

# The Impact of Social Media on Creativity and Innovation in the Modern Business World

WEKNOW MAGWENZI  
ISMU, Mozambique

Jacob Munodawafa  
USTM, Mozambique

**Abstract:- It is of no doubt that social media is playing a pivotal role on creativity and innovation in the modern business world. Many companies are gaining a competitive edge over their competitors in the market due to their advanced creativity and innovation attributed to use of social networks. Although there are disadvantages associated with the use social networks, it is recommended for companies to aim at reducing these disadvantages and maximize on the advantages. In fact, social media is enabling companies to reach out to more customers and cater to their specific needs in a better way. Therefore, a better brand image is built for the benefit of the companies through social media.**

**Keywords:- Creativity, Competitive edge, Innovation and Social media.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Social media is a form of electronic communication through which users create online communities meant to share ideas and information such as websites for social networking and micro-blogging. Social media as part of social technology uses human, intellectual and digital resources to influence social processes, thereby impacting on business creativity and innovation. Creativity in business is the power to invent and design products and services that will ensure the success of a company. According to Rouse, (2017), business innovation is an organizational process meant for the introduction of new ideas, workflows, methodologies, services or products. Creativity can be distinguished from innovation only on the bases of implementation. Creativity is a production of novel and useful ideas, while innovation is the implementation of creative ideas. Thus, innovation is more than a new idea or an invention. An innovation requires implementation, either by being put into active use or by being made available for use by other parties, firms, individuals or organizations, (Teresa et al, 2016). In this present economic era, businesses do have many stakeholders whose ideas and contributions through crowdsourcing on social media lead to improvement in product marketing, product quality, market-share and invention, though the misuse of social media related environment can pose a great threat to business creativity and innovation. The general objective of this research was to explore the role of social media in promoting creativity and innovation in business, and the specific objective was to evaluate the positive and negative impact of social media on business creativity and innovation. Through a desk research, these objectives were attained.

## II. METHODOLOGY

Desk research method was used in gathering data on the impact of social media on creativity and innovation in the modern business world. The data was gathered from different articles written on how companies are making use of social media platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter to promote their internal creativity and innovation. Desk research is the collection of secondary data from internal sources, the internet, libraries and published reports (Juneja, 2022). It is frequently carried out at the beginning of a study as a stage-gate to see if more costly primary research is justified. Desk research is very effective and can be conducted in starting phase of market research as it is quite quick, cheap and most of the basic information could be easily fetched which can be used as benchmark in the research process.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social media has become a part of our daily life as many people are always on social media platforms, especially the young generation. The users of social media platform have risen despite many arguments that it is affecting people's quality of life. This is attributed to the socio-economic benefits associated with it. Evidently, the users of Facebook have risen by 525million from 75million to 600million in 2008 to 2011. By 2018, people using Facebook rose to over 2 billion ruling supreme with the majority of the market-share according to Statista.

In addition, LinkedIn rose by 80 million from 20 million to 100 million in 2008 to 2011. Such an increase is significant and one can argue that, business creativity and innovation promoted at these platforms attracts many users who are in different business sectors across the globe. In Southern Africa, social networks are accessible from most available digital devices. Furthermore, accessibility by people on such devices is also due to their affordability. Many researches and studies have been conducted by different scholars on the importance of social media in business and life and, the focal point is the creativity and innovation it enhances. These researches act as a base to this research paper as they bring in debateable issues related the role of social media in business and life.

