

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Influence of Facebook usage on employee productivity: A case of university of cape coast staff

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The rapidity in the rise of social media is changing how organizations operate and handle their communication. Several organizations are in search of ways to seize advantage in this emerging era marked by greater real time, interactivity and transparency. The new media, of which Facebook is part, is growing so fast that it makes it imperative for employees to embrace the medium in the workplace. Facebook's widespread among workers has given an interest in how Facebook usage is related to the output of workers. The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of Facebook usage on the productivity of employees of University of Cape Coast. A questionnaire purposely designed for the study was used to gather the data from a sample of 100 respondents purposely selected from the staff of the University of Cape Coast, after a pilot study. The time spent and the number of times people visit Facebook has both positive and negative effects on the output of workers. It also emerged that Facebook has become an important part of people's lives. The study showed that the use of Facebook during productive hours has a significant influence on staff productivity. Facebooking by employees affect their skills/ability, knowledge/qualification, and productivity/outcomes.

**Key words:** Facebook, University of Cape Coast, facebooking

## INTRODUCTION

It is nearly impossible for people to go about their everyday lives today without making use of some form of social media. The popularity of social media has grown as a result of the rapid changes in technology as computers are now more mobile, and can be used virtually anywhere.

According to Diercksen et al. (2007) companies are increasingly using social media as a new way to reach customers more effectively, and to spread news of their activities more rapidly. The ubiquitous use of social media has also brought new challenges to today's workplace.

One of these is the apparent addiction that the millennial generation has to Facebook. Social interaction used to take place on a much smaller scale between relatives, friends and associates in households and communities. Presently, the situation has changed considerably and today one rarely finds an organisation that functions without applying Information and Communication Technology in its day-to-day activities. According to Von (2015) within less than ten years since Facebook was founded in 2004, roughly one seventh of all living humans regularly engaged with Facebook, and Facebook's user

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base is still growing today, albeit at a slower rate.

The concept of social networking is not new because human interaction inherently promotes the formation of networks through social contact (Tapscott and Williams, 2007). For some years, employers have had to deal with issues concerning employees internet use through organisational ICT infrastructures. In the organisational context, the problems associated with online social networking (OSN) technology as well as the nature of the content on such sites present employers with a dilemma. As with organisations in general, employees at tertiary education institutions have varying computer and internet literacy and skill levels (Ferreira, 2009).

There has been an explosion in the popularity of social media sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Bebo and LinkedIn in recent years. Their popularity has transcended languages, borders and cultures, and it is probably no exaggeration to say that there is a social media revolution. Facebook alone has over 500 million users, equating to roughly one in every 13 people on this planet. It is estimated that over 50% of these users log on to Facebook every day. By anyone's standards, these are staggering figures and yet they relate only to one social media site (Brown, 2011). Facebook is a social networking site designed to connect users. It allows individuals to create profiles that include personal interests, affiliations, pictures, and anything else a user wants to post (Educause, 2006). According to DMR (2016), Facebook is the largest social network in the world with over a billion and a half monthly active users.

The use of Facebook has become more of a banality in organizations and many have enacted policies regarding their use/misuse at work. The use of Facebook during work hours brings a new set of challenges to employers. It also has some advantages for employees. Facebook is web-based service that allows employee to:

1. Construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system
2. Articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and
3. View and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd and Ellison, 2008). The use of Facebook at the workplace during productive hours for personal gratification has become a matter of concern to employers.

The uses and gratification theory suggests that media audiences play an active role in interpreting and integrating media into their own lives. The theory interrogates why people actively seek out specific media to fulfill their needs. There are four different activities; diversion, personal relationships, personal identity or individual psychology and surveillance that audiences are assumed to partake in. According to Boer and Brennecke (2003), the uses and gratification theory attempts to explain the uses and functions of the media for

individuals, groups, and society in general. The uses and gratification theory has three main objectives:

1. To explain how individuals use mass communication to gratify their needs. What do people do with the media?
2. To discover underlying motives for individuals' media use.
3. To identify the positive and the negative consequences of individual media use. At the core of uses and gratifications theory is the assumption that audience members actively seek out the mass media to satisfy individual needs.

Early in the history of communications research, an approach was developed to study the gratifications that attract and hold audiences to the kinds of media and the types of content that satisfy their social and psychological needs (Cantril, 1942).

### **Facebook usage by organizations**

Facebook can be considered a fantastic resource to the working class. For example, social media have been credited with helping employees think outside the box. Research has shown that employees who utilize social media are nine percent more productive in the workplace.

