- Make security policies understandable for all employees – plain and simple language must be in the social media security policy to ensure that it is understood by all employees. Multimedia like videos may be used to get the message across clearly.
- Protect multiple endpoints – Multiple endpoints such as laptops, tablets, desktops, mobile phones are now used to access social media sites. Cyber-attacks from mobile devices are on the increase. Organisations need to work together with security providers to find a solution that covers all endpoint devices (He, 2013:178).

Social media policies and guidelines should be reinforced by training and education and should target all levels of employees. The ultimate goal of training in social media is to educate employees about their social media use at work, policies, rules, its risks and procedures (Dreher, 2014:344-356).

2.9 Social media in workplace learning

According to Shepherd (2011:4), collaboration plays an important role in learning. A lot of what we learn comes from the sharing of experiences and mutual problem-solving. There are numerous ways in which social media can be utilised to facilitate workplace learning. Forums may be used to discuss issues and share ideas, videos and podcasts can be used as a means to share research, wikis for group collaborative projects and blogs as learning journals. A great deal of learning takes place at the point of need. This is why those that are in a hurry could use micro-blogging services such as Twitter and Yammer to quickly update their peers on new developments. Blogging can play a valuable role in learning whereby employees can offer their own expertise to others or find other sources of expertise. Social media at work works best in an organisation where expertise is widely distributed and employees have the maturity and discretion about how they spend their time (Shepherd, 2011:4).

Kluemper *et al.*, (2016:187) advises that social media assists employees in gaining transferable skills like online collaboration, team working skills and communication skills, that are useful for current and future circumstances. Social media platforms like Second Life and Lotus Workplace allows organisations to create virtual training workplaces that allow employees to virtually meet, conduct training sessions, hold events and practise corporate communications. This type of virtual learning brings about cost savings as employees do not have to travel to meet face-to-face. A benefit of online training is the possibility of trainees to individualise learning experiences and have the training available for when it is convenient for them.

2.10 Counterproductive work behaviour: Cyber-loafing

According to Kluemper *et al.*, (2016:199) cyber-loafing is explained as when an employee engages in electronic activities using the internet, that his/her manager would not consider work-related. This includes and is not restricted to, online romance, online gaming, online gambling, browsing pornographic websites, stock trading and watching YouTube. The examples mentioned have the potential to expose the organisation to risk or liability. These behaviours symbolise a loss of productivity at the workplace.

There is a link between cyber-loafing and behaviours such as absenteeism, leaving early, lateness and extended breaks. With the introduction of smart technology, there is now a new trend in cyber-loafing called mobile-cyber-loafing compared to the classic form of cyber-loafing via laptops and desktop computers. Mobile phones

have become a leading trend for cyber-loafing and it is a major source of distraction at work (Kluemper *et al.*, 2016:201).

In today's ever-changing social media era, IT and HR professionals have to give special attention to their workforce as the social network is a necessary part of their lives. Managing the risks and leveraging the numerous benefits of employee's social media use requires a strategic management approach. Employers have to embrace the fact that employees' social media activities are going to mould and shape their organisations' reputation on a wider scale in the future. Organisations need to learn how to embrace and facilitate these new challenges and opportunities instead of ignoring it.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative method of research was chosen over quantitative and combined methodologies as this was best suited for the study because the research was aimed at understanding the belief and perceptions of the participants with respect to their experience, feelings, ideas and perceptions. According to Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014), an important advantage of this methodology is that details about the research subjects and topics are discovered which are often missed by a quantitative or combined methodology.

An interview with structured questions was selected as the data collection strategy for this research as employees were required to provide input on their perceptions and experiences of social media and how accessing social media may impact their jobs either in a positive or negative way.

3.1 Target population

The process of selecting a sample (a few) from the sampling population (the entire group) is referred to as sampling (Kumar, 2011:163). For the purpose of this study, the target population or sample consisted of 10 participants. This study, being small scale and qualitative, meant that the findings could not be confidently generalised.

3.2 The research instrument and questionnaire construction

The instrument was comprised of twenty-three questions which were aligned to the objectives of this research that focused on ascertaining the individual's social media presence as well as the number of communities the individual has a presence in or influence on. The instrument was developed after having conducted a literature search and it was designed to elicit responses that were of value in answering the objectives and research questions. The questions determined the amount of time spent on social media websites as well as covered the employee's perception of the impact of social media in the workplace. The questions also determined if the employee was aware of the legal consequences of implicating the organisation in any scandal whatsoever.

