An evaluation of the use of Social Media and how it affects productivity/cost effectiveness at the workplace

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Student: Muawia E. I. Babiker
Student ID no.: st20119316
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DECLARATION AND STATEMENTS

DECLARATION

This work is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MBA and has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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STATEMENT 1

This dissertation is the result of my own work and investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in footnote(s).

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SUPERVISOR’S STATEMENT

Student Name ...... Muawia Elias Ibrahim Babiker .................
Supervisor’s Name ...... Andrea Steel ....................................

I acknowledge that the above-named student has regularly attended the planned meetings and actively engaged in the dissertation supervision process. They have provided regular timely draft chapters of the dissertation and followed given guidance.

Signed ................................................

Date ................................................

Muawia E. I. Babiker
Student ID no.: st20119316
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I dedicate this long-awaited piece of work to my family, wife and kids as well as my extended family.

Thank you all for caring.
ABSTRACT

Social media have become a dominant component of our life, influencing all segments of our societies in almost all aspects. Social networking, therefore, has been a hot topic for researchers over the past few years. However, there has been limited research on the impact of this rapidly evolving phenomenon on organisations.

This study aims to contribute to understanding the impact of social media on businesses. The research has been conducted on the oil and gas sector in UAE through a set of methods including observations and semi-structured interviews with experts in the sector. The purpose of the research is to analyse the sector’s approach towards social media usage and measure its impact.

To have closer insights into the subject, the research has investigated into the issue from the perspectives of 18 SMEs from UAE Ministry of Energy and A-Z, an integrated company that manages the oil sector in the UAE. A qualitative methodology using purposive sampling has been employed to answer the research question: “What is the impact of using social media as a strategic communications tool on employee productivity and cost effectiveness in UAE oil and gas sector?”

The study has concluded that social media are used extensively in the sector but mainly for entertainment and socializing and not for business, which is negatively affecting the sector. Based on the literature review, it is argued that social media are of great value to organisations. But experts warn that if not used wisely social networking could create business risks, turning into a destructive tool. As per the findings of this study. There seems to be a correlation between social media usage and productivity and cost effectiveness. The study recommends further research to explore how organisations can benefit from the technology.

KEY WORDS: Social media, social networking, platforms, productivity, cost-effectiveness, efficiency, employee performance, oil and gas.
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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the research study presented in this dissertation. It includes background to the research and the rationale of the research, highlighting the significance of a study on social media to the oil and gas sector. The research question, aim and objectives are explained. The chapter outlines the methodology, scope, limitations and concludes with an outline of the following sections.

1.1 Background to the Research

Social media are perhaps the most influential communication tools in the world today. They have invaded almost every single household. The number of users is on the rise globally. In the Arab world, the extensive use of social media indicates that the internet has the potential to become the most dominant platform through which every segment of the society can communicate (Reyaee & Ahmed 2015).

Thanks to social networking, the world today has turned into a small village where communication has become as fast as light. Social media are used by individuals as well as businesses and are becoming highly essential and indispensable. Over the last two decades (Michael 2015) digital technologies have invaded the globe and the Internet has reached almost every corner of the world where they are used by individuals, companies, journalists, and governments etc.

In the Arab world, the Gulf countries occupy the top five slots in terms of penetration rates of the most popular social media platforms among their populations. Around 55% of households in the region own 2 to 5 Internet-enabled devices and another 25% have 6 to 10 internet-connected devices based on a survey conducted by Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government (Salem 2017).
Enterprise social networking is growing steadily with different sectors adopting the technology. Law firm Proskauer Rose LLP found in a 2014 survey (Proskauer 2014) that 90% of firms worldwide today use social media for business. Yet, the energy sector, the most vital industry globally, is reportedly hesitant to join the digital club, confirms Sundararaman (2016).

This research is intended to investigate into this phenomenon with the objective of understanding it. The aim is to contribute to the body of knowledge by way of exploring untapped opportunities for solutions.

1.2 Rationale

UAE by far has the highest penetration rates (Salem 2017). However, the oil sector is reportedly still reluctant to use social media for business. Being a media professional at a major oil company, this situation has instigated the researcher to investigate into this phenomenon.

Figure 1: Percentage of Facebook users in Arab countries

Source: Arab Social Media Report 2017
Globally, 80% of international upstream oil companies plan to spend the same or up to 36%, on digital technologies as they do now, according to “2016 Upstream Oil and Gas Digital and Technology Trends Survey,” sponsored by Accenture and Microsoft and conducted by PennEnergy Research in partnership with the Oil & Gas Journal (Accenture 2016).

In the UAE oil sector, almost every single employee has access to Internet. However, there are indications that a very small percentage uses social media for business. The purpose of this study is to evaluate to which extent social media can be useful to oil companies. This has prompted the researcher to use the working title: “An evaluation of the use of Social Media and how it affects productivity/cost effectiveness at the workplace. A study on the UAE oil and gas sector”.

The selection of these two variables is instigated by the researcher's intention to explore the phenomenon since there is no consensus among researchers as to the advantages and disadvantages of social media.
Colbert et al, (2016) state that increased technology usage has remarkable positive impact on digital workforce. Some researchers including Martin and Bavel (2013) argue that social media are the most cost-effective communications tool. Other researchers, Haddud et al, (2016) Holtzblatt et al, (2013) and Aguenza and Ahmad (2012) cite several advantages which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Some critics Yeshambel et al, (2016) and Huang et al, (2015) claim that social networking affect firms negatively. Hofacker and Belanche (2016) cite several challenges to firms including economic obstacles, ability to react to market etc..

1.3 Research question and objectives:

The aim of the study is to understand the effects of social media usage in the workplace and evaluate to which extent it can be useful to oil and gas companies in UAE. This research will investigate into the issue to answer the following key research question:

“What is the impact of using social media as a strategic communications tool on employee productivity and cost effectiveness in UAE oil and gas sector?”

While attempting to answer this question, the research will critically evaluate the phenomenon with focus on meeting the following objectives:

• To measure and analyse the perceptions, usage and exposure of UAE oil and gas sector in social media.
• To evaluate the impact of social networking on productivity and cost effectiveness in UAE oil and gas sector.
• To explore how social media can be used to improve productivity and reduce cost.
1.4 Methodology

As the research is on a social phenomenon and is expected to mainly generate subjective and socially-constructed meanings expressed about the phenomenon being studied, a qualitative research approach has been adopted (Saunders et al, 2012)

To examine social media effects, this research will solicit views of employees as well as influencers to answer the research question and reach conclusions with regards to the two variables. To have credible findings that will lead to achieving research objectives, a qualitative approach will be adopted where semi-structured and focus group interviews will be conducted.

A topic on which there is a wealth of literature from which the researcher can define a theoretical framework and a hypothesis lends itself more readily to deduction (Saunders et al, 2012). Drawing on past research in this area, the research will follow a deductive approach where validity of the main relevant concepts and assumptions will be tested with the aim of understanding the phenomenon.

Primary data will be collected using interviewing with influencers and experts who have around 10 years of experience in the field. The researcher was granted permission to conduct the interviews. An exploratory approach will be followed where open questions will be asked to gain insights from the participants about the topic and seek answers to the research question. The interviews will be recorded to back up note-taking.

The research will follow a non-probability sampling method. Data will also be collected using company secondary sources to which access has been granted to the researcher by the management. Web-based materials including recent relevant literature reviews are also used. This is mainly peer reviewed literature. Additionally, the researcher will be collecting data through observation to enrich the research
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Muawia E. I. Babiker
Student ID no.: st20119316

Data. Data will be prepared for analysis from a deductive perspective. Results will then be triangulated to marry primary data with secondary data.

To ensure validity and reliability of all used material, a rigorous evidence-based approach will be followed where all sources in the database will be verified and referenced accordingly.

