

**An exploration of the impact of social media usage on job performance and the  
implementation of social media policies at work:  
A study within the food and beverage industry in rural west Clare.**

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**Abstract:**

**An exploration of the impact of social media usage on job performance and the  
implementation of social media policies at work:**

**A study within the food and beverage industry in rural west Clare.**

**By Nicole Burke**

This is a qualitative study where managers of multiple restaurants are interviewed in relation to their employees' performance with regard given to technology usage and its impact. This study aims to determine the impact of the usage of social media in the workplace on job performance; if a social media policy exists and if so whether its implementation is considered beneficial. The study also explores if a policy is not existent what effect this and social media usage may have on job performance from a manager's viewpoint. The study was conducted on quite a small sample size so future studies could focus primarily on one organisation or on a larger sample. The results from this research could encourage further exploration into how employees are using social media both positively and negatively at work and to help encourage improvement or development of policies in the workplace.

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## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my mum, Marian Burke.

Thank you for everything.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The addition of technology has revolutionised the contemporary workplace and enabled the growth of globalisation but has also negatively impacted on job performance (Armache and Armache, 2015). Globalisation is the free flow of goods, services and knowledge across the world (Friedman, 2005), which with the help of technology has enabled information collected to be dispersed in a larger extent across the world.

It is now in the employers' best interest to apply a social media policy in work in order to minimise the negative effects social media can cause within any work place, as it acts as the employer's front line of defence against liability created through improper use of social media (Lieber, 2011). There is a risk of employees using social media in an inappropriate way (Landers and Callan, 2014) and the possible disclosure of information being inappropriately used and dispersed by others is a growing problem (Bolton *et al.*, 2013).

There is pressure on employers to decide if the benefits of social media outweigh the negatives. Social media usage in the workplace and its impact on job performance has conflicting views with those who see social media as positively increasing performance and some with concern in relation to social media having a negative impact and decreasing performance (Cao *et al.*, 2016; White, 2014).

This research conducts a qualitative study where managers of multiple restaurants are interviewed in relation to their employees' performance with regard given to technology usage and its impact. This study discusses social media usage and social media policies in relation to whether they are being adhered to within the food and beverage industry, if there is a flexible approach by managers towards implementation of policy and the negative impact it may have on performance. Information gathered is compiled and organised in a thematic structure. The negative impact of social media on job performance (if any) and the impact social media policies have on the organisation are tested, explained, explored and understood as a phenomenon.

Literature recognising the positive impact of social networking sites on organisations and their work practices is growing but there is very little literature at present in relation to the possible negative impact of social media in the workplace (Cao *et al.*, 2016). Kluemper, Mitra and Wang (2016) discuss the rapid growth of technology which is proving quite difficult for research to keep up.



Social media reviews covering vast areas have been conducted, primarily to give an brief overview of the existing research on the topic (Wu, Sun, and Tan 2013) while other researchers focused on specific uses, fields or disciplines (Magro, 2012) such as the health-care sector (Hamm *et al.* 2013).

Technology has been the main catalyst for globalisation's advancement but the impact of technology on the future of work and job performance is an uncertainty. Major discoveries in communication, information technology, and transportation have been the driving forces behind the early 21st century global market boom, in which job performance has been and will continue to be affected (Smith and Doyle, 2002).

The internet and information systems have had a huge impact on globalisation and in the workplace allowing for significant advancement and considerable problems. Vast amounts of data and information can be collected via the World Wide Web, where it is rare if a question cannot be answered with a search engine but with this comes potential negative impacts.

As technology continues to develop this can result in over sharing of information and risks associated with it. This study will look at the effect that social media usage in the workplace has on job performance and also explores social media policies written in some contracts of employment and if they are really being implemented in a satisfactory manner and if they are flexible? The study is based on qualitative data collected via interviews of managers in a number of local bars and restaurants within the food and beverage industry of west Clare, Ireland.