According to Kumar (2011:138), interviewing is a common means of collecting information from people. Interviews are classified into structured and unstructured formats. In the unstructured option, questions can be asked freely and made up on the spur of the moment as opposed to a structured interview where a predetermined set of questions are asked by the researcher.

The structured interview, where the same predetermined questions were asked to all interviewees, was used as the research instrument for the collection of primary data. An advantage of the structured interview is that it provides uniform information. This ensures that the data is comparable. The interview was conducted electronically via e-mail.

Communication was sent to the participants mentioned above, informing them of the study and the reason for their participation. Structured and open-ended questions were used to capture qualitative data for the study. The interview questions were based on the objectives of the research.

3.3 Pilot study

Mackey and Gass (2016) advise that a pilot study is necessary in order to test, revise and finalise a questionnaire. The pre-test phase allowed for the evaluation of the research methods of the study to be considered. Feedback from the pilot test was incorporated into the finalisation of the interview questions for the structured interviews. The pilot study was necessary for this research because it revealed design and implementation flaws in the questionnaire. This avoided additional costs and time spent during the data collection phase. The pilot study also ensured that the questionnaire covered those research questions which led to the resolution of the research questions.

A face-to-face open-ended interview and the emailed interview schedule were piloted with two employees from the IT and HR departments. These individuals confirmed that the questions asked were linked to the objectives and study being conducted. This therefore confirmed face validity. The conducting of the trial interviews assisted in gaining confidence and experience in managing the personal interviews in a reputable way. Thus, the pilot study provided a better understanding of the research data collection phase, the time management issue, and the capturing and interpretation of the data. These ensured plausible conclusions could be made.

3.4 Data analysis

For the purpose of this study, an inductive analysis approach was adopted. Qualitative research generally has a linked progression of events in the data collection and data analysis stages. As pointed out by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003:380), the researcher must carry out data collection and analysis in a systematic and well-planned manner in order to be able to analyse the data in an efficient and sound manner. Researchers may ask open-ended questions and/or make observations. The examination of this data led to the development of categories of information and the grouping of ideas. The researcher concurrently looked for patterns and recurrences in the data, interpreted these patterns, defines interrelationships among the categories and patterns identified in the data and attached meanings. The tentative theory was developed and patterns compared with other theories using inductive reasoning processes. The resultant 'pattern theory' contains an interconnected set of concepts that make sense but unlike a causal theory, it does not require causal statements. The main implications for the analysis of qualitative data in this general sequence of processes are that the whole procedure is based on inductive reasoning. Structure and meaning are emergent as analysis proceeds and theory is generated as 'grounded theory' (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:381).

3.5 Validity and reliability

It is important that the data collected is valid and reliable which is why the validity and reliability aspects of the methodology are frequently questioned when a qualitative study is undertaken. The individual skill of the researcher plays an important role in the analysis of data (Braun & Clarke, 2014). Face validity was established during the pilot study.

Participant error was not experienced during the study. Participant bias was eliminated as the participants gave their own opinions to the questions and were not prompted by the interviewee. Observer error was eliminated as the interview had a standard set of questions which was asked to all participants. To ensure the achievement of content

validity, the interview questionnaire was designed to contain a variety of questions pertaining to the information gathered from the literature review, to ensure that employees knew what social networking was about. Content validity was also ensured by the consistency in which questionnaires/interviews were administered. The interview schedule was personally distributed to all the respondents.

3.5.1 Trustworthiness and credibility

To ensure that the research methodology was well established for the study, frequent debriefing sessions with the allocated supervisor where notes were made and checked, was carried out. Data was also interpreted back to the participants of the interview to verify the data gathered (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:72-100).

3.5.2 Dependability

Dependability is used in preference to reliability for a qualitative research (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:72-100). The research design was implemented in correct relevance to the study with the assistance of the appointed supervisor and the data analysis process was documented such that a bystander can see the decisions taken, how the analysis process was accomplished and how interpretations were derived.

3.5.3 Conformability

The findings of the study were formed by the participants' perceptions and experiences and not by biases by the researcher.