1.5 UAE Oil and Gas Sector

The UAE possesses nearly 10 per cent of the world’s total reserves. Abu Dhabi produces 97% of the country’s crude oil. This sector represents one of the core elements of UAE national economy. In 1971, state-owned A-Z was set up to manage and operate the emirate’s oil and gas industry. One of the world's leading energy producers, A-Z produces 3.15 million barrels per day. It employs around 55,000 employees.

1.6 Scope and limitations

The research will explore the scope of social media usage in the oil and gas sector in the UAE. The study will be limited to Abu Dhabi and will not cover other six emirates. The reason is that Abu Dhabi produces 97% of the country’s crude oil. Even in Abu Dhabi the research will focus on A-Z which manages Abu Dhabi’s hydrocarbon reserves on behalf of the Government.

A-Z comprises 17 oil and gas companies, with a workforce of around 55,000. To avoid gaps, inconsistency and bias, focus will be made on a cross-section of employees representing the different disciplines of the organisation. Due to the high population in the oil sector it is not guaranteed that a survey would accurately represent the target population. Therefore, the researcher had to narrow the scope and conduct an exploratory research. There are several ways to conduct exploratory research. These include a search of the literature; interviewing ‘experts’ in the
subject; conducting in-depth individual interviews and conducting focus group interviews (Saunders et al, 2012).

The key limitation in the study during the initial phase of the research is time constraint which forced the researcher to opt for interviews rather than questionnaires and thus reducing the statistical significance of the findings. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with 18 professionals. To ensure greater in-depth discussion, focus groups interview will be conducted where 8 participants will be invited.

Since the topic of the research does not involve numerical data or statistics that require adopting a quantitative method, the research will be qualitative. It is also impossible to collect all data related to all aspects of the subject. This also narrows the scope of the research and adds to its limitation.

1.7 Dissertation Outline

The structure of this dissertation which consists of five chapters is as follows:

1.7.1 Chapter 1 - Introduction

This chapter gives a background to the research and a rationale as to why the subject of social media is important, setting the study in context. The aim and objectives are stated clearly. Here the purpose of the study which is to evaluate to which extent social media can be useful to oil companies is explained in detail. The chapter also gives an outline of the methodology used in the research, explaining how the study will be conducted in a vast oil sector, one of the largest in the world, and which methods will be adopted.
1.7.2 Chapter 2 - Literature Review

This chapter provides a critical review of peer-reviewed literature on the topic of social media effects. Up-to-date literature mostly published between 2013-2017 and discussing thought-provoking arguments related to advantages and disadvantages of social media was reviewed. This covers relevant existing and recent research on social media that supports the arguments relating to research question, aim and objectives. Arguments related to social media effects, mainly relevant to the two variables of productivity and cost-effectiveness are identified, analysed and summerised.

1.7.3 Chapter 3 – Methodology

Chapter 3 demonstrates the methodology used in the research explaining the rationale and methods used which include a deductive approach that has been selected in view of the distinctiveness of the social media topic. This chapter also discusses methods used in data collection and how data analysis is conducted to answer the research question and achieve research objectives. Compliance with academic ethics is also addressed here. The section gives a detailed description of the research conducted including semi-structured interviews, focus groups and observation within A-Z Group. Methods of data analysis and study limitations are explained.

1.7.4 Chapter 4 - Findings

This chapter demonstrates research findings based on analysis of data collected through identified themes during the interviews, focus groups and observation. Here insights gathered during interviews will be explained and correlated to arguments that arose during literature review. Applying the selected research methodology, this chapter discusses the findings for each of the research objectives in a chronological
order. Tools used include open-ended descriptions, transcripts of interviews, essays and observations within A-Z.

1.7.5 Chapter 5 - Conclusions and Recommendations

In this closing chapter, the findings drawn from data analysis are triangulated and linked back to the aim and objectives to make sure they have been met. Primary data collected from interviews with social media experts and secondary data gathered during literature review and observations reordered by the researcher will be cross verified to ensure credibility and validity. Findings are evaluated and identified implications are discussed. This chapter also suggests recommendations for further research on the topic of social media usage in the enterprise, mainly oil and gas sector in UAE.
 CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

As the study of social media adoption in oil and gas sector is unique, conducting some type of literature review seemed to be essential to inform the research (Yin 2011). The literature review, as recommended by Yin (2011) followed the creation of a study bank.

This chapter gives an overview of past research on enterprise social media and the factors relevant to this dissertation. Research gaps are discussed and related theoretical models are reviewed.

2.1 Defining social media

The definition of social media itself has created a lot of discussions among scholars as the term is often confused to social networking. It is important to start with a widely-cited definition to distinguish between the two throughout the research.

As defined by Investopedia, social media are “Internet-based software and interfaces that allow individuals to interact with one another, exchanging details about their lives such as biographical data, professional information, personal photos and up-to-the-minute thoughts.” (Dictionaries 2017). The same source defines social networking as the use of internet-based social media programmes to make connections with friends, family, classmates, customers and clients. (Dictionaries 2017).

Ouirdi et al, (2014) define social media as mobile and web-based platforms that allow users to share and add geographical information to user-generated content for purposes of collaboration and building networks and communities.
Leonardi et al, (2013) give a more detailed definition for enterprise social media. They described them as web-based platforms allowing workers to (a) communicate messages with specific coworkers or broadcast messages to everyone in the organization; (b) explicitly indicate coworkers as communication partners; (c) post, edit, and sort text and files; and (d) view the messages, connections, text, and files communicated, posted, edited and sorted by anyone else in the organisation at any time of their choice.

### 2.2 Theoretical review

Just like the way they inundate users with their content, research on social media is extremely huge. In the initial stage of this research which aimed at creating a study bank, the researcher screened more than 100 articles, books and research papers mostly from 2013-2017. These were categorised into two categories – theoretical concepts related to social media and analytical methods focusing on the research’s two variables.

The main purposes of literature review are to set study within its wider context and to show the reader how the study supplements the work done on the topic (Saunders et al, 2012).

The initial literature review conducted showed that social media are growing at a fast pace in almost all walks of life, raising many question marks over different aspects of this digital revolution and making it necessary for researchers to explore this area continually.

#### 2.2.1 Theoretical models

There are several theories and models related to the study of social phenomena. These include the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Uses and Gratifications Theory, Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), Theory of Panned Behavior (TPB).
The researcher has found TAM to be the most suitable model to be used in this research. The reason behind using TAM is that the model can help understand how oil and gas companies and employees accept and use technology. TAM model helps in predicting individual behaviours that affect how users accept new technologies. TAM has become one of the most influential and most predominant models which has been widely used in this field of research, Wirtz and Göttel (2016) and Rauniar et al, (2014).

This research revisits TAM to examine the use of social media and user intentions and opinions about the technologies at oil and gas companies.

2.2.2 Gap in empirical research

The available body of research indicated the gaps in literature on organisations' social media usage. The preliminary review of literature helped the researcher generate ideas and explore sources that will contribute to the research. In terms of theory, several theorists have made valuable contributions to research, paving the way for others to build on and come up with more input.

Social media have some unique features that may challenge the ability of existing theories and frameworks to explain cognition, affect, and behavior. These may require new theories and frameworks that will help in understanding social media and organisational behavior (McFarland & Ployhart, 2015)

According to Robson (2013), many studies have investigated the adoption and use of social media by PR practitioners. Although there are plenty of social media studies in academic literature, significant gaps remain in understanding how organisations are using the technology. Despite the rapid growth of social networking (Michael 2015) there is lack of theories in the phenomenon of social media.

The potential benefits of social networking are not well understood (Martin & Bavel, 2013). Practically, managers are trying to understand how their firms should employ
social media for organizational purposes (McFarland & Ployhart, 2015). This is partly due to the lack of empirical research on organisational use of the technologies and platforms that underlie social networking and social media, argue Martin and Bavel (2013). This is true when it comes to the adoption of the technology in the oil sector.