#### *Justification for research:*

Social media has evolved drastically over the last decade and social media management is a new issue for organisations. Its impact is not yet known as there is a lack of research in that area but as the use of social media increases and as issues arise within organisations both positive and negative, it will become a clear area in need of further research.

By researching how management view the issue of social media use, the severity or flexibility of the implementation of social media policies or lack of, and the impact this has on the job performance of employees, management can put practices in place which can be beneficial for the business. Organisations can use information gathered to improve their organisations.

### *Research Aims and Objectives*

The objective is to establish what impact exists with the usage of social media in the workplace; if a social media policy exists and whether it is implemented; and what effect these have on job performance from a manager's viewpoint. The researcher aims to collect findings that will be of use to other businesses or organisations encouraging future studies to be conducted in this area.

### *Overview of the Research:*

A review of the existing literature is completed, exploring the use of social media and its impact on employee job performance. Through exploration of the literature and analysing previously conducted research, a greater understanding of social media use is demonstrated and the connection between social media use by employees, social media usage policies and work performance.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### *Introduction*

The literature review aims to explore the key components of this research. Performance, technology (particularly social media) and social media policy usage are explored in the greatest depth. The impact of social media usage on employees and the impact it has on employees' job performance will be explored, and the outcomes from previous studies will be looked at to gain a better understanding of the size of the topic. The primary concept of work performance and its relationship with social media is discussed.

### **Performance**

“Performance in the workplace can be generally defined as the achievement of an expected or predetermined outcome” (Boileau, 2011, p16). In any organisation performance is important and dependant on the efficacy of human capital within the workplace; it is vital for management to invest in training and development to improve the work abilities of staff (Truitt, 2011). Emerging evidence is showing that organisations are monitoring their employees' internet use due to loss of productivity within the organisation (Ciocchetti, 2011). It is in employers' and managers' best interests to monitor their workers in relation to internet usage, including social media usage, as if they are unable to monitor it, it may have disastrous consequences with regards to the performance of employees as it may pose as a distraction for the employees and thus, impact the productivity of the organisation overall.

Nucleus Research (2009) discovered that staff members would use their own personal Facebook account during working hours for approximately 15 minutes a day on average while others admitted to using it up to 2 hours throughout the working day. Levin *et al.* (2008) also suggest that multiple organisations have banned usage of social media sites during working hours as they are aware that its use, may lead to a drop in their performance.

Organizations are interested in employee performance because it drives or affects their overall performance. If employees perform well and are productive, an organisation is likely to succeed, if employees under-perform or are unproductive, it can have a huge impact on the organisation. Technology can enable either outcomes depending on its use, be it personal checking of Facebook or Twitter essentially as a distraction, or if it is a requirement of your job to enable you to communicate and perform better.

The study by Nucleus Research (2009) also discovered that complete access to Facebook at work allows for a drop of 1.5 percent in productivity, which shows that social media usage in the workplace may lead to a loss in employees' productivity as a result of time wasting and distraction at work (Zhang et al., 2015; Sherman, 2009)

There has been little research conducted on employees' performance impacted by technology or social media and an awareness of how employees are communicating online is so important for managers to know (Solnet, Kralj and Kandampully, 2012). This is necessary in order to develop a greater understanding of employees in a workplace environment.

Performance management is made of a range of distinct tools and activities. "Performance management is defined as activity that establishes objectives through which individuals and teams can see their part in the organisation's mission and strategy; improves performance among employees, teams and, ultimately, organisations; holds people to account for their performance by linking it to reward, career progression and termination of contracts" (CIPD, 2016, p. 5).

Performance management can be described as a holistic set of processes (CIPD, 2016) which allows for good people management practice to be implemented and is complex and often misunderstood, including learning and development, organisational development and performance development. For reasons of the enabling of implementation of policies and procedures, it relates to this study.

