

# Social Media in the Workplace: To Allow It or Not to Allow It?

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## Abstract

There is an increasing interest in exploring the use of social media in the workplace, where the issue of the effect of this phenomenon often provokes opposite reactions. Consequently, managers face the challenge of making the right decision, allowing or limiting the use of social media. It is necessary for contemporary companies to create an environment that will enhance the performance of their employees, but also to understand the challenges and opportunities of the changing nature of the today's workforce in the context of the development of new technologies and especially of social media. Thus, this paper draws on Uses and Gratification theory and aims to offer the theoretical model that explains the role and impact of different types of social media use at the workplace on employee's innovative behaviour and individual work performance. The research model predicts that social media influences innovative work behaviour and individual work performance.

**Keywords:** social media, hedonic use, social use, cognitive use, innovativeness, job performance

**JEL classification:** M15

## Introduction

It is well known that we live in a world of constant change in which the expectations, needs, and demands of the market are very high, which is why human capital plays a crucial role in the company's success. It is necessary for companies to create an environment that will enhance the performance of their employees, but also to understand the challenges and opportunities of the changing nature of the today's workforce in the context of the development of new technologies. In the modern business era of technology, knowledge sharing and innovation are extensively acknowledged as the critical competitive aspects that can significantly influence and foster the survival, outstanding performance, and adaptation of an employee (Palacios Marqués and José Garrigós Simón, 2006; Ngai, Tao and Moon, 2015; Sigala and Chalkiti, 2015). The global expansion of digital technologies in the last two decades has had incredible growth and has created a lot of changes in the business world and everyday lives, as well as raised questions about the digital age opportunities for global development. New technologies have created different opportunities that were previously unavailable to organizations. For their optimum use, it is necessary for companies to embrace exponential changes and trends in

technology, and become flexible and adaptive (Collins, Fineman and Tsuchida, 2017). One of these trends is social media technologies that have created tremendous changes in all spheres of our lives and became the most important and reliable source of information for users and companies (Cheema and Papatla, 2010). In addition to using it for private purposes, social media technologies have brought changes in the business world too, from creating new business and marketing models to "more successful customer behavior, new ways of managing and learning, improving innovation, sharing knowledge, collaboration, and communication" (Aral, Dellarocas and Godes, 2013).

Many sources claim that social media tools have a positive impact on employee productivity and performance at work (Bennett et al., 2010; Moqbel, 2012; Moqbel, Nevo and Kock, 2013; Ali-Hassan, Nevo and Wade, 2015; Ashraf and Javed, 2015; Nielsen and Razmerita, 2016; Kishokumar, 2016) while some of them believe that positive aspects also include networking, business process acceleration, customer relations improvement, cost-effective recruitment of quality employees, improvement of morale, motivation and employee satisfaction (Van Zyl, 2009).

Therefore, this study aims to offer an advanced understanding of social media usage on the workplace and its impact on employees' innovativeness and job performance. The literature review was used to determine the theoretical model, that is, the proposal was based on the available corpus of knowledge on the topic.

The main contribution of the paper is that we offer the theoretical model that explains the role and impact of different types of social media use at the workplace on employee's innovative behavior and individual work performance. Based on the literature review, a research model and hypotheses were developed. The research model predicts that social media will influence innovative work behavior and consequently individual work performance.

The paper is structured as follows: first, we briefly present the key theoretical perspectives on social media use, employee individual performance and employee innovative behavior. Second, we combine extant literature to present a set of theoretical propositions related to social media use, employee individual job performance and employee innovative behavior. Finally, the conclusion, limitations and recommendation of our paper are presented.

## Literature review

### *Social media use*

"Social media" term has different definitions, but in general it is a common name for a variety of Internet platforms, tools, and applications aimed at enabling collaboration and content creation and dissemination (Ramsaran-Fowdar and Fowdar, 2013). According to Blackshaw and Nazzaro (2006) social media "describes a variety of new sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated and used by consumers intent on educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues". Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as a group of Internet-based applications created on the ideological and technological basis of Web 2.0 technology, that enables the creation and exchange of User-generated content.