Social media has a profound impact in the world, as it is transforming the way people communicate, do business, communicate in life and access entertainment. Despite the challenges, the benefits of social media far outweigh the risks, and its growth is likely to continue in the coming years. Despite the widespread adoption of the new technologies, there are challenges and risks. The challenges and risk are possibly because of low computer literacy as technology

learners require more time in using social media and email services, leading to the lowering of industrial productivity. In addition, this could have been a result of resistance from employees in using new technology, as new things are always resisted in organizations. Once resisted, automatically productivity falls pushing the employer to look for an alternative. The acceptance of the use of email services by businesses and organizations in the 1990s can be attributed to intensive computer literacy programs which empowered many employees across the globe especially in the developed countries. In this case, companies recognised the importance of email services and went further to link it with social media to boost their competitiveness in the market. The powerful combination of social media and email allows marketers to interact with consumers, fans, followers and friends on a whole new and more personal level, (Bowker, 2020). By plugging your social media content into your email newsletters you can extend your visibility and utilise social media's viral effects and its ability to generate brand awareness and engagement instantly at the click of a button. This will not only guarantee your website more traffic and provide you with access to new audiences, it will also allow you to show thought leadership. But one has to be smart. There is need to recognise that you are dealing with different types of consumers, with different attributes. Thus, one has to respond to them accordingly, whilst also recognising that the strength of email marketing campaign lies in providing a wealth of opportunities for them to contact and interact with you.

In the whole world, even by rural people, sharing images and video content on YouTube for example indicates higher engagements and exposure among the communities. We should therefore encourage the use of social media as a development platform form of business and life. According to the US Consumer Panel from comScore, Facebook had the greatest engagement in time with the audience in 2015. A number of companies use engages customers, potential consumer and any other stakeholders, thereby doing crowdsourcing which benefits companies with knowledge and ideas on their products or services.

Researches done in recent years suggest that social media platforms in particular, play an important role in empowering open creativity and innovation networks, which involve a diverse set of partners, and have been known as a key driver for the sustainable development of new products and services in organizations. Social media platforms present an opportunity for firms to create online communities where users engage in collaborative practices to create value by submitting product reviews, providing feedback, generating ideas, suggesting new solutions to the problems, and identifying new sources of innovation and creativity. There is a growing body of literature suggesting that, businesses can reap significant benefits if they use social media to collaborate with their external partners, suppliers, customers, and other stakeholders, and to engage in open innovation and creative activities with them. These benefits can be co-creation of new solutions, increased efficiency saving and economies of scale, improved metadata (knowledge of who knows what and who knows whom), and enhanced individual and organizational learning. This can only be possible if

companies on social media platforms provide the users especially customers and potential customers with quick answers, promotions, educational content, interesting visuals, funny content, exclusive content and competition among different brands. For this to happen creativity and innovation are called for and companies like Sharpie and HubSpot are not an exception and they are doing it on Twitter and Pinterest respectively. According to the [Sproutsocial.com/index](https://sproutsocial.com/index), the research done in 2017 shows that respondents accepted that brand actions which show creativity and innovation prompt customers to purchase.

Evidently, there are a number of companies across the globe, which are making use of social media in promoting their internal creativity and innovation. These companies include Sharpie, Hudspot, Weapons Plus Martial Arts Supplies, Evian, Openview Partners and Sammy's Woodfired Pizza. Sharpie is the permanent marker company, Hudspot is a B2B company that provides inbound marketing tools to small businesses, Weapons Plus Martial Arts Supplies is a company that supplies martial art equipment, Evian is the bottled-water company, Openview Partners is a B2B capital firm and Sammy's Woodfired Pizza is a fast food company with restaurants in San Diego.

Through social media and other marketing efforts, Sharpie has taken an ordinary commodity and turned it into a common noun. Sharpie excels on Twitter, but they also make good use of their blog and Instagram and have even formed their own community through social networking. This company spotlights its customers. Smart businesses know that satisfied, loyal customers drive their business. One way to increase loyalty and retention is to focus attention on your customers' creativity. Sharpie does this through sharing samples of customers' artwork online and also features some case studies. Sharpie makes a subtle double-play on their blog. First, they tell positive stories about their customers. Second, they use blog posts to inspire creativity from their own fans. It's as if they're saying, "Who can top this Sharpie Snow Leopard?" Sharpie also started its own online community. This strategy won't make sense until one reach a certain size, but at some point there is need to decide on how to take audiences from the public social networks and create the company's unique community. In fact, Social Media Examiner recently did this with Networking Clubs. Sharpie invites their community to engage through art challenges where users voted for the best submissions. All this shows how Sharpie is creative and innovative on social media in trying to increase its market share and source knowledge and ideas from its fans, which can be used internally by their employees to improve their product(s).

