

Exploring the Pros and Cons of Social Media Use: Is It Time for Organisations to Consider Appointing Social Media Officers

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Abstract: *Social Media is contributing a lot to the general development across social and development strata. The widespread use of Social media in all channels of communication is highly economic considering a developing country. However, there are challenges that are inherent in Social Media which are threatening the validity of this tool as an authentic asset for business. While the acceptance, adoption and use of Social Media by organisations in their operations are creating habitual technological encounters, there are inherent challenges which threaten the viability of their use. The researchers carried a case study of Midlands State University.*

Keywords: Netnography, Social Media, ICT4D, M4D, Organisations

1. Introduction

Social media has gained its widely visibility in the world whether in companies, schools and home. You cannot separate media and person with a media capability gadget, such as a cell phone, laptop and even a desktop because although it is a recent phenomenon, it has proven to be an effective and efficient tool of communication. The services of sites like Facebook and LinkedIn are being integrated by company owners in their communication channels, even if they want to recruit a new employee, the platform had proven to be the best information conveyor with cheaper costs as well. [1] stresses the point that connections through networking and working are the most important aspects of a well-managed work life if they are given their priority and this cannot be done outside the companies because most of the employees spend most of their time at the workplaces. The use of Social media has many advantages to the companies which include [1, p. 70]:

- 1) Rigid hierarchies, corporate silos and walled-off R&D departments can be ripped down and replaced by transparent, open-ended “crowd sourcing” strategies that even bring customers into the collaborative dialogue. Power is shifting from executive C-suites to employee cubicles, from companies
- 2) To customers, from monopolists to markets. The potential upside: improved morale, enhanced collective knowledge,
- 3) Increased productivity, sharpened strategic focus, greater innovation. And on the bottom line, higher profits.

Although this may not be written in the policies of companies, social media had already changed the way employees communicate, the issue of notices and also the way new recruits are being recruited into the companies. A lot of research shows that the use of social media has indeed helped many organisations in every way communication wise, training purposes, research, to the extent that others think it worthwhile to look at the security issues of using social media in the organisations [2]–[6]. [7] has a list of cases where media is being used in Zimbabwe which are (i) in business; where the companies would build their brand

name and also assess their market niche and also the loyalty of the customers by requesting the customers to like the pages on their Facebook and Twitter. (ii) Politics; where the politicians take the opportunity to campaign and can also measure the potential support they may have judging on the participation and likes on topical issues. The members can also have a dialogue discussing trivial issues concerning the part that means even the concerns of the public which struggled to reach the intended recipient way back are now conveyed without much effort. (iii) Research platform, users are forming discussion forums, virtual classes and just researching in terms of asking questions either on general health, and even school related information is done on social media. Other cases highlighted are entertainment, relationship building, news dissemination and educational purposes, which has also been adopted even by the lecturers who are now taking it as an elearning tool to enhance morale in student’s learning environment.

2. Research Problem

The business landscape has changed and is continuing to evolve. The business operational environment is ever evolving. The way communication is taking place in the contemporary world has transformed. Social media has become an indispensable tool for corporate communication, bringing the organisation even closer to the community. There are challenges that are inherent in social media use and this has a detrimental effect on the organisation. [8] stated that ‘regardless of the augmented adoption of social media by firms, the connotations of these new technologies for organizational processes are not so far well understood by the business people. ...Social media sites are a fertile ground for attackers because it has huge number of users and information availability. Misapprehension of acquaintance and trust can entice workers to share the sensitive information of organization to outsiders.’

Social media is both an asset and a liability, in as much as there are challenges to social media use on organisations, it cannot be negated, and hence the question now is; **Is it time for organisations to create Social Media positions and appoint workers to occupy such portfolios?**

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3. Literature Survey

3.1 What is Social Media?

The developers who came up with the ideas of developing the social media had seen the peoples' need for socialising; hence they decided to make life easier for the people. The social media have "revolutionized the way people interact, the way they communicate, and even the way they think" Weisgerber and Butler 2010, in [9, p. 1], because they would be influenced by different people from different parts of the world. [10] defined a social network as a set of people, organizations or even a society connected by a set of socially meaningful relationships.