Figure 1  
Social Media Classification

Self-presentation / self-disclosure	Social Presence / Media Richness		
	Low	Medium	High
	High	Blogs, mobile applications (e.g., Pinterest), project management systems, collaborative software	Social networking sites (e.g., FB, LinkedIn)
Low	Collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia), information sharing systems (e.g., BookCrossing)	Content communities (e.g., YouTube, Reddit, SlideShare)	Engagement development platforms (e.g., Engage), virtual game world (e.g., World of Warcraft)

Source: Kluemper et al. (2016)

The most frequently used classification of social media in the literature is the work schema by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) that was expanded by Kluemper, Mitra and Wang (2016) by including some of the social media that are relevant to human resource management, and we will comply with this customized classification and explain the types of social media relevant for this study. Their schema is shown in the Figure 1 adopted from Kluemper et al. (2016).

Social media is considered a phenomenon that has changed the way the business environment works. Companies are now able to access resources that were otherwise unavailable and social media tools enabled companies to increase their value, strengthen strategic partnerships, and strengthen communication with customers and suppliers. In early 2008, the first articles were written about improving business processes through the use of social media (Huberman, 2008; Thackeray et al., 2008). Huberman (2008) argues that social media plays a key role in generating, disseminating and validating ideas. The same is confirmed in the studies carried out by Thackeray et al. (2008) and Warr (2008) where they describe the possibility of direct customer involvement in a creative process through the creation, organization, and sharing of information.

### Employee individual performance

In an unpredictable business environment and intense business competition, companies need to reach certain standards by improving their performance. This term “performance” refers to an organizational or individual level, whereby human resources become a crucial factor in achieving organizational goals and expected business results. Good employee performance equates to their ability to contribute through their work to specific organizational goals. So, the level of company success depends on both human resource management and their performance (Muda, Rafiki and Harahap, 2014).

Since what determines workplace performance differs from the type of work, a vast number of measures have been used to analyse this concept (Tubré, Arthur and Bennett, 2014), but as Viswesvaran and Ones (2000) state, work performance is an abstract, latent construct that cannot be measured directly, and consists of several indicators. Campbell (1990) defines it as a behaviour that is relevant to organisational goals.

### Employee innovative behaviour

From the beginning of the industrial revolution, innovation has been a key source of competitive advantage. It has become imperative and a prerequisite for many

companies in the knowledge-based economy. Today the entire concept of innovation in all its forms, processes, products, services and work methods is considered more of a product of human mind where the greatest focus is on organizational human resources (Kheng, Mahmood and Beris, 2013). West and Farr (1989) defined innovative work behaviour as an employee's action directed at the generation, application and implementation (within an individual, group or organization) of ideas, processes, products or procedures which are new to the relevant unit of adoption, designed to significantly benefit the individual, the group, organization or broader society. Jain (2010) considers innovation a social process since it implies an interaction between those who innovate and those who are affected by the innovation, and there is recognition that one's action will affect others and will influence that action; to innovate means "bring in novelties, make changes".

## Research background and hypotheses

The hypotheses introduced in this section are depicted in the proposed theoretical model in Figure 2. Hypotheses are represented by arrows connecting pairs of latent variables.

Social media use is still considered as a phenomenon that has not been thoroughly investigated, especially in terms of business and workplace context. The effect of the employee use of social media is being debated by academics and practitioners (Boyd and Ellison, 2007; North, 2010). This study attempts to explore and resolve mentioned controversy by examining the impact of different types of social media use on employees' innovative behaviour, and consequently on individual work performance. Based on the literature, a research model and hypotheses were developed.