Past research demonstrates a high level of interest in studying the usage and influence of social media as a tool of communication in the workplace (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). However, research that is mainly focused on oil and sector is very limited and is rather in its infancy. Only few studies have addressed social media usage in this important sector.

The researcher has reviewed scores of research papers, reports, academic articles, books, websites etc. using the social media as key search words that turned in thousands of titles. There are many past research studies or papers on social media in general but still more research needs to be done in this area.

The initial step in this project was to conduct a systematic review of the body of literature using a comprehensive preplanned strategy to locate existing literature, evaluate the contribution, analyse and synthesise the findings and report the evidence (Saunders et al, 2012).

One of the main media theories that have been thoroughly researched is Manuel Castell’s trilogy on the information age. In a recent lecture at Cambridge University (CRASSH 2013) Castell gave an overview of what he claims is a nucleus for a new general communication theory of power which is linked to his well-known theory of Network Society.

Focusing on the crucial role of technology and social media platforms in what he terms as the “Internet Age”, Castells came up with his theory of “mass self-communication,” which relates to the characteristics of social media.
Castells’ work can be useful in addressing and analysing the connection between social media and social networks where he provides a description of the impact on both individuals and businesses.

2.2.3 Social media vs traditional media:

One of the frequently cited theoretical works related to the media is Denis McQuail’s Mass Communication Theory. McQuail (2013) sees the shift from the age of mass communication to “new media”, under which comes social media, as a paradigm change.

McQuail agrees with scholars, including Leonardi et al, (2013) Martin & Bavel (2013) that new media has taken over, literally causing the demise of old media. He argues that the original idea of mass media met an early death by way of early evidence of both diversification and social organisation in media use behavior, later compounded by the emergence of new or social media. This research will further explore these theories by soliciting the views of interviewees.

2.2.4 Restrictions and Controls

One of the important observations made by Castells in his lecture was that because of the rapid growth of the internet and social platforms, governments no longer have control over media communications and therefore governments and large businesses become wary of the freedom that is enjoyed by internet users.

On the issue of control, McQuail (2013) states that the phenomenon of social media has given rise to new groups of “inter-communicators,” who are linked remotely to each other as well as to innumerable groups who can hardly be controlled but possibly tracked down to the level of individuals to build detailed profiles. As far as this research is concerned, this perception paves the way for further discussions in the following sections of this dissertation, mainly on the current regulations and
restrictions imposed by some official bodies and organisations to avoid unwanted percussions that might arise as a result of free use of internet. Related questions will be addressed to interview participants.

It is reported that there is public concern over existing government practices on social media around the world especially in the Arab world. The Arab Social Media Report 2017 (MBRSG, 2017) said “Governments around the world are proactively experimenting with social media data and interacting with social media users in a variety of ways. The spectrum of uses varies from benign and positive uses, to manipulative and aggressive ones” (Salem 2017, p17).

Citing some examples, the report said some governments use social media data to analyse trends and sentiments. The objective here is to align policies with public needs, concerns and preferences. In the process, large amounts of personal data are captured and stored from social media users for profiling and behavior analysis.

There is a positive side of monitoring and control. Some government agencies have issued guidelines that are deemed beneficial for users. Encouraging the use of social networking by public and private sectors, the UAE government has recently established guidelines for social media usage by government entities. The document highlights best practices and addresses both the benefits and risks of using social networking tools, both in engaging with citizens and for inter-agency collaboration (Al-Badi 2014).

The following sections of this research will discuss the issue of guidelines and controls and will seek views of interview participants in this regard.

2.3 Productivity

The effect of the use of social media in the workplace on employee productivity is widely discussed by researchers and scholars. There are many different opinions.
While e-marketing experts claim that social media improve productivity, others say they have negative impact.

Surveys and research studies have found out that enterprise social media enhanced employee engagement, awareness, productivity, efficiencies and skills. They helped firms in recruitment, innovation and communication etc.

Colbert et al, (2016) state that the competencies of the digital workforce have improved whereas many skills have developed while interacting through technology at work. This is supported by Haddud et al, (2016) who stated that internal social media usage is associated with competencies, communication and readiness for change.

Holtzblatt et al, (2013) conducted a survey in which the participants said social networking supported collaboration, strengthened social connections, fostered awareness of connections’ activities, and facilitated knowledge management. Social networking sites can increase the levels of employee performance and satisfaction when used wisely and efficiently (Aguenza & Ahmad 2012).

2.3.1 Interaction & Communication

Some scholars claim that social networking improves firm-customer relationship through boosting interaction and communication. Leonardi et al, (2013) argue that as these platforms are digital, contrary to the traditional physical platforms of offices, conference rooms and hallways, anyone in the organisation can participate at anytime from anywhere.

Because of the ubiquitous spread of the Internet, (Martin & Bavel 2013), social networking is today the most powerful tool that can be used to improve communication of information, knowledge sharing as well as the overall organisation performance.
Through social media individuals and firms can interact and build relationships (Divya & Regi, 2014). While consumers can interact with companies using social channels, companies can communicate with consumers directly. In support of these claims is McQuail (2013) who states that Internet has opened many channels for experimentation which offer the potential for using the attractions of social media tools including identifying customers, marketing etc.

One of the most important advantages of the use of social media is the online sharing of knowledge and information among the different groups of people, the researchers argue.

![Figure 3: Social Media advantages. Source: Originated by this researcher](image)

### 2.3.2 Improved Organisational Performance

It is believed that social media contribute to enhancing performance. Huang et al, (2015) claim that social media technologies help firms to enhance organisational
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performance by supporting not only collaboration but also to act internally to respond to customer support, innovation, and sales and marketing opportunities. These advantages, Buettner (2015), could lead to greater collaboration, innovation, higher morale, lower cost, reduced turnover, and greater productivity. This claim provides an answer to the research question and serves the research topics variable of productivity.

2.3.3 Innovation

In a study that focused on blogging, Huang et al, (2015) stated that enterprise blogging forums can be used to build structured platforms needed for encouraging innovation. When used effectively, social platforms could also encourage participation in projects and innovative ideas sharing.

2.4 Cost-effectiveness

To measure the impact of social networking in organisations, some scholars recommend measuring the organisation’s Return on Investment of social media. Buettner (2015) cited many individual and competitive advantages for the use of social networks including lower cost and greater productivity, among others.

In his network concept, Castells (2011) claims that networks represent the fundamental pattern of life. Serving one of the two variables of this dissertation topic is Castell’s notion that networks represent the sources of productivity and competitiveness for firms, regions and countries.

In the oil and gas industry, the use of social media could be of great help for firms in terms of cost savings and could save billions of dollars. The recent BP’s Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico is an example. BP was criticised for not using media properly which cost it millions of dollars to rebuild its image. BP’s post-crisis
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phase of crisis communications cost the company more than $90 million for one year and its reputation is still in question (Kristen & Lindsay 2015)

According to Wendling et al, (2013) social media can be beneficial for firms in improving preparedness and responses and reducing the cost of a disaster. This research will elaborate on this point through discussions with interviewees.

2.4.1 Social Media ROI

The reason why many firms are not encouraged to adopt social platforms for business is that there is no solid evidence of benefits in terms of Return on Investment (ROI). Almost all past research reviewed by the researcher showed no authenticated statistics on the ROI for organisations using social media which makes further focused research using efficient metrics a necessity.

As stated by Gu & Ye (2014) a key factor that could help firms to determine social media ROI is how a firm utilises them and what types of relationships the firm develops with customers.

Many studies have discussed benefits related to organisational behavior and Human Resource (HR) functions, including recruitment, selection, and training and development. However, the benefits of social media are merely potential, and it is more of assumption than evidence. There are many unreliable arguments on the merits and risks of social media in business community, but the scientific research that validates such claims is little (McFarland & Ployhart 2015).

