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2021-02

International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications

<http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.11.02.2021.p11078>

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Influence of Social Networking Sites as an Emerging Channel of Communication on Employee Performance in County Government of Kericho, Kenya

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DOI: 10.29322/IJSRP.11.02.2021.p11078

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ABSTRACT

Channels of communication is of great importance when passing information from the sender to the receiver and it also affects the performance of employees as they act based on how they have received the information and how they have understood it. Due to the rapid emergence of the channels of communication and its' increased level of usage in workplace, policymakers and organizations are still not sure whether to incorporate it entirely in their operations even though the evidence points out that use of emerging channels of communication has led to increased productivity. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the influence of social networking site as a channel of communication on employee performance in County Government of Kericho. The study was informed by Social Network Theory. The study adopted both the descriptive and correlation survey design. The total population for the study was 3108 being both managers and non-managers and out of this, a sample size of 354 was obtained. Data was collected using a well structured questionnaire and analyzed using inferential and descriptive statistics. Data was collected using structured questionnaire and analyzed using inferential and descriptive statistics and a response rate of 81% was obtained from the 288 questionnaires that were filled. Reliability and validity of the data was examined using pilot test where a Cronbach's alpha values for all the constructs' were above 0.70 making the research instrument reliable. The findings further showed that social networking sites ($\beta = -0.032$, $p = 0.048$) had a statistically significant effect on employee performance. Recommendation for the study was that county government of Kericho needed to provide computers in all the county offices and all computers to be networked for easy access and social network platform to be monitored all the time for control purposes.

Key Words: Emerging Channels, Social Networking Sites, County Government of Kericho, Kenya

Introduction

A social networking site is an upcoming channel of communication which is gaining momentum day by day and is defined by (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010), "as applications that allows users to connect with each other by creating personal profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to access those profiles, sending emails and instant messages amongst each other". Users of SNS can create a webpage with personal information where they interact with other people both physically and virtually (Kuss and Griffiths, 2011). The communication approach has therefore shifted from traditional communication to computer or smart phone communication as a result of emerging use of SNS.

Social networking allows formation of many sized groups (Herring, 2015). These groups are organized methods through which groups are formed, and vary from big, small, formal, informal, intentional or unintentional (Ifinedo, 2016). These websites are known as social networking sites (SNS) which include sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn and Skype to name a few and have led to foundational changes in the ways people interact and relate with employees and also organizations (Martensen *et al.*, 2011). Employees at workplace have been seen spending more time on SNS while engaging in activities such as creating personal networks, checking on family and friends, streaming and downloading music and videos which are not work related (Richard, 2012).

According to the research that was conducted by (Stokes & Senkbeil, 2017), an estimate of 700 billion minutes is spent each month on the site and at least one person out of nine people uses facebook. Additionally, over 2.5 million organizations have a facebook accounts apart from having corporate websites. People access social media platforms using their smart phones because it is available and accessible. The social network platforms have transformed people's lives beyond the "tweets" on twitter and the "likes" on facebook. Consequently, organizations are feeling the need to be present on a number of social media sites to be relevant in the ever changing world and to be part of the current trends be it in marketing of products, participating in trainings via skype and many more. The usage of technology, the charisma of social media networks cannot be disregarded whether employers want to accept this or not, people sign in on facebook and other social media and spend an average of 20 minutes a day also social networking sites have played a very important role in marketing products and engaging clients (Su & Chan, 2017). Therefore, this indicates that employees have an insatiable need to link up with their colleagues and this impact on quality of life. The use of SNS has enhanced the levels of anxiety among employees such that they end up being apprehensive without their devices for some hours.

In Kenya, businesses communicate with clients on social media as essential part of marketing, customer service, public relation, branding and recruitment. SNS plays a vital role according to (Nyaribo & Munene, 2018). This has led to increased productivity and workflow due to the internet possibilities such as informal learning, creation and sharing of knowledge, retention of organization knowledge in formats that are easily searchable and effective communication using computer and technology.

Business processes have become complex such that they must be automated since employees cannot perform all the tasks required with the time limit (Hutley, 2009). This shows that companies today are experiencing the challenge of contextualizing the situation and its impact on the employee's capability to perform duties assigned and draw boundaries between personal and professional use of resources on organizational information technology. Further, utilization of social media has enhanced distribution of significant content and effective communication processes. A higher level of socialization leads to increased organizational performance and teamwork across departments (Novak & Hoffinan, 2011). Organizations and businesses that use social network sites spend less time as compared to ones that are not using (Nyambu, 2013).