HubSpot as a leading B2B company that provides inbound marketing tools for small businesses, the key to their explosive growth comes through a strategic content creation plan. HubSpot knows what their audience wants and they write about hot topics. Hot topics like, "*Marketing in the Global Economy*" permit their audiences to participate in online discussions airing their knowledge and ideas about the topic. They also tag their articles based on experience level and provide a way to listen to their posts through a service called Vocalyze. It would be easy to overlook this, but HubSpot also does a great job providing easy access to a variety of social

sharing buttons. HubSpot excels at making their brand personal. On their Facebook page, they do this by featuring their employees. By featuring their employees, it promotes unity and a sense of belonging. Workers feel appreciated and to be part of the company, leading to improvement at workplace. Thus, creativity and innovation through social media lead to high productivity in the long run in an organization.

Weapons Plus Martial Arts Supplies is an early adopter of Google+ and has found many creative ways to take advantage of Google's power. One of their most compelling elements comes through their use of animated profile graphics. Like any good content strategy, Weapons Plus understands that their audience likes to read reviews of martial arts movies and get how-to instruction on making and using martial arts weapons. They also want to show their love. Another ninja trick (forgive the pun) exercised by Weapons Plus is to take full advantage of the "About" page to get lots of Google juice. The Recommendations links are a perfect way to tie your Google+ page to your other online properties. Thus, Weapon Plus Martial Arts Supplies is using the social media to boost its creativity and innovation for its business advantage.

A YouTube page developed by Evian is highly sophisticated and it is worth studying at both academic purposes and business purposes, as far as business creativity and innovation is concerned. They initiated a pervasive campaign with the "Live Young" motif and all of their images and products reinforce this through the idea of fuelling the Evian baby inside (which, of course, needs to drink Evian water). In addition, another excellent idea implemented on Evian's YouTube channel are user-generated videos meant to source new innovative ideas from this platform users. Their aim is to create the world's longest user-generated videos, through allowing users to create short video clips that tie into the theme of their choice. Although the technology required to accommodate this is expensive, but it is essential for businesses to look for ways on how to get fans to create content on their behalf. Once content is created by fans, it therefore means that there is going to be less work for the employees. Instead, the employees will be left with the duty of synthesising and perfecting the content forwarded by the fans to produce a unique and competitive product.

Openview Partners as a B2B venture capital firm, helps emerging growth technology companies with start-up funding. They have added 10,000 new subscribers through their social media strategies on their blog. The authors of Openview's blog understand that good content draws new readers. That's why they make it really easy and compelling to sign up for their newsletter. By making it easy to sign up, many new readers subscribe. In addition to the ubiquitous sign-up sheet found next to every blog post, the site provides a pop-up invitation to new site visitors who haven't signed up before. Openview partners also employs another smart tactic by making their posts readily available for mobile readers. They do this through a service called Google Currents. A venture capital firm could portray a stiff, conservative image to clients. Certainly they need to convey confidence and stability, but that doesn't mean they can't be personable and fun. Open view strikes this balance well by allowing staff to show a professional and a fun-loving photo on their "Meet the Authors" page. The staff by doing so will be

effectively participating in the company activities in a positive way, which gives the organization a competitive advantage.

Sammy's Woodfired Pizza, which is a regional chain based in San Diego, effectively uses social media to grow their audience through creativity and innovation on social media. On Twitter, Sammy regularly publish coupons, promote causes and share information for their partners or about important topics. For restaurants, it's important to present your food favourably. Sammy's takes advantage of photos on Twitter and videos on Facebook to do this. As a result of its creativity the company manages to be competitive and its market-share is increasing.