Valenzuela et al. (2009) found that intensity of Facebook use was related to civic participation, life satisfaction, and social trust. Diercksen et al. (2007) opined that sites such as Pinterest (a site where the user can "pin" the things he/she likes in a particular category to create a "board" to group them all together, for example, future wedding ideas) and Instagram (a site dedicated to taking pictures and allowing them to tell an entire story) allow members to instantly see the creative works of a friend, and can help the user to brainstorm new ideas.

These sites are a valuable resource that can really help spark new and exciting ideas for work. Social media not only help employees to become more productive; they also allow employees to stay current with market trends and issues important to consumers as well as the general public. By staying informed in these areas, employees are also better prepared to troubleshoot potential setbacks and are more likely to create good public relations through the work they are doing. By identifying the trends, they can then tailor their own work to incorporate them, providing consumers with the sense that they are buying from a company who is diligent in staying current.

### **Facebook status updates**

According to Von (2015), Facebook status updates are short textual messages Facebook users can post, and these status updates are permanently displayed on the

user's own profile page and might appear in the automatically curated and personalized social awareness streams.

### Benefits of Facebook usage to the workplace

Social media and for that matter Facebook usage varies from organization to organization. Some people think that social media sites such as Facebook are time-wasters; however, a number of studies have shown just the opposite. Some studies show that employees who use social media sites are nine percent more productive than those who do not (Fahmy, 2009).

Fahmy found that 70% of employees who use internet for personal surfing result in sharpened employee's concentration. Alguenza et al. (2012) posit that using social media sites may actually increase employee productivity. Alguenza et al. (2012) further state that employees who are more social by nature and are connected to other people through social media sites are better persons in the workplace, which means they are skilled at interacting with others and solving problems, and that it is assumed that by taking short breathers, the brain will be refreshed and renewed.

The positive impact of social media and for that matter Facebook cannot be overemphasized as espoused by Avalos (2011) and cited in Ashraf and Javed (2014) that people no longer ask for mail addresses or mobile numbers instead of that people ask each other for their social network identities for carrying on long term contacts. This means that once a person's Facebook identity (real name or any name used on Facebook), is known, that person can easily be located and a conversation initiated. Other details such as phone numbers and email addresses could be obtained through Facebook.

Flynn (2011) is of the opinion that Facebook usage by employees can become strength for organizations when it is used to build good relationship with employees, and that it can be used to collect information about employee behavior as well as to train them. Flynn (2011) concludes that social networking affects employee's performance positively by increasing their knowledge, abilities, motivational level and close association with organization.

### Implications for human resource management

There used to be a belief that human resource professionals often are slow in embracing change when it comes to anything technology related, however, the popularity and possibilities that Social Media have brought are causing human resource professionals to take notice (Total HR, 2014). Total HR (2014) outlines four areas of effects that social media can have on human resource management and these are;

**1. Using social media to expand networks and increase access:** Regardless of the human resource profession, it is a common knowledge that using social media allows professionals to expand their networks on several different levels. Human resource practitioners can expand their networks, thereby increasing access to the latest information and cutting edge tools.

**2. Quantify the productivity and value of social media:** Organizations are convinced that employees would spend all day surfing and not getting any work done. Human resources departments are still fighting this battle with social media. Human resource practitioners must understand which social media tools and strategies will give them a greater positive result. While using social media tools can provide convenience, establishing appropriate metrics to measure results is essential. Simply having a Facebook account is not enough.

**3. Never truly disconnected as expectations evolve:** Before Facebook and iPhones, it was understood that people were not available all the time. Even though companies now try to encourage "disconnect" time, it has become essential for organizations to set expectations and manage those expectations where using social media is concerned. To understand customer demographics and needs, social media can be used to find business solutions faster and from a wider variety of sources. It also means that a business can respond to the needs of their customer faster as well.

**4. Do not be afraid — Support innovation:** There is tremendous potential in social media for collaboration and the sharing of real-time ideas or solutions with team members. The application of private enterprise tools can be used for internal conferences or team development and meetings. Facebook and blogging tools can be used to collaborate and inform employees and clients about practices and methodologies of businesses. So many positive applications can still be discovered and harnessed to improve both productivity and profitability. The more these tools are used, the more people will grow in their roles.

Human resource practitioners can learn about the social media tools that are available, and how they can be leveraged in the workplace. Many of the rules regarding what works have yet to be written or tested (Total HR, 2014).

### Statement of the problem

The popularity of social media and their increasing use in the workplace present some concerns for employers. There are indications that employers cannot completely prevent the use of social media during work hours. A state of uncertainty arises where employees tend to spend more time on social media such as Facebook engaging in non-work related activities such as creating

**Table 1.** Frequency of Facebook visit in a day.

Response	Percentage (%)
Very often	18.0
Always	14.0
Not too often	32.0
Occasionally	36.0
Total	100.0

**Table 2.** Number of hours spent on Facebook in a day during office hours.

Response	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 h a day	67.0
1 to 3 h a day	22.0
4 to 6 h a day	6.0
7 to 14 h a day	1.0
Total	100.0

personal networks, checking on family and friends, streaming and downloading music and video, checking sports scores, following social bookmarks, chatting with friends, reading and commenting on people's statuses, perusing people's gallery of photos and looking for friends.