Technostress due to the use of information communication technologies including social media in work environments has been a topic discussed in a number of studies. It seems that decreased productivity is one of the results of usage of ICT (Srivastava, Chandra and Shirish, 2015; Ahuja *et al.*, 2007). Managers need to be aware of this and be able to effectively manage usage as reduced job performance is a critical work behaviour in relation to the stress-creating conditions from the use of information communication technologies (ICTs) in the work environment (Cooper, Dewe and O'Driscoll, 2001)

Social media on mobile devices has enabled people to be in contact 24/7, the access and transfer of information is increasing, there needs to be effective change management in place to deal with this, as if incorrectly managed, it may result in lower job performance.

Problems that arise regarding trust relating to acceptable times of social media usage at work can result in low morale; this may affect productivity, with a shorter working week impacting wages employees leading to dissatisfaction, weakened job performance and less productivity

New technology has assisted with the creation of opportunities but has been a contributor to a rise in stress levels in younger and older workers with potential unethical temptations and conduct; therein lie opportunities to improve leadership practices (Mujtaba and Afza, 2011). Morris and Venkatesh (2000, p. 375) “investigated age differences in individual adoption and sustained usage of technology in the workplace using the theory of planned behavior. User reactions and technology usage behavior were studied over a 5-month period among 118 workers being introduced to a new software system.” Younger and older workers' technology usage decisions differ and result in different levels of job satisfaction. Here we see that moving towards technology or even the usage of social media at work may cause job dissatisfaction resulting in less productive workers if not properly trained.

Thirgood and Johal (2017) discuss the influence technology has on jobs and distractions such as emails, phone calls and instant messages may cause overall lower productivity. Legitimate work-based interruptions are inevitable, but employers now face a rising problem of technology-driven distractions such as social media and its impact on job performance.

After reading this literature, this study found that there has been insufficient exploitation of studies done on the affects technology (specifically social media) has on job performance. This study will explore if the fast growth of technology focusing primarily on social media is affecting job performance. The research conducted will determine if the impact is positive or negative. This study will allow for further insight into HR best practice determining if there is need to implement social media policies correctly into the workplace.

## **Social Media**

Lieber (2011, p. 94) states - “Social media includes a variety of electronic communications—most commonly networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, Plaxo, chat rooms, and the like. Social media also covers all forms of blogs, including Twitter (a micro-blog), wikis, online journals, diaries, personal newsletters, and so on. Video posting and viewing websites, such as YouTube, and “virtual worlds,” such as Second Life and World of Warfare, also are included under the umbrella term of social media”.

Social media usage for work can result in significant informational benefits; people may use social media to connect with work colleagues in order to get information relating to work (Schmidt et al.,2016).

Social media enables users to post, view and share content and communicate with each other. A study in the hospitality sector in Cape Metropole, South Africa was conducted to provide an alternative to ailing marketing strategies used by small businesses in the hope that the findings could assist SMME operators to access and review their social media platform usage and to maximise the capabilities the platforms may offer. Another previous study conducted theorised and classified social media in the workplace into work-orientated social media and socialisation orientated social media (Lin *et al.*, 2012). It is clear that social media amplifies the risks of reputation loss, the online leakage of confidential information, and various other financial, legal, or ethical risks to organisations and users (Jennings, Blount and Weatherly, 2014; Younkins, 2013).

There have been studies conducted to understand excessive social media use but there are little theory-based empirical studies exploring the effects of excessive usage of social media on job performance. For example, Hou *et al.*, (2014) developed and validated a psychometric scale used to assess excessive use of microblogs or Twitter among college students but did not develop a general theory on the consequences of excessive use of social media for individuals. So, it is clear there are gaps within the research area of social media and job performance.

A discussion by Yu *et al.* (2018) advances understanding of the irrational use of social media in the workplace and the influence of the cognitive and emotional states of employees, as well as their job performance and offers empirical evidence on the need of employees to regulate their social media usage behaviour to avoid the harmful outcomes of overuse. This study extends the conventional stressor–strain model and employs the transactional theory of stress and coping to explore the potential negative consequences of excessive social media use in the workplace from the perspective of technostress. It is clear that some managers are aware that employees are using social networking sites which is leading to time wasting but have not banned its use at work.