Lack of guidance is the reason behind the reluctance of some firms to adopt the technology. Most organisations are facing challenges while attempting to incorporate or adapt to social media. This is because there is almost no scholarly guidance that provides principles and best practices (McFarland & Ployhart 2015).
2.5 Social Media Disadvantages

Past research has concluded that misuse of social media could affect the firm’s productivity. Yeshambel et al, (2016) said their research showed that 68.4% of employees spent most of their time enhancing personal networks and 86% used office hours to visit social networks.

One threat that could be encountered by firms using social media is disclosure of internal information on social networks which can be used by competitors (Ashraf and Tasawar 2014). Huang et al, (2015) argue that when social networking is used for leisure, employee productivity gets affected adversely.

![Figure 4 Social Media main disadvantages. Source: Originated by this researcher](image)

2.6 Why Social Media can’t be ignored?

Some scholars have warned businesses of the risks of ignoring social media. Some researchers including Divya and Regi (2014) believe it is impossible for an organisation to have a successful strategy that does not take into consideration social networking.
For the oil industry, the Internet has clearly become an indispensable tool for conducting business within the sector although the business models adopted by social networks are different to a large extent from those of the sector. Citing Feblowitz (2013), Perrons, and Jensen (2015) stated that many oil companies today apparently do not consider digital information to be so critical to them in terms of profitability. However, it is most likely that these companies will soon start to think differently with regards to the value that digital information could bring to them.

2.7 Social Media Phobia

Sundararaman (2016) argues that oil and gas industry is no exception to the use of social media. He claimed in an article that many oil and gas companies have some sort of phobia when it comes to the use of this latest and significant media. The author states that due to fear of the unknown, many oil and gas companies were reluctant to be active in social media. However, he adds that the industry is now successfully employing digital channels to communicate more efficiently, citing some advantages including promoting the activities, educating and engaging with key stakeholders like the public, media, governments and contractors. The issue of fear of social media will be further discussed in the following parts of the research.

2.8 Conclusion

Based on the literature review, there are gaps in research that if filled will help firms understand what social media are and what advantages are associated with their use. Oil and gas firms, as established by many scholars such as Sundararaman (2016), have some sort of phobia when it comes to the use of social media.

As several scholars have noted including (Divya and Regi 2014), it is becoming essential to include social media in any business strategy. The following chapters will look at the issue through the eyes of professionals who know the ins and outs of media in the energy sector.
CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents the methods and study approaches used by the researcher in examining how social media affect organisations. The methodology chapter identifies the research philosophy (ethnography) and approach (qualitative) and relates them to the strategy (deductive) that has been used. The chapter explains the methods used in conducting the research to achieve the aim of the study. The design of the study, the sample chosen and the techniques employed (interviews) are presented. This chapter also covers methods of data collection and analysis.

3.1 The Research Onion

To have a clear methodology that will help guide the research, the researcher has chosen the Research Onion framework as suggested by Saunders et al (2012). Each of the elements shown in the figure below in its respective layer is explained and a justification for its selection is given.

![Research Onion Diagram](Image)

Figure 5: Research Onion (Source: Adapted from Saunders et al, 2012)
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Student ID no.: st20119316

The onion was helpful in the sense that by peeling away the methodological choice the next layer of the onion (strategy) becomes automatically evident. (Saunders & Tosey 2012).

3.2 Research Philosophy

As social networking is all about social interactions and the fact that this research is aimed to study people and organisation behavior, the researcher has chosen interpretivism as a philosophical approach. Because the research is on a social phenomenon and was expected to mainly generate subjective and socially-constructed meanings expressed about the phenomenon being studied a qualitative research approach was adopted. (Saunders et al 2012). As explained by Creswell (2012), the philosophical assumptions embedded within interpretive frameworks or social constructivism can be used by the researcher.

3.3 Research Approach

The research follows a deductive approach where validity of the main relevant concepts and assumptions will be tested with the aim of understanding the effects of social media usage in the workplace and evaluating to which extent it can be useful to oil companies. To have credible findings that will lead to answering the research question, semi-structured and focus group interviews were conducted with a cross-section of employees with around 10 years of experience in the field.

3.4 Research Strategy

As social networking is all about social interactions, the researcher has chosen an ethnographic approach to the study. As a holistic approach to societies and cultures,
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ethnography when used in social research, can contribute a great deal to studying today’s digital communication environments and digital cultures. (Varis 2014).

The ethnographic research approach was also selected to have in-depth understanding regarding the use of social media in oil and gas firms. Saunders et al (2012), citing Watson (2011), recommends undertaking ethnographic research for investigating the realities of how things work in organisations. As the researcher is already in the industry and is witness to day-to-day activities of these organisations, critical ethnography was the most suitable method to use in the study of people in their own environment using participant observation.

It was decided to collect primary data using semi-structured and focus group interviewing with SMEs who mostly hold managerial positions. It was also deemed appropriate to adopt an exploratory approach where open questions could be asked to gain insights about the topic and seek answers to research question. This allowed researcher to omit some questions and change questions order depending on the flow of conversation with the interviewee (Saunders et al, 2012).

Secondary data was obtained from various sources including journals, books, website and newspaper articles as well as blogs. Secondary data will be used to triangulate findings of the study in the following chapter.

3.5 Sampling Strategy

Due to time constraints, the researcher targeted 18 professionals to participate in semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. As this number is not considered to be statistically representative of the total population, a non-probability sampling method was deemed as the most appropriate.

Knowing the culture in the oil industry, the researcher, using expert sampling, selected people who know the ins and outs of social media and possess credible information that will help answer the research question. The logic behind choosing
18 employees to participate in interviews was that they were targeted from 5 A-Z Group companies which represent one third of the Group. They were experts chosen from within the relevant industry streams, allowing for a relatively fair representation of the Group. Additionally, a senior executive from the Ministry of Energy was also chosen. The number of interviewees is considered sufficient to reach saturation levels. After obtaining permission to conduct the interviews potential interviewees were contacted.

3.6 Data Collection and Analysis Methods

3.6.1 Data Collection

Data were collected using primary and secondary sources as follows:

Primary data:

-Semi-structured interviews: Non-standardised interviews were conducted to gather valid and reliable data relevant to research question and objectives. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to be flexible in changing the order of questions, omitting some questions, when needed. This gave the researcher the chance to elaborate on questions when there was a feeling that the informant’s response was not sufficient. (Saunders et al, 2012).

- Focus groups: A focus group interview was conducted involving four SMEs from two oil companies. This exploratory interview was unstructured. Open questions were addressed to the participants to gain insights about the topic. (Saunders et al, 2012).

Since the research is on social media, the researcher decided to create an online focus group. A Whatsapp group “Social Media Research” was created and members who were all industry experts were invited to join and participate in the debate.
- **Observation:** A holistic study was conducted in the researcher’s organisation where open access to and daily contact with employees concerned with the research topic provided the researcher with first-hand exposure to collect data.

**Secondary Data:**

The organisation’s secondary data will be used including quantitative data from reports, relevant documents, website content, media statements and published summaries whether in company archives or on the public domain. Access to these data was negotiated with the management.

**3.6.2 Data Analysis**

Collected data will be prepared for analysis from a deductive perspective. In view of the nature of the topic and the outcome which was mainly meanings that were derived from words not numbers, manual analysis technique will be adopted.

The interviews will be transcribed, categorised and analysed separately. Data compiled via observation and secondary sources will also be analysed manually. Once this process is completed a data file will be created for analysis by computer for coding them into groups and themes.

**3.7 Validity and Reliability**

To ensure validity and reliability of all used material, the researcher will follow a rigorous evidence-based approach where all sources in the researcher’s database will be verified and referenced accordingly.
3.7.1 Validity

A valid study is one that has properly collected and interpreted its data, so that the conclusions accurately reflect and represent the real world that was studied (YIN 2011).

Creswell (2013) recommends using multiple approaches to check the accuracy of findings. Out of eight primary strategies he suggests, the researcher has decided to adopt the most frequently used i.e.: triangulate different data sources by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes. Primary data will be triangulated to secondary data.