3.6 Limitations of the study

This was a small-scale study conducted at the company's head office. There are approximately 900 desktop and laptop users within the company. It was not possible to contact each and every employee due to different shifts, shortage staff and geographical constraints, hence the utilisation of a small sample size, narrowed down to two departments consisting of 42 employees. Furthermore, some employees chose not to participate in the questionnaire due to concerns about job security, victimisation and realisation of complacency. Some employees were afraid of disciplinary action being taken against them for using their personal mobiles during work hours. A small budget was also a limitation of this study and no travelling was conducted outside of KwaZulu-Natal for face-to-face interviews. Data were collected electronically and telephonically.

3.7 Elimination of bias

According to Kumar (2011:221), bias is to deliberately attempt to hide your research findings or to emphasise something that is not in proportion to its true meaning. It is unethical to bring about such bias in a research activity.

The basic principles of research ethics as per Kumar (2001:221-223) were followed. During the research process, the integrity of the information provided by the interviewees was maintained and data was captured in a secure electronic platform that was password protected. All paper trails were then destroyed. Sampling bias, according to Howitt and Cramer (2000:23), which refers to the systematic under or over-representation of the population, was also avoided. The participants selected for the research were random and no preference was given to obtain any specific results.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Saunders, *et al.* (2006:193-195), state that ethical concerns will emerge during the course of your research as you plan, seek access to organisations and to individuals, collect, analyse and report your data. This is irrespective of which data collection technique is adopted. Ethics refers to the appropriateness of behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of the work or are affected by it.

Ethical consideration includes the following:

- Ensuring participants have given informed consent – the participant has the right to withdraw consent at any time should s/he not want to take part in the process.
- Ensuring no harm comes to participants – a participant should not be asked to participate in anything that may cause them any harm or infringe on their privacy.
- Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity – confidentiality and anonymity may be of extreme importance in getting an organisation to agree to participate in the research process. Important information pertaining to names, addresses and other personal information is to remain confidential if promised as such.
- Ensuring that permission is obtained – a formal request for carrying out the research is essential.

The company granted written authorisation to conduct this study and supported the research. This research aimed to seek data relevant to the information technology and required the individual's personal views. The data required needs to be factual and include negative sentiments as well. A declaration was done upfront with the respondents advising as to why the research was being conducted and how their feedback will be utilized. Respondents were also assured at the onset of each interview that all responses and correspondence were treated with strict confidentiality and the data collected was unable to be tied back to any particular individual as no names, identity numbers or addresses were required. No harm came to the participants during the interview process.

4. RESULTS

A qualitative study with an exploratory design was conducted due to the high level of uncertainty and ignorance on the subject as well as to understand what was happening within the organisation pertaining to social media usage. A phenomenological model was selected as an understanding of participants' perceptions, feelings and thoughts were required. The grounded theory was used for purpose of this study.

Collectively, the participants had an astounding 125 years of work experience which is a wealth of information. Participant 5 had 27 years of service and thus made a significant contribution to the study. Participants 7 and 4 had 18 and 16 years of service within the organisation and this as well provided a significant contribution to the study.

Due to the vast number of years of service and experience between the participants, a fair view of perceptions, thoughts and feelings was able to be gathered. This allowed for an unbiased or neutral study to occur. The participants were present during the period of the technological changes that took place from a social media perspective and have embraced it.

4.1 Interpretation and discussion of social media in general

It was found that all of the participants used LinkedIn and half used both LinkedIn and Facebook. LinkedIn ranked as the number one and Facebook as fourth in effectiveness for content marketing. According to Hale (2015:1),

LinkedIn is meant for professional business people to connect with each other to network, find jobs and socialise. According to Whitelegg (2017:1), recruiters are experiencing difficulty in accessing emerging or young talent. This is especially so for industries, similar to the company, experiencing skill shortages. Social media provides a gateway for young talent. Apart from attracting young talent, social media may be used to connect with passive candidates.

According to Dreher (2014:344), social media can be helpful in company branding efforts in building a good reputation. This is an important factor that establishes a link between a positive corporate reputation and the applicant's intention to apply for a job. On average, each participant has 175 contacts or friends under their profiles. This provides a good way to disseminate information pertaining to marketing and job vacancies.

Also, 70% of the participants use social media to find, keep and stay in contact with friends and family. 90% of the participants used social media to find information and opinions on products, get options, socialise, entertain themselves, share experiences and get freebies.