Having defined the term social network there is a need to shed light on the Social network "ing" part.[11]defines social networking as the gathering, representation, processing and dissemination of social information, such as race, sexual orientation and partners, religion, body type, favourite books and movies, relationship status and photo albums using ICT. [12] brings in a simple and straight forward definition that it is how people interact with others online. In social networking people would be getting together especially by connecting with new people after viewing their profiles and other information which they would be interested in. The term social networking maybe split into socialising and networking, where socialising was defined by[13] when he say it depicts the process of learning and participating in a culture and to live with itand networking was also defined by Jenkins (2006) in [14]as the capacity to search for, integrate, and disseminate information.

Social media is a platform that has removed the communication barriers because of its less costs of communication the instant facilities of communication has helped the relationships to remain stronger because the big gap between people has been reduced to the gap between a person and his phone or computer [15]. Because of this social media there is also decentralisation of communication it has given an open door policy for discussions which is facilitated by formal and informal channels. Social Media is defined as services given by the internet on computers and mobiles that allows users to exchange and contribute to content which is created by users, allows also the exchange of photos, videos.....[16]. [17, p. 5] listed a number of platforms that contributes to social media, "media and online plat- forms that primarily support cognition (such as the websites of newspapers) are social media (1), those that primarily support communication (such as e-mail) are social media (2), and those that primarily support community building and collaborative work (such as Wikipedia, Facebook) are social media"

Social media has allowed us to break many barriers any boarders because of its lower cost charges almost everyone has been connected to friends and relatives unlike gone days when only the haves would be having the telephone (landlines) at their homes and the don't haves would pay a fee in order to make a call which would be meant to convey a very important than nowadays when you can contact a person to just greet him. The other advantages are that

"Social media can be a positive and direct way of communicating with customers, clients or potential customers, as a marketing objective to increase credibility and brand awareness"[18, p. 67].[19, pp. 27–28] compiled some key features which make Social Media an important tool to be use in the organisations:

- 1) Compiling HR reports for companies spread over various continents.
- 2) Reducing consulting costs by connecting to specialist opinions online and obtaining their feedback.
- 3) Making transparent decisions in which not only every employee but also the consumers feel that they were a part of that decision-making process.
- 4) Help managers better understand trends and customer opinions.
- 5) Predict and influence consumer behaviours for products and services.
- 6) Act as communication-driven decision support systems.
- 7) Attract younger users and get them involved with decision-making.
- 8) Attract diverse and large numbers of participants for survey.
- 9) Allow information to flow in multiple directions.
- 10) Help employees to participate in and monitor online discussions that can be useful in picking out problem points

3.2 Public social media in the workplace

"Social media is the environment in which social networking takes place and has altered the way in which consumers gather information and make buying decisions" [20, p. 3]. Mangold and Faulds 2009 in [20] encouraged businesses and organisations to devise ways of using social media without getting out of their business plans. This is because these media cannot be avoided, rather for the sake of going on; the businesses should take advantage of these sites and make the best out of them. But [21] whose research dwelled most on the analysing the views of others on the use of public social media gathers information on which other managers where not at all happy with using public media while others were of the view that maybe the social media would help them in future but not at the present moment and others wanted it to be banned completely[22]. In an attempt to make social media relevant again,[18, pp. 53–54]suggested ways of minimizing the risks associated with the use of social media in organisations:

- 1) Prohibition of social media use during working hours
- 2) Employer can protect their reputation and confidential information by drawing up guidelines regarding the use of social media.
- 3) Stipulate a confidentiality clause in both the Employment Cohentract as well as in the Company Regulation(Cairo 2014) in [21].
- 4) Provide clear guidelines for possible disciplinary action against employees who misuse social media websites
- 5) Monitor the use of social media sites at work to help determine whether there is a loss of productivity as a result of employees accessing such sites.