However, organizations can also face threats and weaknesses through the use of social media, (Kane, 2017). Social media can be a threat if competitors use shared information, and it can bring weaknesses when it is negatively affecting organizational productivity. Productivity can be affected when workers are spending much of their time on social media platforms, instead of doing their work in a company. In addition, productivity can be negatively affected if employees resist the use of social media platforms especially during their early days of introduction in a company. Abuse of social media platforms by business competitors and hackers erodes the creativity and innovation embedded in social media. For example, fast food chain McDonalds operating in in Southern Africa and other parts of the world is far from the only company to tap into the use of hashtags to try and engage the social media audience with its brand. In a January 2012 campaign, the firm used the hashtag #McDStories in an attempt to promote farmer stories that reflected positively on their brand. However, the farmer-based video content fell by the wayside as Twitter users seized control, and began hijacking the hashtag to criticise the company's food quality, service problems and horror stories. Although the hashtag is still in use, this incident showed that creativity and innovation associated with social media can be abused with an aim of discrediting other companies' brands.

Also in 2005, Jeff Jarvis wrote a blog post on *BuzzMachine.com*, which complained about a computer lemon that Dell sold the consumer, and the poor customer service thereafter. Headlined "Dell lies. Dell sucks," while the post was originally a mere rant, the article quickly became a saga that follows the firm today. Readers left comments with their own stories of woe, and while the PR nightmare emerged on social networks, Dell remained silent until it was too late to stem the flow -- before offering Jarvis a new computer, and then agreeing to a refund. In this case, social media worked to the disadvantage of Dell.

Furthermore, speculations also make social media the most immediate threat to a company's reputation. In May 2019, shares in the UK's Metro Bank plunged 11% before it could shake off inaccurate social media rumours that it was facing financial difficulties. In this case social media had a negative impact on the bank and there is a possibility that it was the work of competitors.

Employees in a company can post information on social media platforms, which can tarnish the image of the company. This erodes the essence of creativity and innovation associated with social media in a company. In 2011, an employee from



New Media Strategies sent out a tweet on automaker Chrysler's Twitter feed. "I find it ironic that Detroit is known as the motorcity and yet no one here knows how to f\*\*\*ing drive. "Naturally, the message came as a surprise to the thousands of Chrysler followers and the rest of the Twitter sphere. The firm's public relations department suffered a difficult morning before promptly firing the sender of the R-Rated tweet, and Chrysler did not renew its contract.

It is also observed that some articles blame social media for negatively affecting creativity and reduce the inventor's ability to create new ideas. Although social media websites may be seen as distractive from the main creative process, there are a number of advantages associated with the use of social media meant to serve creative and innovative employees and employers.

#### A. Advantages of Social Media on Business Creativity and Innovation

The exposure brought by the use of social media platforms in business enhances creativity and innovation as employers and employees inspire other people on the social media whose knowledge and ideas play a pivotal role in providing feedback and positive criticism, which benefits the company. The advantages of social media on business creativity and innovation are as follows:

##### ➤ *Social media as source of inspiration*

A good number of social networks support different types of media including images, animated GIFs, videos and sound tracks, allowing different companies to explore new ideas and inspirations for their own business projects. This is contrary to the old days, where business researchers used to research in huge library of books to learn about specific innovative and creative product or service designs. Joining a Facebook page or a Pinterest board allows employers and employees to preview hundreds and even thousands of business ideas and styles in less time and effort and benefit from the digital platforms.

##### ➤ *Getting business comments and feedback on social media*

Behance.net is one of the social media platforms that allow followers to comment and give a feedback on the presented business related topics. The feedback and comments are one of the most important learning resources for any employer or worker to improve work based on other people's feedback. Feedback is very essential in other sectors like photography for photographers to promote their work. Photography social networks such as 1x.com allow a better feedback experience through showing the photograph and camera specifications.