According to Munene and Nyaribo (2013), organizations on a global scale have been faced with a multitude of challenges and are looking for different ways to remain afloat. The development of social media policies and internet use policies by most employers is at an early stage as most employers do not have proper policies, although practice has dictated use of arbitrary control and restriction. One of the challenges of this business age is how to enhance productivity of the workforce in order to increase profits and avoid wastage of applications based on participation and feedback that encourages free access and exchange of valuable information.

Social media and for that matter Facebook has made access to information as well as exchange of vital information on time very easy and cost effective, especially on real time basis. With the underlying assumption that Facebook usage has effect on employees' productivity, the present study is deemed necessary. The study intends to assess the time spent by employees of University of Cape Coast on Facebook, and how this affects their productivity. University of Cape Coast has three main categories of employees; senior members, comprising lecturers and registrars, senior staff, comprising administrative staff and research assistants and junior staff, comprising messengers, cleaners and clerks.

Most of the employees who fall under the senior staff category have access to computers in their offices, and most of these computers are connected to the internet.

**Table 3.** Frequency of Facebook status updates.

Response	Percentage (%)
1 to 3 times daily	60.0
4 to 6 times daily	16.0
7 to 9 times daily	5.0
Total	100.0

Some also have smart phones that are constantly connected to the internet.

### Research questions

The following research questions were developed to guide the study:

1. How frequent do staff of UCC use Facebook?
2. What is the perception of UCC staff on the use of Facebook?
3. What is the opinion of UCC staff on the influence of Facebook usage on work productivity?

### METHODOLOGY

The study made use of descriptive survey. One hundred (100) respondents were selected using the purposive sampling method. By the use of purposive sampling, we (the researchers) specially looked for administrative staff of UCC who use Facebook and administered the questionnaire to them to fill. The research instrument used was a questionnaire purposely designed for this study. The overall reliability coefficient after the pilot testing was 0.75 using the Chronbach Alpha reliability coefficient. The set of questionnaire was hand-delivered to the respondents. The respondents were briefed about the study, and also given the opportunity to ask questions to clarify issues they did not understand. The set of questionnaire was collected after they were duly completed.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the analysis of data from the respondents. The research questions were analysed using frequencies and percentages. The number of respondents was 100.

#### Research question 1 –How frequent do staff of UCC use Facebook?

Some questions on the instrument sought to find the frequency of Facebook usage among UCC staff. Tables 1, 2, and 3 present the results.

Tables 1, 2 and 3 all provide information on the frequency of Facebook usage by the respondents. From Table 1, 36% of the respondents expressed the view that they occasionally visited Facebook in a day, while 32%

**Table 4.** Perception of UCC staff on the use of Facebook.

<b>Use of Facebook</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Networking	20.0
Keeping in touch with friends	46.0
Communicating with classmates and colleagues	17.0
Meeting new people	7.0
Sharing pictures	3.0
Fun	7.0
Total	100.0

revealed that they visited Facebook not too often in a day. 14% of the respondents visited Facebook always while 18 respondents (18%) visited Facebook very often in a day. From Table 2, 67 respondents said they spend less than an hour on Facebook in a day, 22 respondents spend between one and three hours on Facebook in a day, six respondents spend between four and six hours on Facebook in a day, five respondents spend between seven and nine hours on Facebook in a day. From Table 3, 60% of the respondents reported that they updated their Facebook statuses one to three times a day while 16% updated their statuses four to six times daily and five respondents said they updated their statuses seven to nine times. These indicate that a great number of the respondents regularly logged onto Facebook and updated their statuses. The results are congruent with Brown (2011) who found that over 50% of people log on to Facebook every day.

### **Research question 2: What is the perception of UCC staff on the use of Facebook?**

This research question sought to find out how staffs of UCC used in this study perceive Facebook use with regard to its relevance or usefulness. Table 4 displays the results. From Table 4, out of the 100 respondents, 90% use Facebook to improve social relationships and interactions with others. This is shown in the sum of respondents who use Facebook for networking, keeping in touch and communicating with old and new friends. 10% use Facebook for entertainment (sharing pictures and having fun). In relation to this, Flynn (2011) opined that Facebook usage by employees can become strength for organizations when it is used to build good relationship with employees, and that it can be used to collect information about employee behaviour as well as to train them.