## **Social Media Use**

“Social media refers to websites and online tools that facilitate interactions between users, by providing them with opportunities to share information, opinions, and interests” (Khan, Swar and Lee, 2014, p. 607). Social media can be used to distribute information product or services allowing organisations to reach a wider audience (Kluemper *et al.*, 2016). Growing interest in social media and of its use in the workplace has developed rapidly over the past few years (Robert and Namusonge, 2015; Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012; Wang and Kobsa, 2009). Some scholars even discuss social media and its positive or negative impact on productivity (Humphry, 2014). Constant access to social media in work can have consequences that are both positive and negative. Employees need to be informed of social media usage monitoring, in order to prevent privacy violations (Elefant, 2011). Organisations still need to be vigilant with regard to relevant regulations (Moore *et al.*, 2011). Hollinshead (2013) discusses that this is necessary in order to abide by social media privacy and protection laws.

Over the years the role of a manager has changed (Fusi and Fenney, 2016), now the issue of promoting the safe and moderate use of social media within workplaces has become an important task for managers to deal with (Dreher, 2014). Regardless if social media is used for advertising, customers use platforms to discuss companies, and often staff interact in these discussions (Altes, 2009). A growing problem is trying to manage how employees act on social media even when they are not in work (Halleck, McKinney Jr. and Shao, 2016).

Numerous small businesses in West Clare have adopted social media for marketing because it is a faster and cheaper way of marketing in comparison to the traditional methods of advertising. Originally a personal interaction, social media platforms have made it hard for individuals to distance themselves from social activities while at work (Koch, Gonzalez and Leidner, 2012). If individuals are exposed to social media-related overload, they may feel exhausted due to excessive usage of social media (Maier, Laumer, Eckhardt and Weitzel, 2015; Maier, Laumer, Weinert and Weitzel, 2015) and this may lead to negative effects on job performance.

## **Social Media Misuse**

The negative implications of social media are gradually being explored to a greater extent by researchers (Lyndon, Bonds-Raacke, and Cratty, 2011); research previously conducted has

focused on one specific industry or one organisation (Bolton *et al.*, 2013) so there are numerous possible areas for future study. Social media has created numerous challenges in the form of difficult navigation between personal and professional boundaries, neglecting work, and increased stress due to the risks of social media use (van Zoonen and van der Meer, 2016; Kane, 2015). Employees can be distracted from their work tasks which leads to a lack of focus (Kluemper *et al.*, 2016).

Social media misuse serves as a disruption of organizational conduct and also exposes the businesses to potential leakages which can be damaging and costly if not dealt with. There is little litigation in relation to social media as employers are unsure about the rules due to this being a new area which is rapidly developing, and no organisations want to be the ‘example’. Lieber (2011) also notes that the employee usage of social media at home, from non-work-related devices can pose still employer liability and that employers can be legally liable for items posted by their employees as well as their former employees. A balance between the employees’ right to privacy and the employer’s legitimate interest to protect its business is necessary and even though there is a high volume of individuals using social media platforms, insufficient studies investigating the consequences experienced by the users have been conducted (Kittinger, Correia and Irons, 2012). It is important to be aware that, in turbulent times of change there is a need of competent, experienced and reliable performance which provides an excellent service to customers which is so vital. Creation of an awareness of changes of the business is important to ensure existing customers remain loyal to the organisation and for everyone to be in the loop.

### **Social Media Policies**

Social media policies are communication tools that are useful for revealing the organisational appreciation of the core value(s) of the social phenomenon in order to influence appropriate behaviour and engagement and address the challenges emanating from social media (Krüger, Brockmann and Stieglitz, 2013).