Furthermore, the researcher made all efforts to ensure that bias does not creep into the research at any stage. Reliable sources were consulted to scrutinise and validate primary data. To prevent participant’s error or bias, the interviewees were selected based on specific criteria including 10 years’ work experience, possession of relevant information, credibility and personality.

Most of the secondary data consulted is peer reviewed. These are mainly academic journals, reports and published articles. Three main search engines i.e. Cardiff Metropolitan Moodle, Google Scholar and CiteULike were used.

3.7.2 Reliability

The researcher will adopt two qualitative reliability procedures recommended by Creswell (2013), citing Gibbs (2007) and Guest et al, 2012 including:

• Check transcripts to avoid obvious mistakes made during transcription.
• Avoid drifting in the definition of codes by constantly comparing data with the codes and by writing memos.

Additionally, the researcher will adopt the Colour Coding method
3.8 Access

The researcher has been granted permission to conduct the research including interviews with selected A-Z Group employees. Contacts were initiated with targeted participants and they were briefed on research plan and asked to sign consent forms.

3.9 Ethical Considerations:

All ethical principles including anonymity, confidentiality and participants consent have been considered before starting the research. All selected participants for the interviews have been assured that their confidentiality will be given top priority. Consent forms were duly signed by all participants who were briefed via email and by telephone.

They were all informed that their confidentiality will be maintained by keeping their names and quotes anonymous and storing all data they provide in a secure and confidential environment during the study and destroyed later.

There are no anticipated risks to the participants as no physical efforts or hazards are involved.
CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the key findings of this investigative study into the use of social media and its effect on productivity and cost effectiveness in UAE oil and gas sector. Qualitative data generated from semi-structured interviews and focus groups conducted as part of the study are presented. Insights and quotes from the interviews are highlighted and analysed. This chapter presents a summary of the findings in this research.

In the following chapter these findings will be used as a foundation for the discussion of conclusions. The findings will be linked with the research question and literature review. Chapter 5 will offer recommendations for further research in this field.

4.2 Secondary Data Analysis

Utilising existing data for research is becoming more prevalent and once analysed they can offer methodological benefits and contribute to the research through generating new knowledge (Johnston 2014).

Being already in the sector under studying, the researcher had access to available secondary data and was therefore able to utilise high quality datasets including reports, policies and procedures, website content, newsletters and a wide range of documents. This provided the researcher with the opportunity to engage and have an initial understanding of the social media phenomena to investigate research questions, setting the scene for the research to evolve at a fast pace, given time constraints.
4.3 Qualitative Research

To have in-depth knowledge of social media usage in UAE oil sector, the researcher has used four qualitative methods including semi-structured interviews, observation, a focus group and a WhatsApp focus group, a new research idea the researcher thought would go in harmony with the nature of the study.

Through the combination of these methods, large datasets have been collected including employees’ opinions, actions and belief.

Figure 6: Primary data sources

4.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

As this is an exploratory study, semi-structured interviews have been used as recommended by Saunders et al (2012). According to reviewed literature, semi-structured interviews have been used in several research studies on social networking phenomena (Shklovski 2012), (Young 2011) and Al-Saggaf (2011). The three researchers have found this method to be useful and has helped in generating valuable outcomes.

Based on the success of this method in previous similar studies, semi-structured interviews were used. The interviews, conducted with a cross-section of employees between March 23rd and April 20th provided important background and contextual material for the study.
4.3.2 Focus Groups:

Two focus group sessions were conducted in March. A face-to-face interview was held on March 19th and WhatsApp group was created on 28 March and closed on April 7th.

While the face-to-face focus group was fruitful, the WhatsApp group has indicated to lack of interest among oil sector professionals in terms enterprise social media. The group was created by the researcher who moderated the dialogue.

Though the participants were more comfortable than the face-to-face Focus Group participants, only two members who were of technical background were extremely active. One of the potential interviewees withdrew as he was sent on an urgent mission offshore.

The researcher decided to interview one of the participants in this group in view of his views which were mostly not in favor of the use of social media in the oil sector.
4.3.3 Research Participants

The interviews were conducted with 18 employees from five oil and gas companies with an average of around 10 years of experience in the field and a senior executive from the Ministry of Energy. The participants were recruited through a letter sent by email, along with pre-determined key questions and consent forms. Among the 18 participants there were four managers, two advisors, three on leading positions and others were social media SMEs.

The table below shows the gender, diversified positions and years of experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No./initials</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 1 K.H.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Ministry (MoE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 2 A.B.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 3 H.M.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 4 H.H.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 5 K.S.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>Advisor</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 6 S. N.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Advisor</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 7 T.M.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Team Leader</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 8 B.B.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Team Leader</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 9 A.Q.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Team Leader</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 10 Y.H.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Section Leader</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 11 A.K.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Senior Media Officer</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 12 A.M.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Multimedia Officer</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 13 H.K.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Multimedia Officer</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 14 M.A.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>HSE Engineer</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 15 H.Y.K.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Senior PR Executive</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 16 A S.S.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Editor</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 17 M.A.A.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Petroleum Engineer</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 18 A.S.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Media Officer</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1**: List of interviews participants
Each semi-structured interview took approximately 15-20 minutes except for the Ministry official and an IT expert whose interview took around 30 minutes each in view of their in-depth knowledge of the field.

An exploratory approach was followed where open questions were asked to gain insights from the participants about the topic and seek answers to the research question. The interviews were recorded to back up note-taking. They were then fully transcribed for data analysis as demonstrated in the following part of this chapter.

The interviews began with a brief introduction by the researcher to make sure that the purpose of the research was understood and to brief the participants on their role and rights in terms of confidentiality and the format of the interview. Some participants were more encouraged to take part after knowing that the interview would be anonymous.
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4.3.4 Interview questions

Following a request to introduce themselves, open questions were addressed to the participants and they were given the opportunity to elaborate, paving the way for new questions and dialogue prompts.

Table 2: Semi-structured interviews key topics and questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Social media impact</td>
<td>- How do you evaluate the importance of social media in organisations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of social media?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Research variables:</td>
<td>- Do you think social media has a role in productivity and cost effectiveness in your organisation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>productivity and cost effectiveness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Social media vs traditional media</td>
<td>- Do you think social media has taken over traditional or conventional media?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Social media preferences</td>
<td>1. From your point of view what are the top 3 social networking sites?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Do you use social media for work and which platforms do you use?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Social media usage</td>
<td>1. In a typical day, about how much time do you spend using social networking websites?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Out of 10 how many do you think use social media for business in your organization?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Restrictions and controls</td>
<td>1. Does your company allow the use of social media?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Do you think your company should impose some controls on the use of social media and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Does your organisation have a communications strategy that covers social media or an independent social media strategy and policy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. From your point of view, do you think it is safe to use social media in oil and gas sector?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4 Interview highlights

The following part includes highlights of the interviews and the data and insights contributed by the participants. These are categorised as per topics and themes suggested by the literature review and based on the researcher’s day-to-day observation.

Participants almost unanimously agreed on the significance of social media and their positive impact on business particularly with regards to the two variables of the research topic i.e. productivity and cost-effectiveness.

4.4.1 Social Media Engagement

There was lack of clarity among the participants with regards to engagement of oil companies in social media. Most of the interviewees were not sure whether their respective companies allowed the use of social media. Contradicting answers were given by some participants with regards to percentage of users within their respective companies. But what could be concluded is that the oil sector has weak presence on social media and the technology is not used effectively.

Most of the participants have stated that they rarely used social media for work. Some of them were not sure whether it is allowed to use social media for work in the first place. Based on the outcome of the interviews and the researcher’s day-to-day observation, there are several reasons behind the poor engagement of oil sector in social media including fear of the “unknown”, restrictions and lack of knowledge and interest.