4.2 Interpretation and discussion of social media and work

Nine of the ten participants stated that they do access job and career websites, while, one participant stated that s/he did not. According to Kluemper *et al.*, (2016:153), social media can reduce recruitment costs. Recruitment via social media increases the talent pool of applicants. Through social media, employers have the opportunity to advertise job postings via employee networks which enables the employee to spread the word about vacancies that may exist. Kluemper *et al.*, (2016:153) call this the "digital version of word-of-mouth" but this is faster, on a larger scale and covers a larger geographical area.

A total of 70% of participants felt that learning via social media was effective, while the remaining 30% felt that it was not. According to Shepherd (2011:4), forums may be used to discuss issues and share ideas, videos and podcasts can be used as a means to share research, wikis for group collaborative projects and blogs as learning journals. Blogging can play a valuable role in learning whereby employees can offer their own expertise to others or find other sources of expertise. Kluemper *et al.*, (2016:187) advise of the benefit of online training is the possibility of trainees to individualise learning experiences and have the training available for when it convenient for them. There is a shift in responsibility from the trainers to the learners. Learners are now empowered.

According to Linke and Zerfass (2012:24), most companies grant access to social media at the workplace while many still believe that blocking or restricting access can help protect their reputation. This is a serious misconception as restricting or blocking social networking sites at the workplace only shifts the problem but does not provide a solution to mitigate the risks. This is evident in the above stats whereby 80% of the participants accessed social media via their personal devices. Organisations must be aware that, irrespective of workplace restrictions, mobile devices allow employees to access social media at any time or place. If social media cannot be accessed via work devices, employees will access it via their personal devices (Linke & Zerfass 2012:24).

More than half of the participants spent under 10% of their time accessing social media during work hours while two of the participants spent between 40-50% of their work time on social media. According to Shepherd (2011:3), it is inevitable that managers will be concerned that their employees will spend a considerable amount of time on social media during work hours which are why the proper guidelines and policies need to be put in place.

Interestingly enough, just under half of the participants advised that accessing social media during work hours is inappropriate. According to Kluemper *et al.*, (2016:199) cyber-loafing is explained as when an employee engages in electronic activities using the internet, that his/her manager would not consider work-related. This includes and is not restricted to, online romance, online gaming, online gambling, browsing pornographic websites, stock trading and watching YouTube. The examples mentioned have the potential to expose the organisation to risk or liability. These behaviours symbolise a loss of productivity at work. Social media-based cyber-loafing associates with counterproductive behaviour. Employees' cyber-loafing behaviour has the potential to affect organisations negatively in ways such as increased IT expenditure for bolstering firewalls to improve security and for implementing monitoring software.

4.3 Interpretation and discussion of policy and reputational risk

Social media policies and guidelines should be reinforced by training and education and should target all levels of employees. The ultimate goal of training in social media is to educate employees about their social media use at work, policies, rules, its risks and procedures (Dreher, 2014:344-356). Training and education is part of the HR function as it pertains to all employees in general. 60% of the participants stated that policy formulation should involve both HR and IT as IT could assist in the nitty-gritty's of social media while HR understands the employee. An involvement from both HR and IT would produce a good policy covering all the pertinent issues of accessing social media.

All participants were fully aware that their actions on social media could lead to the tarnishing of an organisation's reputation as well as their dismissal depending on the seriousness of the offence. This links to the point that Agresta and Bonin (2011) make that one of the reasons why employees play a crucial role in this era of social media is that they function as corporate advocates and brand ambassadors. They are fully informed and educated on their company's spirit and business which is what makes them dependable representatives of their organisation. Their participation in social media cannot be avoided and is basically impossible to eliminate.

Almost all of the participants stated that they were aware that the company had an Internet and social media policy in place. According to management, an internet policy was only in place and required the inclusion of social media usage.

4.4 Interpretation and discussion of the recommendations

There was positive feedback pertaining to the recommendations. More customer engagement via social media was one of the suggestions. This reduces marketing and advertising costs. The general consensus was to make social media available to all with monitoring tools in place to prevent or curb abuse. Another valid suggestion made by the participants was to make social media available during tea and lunch breaks. Kluemper *et al.*, (2016:153-207) is also in agreement with this and advises that there may be some positive effects of cyber-loafing such as employees using social media to distract themselves from stressful events or tasks. This is a form of minor cyber-loafing as employees see this type of cyber-loafing in the same light as making and taking personal calls during work hours.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Objective 1 was to evaluate whether the use of social media can be to the benefit of the company e.g. Employee learning, talent acquisition and marketing. Through the qualitative research findings, it became apparent that social media has numerous advantages which are to be embraced and its challenges and risks mitigated. The use of integrated

platforms within the organisations eliminates geographical boundaries and thus brings the company together for information sharing and problem-solving. The majority of the participants used LinkedIn and Facebook for recruitment in order to attract the right type of talent for job vacancies. On average, each participant has 175 contacts or friends under their profiles. This provides a good way to disseminate information pertaining to marketing and job vacancies thus reaching a wider audience. Participants also advised that social media should be used more in order to communicate with and attract more customers.