Social media can be used in organization as an advertising tool, potential employees can be vetted using the media potential customers can also vet the products they want on

these platforms. The medium is a very good way of information sharing employers can use it to share competitive strategies among the company members [23, p. 4]. Wilson in [23, p. 4] suggests that companies should "...employ people to spend their entire day maintaining the sanctioned company presence on various social network sites, acting as a company's 'voice'".

3.3 Internal or enterprise-based social media

The popularity of the use of social media especially the social networking sites like Facebook has left many organisations with a task of wanting to have an internal social media with the almost same features as Facebook so that workers would feel as if they are on Facebook working together by sharing ideas and even work related jokes to warm their spirits in their working environment. These internal social media would also include the wikis blogs and the features of tagging generally to purpose of communication and research is also fulfilled by these internal social media [22], [24]. The main difference between these enterprise social media and public social media is that in enterprise social media the activities happening there are specifically for insiders that is employees but the public social media can be used to communicate with suppliers customers and other stakeholders (including potential customers, suppliers and workers)[24].

Social media enterprise maybe defined as "Web-based platforms that allow workers to (1) communicate messages with specific coworkers or broadcast messages to everyone in the organization; (2) explicitly indicate or implicitly reveal particular coworkers as communication partners; (3) post, edit, and sort text and files linked to themselves or others; and (4) view the messages, connections, text, and files communicated, posted, edited and sorted by anyone else in the organization at any time of their choosing" (Leonardi et al., 2013 pp 2). Haddud, Dugger, & Preet Gill, (2016) gives three elements of internal social media which improve business processes of the organization and these are; technology, social interaction, and content development/management. He also recommends that there is need for training on the use of these internal social media so as to get maximum benefits from them. Rather than using public social media the organisations that uses internal media have an advantage of privacy they do not worry about security risks as those using public social media. Kane, (2015) gave two advantages of internal social media as: (1) establish and manage social networks in novel ways, to this he states giving an example of linked in where people can get connections to the people they want through the connections suggestions listed on LinkedIn. Such connections can then be used in the internal social media to link people with required skills or knowledge when need arises. (2) the ability to find access digital content this is a way of storing information for research purposes... rather than using traditional emails the use of social media platform enables data to be available to whoever who want to use in the company. An employee can research for a solution to a problem that was solved by another employee and can still get the information on the website.

4. Research Objectives

The main reason of this research was to provide an empirical analysis of the implications of Social Media on organisations in a developing context. The paper then evaluated the need for organisations to create new positions specifically targeted at Social media and appoint specific individuals responsible for social media issues. The specific objectives of the research are stated as follows;

- 1) To establish the role of social media in the sustainable development of an organisation in a developing country.
- 2) To empirically identify the benefits accruing to organisations in Zimbabwe as a result of Social Media use.
- 3) To establish the problems being experienced by organisations in Zimbabwe is their use of Social Media.
- 4) To assess the plausibility of creating and employing people in positions responsible specifically for social media for the organisation.

5. Methods

Data was collected using structured interviews with key informants, a focus group discussion netnography and a survey questionnaire. The researchers conducted interviews with 7 key informants who included 3 Public relations officers, 1 I.T Manager, 2 HR Managers and 1 Blogger. A focus group discussion was held with 12 post graduate students who were studying at Midlands State University. The composition of the focus group participants was as follows; 5 were studying for a MSc Information Systems Management, 3 were doing MSc Media and Society studies, 2 were doing Masters in Business Administration and 2 were doing MSc in HRM. The researchers studied a total of 73 online newspaper articles on social media effects in Zimbabwe and the comments made by the public on those articles. The researchers also analysed organisational Facebook pages in Zimbabwe.