Social media growth has left organisations unsure of how to cope with new implications arising, policies are outdated, and others have no policy and are unsure of the correct procedures of implementation of an effective policy (Deckert, 2010). Pires, Harvey and Bosco (2015) explore how organizations react to social media, specifically whether they block social



media sites, use disciplinary action towards employees abusing social media use in the workplace or encourage the use of social media for work related purposes. Workplaces do not know if they should forbid social media usage or embrace it. Some may take disciplinary action when social media usage has been abused and others may turn a blind eye or give a warning.

A study taking a critical look at the consequences of the banning of social media applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social media platforms in the workplace was conducted. The research originates from a view that social media can exert a positive effect on social capital and thus, positively impacts individual job performance (Ali-Hassan, Nevo and Wade, 2015).

A topic that appeared throughout the research was in relation to communicating social media policies to workers and to help their understanding of how it would be done. A policy that is being implemented needs to be carefully designed and all factors of the business need to be taken into consideration before any policy is implemented. Regulation is a very important aspect to how social media is managed and its impact on job performance. Employers are being held responsible for employees inappropriate use of social media networks (Sanchez Abril et al., 2012). Lander and Callan (2014) outline the risks associated with social media usage including reputation and image being tarnished and waste of working time. Their study found that there was strong relationship between harmful social media behaviours and performance. Changes in law will play a huge factor.

## **Conclusion**

Technological development has paved the way for social media sites which have both benefits and negative impacts for businesses. Social media allows for communication with others and provides a gate way for businesses to interact with employees and customers on a platform that is accessible from multiple devices. Unfortunately, there are also negatives associated with social media. It can lead to a decrease in performance if not monitored correctly. If using social media during working hours, staff can experience a decrease in their performance level due to being distracted. The increase in technology and social media use has become problematic as there is difficulty in establishing boundaries and clearly setting out the suitable usage times for employees when using social media at work. As discussed, social media usage is impacting job performance and by analysing existing literature it is clear problems exist with regards to the usage of social media in the workplace. Therefore, it is clear there is a need for further research

in this area; this research aims to explain the social media impact on job performance and whether social media usage policies are being followed correctly.

### **Research Question**

Research Objective 1: An examination of how social media impacts job performance.

Research Objective 2: Examining if managers are aware that social media usage in the workplace can have positive or negative results on performance?

Research Objective 3: An investigation into the commercial intent and approach to social media usage and views on the implementation of social media usage policies in the workplace.

This study consists of interviews of both male and female managers, from West Clare. Interviews are conducted in the form of semi-structured interviews. The interviewees currently work as managers in a number of bars and restaurants within the food and beverage sector of west Clare.

### **Research Method**

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the usage of social media, social media policy implementation, the severity or flexibility of implementation and the impact of this on employee job performance in the food and beverage industry with a focus on West Clare in Ireland. This research aims to explore if social media has an impact on job performance, whether it is negative or positive, and if the implementation of a social media policy is in the interest of management to implement in the context of improving job performance in the food and beverage sector. This research could be useful for employers and managers in conducting related research in other sectors and for the instigation of future research.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### *Introduction*

The methodology section gives a synopsis of how this research project will be conducted and completed following the framework of the research onion developed by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2016). Different methodologies have been considered by the author and the advantages and disadvantages of each regarding the research topic have been explored. This chapter will discuss how research was conducted and provide justification for the chosen method. It will also explain how the data was analysed and treated. Ethical implications concerning the data and the limitations of the research methodology will be examined.

The objective of this study is to establish if social media usage is negatively effecting job performance and if the implementation of a social media usage policy exists and if it is flexible or rigid and the impact that has overall. This research also intends to identify if there are any trends occurring from the interviewee responses to the questions asked, which may benefit organisations if faced with similar issues in the future. A pilot interview was conducted with the initial interview questions, the interview schedule was then tested, edited and modified where necessary during each interview. The research onion of Saunders *et al.* (2016) was used to have a clear idea of which research method would be most suitable for this study. A diagram of the Research Onion is illustrated below:

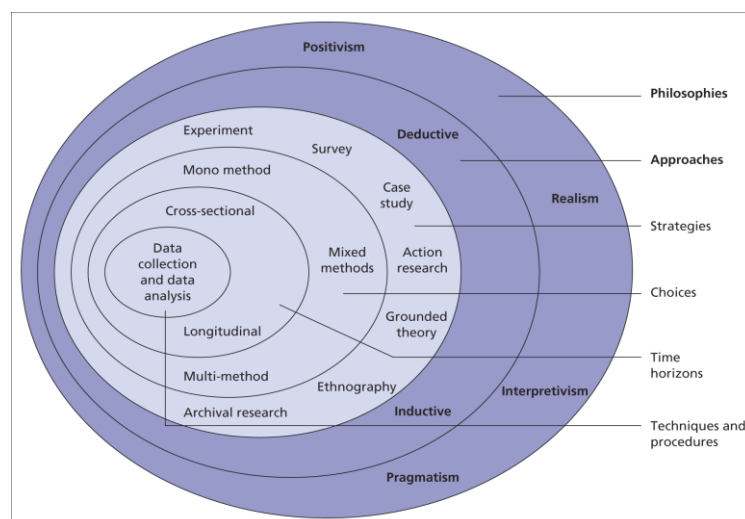


Figure 1: The Research Onion (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012, p. 128)

### *Research philosophy*

Prior to the choosing of a methodology the framework is identified, the appraisal of the study is detected through the exploration of existing literature and the identified framework (Wagner, Kawulich and Garner, 2012). Key concepts form the basis of theory and frameworks are based around these (Quinlan, 2011). The areas of importance in this study are social media, job performance and social media usage policy implementation. Figure 1 above, illustrates that the research philosophy is the outermost layer of the research onion of Saunders *et al.* (2016) and is primarily where the research process begins.

This research philosophy relates to a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development and nature of knowledge and shapes all aspects of the research study (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009, p. 107). According to Saunders *et al.* (2016, p. 108), these same assumptions will validate your research strategy and the methods you choose regarding this strategy. The three main ways of choosing a research philosophy are ontology, epistemology and axiology. The author will give a brief synopsis of each of these directions to highlight the appropriateness of the direction chosen for this study. All have aspects which impacts the researcher's view on the research process in their own respect. Saunders *et al.* (2009) discourage the perception of one philosophy being more worthy than the other, but accepts that each is better at doing different things, and in choosing the best philosophy, it actually depends on the research question(s) one is intending to answer.

The first way of choosing a research philosophy is one's ontological viewpoint as researchers raise questions about the assumptions we have of the "way the world operates" (Saunders *et al.*, 2009, p.110). Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality and has been described as "the question of whether social entities can and should be considered objective entities that have a reality external to social actors, or whether they can and should be considered social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors" (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 22)

Ontology has two aspects which are objectivism and subjectivism and implies that "social entities exist in reality external to social actors" (Saunders *et al.*, 2009, p.110). For example, in an organisation viewed as an objective entity a researcher could embrace an objectivist viewpoint in order to study specific worker aspects in specific organisations. In relation to

objectivism, Bryman and Bell (2015, p. 22) state that the “social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors...Social phenomena and the categories that we use in everyday discourse have an existence that is independent or separate from actors.”

If the researcher is concerned with how workers themselves attached individual meaning to their own jobs and how they perceived that those jobs should be undertaken, then this approach would be more closely aligned to the subjectivist view.

The subjectivist viewpoint stresses that social phenomena are created as a result of the approaches and subsequent actions of social actors. Subjectivism/constructionism are both seen as “social phenomena”. Their meanings are being cultivated by social actors repeatedly. The social phenomena and categories are not only produced by social interaction but they are in a continual state of revision (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 33).

Saunders *et al.* (2009) also considered the objectivist/subjectivist approach in relation to culture and debated that objectivists appear to see culture as something that an organisation has. In comparison, the subjectivist viewpoint argues culture to be something that is in growth and constant change due to social interactions and physical factors. The subjectivist view point suggests that culture will be understood only when the meanings attached to these phenomena by the social actors within the organisation are understood (Saunders *et al.*, 2009, p.111).