##### ➤ *Creation of learning groups or teams on social media*

Facebook groups and Google Plus groups are social groups which were built to bring together people with the similar interests to collaborate through idea sharing. A number of employees and employers have begun to build learning groups or teams based on specific business interests. In these teams or groups there is use of the teams or groups as a way to learn, discuss topical business related issues, and share projects among themselves. The local learning teams or groups are being replaced by digital learning teams or groups because they allow employees and employers to keep in touch

with each other (communicate) when they are on holiday or are travelling.

##### ➤ *Social media as a promotional tool*

From the sharing content to adding marketing and advertising methods, has been an extended responsibility of social network websites. Companies use websites of social networks to enhance their services and products. For example, Instagram pages provide the most effective method of promoting services and products. The advertising features in Twitter can be used to promote products and services among Twitter's large pool of users. LinkedIn among other social networks presents a business-wise platform, where people can add their curricula vitae, projects, and even apply for vacant jobs. Advertising jobs on LinkedIn is creative since it is easier to track the profile of a particular job seeker and find the most suitable candidate for the job.

##### ➤ *Learning and expanding knowledge on social media*

A number of the educational institutions and businesses use different social networks to share their organizational news and resources. Many people prefer to follow these organizations on social network websites because it is easier to reach and allow them to follow all the resources and projects directly from their Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn profiles. The users of these social networks use the acquired knowledge to create a wider base of innovation and creativity in the companies they own or work. This is echoed by Harrysson et al (2016), who state that, the most widespread advantage of social media is to have greater access to knowledge from experts within and outside the enterprise or organization. Through the use of videos and knowledge-sharing platforms meant to engage stakeholders like customers remotely rather than travelling to meet them, many companies have achieved cost reduction. Also knowledge crowdsourcing is now being promoted through the use of social media where people share papers and do some presentations like academia.edu.

#### B. Disadvantages of social media on business creativity

Despite the advantages of social media mentioned above, there are also a number of disadvantages brought by the use of social media. This is attributed to social media addiction, especially while at work thereby affecting productivity. The disadvantages of social media in business are as follows:

##### ➤ *Time Wastage*

It is of no doubt that productive time is lost due to social media addiction. This is because checking new updates and engaging with others on social media platforms all the time consumes one's productive time. The presence of social media platforms on people's mobile devices promotes the loss of productive time as employers and employees usually check social media profiles on both their computers and mobile devices much of their time during working hours. That is why many firms at times block social media websites from the use of their employees as a way of promoting high productivity. In this case, it means, social media is the enemy of industrial productivity. While it is helpful to communicate with others around the world and share some business experiences, it is also of paramount importance to reduce such activities to focus more on business development. Thus,

certain applications at work can be put in use to block the specific website or internet to help employees to focus on tasks that are more essential. Using such applications like hootsuite.com is important in making employees spend less time managing all social profiles through one application. As a result, this will be reducing time wastage, which is an effect of social network use.

➤ *Creativity Reduction*

The large number of shares and likes on social media hinders inventors from the reality of creative processes. This is because instead of focusing on their own production or invention, they spend much of their time reviewing others' shares and works. There is need for a balanced use of website though there are many inspirational resources on social media websites. To avoid this, people should focus on social networks that help in the development of their skills rather than those which do not. A number of applications allow people to view and share work from one simple interface such as buffer.com.

➤ *IP (Intellectual Property) Assets*

One of the greatest disadvantages of using social media websites is the stealing of other people's ideas and sharing copyrighted material. Instead of getting feedback when sharing your work, other people can either steal it or copy it without your permission on social media networks. Importantly, social media websites like 500px.com disables the ability of people from copying one's work. It is essential to understand the copyright issues related to one's work and share creative work carefully through social media websites. To prevent unauthorized reproduction and theft of other people's ideas and material, some people should use social networks, which help them in copyrighting their work.