### *Social media use and innovative behaviour/work performance*

Innovative behaviour is considered as an essential factor in achieving high performance (Moqbel, 2012). Employees that have better access to supporting resources tend to be more innovative, and their qualities are valuable, rare, and hard for competitors to imitate which, in turn, leads to the competitive advantage of the firm (Lengnick-Hall, 1992). Social media enables users to interact and successfully search, develop and adopt new ideas (Moqbel, 2012), since it changes the way people search, learn, read, share and discuss. The creativity model proposes that resources of information represent a significant opportunity for an individual to be innovative (Amabile, 1988). Also, it is considered that social media can improve innovative workplace behaviour by providing crowd-sourcing strategies that include customers in a collaborative dialogue (Moqbel, 2012). With this premise that social media allows employees and businesses access to resources that would not be available under normal circumstances (Jagongo and Kinyua, 2013), the information collected in that way may be important in providing insights, thoughts and ideas to employees and companies by directing them in a different and innovative way of thinking and carrying out activities and duties (Evans, 2010). Aguenza, Al-Kassem and Som (2012) conducted research that demonstrated that social media inspire ideas and innovative behaviour of employees through collaboration and sharing of knowledge. Sharing information may also lead to developing innovative behaviour, for example, divergent thinking. When exchanging knowledge with peers, employees are exposed to different ideas and ways of thinking (Yuan and Woodman, 2010; Mittal and Dhar, 2015). This process of knowledge sharing leads employees towards possible solutions for different problems and directs them to new ways of solving those

problems. That way, social media creates the foundations for knowledge gaining and knowledge sharing that results in producing something new for individuals (Lietsala and Sirkkunen, 2008; Baumann and Bonner, 2017). Furthermore, it is through this knowledge sharing process that the flow of resources among participants accelerates innovative behaviour of the employees (Perry-Smith, 2006; Ancona and Caldwell, 2008).

In sum, these studies show that social media tools empower individuals to successfully explore, develop, and adopt new ideas (Azua, 2009), co-create knowledge and ultimately can enhance workplace innovative behaviour if used in right purposes. This purpose relates to the motives of social media use, which is why the results of the use depend on its types – social, cognitive, hedonistic (Ali-Hassan, Nevo and Wade, 2015). This leads to the following hypothesis:

*H1a: Social type of social media use influences employee innovative behaviour.*

*H1b: Cognitive type of social media use influences employee innovative behaviour.*

*H1c: Hedonistic type of social media use influences employee innovative behaviour.*

On the other hand, studies exploring the influence of social media on different dimensions of employee performance have proven a positive relation between these variables. (Bennett et al., 2010; Moqbel, 2012; Moqbel, Nevo and Kock, 2013; Ashraf and Javed, 2015; Kishokumar, 2016; Nielsen and Razmerita, 2016; Mohamed et al., 2017). Further, Ali-Hassan, Nevo and Wade (2015) have proved that the use of social media at work improves employee performance through the improvement of their social capital. Also, Ashraf and Javed (2015) analysed the influence of social media on four dimensions of employee performance: skills, knowledge, productivity and motivation, showing a positive correlation.

However, this topic often provokes controversial reactions as well. Authors who opposed the arguments claim that some of the potential negative effects include "productivity decline, data leakage, malware, scams, and so on." (Wilson, 2009). Also, some authors refer to the negative impact on work activities due to the loss of time using social media (Mastrangelo et al., 2006; Weatherbee, 2010). In connection with this topic, authors often discuss where is the line between business networking on social media and losing time, which is a very common dilemma in every consideration of social capital (Steinfeld et al., 2009). This is why the influence of the use of social media on individual work performance is still considered as an unclear and confusing topic, which results in a need to analyse different types of social media use and their impacts.