6. Results

a) Netnography

The researchers went through many articles which discussed issues on social media mostly in companies, but only 73 were selected to be analysed in this research. The study was also extended to the comments of the social media articles with the belief that most people would post whatever they can think of without the fear of victimisation so the post were regarded as representation of the true minds of the social media users. Most articles were backed by comments that were finding the advantages of using social media as part of their communication citing the instant messaging, video conferencing and the issue of pool of knowledge where someone can research what was previously posted by a colleague as their most activities on the social media. Few comments indicated that they use social media mostly to communicate with their friends during working hours and they cannot work properly without social media. Generally all comments indicated that social media is being used in companies although they had different uses altogether.

b) Focus Group Discussion

Results from focus group indicated that every company is engaging social media in most of its activities and the media mostly used is Facebook. Most companies have created pages on Facebook where they can get feedback from their clients, suppliers and other stakeholders. This is also used by their companies for recruitment purposes where the shortlisted candidates are researched on Facebook to have a general knowledge of the character they are going to interview. Participants also concurred that social media is the in thing in our today's way of living, saying that a company which does don't use Social media in their activities is very lagging in terms of competitive advantage, talk of tips of how to improve on certain areas in company operations, it is a click away and no person should come up with an excuse of ignorance in this digital world of social media.

According to the participants companies are making efforts of developing their internal networking sites and most of them have been named "forums" on which they can socialise and share whatever they would feel like saying that the security of these forums is much better than that of Facebook for their internal operations. And it would be much better if they can have their own social media site which they can use in all their operation be it adverting, or recruiting and the current IT staff is the one that is dealing with the maintenance of social media sites in addition to maintaining the computer hardware and software of the company.

c) Interviews

The researchers conducted interviews 1 per day for a time ranging from 15 to 25 minutes. The researchers had initially targeted 10 people for interviewing but eventually conducted interviews with 7 key informants as the other 3 pulled out at the last minute. Those interviewed included 3 Public relations officers, 1 I.T Managers, 2 HR Managers and 1 Blogger. The researchers decided to analyse the data collected immediately after completion of the interview process. This enabled the researchers to incorporate the findings into the next interview. The interviewed individuals were selected using purposeful sampling and snowball effect. The data was coded and in the ensuing interviews constant comparison was applied. The process of coding continued until categories and properties and core categories were identified. **Fig 1** below shows the graphical representation of the interview categories.



Figure 1: Model showing the four key issues impacting the developmental aspect of social media. (Source: Own construction)

The key informants' data identified the four key issues that they said has a bearing on the impact of social media on organisations. Zimbabweans are socialites in nature and therefore the bulk of the populace are on the social networks. Almost all organisations are taking the social media to maintain relevant in the social networked world. The Zimbabwean population is also heavily skewed towards youth with the bulk of the population under the age of 50. The main outcomes of the interviews are presented in detail below.

1) Positive effect

All key informants agreed with the fact that social media has a positive effect on business organisations and therefore it is not an option but a must have and use for any organisation in the modern day world. According to interviewees social media has the ability to integrate technology with social interaction aspects and content creation. Individuals and organisations can collaborate and connect online with others and share this information. Social media is enabling individual people, groups and organisations to create content, organise and edit it, comment on it and share content. This enables business organisations to achieve their vision, mission as well as goals. Below is a tabulated list of positive remarks from the interviews;

Table 1: Positive effects of Social Media on the organisation

I	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1a	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
1b	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
1c	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
1d	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
1e	Y	n	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
1f	Y	Y	n	Y	n	Y	Y
1g	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
1h	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
1i	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	n	N

- 1:** Positive effects of Social Media on the organisation.
- 1a:** Social media has a positive effect on the success of my organisation.
- 1b:** Social Media has improved the performance of my organisation in all its daily operations.
- 1c:** Using Social Media has enhanced the effectiveness and efficiency of my organization.
- 1d:** Social media has enabled my organisation to engage current and potential clients in real time.
- 1e:** Social media has enabled my organisation to conduct bidirectional and multidirectional communication
- 1f:** Social media has enabled my organisation to offer social augmented services
- 1g:** Social Media has enabled my organisation to socially network and create social relevance.
- 1h:** Social media enables an organisation to create, maintain and sustain social capital.
- 1i:** Social media greatly reduces the organisation's costs of operating.
- Y:** yes
- N:** no
- n:** nue

Table 1 above presented the most common points raised by the key informants who participated in the interview. The letters A to G represent the interviewees who participated in

the research. There are three responses represented, a Yes indicates that the respondent is in agreement with the narration in line. A No indicates that the respondent is not in agreement with point in line. A Neu which is short for neutral in this research indicates that the respondent neither approves nor disapproves the point.