➤ *Social media makes everyone an inventor*

Users are permitted by all social networks to upload an invention without putting into consideration issues about the quality and even the ownership of the original invention. Every person is allowed to upload inventions on social networks even if the inventions do not worth the time for other people to view and share. The ultimate result is that the good works are lost among all the other unworthy inventions. In this case, best inventors are difficult to be identified among a large number of beginners. Social networks like Facebook and Twitter have such problems. In contrast, there is a rating system in specialized networks like Behance.net that allow other professional designers to rate an invention. This is a way of doing away with bad if not unqualified submissions. Choosing the right social media to share one's work like Behance.net is of great importance. This is because social networks like Behance.net are effective in sharing one's talent and experience.

➤ *Loss of Real Life Sense*

By nature, people are social creatures who need physical association among themselves. This is important in maintaining the physical life style that enhances the creation of new ideas. Communication between people, learning about other people's mind-set drives more ideas and inspire employers and employees in a company to think with the customer in mind. Despite the fact that, the digital world

allows one to meet with other people from different parts of the world virtually however, it denies people of the real meaning and sense of social communication. People tend to communicate better when they talk face-to-face rather than using chat applications. Furthermore, as far as social network websites are concerned, one should make sure that he/she keeps his/her physical life active and running, especially in business since it promotes healthy brains which enhance creativity and innovation.

➤ *Easy Information Accessibility*

Easy accessed information has less value as compared to the one that requires more effort to access. In today's digital world, people can easily find millions of answers by just writing any question on social networks. The credibility of these answers cannot be guaranteed, as some need to be investigated further. It is highly possible for a number social media users to share unverified information through social networks with a quick and simple click on the computer. Many shares on different social media have buried the culture of verification. It is of paramount importance for business employers and employees to share trusted and credible information from websites, which are trusted and credible. Such websites share verified information. It should be a must that, unverified information should not be shared on social network as it can mislead people. Evidently, a lot of wrong information has been spreading on the internet attributed to easy sharing without much restriction, while its content and credibility is questionable. With questionable data, whoever is going to make use of it will be doing the wrong thing, as he/she will also produce questionable product/services. Furthermore, easy access to questionable data defies the idea of creativity and innovation.

Considering the above mentioned advantages and disadvantages on the use of social media and its impact on innovation and creativity, it is important for employers and employees to understand that social media is an essential instrument that can be used in learning, finding inspiration, communicating with other business people, sharing ideas, and finding business opportunities. Regardless of that, it is also important for employers and employees to use social media websites carefully to avoid the disadvantages associated with them. The following are tips, which can help people to get the best out of social media as an instrument used in promoting business establishment, expansion and consolidation.

- Limit social networks usage time at work to avoid affecting production time;
- Select and use social networks that related to your business;
- Check the copyright issues when sharing your best work that represents your company;
- Promote your physical life by meeting your friends regularly instead of usually conducting them online;
- Make use of social media platforms as a learning platforms;
- Make use of social networks to build your professional profile ‘

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Considering that business creativity and innovation through the use of social networks is a topical issue in the present era, there is need for companies to reduce the disadvantages associated with social networks in business and maximize on the advantages that can be acquired from it. Therefore, it is so evident from this research that, the use of social media in business through crowdsourcing promotes creativity and innovation which works to the advantage of a company. The creativity is seen in the ability of companies to reach out to more customers and cater to their specific needs in a better way. Also, through social media companies can build their brand image. Thus, companies that are at maturity stage in their product lifecycle can adopt social media for survival. In contrast, the abuse of social media by some of its users creates a risky and porous business environment, which hinders genuine business creativity and innovation. It is therefore very important for business people to make use of social media in a way that it safeguards their creativity and innovation.

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