Vision 2030 outlines the development of blue print in Kenya which has advanced in ICT through well established industries that form the basis of society for economic growth and socio-political in terms of infrastructure, science and technology and innovation (STI) (GoK, 2007). SNS is gaining popularity has not been fully embraced in Kenya. However, interactions and marketing are undergoing changes owing to the internet. Gone are the days clients used to search for products and services in the yellow pages of postal directory but rather search for them online (Kiveu, 2008). This is because most organizations have adopted social media platforms that are used to discuss their products and services. Therefore, it is very clear that SNS has become vital for every human activity. Shirky (2008) indicated that innovative SNS websites are dominating the employees' personal space and workplace, making it part of their daily routine hence there is need to strike a balance between the use of SNS and its effect on employee performance.

Problem Statement

Employee performance is a major factor in the organization and channels of communication are one of the biggest factors that influence employee performance (Thao & Hwangi, 2015). This implies that organizations are required to address challenges associated with communications so that they can enhance effective teamwork and cordial relationship.

Several theoretical studies have shown that the popularity of emerging channels of communication and how it is increasing at workplace and this affects employee's productivity, performance, outcomes and motivation level. However, there is no study that has been done specifically on the effect of emerging channels of communication such as SMS, e-mails and SNS on employee performance. This comes at a time when organizations globally have been faced with challenges and policies guiding the use of social media sites and are on the lookout for different avenues to remain relevant. Therefore, this study sought to examine the effect of emerging Channels of Communication and on employees' performance in County Government of Kericho. Furthermore, the study aims to establish if employee performance is affected by use of emerging channels of communication during working hours.

Theoretical Review

Social Network Theory

This theory describes characteristics of interactions among people as they connect (Valente & Piss, 2017). The persons within local network coverage are called nodes and the relationships between actors are called ties. Ties and nodes account for the structure of a social network for social action (Horak, 2019).

This theory seeks to understand the nature of a network and the antecedents and consequences of the network at different levels that is interpersonal, inter-unit or inter-organizational level. Past studies states that fast receipt of resources affects knowledge transfer and performance. Therefore, if people use the networks and or connections to access information faster, it will contribute to their performance. This theory is relevant to this study because social media being an integral part of communication affects knowledge sharing. Employees' performance will improve if social media sites are used to enhance communication in organizations and knowledge sharing.

Conceptual Framework

Independent Variable

Dependent Variable

Emerging Channels of Communication

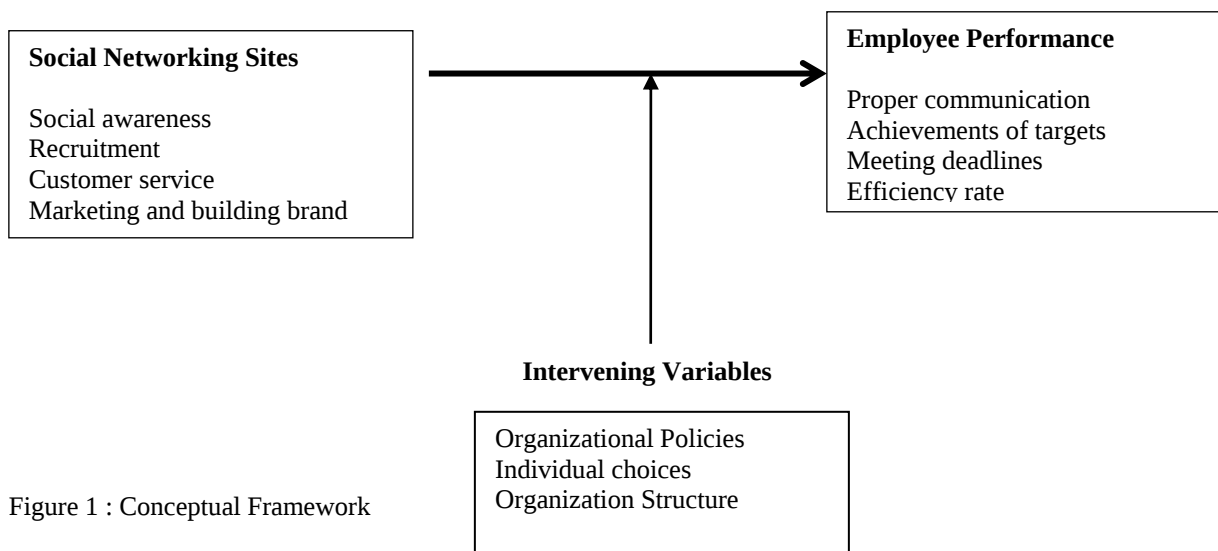


Figure 1 : Conceptual Framework

Research Design

This study used both descriptive and correlation research design to examine the relationship between emerging channels of communication and employee performance. The descriptive research design was important for this study because it shows the variables by answering who, what and how. The target population was estimated at 3,108 for managers and non managers from selected departments and a sample of 353 employees were selected using stratified random sampling.

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data for this study. The questions contained both closed and open ended question and was standardized to ensure validity and reliability.

Validity and reliability of the instruments

Validity shows whether the instruments measures what they are designed to measure. Validity refers to the extent to which the data collection instrument measures what is supposed to measure (Naibei, 2015). Expert judgment was used to uphold the content validity.