### **Research question 3: What is the opinion of UCC staff on the influence of Facebook usage on work productivity?**

The focus of this research question is on the impact of

Facebook on work productivity in UCC. We are interested in the perception of respondents on whether Facebook usage has a positive or negative influence on their work productivity. Tables 5 and 6 present the results.

Table 5 indicated that majority of the respondents (79%) reported that Facebook usage does not have a negative impact on their work productivity while 21% said otherwise. The implication is that a great number of the respondents consider Facebook usage to have a positive rather than negative impact on their productivity. In relation to this, Alguenza et al. (2012) posited that using social media sites may actually increase employee productivity. A possible reason for Facebook usage increasing work productivity is indicated by Alguenza et al. (2012) when they stated that employees who are more social by nature and are connected to other people through social media sites are better persons in the workplace, which means they are skilled at interacting with others and solving problems and that it is assumed that by taking short breathers, the brain will be refreshed and renewed.

This supports the results on research question 2 which proved that majority of the respondents reported that Facebook usage has a positive impact on work productivity. In relation to the fact that 21% of the respondents, reported that Facebook usage has a negative influence on productivity, Abdulahi et al. (2014) found that users of social network sites such as Facebook might get addicted to the internet. It is possible that Facebook usage has some negative influence on work productivity because according to Bennett (2012) almost half of UK employees (44%) believe that social media platforms such as Facebook negatively impact office productivity.

From Tables 6, 36 out of 100 respondents solicit ideas from friends through Facebook, especially on how to do certain things related to work. Again, 48 respondents learn a lot from their colleagues through Facebook while 16 respondents said they get advice quickly from their colleagues on Facebook. In relation to this finding, Bridge Consulting (2009) noted that the use of social media tools by organizations were to increase employee engagement, foster employee ideas and innovation, enhance customer relationships and employee productivity. They further noted that online social platforms expand learning options

**Table 5.** Does Facebook usage have a negative effect on work productivity?

Response	Percentage (%)
Yes	21.0
No	79.0
Total	100.0

**Table 6.** Positive influence of Facebook usage on work productivity of UCC staff.

Response	Percentage (%)
I am able to get advice from colleagues very quickly	16.0
I have learned quite a bit about my colleagues from Facebook	48.0
I solicit ideas from friends on Facebook on how to do certain things relating to work	36.0
Total	100.0

because they create collaborative environments for people to share and discuss knowledge informally.

## CONCLUSION

The study validates the fact that the use of Facebook by employees during working hours can be counter-productive if proper measures are not put in place to check its abuse.

From the findings, there is the need to put in some regulations to be sure that time spent on Facebook during productive hours are beneficial to the employer. The analysis revealed that social media usage by employees enhances employee productivity. Organizations encourage the use of social media by employees in order to increase employee involvement, promote the flow of ideas from employees, aid innovation, and increase customer relationships in order to promote employee productivity.

Relationship building is important to the society; hence the use of Facebook by employees to cultivate and improve their relationships must be encouraged. From the discussion, a confirmation of the theoretical framework is realized. Employees use a particular medium, and in this case Facebook, for the gratification that they derive from it. The pervasiveness of Facebook usage among workers in the University of Cape Coast is apparent from the study.

Time spent and the frequency of visit to Facebook can have positive and negative effect on employee output. It is certain that the growth of social media is not going to stop, and Human Resource practitioners must understand it to be a simple reality. The challenge is

integrating a cohesive, relevant and effective strategy at every level of an organization. By supporting innovation and not being afraid of change, one can stay a step ahead of the curve and make social media an ally as opposed to an ignorant enemy.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study contributes to the literature on the use of social media/technologies among workers during working hours in several important ways and provides some significant implications for consumer researchers and human resource practitioners. The study was however, limited by some factors hence some caution must be applied in the revision of its findings. First, the purposive sampling which is a non-probability sampling method was used in selecting respondents for the study; hence, not all staff of the University of Cape Coast who use Facebook had equal chance of being selected. Secondly, the instrument used had closed-ended questions which forced respondents to choose among the options available. These limitations potentially restrict the generalizability of the results.

Future research should address the limitations evident in the current study. Future studies are needed to assess a larger sample size, and test the results in multiple contexts. The use of other social network sites is also recommended for future study.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following

recommendations were made:

1. Higher education administrators can create an opportunity to help staff to use Facebook in ways that are beneficial to their specific duties and, by extension, to their overall employment experience.
2. Given that Facebook continues to be popular, and that universities are interested in increasing productivity and creating a lively working environment, it is important for those working in higher education to familiarize themselves with Facebook (and other such social media platforms) and to design and support interventions that meet staff expectations in order to help them give off their best.

## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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