When asked, K.H. a senior government executive said the government encourages the use of social media, with the country’s leadership setting an example for others to follow. “Today UAE leaders are on social media. They follow up and participate regularly.”
He added: “We are proud to say that we are No. 1 in the Arab world in terms of e-Government and smart applications, today UAE competes at the global level and the country ranks on top in various categories of digital networking.”  
The executive’s views were echoed by other participants and are established by other sources.

According to K.H., UAE Prime Minister has launched a series of e-government initiatives. “Traditional paper work is no longer there. Each minister has an i-Pad through which all work is done. No paper work… and everything is sent via email. Thanks to digital information systems, all ministries today use the Internet in conducting day-to-day activities including email for correspondence.”

Although the use of social media is encouraged, most interviewees do not use social media for work. They mainly use them for entertainment.

A recent survey has found that social media is more for play than work for most users in UAE. Social media platforms are used for posting updates, pictures or watching videos, according to the Social Media Survey 2016. (The National 2017).
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WhatsApp had 97 per cent and Facebook had 89 per cent usage, followed by YouTube with 73 per cent. Professional platforms are the least used platforms. LinkedIn was 16 per cent only.

![Figure 7: Ranking of social media platforms usage in UAE. Source: Originated by this researcher](image)

Responding to a question, most of the participants said they never used networking for work or used it at a very low level.

T.M. who is leading the media team in organisation “A” responded: “not really” but he said he just follows one account which is his company’s account. On the reasons why the technology is not used for business, he replied: “It is applied but it is still very conventional to me. Why not apply it to my team? I don't know. I don't know how to explain this.” But when the researcher repeated the question, T.M. said company shareholders and management have the say to use it or not. “Before they were skeptical about using it but now the mother company is using it and the shareholders as well …”

H.M. who is manager of the media department in organisation “B” said although everyone uses social media, the oil industry is odd. “They haven’t accepted it yet.
Speaking from my experience with “B” we have pushed for several times and we have revealed its benefits in terms of marketing the company. However, we have found a huge resistance to adopt social media as a media forum for the company.”

K.S., a communications advisor with Organisation “C” said those who use social media for business are few. He said 5-6 people out of 10 use them in his organisation but those who use them for business maybe less. “It seems people are increasing day by day.”

4.4.2. Fear of Social Media

Fear of the “unknown” or what can be termed as “social media phobia” is one of the main reasons that limit oil sector’s presence in social media, according to some of the participants.

Agreeing with Sundararaman’s (2016) claim that many oil and gas companies have some sort of phobia when it comes to use of social media, K.H. said “there is obviously fear of using social media. Why? I think it is a personal issue.” He thinks it all depends on the mentality and how the person sees it, adding that these issues require resolve, mainly among decision makers. According to King’ori (2013) there is fear, uncertainty and misinformation among managers and leaders in business about social media.

T.M. is of the impression that decision makers could be worried about the backfire of the technology. “I think people in the oil and gas industry are scared to use social media because everyone has a say... everyone has an opinion and they are maybe afraid of negative comments, but if you are confident and you have nothing to hide that is good for you.”

But K.S., though he did not disagree with K.H. and T.M, said maybe it is not fear, stating that it could be uncertainty. “Maybe because it is out of their control. It is risk. They are afraid of the risk but not from social media itself as a media or means of
communications but risks involved because people are new to this or there is a risk of somebody who does not know how to use it. That’s the risk and that is the way they see it.”

4.4.3. Has Social Media taken over traditional media?

Most of the participants said social media had taken over traditional media. This is supported by similar scholarly arguments by McQuail (2013) Leonardi et al, (2013), Martin & Bavel (2013).

K.H. predicts that old media i.e. newspapers would soon vanish. “I think even newspapers are going to disappear.” Another participant, H.M. said she preferred electronic media because old media i.e. print media harms the environment. “Additionally, having it electronic is accessible to everyone and controlled and corrected.”

S.N. thinks the use of old media is a waste – “It is a waste of a lot of paper, wasting a lot of energy and wasting a lot of effort. I think the current social media is more reachable, easier, more accessible than old media. Now people are not buying newspapers like before. Now everything is digital, everything is online and everything is in your hand. You carry it on your hand and you can access the whole world from your smart phone. So, I think social media now will be easier especially for the coming generation. So, compared to the old media it is a big difference.”

All other participants echoed the same views with varying perceptions. However only one interviewee, K.S. had a different view. “I’m an old fashion. I still prefer the print media because I like to sit down with a book or a magazine relax and read it. The social media is OK, good but for longer articles, general information or something very detailed I would rather have something printed”.

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Student ID no.: st20119316
4.4.4. Social Media advantages:

The participants cited many advantages of social media including speed, transparency, time and effort saving, knowledge and easy information accessibility.

![Social Media advantages diagram](image)

Figure 8: Social media advantages from interviewees' perspective. Source: Originated by this researcher

K.H. said with social media everything is fast today. The other advantage, he believes is transparency. “Everyone today knows what is on around them”.

Another participant agreed with K.H. on speed as one of the key benefits. “The top advantage I see in social media is the vast spread and speed of communication since whatever happens can be within minutes posted by so many people around the world and it has distance or limitations or space. So, whatever happens here can be spread or whatever happens in America we can know a few minutes after that so this can be an advantage if it is well used and can be a disadvantage if it is not well used,” says K.S.
This is seconded by T.M who says it is becoming faster and everything is a click of a button away. “It’s faster, its accessible and easier to handle”, remarks H.M. In terms of information and knowledge, A.M. said through social media users get some powerful information about their roles and achievements that benefit other employees. Furthermore, social media helps expand the business.

4.4.5. Social Media disadvantages

One of the participants did not see any negativity in the use of social media. “I don’t see any disadvantages for social media,” said A.M. However, others cited several negative effects. H.M. spoke about the risk of a hit-back because of lack of control. “The only disadvantage is the control of the feedback coming from this.” She adds: “I don’t see other than that honestly.”

S.N., K.S. and A.Q. agreed that misuse is a major disadvantage. S. N. says misuse happens when people give wrong information that go through social media. This ethically shouldn’t happen.
Another participant agrees with S.N. “Social media can be used in a bad way”, remarks A.Q. Others like H.K and H.M. believe that rumors represented the main disadvantage. Sometimes there are rumors which may affect not only the company reputation but the employee himself. The other negative side is that fake accounts can be created as well, says H.K.

H.H. who was neutral thinks it depends. “If you use it positively it will be positive and if you use negatively it will be negative. It is a double-edge sword.”

4.4.6 Correlation between social media and productivity

To find out whether social media help improve productivity, which is one of the variables of the topic of this study, the researcher asked a related question and the majority responded positively.

M.A. said it can affect productivity of an employee, depending on how the employees use them. What are they following? Whom are they communicating with? He said it would be great if they were allowed to use social media and if common platforms and online communities were established to serve the purpose of productivity. One of the useful platforms for business, according to H.H. is Skype. Out of personal experience, he thinks Skype helps you communicate directly and thus enhance productivity. He also cited WhatsApp as a useful application in terms of speed.

Another participant, S. N. agrees with M.A. and H.H. saying that social media help enhance performance through fast information. “Employees have become proactive in their level and being proactive affect their performance which becomes higher. That is because social media affect the employee directly or indirectly in their life and their work,” she added.

In terms of sustainability M.A. believes that any company that utilises social media would promote its reputation which, in turn, influences the company’s productivity. “People will be more aware of the products and perhaps increase productivity.” But
he warned that many employees abuse management flexibility and therefore “they don’t really do something productive for work.”

Unlike other participants, H.K. believes that companies should not have social media as a tool for productivity. She said because of rumors and other negativities companies should focus on something else. She, however, recommends social media for businesses like make-up, restaurants and others.