Based on these controversial conclusions in regards to the relationship between the social media use and employee performance at the workplace, it is suggested that there is a significant relationship between these variables. However, depending on the observed aspect of individual performance, as well as the type of social media use, the mentioned relationship can be positive or negative. Taking into account the three types of social media use, the following hypotheses have been suggested:

*H2a: Social type of social media use influences employee work performance.*

*H2b: Cognitive type of social media use influences employee work performance.*

*H2c: Hedonistic type of social media use influences employee work performance.*

### *Innovative behaviour and individual work performance*

Innovative behaviour of employees is considered as one of the most important indicators of individual work performance (Berman et al., 2010). Several studies have

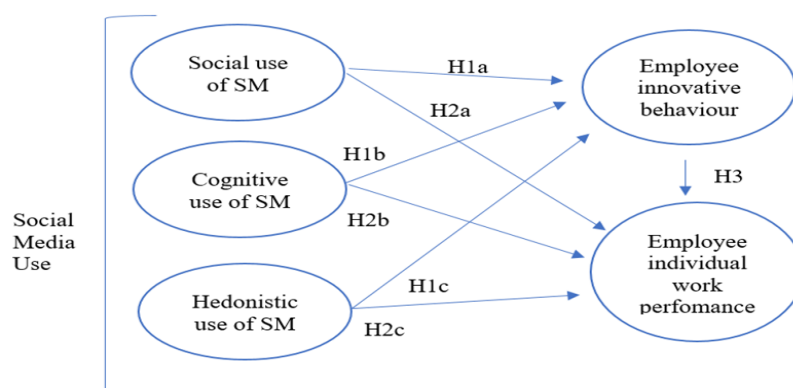
been conducted that found a positive relationship between innovation and organizational performance (Battor & Battor, 2010; Chaveerug & Ussahawanitchakit, 2008; Thornhill, 2006; Rosenbusch, Brinckmann & Bausch, 2011). However, as the performance of an organization is a collective effort of its individuals, it seems natural to argue that innovative behaviour leads to better job performance at the individual level as well. Middelkoop (2016) also found that several other authors underline the importance of innovative work behaviour of employees in order to improve organizational performance (Amabile, 1988; Axtell et al., 2000; Van de Ven, 2008). It is also empirically confirmed that social media through the effect on innovative work behaviour, influences employee productivity, profitability, and performance (Bennett et al., 2010; Nyaribo and Munene, 2013). Moqbel (2012) also claims that innovative behavior is an extremely important factor that directly influenced job performance and mediated the effect of social networking site use intensity on job performance. In line with the discussion, we propose the following hypothesis.

That is why, concluding from all the literature, this study suggests that innovative work behaviour has a positive effect on individual work performance of employees.

*H3: Innovative work behaviour has a positive impact on individual work performance.*

In respect to everything described, we propose the conceptual model as shown in the Figure 2.

Figure 2  
Proposed Conceptual Model



Source: Authors' work

## Conclusion

In this paper, we aimed to contribute to the understanding of the impact of today's ubiquitous social media technologies on employee innovative work behaviour and individual work performance. It is well known that we live in a world of constant change in which the expectations, needs, and demands of the market are very high, which is why human capital plays a key role in the company's success. That is why it is necessary for companies to create an environment that will enhance the performance of their employees, but also to understand the challenges and opportunities of the changing nature of the today's workforce in the context of the development of new technologies.

In this study, three different types of social media have been analysed: social, cognitive and hedonistic in the context of their influence on individual work performance through one of its most important indicators – innovative work

behaviour. With the study, we offer a theoretical model that explains the relationship between the use of social media, employee innovativeness and employee job performance. It provides conceptual definitions of observed constructs, and literature overview of current knowledge of the hypothesised relationships.

Considering that satisfied, motivated and loyal employees are the main resource of the organization and a key success factor, it is important to understand the challenges and opportunities of changing the nature of the workforce in the context of the development of new technologies. Many managers face the problem of employees' usage of social media in the workplace. In this regard, the basic practical implication of this paper is reflected in providing guidance to managers on the importance of the role of social media for employees' job performance. In order to provide a better insight, it is necessary to empirically check the proposed theoretical model.

The main limitation is that only a theoretical model is offered. Recommendation for future research is to conduct research to analyse the proposed model and make conclusions regarding the proposed model.

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