

Social Media Integration into Contemporary Human Resource Management: A Qualitative Approach

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ABSTRACT: *This study explored the theme “social media integration into contemporary human resource management: a qualitative approach.” The study was guided by three research objectives which are; to determine whether human resource managers integrate social media in their practices; to ascertain the benefit of integrating social media into human resource management and to determine challenges associated with the integration of social media into human resource management. The study was built on the Theory of Creative Destruction and the population of the study comprised of human resource managers and academicians within Yola metropolis. The study adopted dual research methods which are the in-depth interview and integrative literature review design. The researcher interviewed human resources managers and academicians that specialized in human resource management until the results reached saturation point. Findings revealed that human resource managers have incorporated social media into contemporary human resource management. It was also found that social media platforms offer lots of benefits to human resource managers in their professional practices. However, it was unraveled that there are quite several disadvantages associated with the integration of social media into contemporary human resource management even though the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. Therefore, it was recommended among other things that there is the need for managers of human resources be aware of the right limits and boundaries when it comes to using social media for their professional practices.*

KEYWORDS: Human Resource, Social Media, integration, management, qualitative approach

INTRODUCTION

The advancement in technology has transformed human society in many ways. Lately, modern technologies such as the internet and social media have become an important and integral part of our lives as humans (Djabanor, 2019). Awofadeju and Ewuola, (2019) authenticate the veracity of the above assertion when they stated that the rise in the use of social media around the world has led to its use in almost all facets of human endeavor. Suffice it to say that this new form of communication is growing at an incredibly rapid pace. According to Inya (2017), social media have changed the pattern of corporate communications, affecting the ways organizations disseminate information.

In recent times, organizations across the globe use the internet and social media platforms to disseminate information to their internal and external publics. Williams (2017) observed that human resource managers also used social media platforms in their professional practices. Williams (2017) further notes that human resource managers have benefited from social media in the areas of recruitment, and employee appreciation. Similarly, SHRM (2016) revealed that a good number of companies now use social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter to communicate with their employees about new programs or policies.

According to Cober e t'al (2000), the integration of social media into human resource management has the potency to reduce recruitment costs by up to 95% over traditional recruitment sources and reduces hiring cycle time by roughly 25%. The above revelation implies that social media platforms are veritable tools in the hands of human resource managers when effectively utilize. However, there is a paucity of empirical studies on the subject matter especially in developing countries (Nigeria inclusive). It is therefore in light of the above that this current study seeks to examine the implications of integrating social media platforms into contemporary human resource management.

Statement of The Problem

The widespread usage of social media has led to the incorporation of platforms into numerous managerial functions worldwide. Because the use of this new form of communication is unquestionably increasing at a breakneck speed, it's critical to examine the implication of integrating these platforms into human resource management. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find out whether human resource managers use social media, as well as the influence and consequences of these platforms on contemporary human resource management.

Objective of The Study

- i.To determine whether human resource managers integrate social media into their practices;
- ii.To find out the benefits associated with integrating social media into human resource management;
- iii.To determine challenges bedeviling the integration of social media into human resource management

Research Questions

- i.Do human resource managers integrate social media in their practices;
- ii.What are the benefits associated with integrating social media into human resource management;
- iii.What are the challenges bedeviling the integration of social media into human resource management

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research study is anchored on the theory of creative destruction. The theory of creative destruction was propounded by Schumpeter in 1942. Since then, the Theory of Creative Destruction has over the years been used in different fields and within different contexts. However, for this paper, we shall focus on Wigmore's perception of the Creative Destruction

Theory. According to Wigmore (2013), creative destruction deals with the process of how innovation contributes to the demise of the existing or old alternative of such innovation or technology. The nexus between the above theory and this current study hinged on the fact that the advent of the internet and social media platforms has altered the method and channels used by human resource managers in communicating with recruitant or employees. Lately, most companies prefer using social media or their official websites to advertise vacancies instead of using traditional media such as newspapers, radio, or television. In précis, this paper submits that every creativity in the field of human resources is always accompanied by destruction. In other words, new ideas or innovations destroy existing or obsolete ideas.

METHODOLOGY

This research paper used two research methods because “a single method can never adequately shed light on a phenomenon” (Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekhareafu, and Okpanachi, 2012, p.248). Therefore, the use of two methods would enhance the authenticity of the research findings and also make the study comprehensive. Therefore, this study adopts an integrative literature review method and in-depth interview to examine the implications of integrating social media into contemporary human resource management. According to Christmal and Gross (2017, p.7), an integrative literature review method is a non-experimental method in which researchers objectively critique, summarize, and draw conclusions about a subject matter by conducting a systematic search, categorization, and thematic analysis of previous qualitative and quantitative research studies on the topic under investigation. Therefore, the researcher will use this method to objectively review relevant literature to ascertain the implications of social media integration into contemporary human resource management.

Conversely, the researchers made use of the in-depth interview to find out from professionals and practitioners the implications of social media in contemporary human resource management. A total number of eight people were interviewed, four were human resource managers and the other four were academicians with specializations in the area of human resources and administration.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section synthesizes the qualitative data obtained from the scripted interviews and the reviewed literature by exploring the findings based on the research questions as well as their interpretations in making the study significant. The discussions in this section are categorized into three (3) themes in tandem with the research objectives

Theme 1: Social Media Integration in Contemporary Human Resource Management

Data retrieved in the interview sessions revealed that lately, Human Resources Managers used social media for HR professional practice. It was also found that the use of social media for HR professional practice has offered an avalanche of auspicious benefits for HR Managers practitioners. Under this theme, four sub-themes emerged from the analysis of the interviews. Each theme addressed the reasons why human resource managers use social media for HR

professional practices. These themes include social media being a low-cost tool, providing a platform for education and awareness, and supporting real-time conversation and engagement: **Low-cost tool:** One theme addressing the use of social media for professional practice among human resource managers was that it is a low-cost tool. The interview participants made comments such as, "We use social media because we can reach out to our employees or recruitants without spending a lot of money by using social media to communicate with them". Furthermore, the interviewees discussed how a social media platform, such as Facebook, Twitter, etc, was an inexpensive tool for the HR department. Another participant commented that "the social media is an inexpensive tool in the hands of the human resource department to communicate with the employees." In precis, majority of the participants revealed how social media was important for their organizations, especially the human resource department.