Figure 10: Correlation between social media and productivity
4.4.7 Correlation between social media and Cost-effectiveness

One of the objectives of the research is to evaluate the impact of social media usage in cost effectiveness. When asked, all participants agreed that social media are cost-effective tools, supporting claims by many researchers who argue that social media are the most cost-effective communications tool including Haddud et al, (2016), Buettner (2015), Martin and Bavel (2013) and Holtzblatt et al, (2013).

A.B. said the technology helps organisations in terms of cost-effectiveness. “Rather than having two or three employees doing the same job, you can have one with the help of tools and programmes which are available online.” She said we can certainly do with less and that helps in cost-effectiveness.

A.Q. said publishing on social media platforms contributes to cost saving. “This will not cost us anything since social media are free to use. So yes, its cost-effective”.

Another participant, H.H. says using less paper, the organisation can save money. “Today our printing machines are not used unless it is deemed necessary to print as everything could be sent through email, through WhatsApp. This is really contributing to cost reduction or optimisation.”

K.S. thinks through spreading awareness, social media can help reduce, reuse, recycle and that way cost can be optimised.

H.K. says using tools like Instagram costs nothing. This view is supported by T.M. who says “since nothing is physical, you are not saving cost only but you are also saving the environment. So, it does have cost impact yes. As for paid advertisements and paid media again if we have a more social media presence we will have less of that.”
A third participants agreed with this, citing examples of how cost is saved. “We got rid of roll ups, posters. We just post them on Instagram account. If we need to announce something. Yes, it helps in cost optimisation.”

Other participants, K.H., S.N., H.M. all agreed that through less dependence on printing and more reliance on online tools substantial savings can be made.

![Diagram](image_url)

*Figure 11: Correlation between social media and Cost-effectiveness*
CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses, analyses and interprets the research findings and links them to the literature review. Findings are correlated to the topic: the use of social media and its effect on organisational productivity and cost-effectiveness, to draw conclusions, taking into account the aim and objectives of the study.

Limitations of the research are outlined and suggestions for additional research in this area are made. The chapter ends with recommendations based on the findings as a contribution to solve the problem investigated.

5.2 Conclusion

The objective of this study was to explore the phenomenon of enterprise social media and its effect in terms of productivity and cost-effectiveness and provide empirical insights into relevant assumptions drawn from the literature review and findings of the research.

Critical evaluation was conducted on the phenomenon to meet the research objectives.

In summary, the main conclusions of the research are as follows:

1. There is poor presence of oil and gas sector on social media.
2. There is lack of awareness about the benefits of social media.
3. Unclarity of Return On Investment (ROI) is discouraging some companies from joining social media.
4. Several factors are blamed for the poor presence of oil sector in social media, most prominently fear of the “unknown”. This includes recent cases of “hacking”.
5. Reported misuse by some employees and outsiders is one of the risks associated with enterprise networking.
6. Social networking sites are blocked by majority of the companies in the sector. Only internal portals and apps are accessible. These include Skype for Business and other IT management systems.

The above findings are supported by assumptions raised in the literature review. According to Sundararaman (2016), the major concerns in adoption of social media by these companies include IT security, unclarity of ROI and potential misuse.

![Figure 12 Factors behind oil sector’s poor presence in social media: Source: Originated by this researcher](image)

5.3 Research objectives conclusions:

The conclusions will be discussed and linked to the research objectives in the following section to answer the research question: “What is the impact of using social media as a strategic communications tool on employee productivity and cost effectiveness in UAE oil and gas sector?”
5.3.1 OBJECTIVE 1: To measure and analyse the perceptions, usage and exposure of UAE oil and gas sector in social media:

Poor engagement - Most of the participants didn’t know how many roughly used social media within their respective organisations. Responding to a question to rank users out of 10, all participants failed to give a clear answer. Their varying and unconfirmed statistics show lack of clarity regarding level of engagement of their companies. Out of the 18 participants only three used social media for work. Others used them for leisure, personal and family contacts.

Using Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the researcher asked a set of questions that aimed to find out whether the participants used social media for work, what are their intentions of using social media, what type of platforms they use, number of users, and their perceptions and preferences with regards to platforms.

![Use of Social Media Diagram]

Table 3: Social media usages and preferences
The above table shows questions used to measure the constructs. The researcher concluded that there is poor engagement on social networking for business. The intention to use social media for enjoyment acquired the highest percentage.

**Lack of awareness** - There is poor awareness among some decision makers about social media benefits. Although workshops and lectures on social media are organised regularly by Group companies as observed by the researcher there is still lack of awareness among employees as well as influencers.

Interviewees responses reflected the level of awareness among the workforce. The researcher was surprised that some of the participants who oversee teams managing social media didn’t know whether networking was allowed in their organisations. When asked, many employees didn’t know they could use applications built in their PCs like Skype for Business for their business calls and teleconferencing. The other surprising fact was failure of some participants to name some of the platforms used by their respective companies and give estimates of the numbers of users within their organisations.

**Fear of the unknown** - As stated in previous chapters, fear of the unknown is one of the factors behind shying away of many oil companies from social media. Three participants, K.H., K.S., and T.M., spoke about the phenomena of social media phobia among decision makers in their organisations. A.Q., being an IT SME said this fear is primarily caused by recent incidents of hacking that impacted some companies, creating reluctance among many oil companies to use social networking.

**Controlled use** - Based on statements by most of the participants and the researcher’s daily observation, there is control over the use of social media. Almost all companies block social networking platforms and this is mainly due to cyber security concerns as well as fear of disclosure of confidential information. A.Q said strict procedures were in place at his organisation because of concerns regarding hacking, risks of information leak and misuse. He said there are also risks of
publishing false information that could affect company image, production as well as employees and management image internally and externally.

5.3.2 OBJECTIVE 2: To evaluate the impact of social networking on productivity and cost effectiveness in UAE oil and gas sector:

Improved productivity/reduced cost- There was agreement among participants that social media usage leads to improved productivity and reduced cost. K.H. believes that through fast speed and free applications social media contribute to enhancing productivity and ensuring cost-effectiveness. “With social media having access to information has become faster and with less effort. Social media has certainly reduced cost and helped enhance performance,” he said, adding that the other advantage of social media is transparency.

Asked to give an evaluation of the impact of social media in terms of cost, A.B. said one of the examples she recalled was telephone directory advertisement. Her company used to advertise in directories which cost 12,000 to 20,000 dirhams. With social media, these ads are no longer entertained by the company which means more savings.

Another example cited by A.B. is the saving on travel cost. Company marketing teams used to travel abroad to take part in exhibitions etc. to bring new customers from new markets but through social media they can do the same job while sitting in their offices with no cost.

A.Q. agreed with A.B.’s views, adding that enterprise social networking is cost-effective and in the same time enhances employee productivity through faster flow of information.

Getting rid of print media, 14 out of the 17 group companies today use electronic media to communicate their messages. The 14 companies ceased to produce print magazines, newsletters, posters and other publications, saving thousands of dollars
annually. The average cost of a magazine is AED40,000 per month, a total of AED480,000 annually. Altogether the 14 companies save around AED6.7 million a year.

Each company used to place ads in directories and newspapers at an estimated cost of AED20,000 monthly, a total of AED240,000. Altogether the 14 companies save around AED3.36 million a year.

Social media also led to more savings through making many jobs redundant including printing staff, technicians, admins and other employees whose jobs involved manual work that has been replaced by digital communication tools. It is estimated that some 100 jobs were made redundant in the past annually in all group companies. Each of the scrapped jobs saved an average monthly salary of AED7,000, a total of AED84,000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of service</th>
<th>Cost per company/month</th>
<th>Total per year</th>
<th>Total saving by 14 group companies/year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Print magazine</td>
<td>AED 40,000</td>
<td>AED 480,000</td>
<td>AED 6.7 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement</td>
<td>AED 20,000</td>
<td>AED 240,000</td>
<td>AED 3.36 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redundancy</td>
<td>AED 7,000</td>
<td>AED 84,000×100</td>
<td>AED 8.4 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AED 18.46 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Savings estimates of social media usage

**ROI ambiguity** - As concluded by Sundararaman (2016) many oil and gas companies have doubt over social media ROI. They think enterprise networking is an additional cost. At least 10 participants were unable to give estimates with regards to social media ROI. This is one of the concerns that holds back some of the companies when it comes to the use of enterprise social media.
Enhanced communication- The participants unanimously agreed that social media contribute to enhancing communication. They gave examples where social media have made correspondence faster, flow of information smoother and processes easier. This supports views of scholars like Martin & Bavel (2013) who argue that social networking could be used to improve communication of information and knowledge sharing.