It is recommended that the benefits of social media need to be explored a bit more by the company so that these methods can be adopted for the benefit of the organisation.

Objective 2 was to evaluate whether social media networking/access impacts staff performance and service delivery. Gathering from the literature review and the primary research, it is evident that there will be an impact on staff productivity and service delivery. Banning or restricting social media access in an organisation in this day and age would be futile as employees will access social media via their personal or private devices. Instead, social media should be embraced and the correct rules and policies should be put in place to control and monitor the usage.

It is recommended that social media should be embraced by the organisation and proper rules and guidelines put in place. Also, employment contracts need to contain a fair social media policy which is agreed with by the employee. A cloud-based web filtering software solution should also be implemented. Cloud-based solutions enable controls to be effective 24/7 on all devices irrespective whether the device is logged on to the corporate domain or not. Also, even if employees connect to a corporate network with their own mobile devices, control over social media and other undesirable categories of websites still remains effective (Van den Berg & Verhoeven, 2017:149-164).

In order for organisational policies and internet monitoring to be taken seriously, employees need to be made aware of others who have been caught and punished. Personal emailing and viewing social media will be curbed due to the possibility of dismissal.

Objective 3 was to determine if access to the Internet and social media may be obtained by all employees with a desktop or laptop as there are just a few that have access. It is evident from the literature review that is inevitable to ban employees completely from accessing social media as they will find the ways and means to do so. It is also evident from the primary research that the employees were logged on for a minimal percentage of the workday. This shows that there is a mature environment. This could be as a stress reliever from a busy day where a quick break is required.

It is recommended that social media access be granted to employees, on their company-owned laptops and desktops, during tea and lunch breaks. This suggestion would bring about minimal disruption to the workday and service delivery. Network bandwidth would not be affected during this time as this could be routed via a “less significant” line ensuring minimal impact on network bandwidth speed. Furthermore, this access can be monitored and the culprits disciplined.

Objective 4 was to determine the role of Human Resources on Internet social media policy formulation and enforcement whilst at work. The development of a social media and internet policy is the joint responsibility of the HR department and the IT department as each possesses the knowledge required for an effective policy development. The enforcement of this policy is the function of the HR department as it is people related and the policy needs to be applicable to all employees at all levels in the organisation.

It is recommended that a joint effort from the HR and IT departments formulate a social media and internet policy which is to be enforced on all employees.

Objective 5 concerns making recommendations regarding company Internet policy and rules on accessing of social media. An effective internet and social media policy is a necessity in all organisations and not just at the company. The actions of the employees will be driven by this policy which would require frequent updating and training and education of the employees.

The company is in need of an up-to-date social media and internet policy in order to safeguard the organisation and the employee against abuse or in the event of legal action.

5.1 Suggestions for further research

Further research of a quantitative nature can be carried out to find out the exact impact social media access has on service delivery, productivity and network bandwidth utilisation. Additional expenses incurred by the IT department for monitoring and additional security costs can be quantified. Some of the literature sources clearly outline the loss of productivity but alternatively, also provide insight into job satisfaction and employee motivation. This angle could also be explored for further research.

5.2 Conclusion

The research was conducted on an employee sample at the company and focused mainly on exploring the use of social media and how its utilisation could be better managed as well as how the organisation could leverage the advantages of social media. A clear message from the research literature emphasised the need for a policy on the use of social media in the workplace. There were also numerous advantages mentioned in the primary research as well as in the literature review, which could be of great benefit to the organisation. Some of the advantages are, but not limited to - a wider customer base, low-cost marketing, recruitment via social media sites, knowledge management/sharing, and a means for information dissemination. The importance of having a social media policy forms the basis of a foundation on which to build. Social media provides a gateway to numerous possibilities and advantages for an organisation if managed correctly.

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