A measuring instrument is considered to be reliable if it provides consistent results (O. Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). Reliability and validity of the data was examined using pilot test where a Cronbach's alpha values for all the constructs' were above 0.70 the aim of the reliability test was to check on internal consistency of the instrument.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive analysis

Table 4.14 Descriptive findings of social networking

	SD	D	N	A	SA
Use of social networking enhances social awareness	20 (6.9%)	80 (27.8%)	64 (22.2%)	84 (29.2%)	40 (13.9%)
Use of social networking has boosted recruitment of new staff due to the wide coverage of advertisements	16 (5.6%)	72 (25.0%)	96 (33.3%)	64 (22.2%)	40 (13.9%)
Social networking increases customer and employee satisfaction	12 (4.2%)	56 (19.4%)	60 (20.8%)	116 (40.3%)	44 (15.5%)
Organization has benefited from social networking through marketing and building organization brand	20 (6.9%)	64 (22.2%)	60 (20.8%)	100 (34.7%)	44 (15.3%)
Social networking has created platforms such as WhatsApp for easier Communication and correspondences	8 (2.8%)	52 (18.1%)	36 (12.5%)	124 (43.1%)	68 (23.6%)

Source: Research Data (2019)

The findings showed that a few number of respondents 84 (29.2%) agreed that use of social networking has enhanced social awareness followed by 80 (27.8%) respondents that disagreed then 64 (22.2%) that remained neutral, 40 (13.9%) respondents that strongly agreed and 20 (6.9%) that strongly disagreed. Less than half of the respondents 96 (33.3%) remained neutral on the fact that use of social networking has boosted recruitment of staff followed by 72 (25%) that disagreed then 64 (22.2%) that disagreed, 40 (13.9%) respondents that strongly agreed and 16 (5.6%) that strongly disagreed. This agreed with (Gibbs, 2015) who explained that social network sites is very key in recruitment of employees. Employers pegged on advertisements of vacancies through other medium like dailies to recruit but recently a shift has been embraced where employers are using social networking sites to place vacancies. Close to half of the respondents 116 (40.3%) agreed that social networking increases customer satisfaction which in turn leads to employee satisfaction followed by 60 (20.8%) that remained neutral then 56 (19.4%) that disagreed, 44 (15.3%) that strongly agreed and 12 (4.2%) that strongly disagreed. The findings were consistent with that study by (Njuguna, 2012) that use of SNS has led to increased customer base. Less than half of the respondents 100 (37.7%) agreed that the organization benefits from social networking through marketing and building brand followed by 64 (22.2%) that disagreed then 60 (20.8%) that remained neutral, 44 (15.3%) that strongly agreed and 20 (6.9%) that strongly disagreed. Companies have also argued that networking sites is cost effective since it helps in marketing and building organization brand online. Social networking is now one of the main important business advancements in the 21st century and has increased or added a facet to the manner in which people exchange information globally. A number of respondents 124 (43.1%) agreed that social networking has created platforms such as whatsapp for communication and correspondences among the employees followed by 68 (23.6%) that strongly agreed then 52 (18.1%) that disagreed, 36 (12.5%) that remained neutral and 8 (2.8%) that strongly disagreed. The study findings collates with the study by (Bartlett, 2015) who indicated that SNS have been used in offering proper information, communication, dissemination, discussion and mobilization of vast information which in turn led to higher levels of employee productivity.

Correlation analysis of Social Networking and Employee Performance

Table 4.15 Correlation results for social networking

Variables		Effect of Social Networking Sites (X3)	Employee performance (Y)
Effect of Social Networking Sites (X3)	Pearson Correlation	1	.764**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	288	288
Employee performance (Y)	Pearson Correlation	.764**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	288	288

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Research Data (2019)

The findings ($r = 0.764$, $p = 0.000$) revealed that there exists a positive moderate relationship between social networking and employee performance. This means that employee performance increases with increase in magnitude of social networking. The findings agreed with (Ali-Hassan, 2015) who found that employees who use SNS are 9% more productive than those who do not use since it is believed that the employees who use SNS have good problem solving abilities and good concentration at work

Summary

Correlation matrix was used to examine the relationship between social networking and employee performance in County Government of Kericho. The Pearson correlation coefficient was established at 1% (2-tailed) level of significance.

Conclusions

This study concluded that Social networks sites promoted employees performance since it enhanced social awareness, created a platform for recruitment of new staff for the county and facilitated marketing and building of organization brand.

Recommendations

After analyzing the findings of the study, the following recommendations were necessitated: There is need to have all the social network platform monitored, County Government of Kericho to have education day for employees on the use of social networking sites and how it affects their performance. For further study, similar researches need to be done on other county government in Kenya. The use of other social network sites is also recommended for future study.

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