Potential misuse- Past research as cited in literature review chapter has reported cases of misuse of social networking at work, warning of several disadvantages associated with such behavior.

Yeshambel et al, (2016), Ashraf and Tasawar (2014), Huang et al, (2015) found through their research that misuse of social networking at work such as for leisure, personal and social connectivity etc. have affected employee productivity.

Almost all interviewees agreed that misuse already prevailed among employees. Two participants, S.N. and A.Q. cited cases of misuse including use for personal purposes, entertainment etc… This is one of the concerns raised by researchers like Yeshambel et al, (2016) whose research showed that 68.4% of employees spent most of their time enhancing personal networks and 86% used office hours to visit social networks.

Disclosure of internal information on social networks is another way of misuse. Five participants emphasised on potential misuse acknowledging that their companies already suffer because of such behavior which results in waste of company time and risk of information leak, among other risks.
5.3.3 Objective 3: To explore how social media can be used to improve productivity and reduce cost.

It has been concluded that the oil sector is not taking social media benefits seriously. The interviewees cited several examples where their respective companies have benefited from the use of social media when it comes to productivity and cost-effectiveness. They have made several recommendations which will be summarized along with the researcher’s own recommendations in the following part. These include adoption of specific technologies and applications as well as several preventive measures to avoid misuse and risks.

5.4 Recommendations:

Social media can be used for many purposes at work including communication, recruitment, marketing, networking, leisure, blogging, online forums, social and business networking.

To ensure they are used in an effective way that would lead to improvement of productivity and cost-effectiveness, it is recommended that oil and gas sector take the following steps:

1. Adopt a comprehensive strategy that has specific smart goals to manage and control social media.
2. Conduct benchmarking, review lessons learned and carry out a market research to adopt best practices.
3. Provide employees with open access to social media platforms.
4. Introduce a strict cyber security policy to avoid risks and prevent cyber-attacks.
5. Establish online communities that serve the purpose of productivity and cost-efficiency.
5.5 Limitations and Further Research

5.5.1 Limitations

The key limitation in this research study was the size of sample used. This was primarily due to the dissertation time constraint. The researcher was planning to conduct a survey that could have guaranteed fair representation of the targeted population of 55,000 and thus have better results specially with regards to validated statistics. Due to time constraint, a survey was excluded to avoid delay.

There was lack of access to quantitative data which resulted in the researcher's inability to conduct proper analysis on social media ROI which could have ensured a better understanding of the phenomena with regards to cost-effectiveness.

5.5.2 Further Research

Further research is required to provide evidence of the effectiveness of social media in the oil and gas sector. This can be done using a larger sample i.e. a large-scale survey that would guarantee a fair representation of the target population of the sector.

Further research could also consider conducting a holistic case study to investigate this complex phenomenon.

Ethics Committee Approval Number: 2016D0471

Wordcount: 11,996 excluding tables, appendices & reference list
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An evaluation of the use of Social Media and how it affects productivity/cost effectiveness at the workplace


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An evaluation of the use of Social Media and how it affects productivity/cost effectiveness at the workplace

Appendix 1

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Cardiff Metropolitan University Protocol Number: XX

Project summary

The purpose of this research project is to study the use of social media and how it affects employee productivity and cost effectiveness at the workplace. The research will mainly be focused on the oil and gas sector in the UAE to assess the impact of social networking on the sector.

This research will have the following objectives:

- To measure and analyse the perceptions, usage and exposure of UAE oil and gas sector in social media.
- To evaluate the impact of social networking on productivity and cost effectiveness in UAE oil sector.
- To explore how social media can be used to improve productivity and reduce cost at the workplace.

Why have you been asked to participate?

You have been selected to participate because of your knowledge of the topic of the research. You have between 5-10 years’ experience and you are handling a job that is relevant to the project.

All what you need to do is take part in the conversation. The interview will be recorded and if you feel at any time you are not comfortable or you need to postpone
An evaluation of the use of Social Media and how it affects productivity/cost effectiveness at the workplace

Muawia E. I. Babiker
Student ID no.: st20119316

the meeting for any urgency please feel free to ask for that. If you have any concerns, please bring them to the attention of the researcher. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

Project risks

The research involves your participation in an interview which as mentioned above will be recorded for later analysis. I’m not going to collect any sensitive data on you; this study is only concerned with the use of social media at your workplace. Through taking part in the interview you will be contributing to knowing the trends in the use of networking in the sector and there are no risks involved.

How we protect your privacy

All the information you provide will be treated as confidential. All information will be used anonymously with no reference to your name.

Your personal details will not be disclosed by the researcher to any party or at any time for any reason. Once the study has been completed the recordings of the focus groups/ interview will also be held in a secure and confidential environment during the study and destroyed later.

YOU WILL BE OFFERED A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET TO KEEP

If you require any further information about this project, then please contact:
Cardiff Metropolitan University: email: st@outlook.cardiffmet.ac.uk
Appendix 2: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Cardiff Metropolitan University
Ethics Committee

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Cardiff Metropolitan University Ethics Reference Number:
Participant name or Study ID Number:

Title of Project: An evaluation of the use of Social Media for business communications and how it affects productivity/cost effectiveness at the workplace.

Name of Researcher: XXX

Participant to complete this section: Please initial each box.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. [ ]

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. [ ]

3. I agree to take part in the above study. [ ]

4. I agree to the interview / focus group / consultation being recorded [ ]
   Yes  No

5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications [ ] [ ]

6. I would like my organisations’ name to be anonymised in all publications [ ] [ ]

_______________________________________   ___________________
Signature of Participant                     Date

_______________________________________   ___________________
Name of person taking consent                 Date

____________________________________
Signature of person taking consent
Appendix 3: LETTER TO AN ORGANISATION

Dear Sir/Madam,

Hope all is well your end. I’m contacting you regarding a research I’m doing for an MBA with Cardiff Met University, UK. We have just completed the research modules and now moving to the dissertation phase. I have selected Social Media vs traditional media in the oil and gas sector in UAE as a topic.

For this research, I would like to conduct focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews with selected employees who possess the knowledge and information that will contribute to the research. I already have a list of select employees who can be interviewed as part of the study.

This research project has been approved by Cardiff Metropolitan University and all data to be collected will be kept confidential in accordance with the university’s ethics code of practice.

I would appreciate if you could provide me with access to the selected employees who will be asked to take part in the interviews voluntarily and any quotes will be anonymous. Their names will not be disclosed. Each interview will take 15-25 minutes and the topics to be discussed include:

- What kind of social media platforms does the participant use?
- Do they think social media affect productivity and cost effectiveness?
- Do they think oil and gas sector should use social networking for business?
- What are the challenges faced by organisations using social media?
- What are the potential risks of social networking?
- Are there controls needed over the use of social media. Any suggestions?

It will be my pleasure to share the outcome of my research with the participants when completed. if you have any queries please contact me via my Cardiff Metropolitan University email: st@outlook.cardiffmet.ac.uk

Thank you in advance.

Yours sincerely

MBA AE Student

Muawia E. I. Babiker
Student ID no.: st20119316
An evaluation of the use of Social Media and how it affects productivity/cost effectiveness at the workplace. A study on the Oil and Gas Sector in UAE

Appendix 4

GANTT CHART

Last updated 16/05/2017

Dissertation Submission

Completed

Pending