Education and awareness: Another topic that arose from the interviews was the opportunity offered by social media to provide knowledge to educate or raise awareness of a cause or organization. Some participants expressed their satisfaction with their abilities to use social media to educate their employees and recruitants on urgent and salient issues. The following are some of the interviewees' comments:

Human resource departments are increasingly looking to social media to strengthen a company's identity. When a company's image is harmed as a consequence of a customer complaint or another factor, the HR department can utilize social media to strengthen the brand and ensure that the outrage does not escalate.

Another participant commented thus:

...I think HR managers also have the responsibility of successfully managing an organization's reputation. An active social media presence may portray a company as creative and interesting in and of itself, which is exactly what a reputation management plan should aim for. This can be achieved through the use of social media.

Real-time conversation and engagement: The final theme related to the opportunities available through social media for HR professionals was the ability of the organizations to present in a real-time conversation with their employees. Many respondents discussed the availability of a conversation through social media with comments such as, "I think the social media presents an ample opportunity for the human resource department to be able to hear from their employees and potential employees concerning the performances of the unit".

From the foregoing, it is apt to infer that the integration of social media into contemporary human resource management is associated with an avalanche of benefits as a result of the interactivity, rapidness, and timeliness of social media. Suffice it to say that the social media platforms have the potency to solidify HR managers' interactions with their employees and increase the speed for feedback from the employees.

The above findings support the results of the data obtained from the reviewed literature. Williams (2017) affirms that the advancement in technology affects the field of human resource management. In his words, he captured it thus:

The field of human resource management (HRM) has been restructured by technology in recent years. Through the use of social media sites, online websites, cloud storage, and a variety of other advancements, the workforce is constantly being altered to adjust to the organization's technological needs (p.12)

Additionally, Davison, Maraist, Bing, (2011), revealed that lately, human resource managers use social media sites and websites for recruiting, staffing, selection, discipline, and termination. Additionally, social media integration in an organization's HR department will enable it to keep up with technological advancements in the global economy (Miller, 2012). From the foregoing, it is apposite to infer that social media platforms are already integrated into contemporary human resource management practice and that the platforms have quite several auspicious impacts.

Theme 2: Possible benefits of the use of social media by professional Human Resource Managers/Departments

Most interview participants reported that the integration of social media in contemporary Human Resource Management is a welcome development that comes with an avalanche of benefits. The interviewees further unraveled that, lately, social media has enormously helped the human resource department of most organizations to engage a quality pool of candidates during job recruitment exercises and to also communicate with employees within a short time. In his words, one of the participants said:

The integration of social media into contemporary human resource management has lots of advantages. For instance, some companies use Twitter to communicate with employees about company events so that the general public is aware of them. Other companies utilize chat apps like Google Hangouts to communicate with staff in different locations or around the world. Similarly, another participant said:

One of the most significant benefits of human resource managers using social media at work is that it makes the company's recruiting process easier and more successful. HR managers can publish job vacancies on all of the company's social media platforms, including links to the company's employment postings. This makes it easy for the organization to notify the general public when new positions become available, as well as for people to apply for such positions. Companies are also having better success utilizing social media to recruit new employees since they can look at possible applicants' social media sites to see if they will fit in with the company culture.

One of the interviewees who has a contrary view said:

"The integration of the so-called social media into human resource management practice has enhanced laziness among HR managers as they spent their free time chatting on networking sites which could have been used in development opportunities in their company.

The above findings imply the integration of social media into contemporary human resource management practices has its advantages and disadvantages but notwithstanding, it is obvious from the above findings that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

Theme 3: Challenges Associated With the integration of social media into contemporary Human Resource Management

Data obtained from the reviewed literature revealed that the integration of social media into human resource management is accompanied by some challenges. Williams (2017) revealed that the use of personal mobile devices by employees is also an issue in regards to the privacy of an organization. Human resource management is now struggling between the appropriate use of personal devices and technology within the workforce. In the same vein, Whitty and Carr (2006) conducted a study and found that social networks contribute to "productivity-lowering behaviors" including "cyberslacking" and "cyberbullying."

CONCLUSION

The integration of social media into contemporary human resource management has its auspicious and inauspicious side. However, this study concludes that the advantages of social media usage in contemporary human resource management outweigh the challenges. Hence, the platforms are veritable that have the potency to enhance the performance of the human resource department and organization at large.

Recommendations

1. Managers of human resources should be aware of the right limits and boundaries when it comes to using social media.
2. As social media has grown in popularity, a plethora of resources have emerged to aid in the measurement of social media initiatives. Human resource managers should take use of these resources and begin measuring the effectiveness of their social media operations.
3. There is the need for organizations to consistently train their staff in the human resource department on how to utilize social media platforms for professional practice because of the auspicious features the platforms.
4. Human resource departments in organizations should conduct research on how to overcome the challenges of social media use for HR professional practice.

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