2) Challenges

All the interviewees agreed with the challenges posed by the researchers that social media is risk since many participants on the sites do not disclose their identity. The answers that were given by the informants seemed as if they had discussed the questions in advance and agreed on the same thing, this means the challenges faced by the entire organisation as a result of social media use were common across all the departments in the organisation. According to them social media is very complex it needs proper management and the organisations should be well abreast with the activities happening on social media to avoid unnecessary surprises because all of them indicated that it is vulnerable to abuse. In order for the organisation to work well with social media there is need to select those sites that are relevant to their business activities since they are very diverse which may cause confusion if they are used all at once. When using the social media the organisations should know that there are some legal implications which needs to be taken into consideration so as not put the organisation on a spot light

Table 2: Challenges faced by the organisation because of using Social media

2	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
2a	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2b	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2c	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2d	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2e	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2f	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Key to table 2

2: Challenges faced by the organisation because of using Social media.

- 2a:** Using social media is risk, the identity of participants on the platform is not known.
 - 2b:** Social media is very complex therefore it requires proper management.
 - 2c:** Social media use requires the organisation to be in constant touch with dialogue going on the platform.
 - 2d:** Social media is very diverse, the organisation need to properly select the ones that are useful.
 - 2e:** Social media is vulnerable to abuse, as anyone can post anything.
 - 2f:** Use of Social media is subject to legal implications.
- Y: yes
 N: no
 n: nue

Table 2 above presented the most common challenges faced by organisations in Zimbabwe as a result of using social media which were raised by the key informants who participated in the interview. Although not all participants were affirmative on these points, they were the most agreed by many. The letters A to G represent the interviewees who participated in the research. Again, there are three responses represented, a Yes, a No and a Neu.

3) Integration

The respondents showed the need for Social media to be integrated with the communication in the organisation, although some refused and some had mixed feelings on the idea of integrating it into the Human Resources function and the Public Relations function. The idea of using social media for data intelligence was suggested by most respondents than that of augmenting services, where four out of seven agreed to the idea that social media can be used for augmented services.

Table 3: Integration of Social Media into organisational settings

3	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
3a	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
3b	Y	n	Y	n	N	Y	Y
3c	Y	Y	n	Y	n	Y	Y
3d	n	Y	Y	n	n	Y	Y
3e	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N

Key to table 3

3: Integration of Social Media into organisational settings.

- 3a:** Social media should be integrated with the organisational communication system.
 - 3b:** Social media should be integrated into the organisational Human Resource function
 - 3c:** Social media should be integrated into the Public relations function.
 - 3d:** Social media should be used to provide Social augmented services.
 - 3e:** Social media should be used for Data intelligence.
- Y: yes
 N: no
 n: nue

In table 3 above we presented how the integration of social media into organisational settings was meant to be done considering the ideas which were raised by the key informants who participated in the interview. Although not all participants were affirmative on these points, they were the most agreed by many. The letters A to G represent the interviewees who participated in the research. Again, there are three responses represented, a Yes, a No and a Neu.

4) Incentives

The social media has some challenges which were cited above and some of the challenges may be avoided when the company put measures which help in controlling the use of social media. Most of the key informants were of the idea of a well training session for the stakeholders to be able to use the social media effectively. All the respondents agreed with the view that the stakeholders should be given adequate access to social media and most of them need a motivation for them to use the social media responsibly, the others do not need any motivation for being responsible when using Social media. A well managed social media platform for an organisation is characterised by conversations which are constructive whether they are criticism or any kind of contributions to posts by other stakeholders so that the social media would not bring about a bad image to the reputation of the organisation, this was agreed by most respondents except three who did not show their side of thinking.

Table 4: Incentives that must be offered by organisations for the effective utilisation of social media

4	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
4a	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
4b	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
4c	Y	n	Y	n	Y	Y	Y
4d	Y	Y	n	Y	n	Y	Y

Key to the table

4: There are incentives that must be offered by organisations for the effective utilisation of social media.

4a: Stakeholders must be well trained on the how to effectively use social media and the pros and cons of social media use and misuse.

4b: Organisations should give stakeholders adequate access to social media.

4c: There is need for provision of motivation for responsible use of social media for stakeholders.

4d: Reinforcement of constructive comments on the social media platform.

Y: yes

N: no

n: nue

In table 4 above we presented the incentives that must be offered by organisations for the effective utilisation of social media and these were suggested by the interviewees. Again in this section not all participants were affirmative on these points but most of them agreed to the suggestions. The letters A to G represent the interviewees who participated in the research and again the three responses were given which were represented as a Yes, a No and a Neu.

7. Discussion

Social media has changed the way people are living nowadays, social media is now being used everywhere and every time that means when people are at home they would be socialising on the media and these has not resulted in being social only there are a lot of lessons learnt through the social media where some are sharing experiences with life changing remedies especially in the health sector and this is proving to be helpful. This does not only apply to the health of the body but also to the wellbeing of the organisation where people are sharing experiences on solving different solutions to problems encountered at some point in time in an organisation. That means if the same problem is to be experienced again there would be a pool of data to fish solutions from.

In table 1 and table 2 above we discussed about the positive effects of social media and the challenges that may be faced when using social media respectively, this means we need to find an equilibrium so that the two would give a maximum benefit from the use of these media. [26, p. 72] supported the issue of social media being integrated in the systems of the organisations where they state that “the use of social media should be promoted as a working tool, for example employees could exchange information with other members about common interests, policies, services and products”. According to [26], there should be training programs in companies which would help the workers to know the policies and the responsibilities each employee is expected to comply with during when using the social media, he also stressed that the employees should be trained on the importance the efforts of an individual on work and the

products of that effort such that they will not be spending most of their time on the expense of working and this should be done to benefit all personnel which means that each all level in the organization should be included and in an interactive manner. [26, p. 70] also suggested the need for provision of motivation for responsible use of social media for stakeholders and this can be in form of giving rewards to employees who “have consistently focused on work duties, instead of connecting to social media to distract them”, there may also be performance based results which may be used meaning that it would be assume that if the performance is high then the employee was spending more time on work than on social media. This had brought about a gap which need to be filled, a person who will be training the workers who would be monitoring the use of social media and also the person who would be responsible for maintaining those social media platforms especially where the company needs to use them for the benefit of the organisation.

8. Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to determine whether the company should now consider hiring permanent employees who are dedicated to social media and its issues in the company. In the research we found out that most social media user needs to be controlled in their use and through the use of incentives although they agreed that it may need to be integrated in one of the departments in the company. [27, p. 88] notes that “....Social media is imperative for any business in today’s world and therefore every business should embrace it, but in doing so caution must be exercised”. Most of the findings were citing that social media is the in thing and the users are now used to it because it helps them even when they face some problems at work, the social media has instant answers, this is backed by [19] who indicates that content and information which is generated on Social media sites is non-perishable because as long as the users continue to log on and search for that archived information it will be readily available. The decision on whether the time has come for companies to hire workers dedicated to manage Social media depends on whether the problems associated with using Social media at work can be managed and also workers need to agree where the personnel would operate from Social media in the company.

9. Future Scope

The research was conducted on Midlands State University (M.S.U) only and we assumed that this would be applicable to all companies in Zimbabwe. However, these findings may be different from one company to another since MSU is an academic institution, this may not apply to industries or retailers. In future this research can be conducted on a wider scale to get different view according to types of companies.

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