The second option of choosing a research philosophy would be epistemology. Epistemological considerations can be considered as “the question of whether the social world can and should be studied according to the same principles, procedures and ethos as the natural sciences?” (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p13). There are three types of epistemology to consider which are positivism, realism and interpretivism.

### *Positivism*

Positivism is connected with the philosophical stance of the natural scientist and works with an observable social reality to produce law-like generalisations by use of existing theory to help develop a hypothesis. Saunders *et al.* (2016) explain that this was not always the way things have been and that all-natural scientists will collect data and observations prior to the

testing of a specific hypothesis. Remenyi *et al.* (1998) determine that the researcher is seen as an observer only in this kind of study with no influence and is not influenced by the study and the contents of the research. Crotty (EJC Book Notes, 2001) also agrees that as a positivist researcher one would remain as neutral from the research to avoid impacting or influencing the findings. Saunders *et al.* (2016) suggest that it is likely that a quantitative approach will be taken by the positivist research philosophy.

### *Realism*

Realism recognises “the subjective nature of research and the inevitable role of values in it” (Fisher, 2010, p.20). Realist researchers even though they have quite a positivist view in some perspectives, may offer explanations but they are less likely to give predictions. There are two types of realism; empirical and critical.

Empirical realism proposes that objects discovered through science are things in and of themselves. Whereas, the critical realism philosophy is essentially what the researchers see and experience. The most important philosophical consideration is reality, this along with a structured ontology is vital to the research (Fleetwood, 2005). The concept of critical realism is that a reality exists but acknowledges that factors that can influence people’s perception of this reality also exist, even if one may not be consciously aware of this. Maintaining awareness of potential biases that might influence the research should be of great importance to the researcher. Critical realism also takes a scientific approach when generating data.

### *Interpretivism*

Interpretivism rejects a sole focus on scientific methods and has an awareness of the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences. Interpretivism suggests that people need to be studied differently (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). The interpretivist research is appropriate to create new understandings and interpretations of social worlds and contexts that are rich in information and its subject matter has freewill and autonomy. Myers (2008) suggests that the researcher using this approach determines a reality via social constructions and views that our actions are the results of our own meanings not external forces. This may be by investigation of consciousness, language or even shared meanings and suggests that one should focus on the thinking and the feeling which underpins people’s behaviour and the subjective ways in which they view their world. It veers towards a qualitative approach which allows for a depth of data.

This approach focuses on the subjective meaning of social action. Interviews, conversations and observations are the means by which information and data is collected (Collins, 2010) which is then combined by adopting strategies such as case study or ethnography used to highlight the diversity and richness of human experience rather than a representative generalisation and researchers should then develop rapport and empathy (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). The nature of the reality that exists is of importance from the perspective of how to understand the world and the generation of knowledge about it.

Interpretivism suggests that all knowledge is a matter for interpretation. Researchers taking this stance “believe that reality is socially constructed” (Fisher, 2010, p. 22). Researchers taking an interpretivist stance often have “a preference for research methods that elicit participants’ world views in relation to the topic of interest, and for analyses that ground concepts and connections between them in the words and elicited perspectives of participants” (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 30).

This study will take an interpretivist approach as it aims to investigate how technology, in particular social media usage, in the food and beverage sector is impacting job performance and whether they are aware that social media policies are/are not implemented and the impact that may have on job performance from a managers’ point of view.

## **The Research Approach**

According to the research union of Saunders *et al.* (2016), the deductive approach, inductive approach and abductive approach are the three approaches that may be conducted when undertaking research.

The deductive approach moves from theory to data, which means that the research strategy is developed from the literature review. Theoretical structure is needed before the analysis can be carried out. This approach emphasises the collection of quantitative data. In contrast to the deductive approach, if the research begins as a collection of data as a phenomenon and the theory is based on findings then this is called an inductive approach. Theoretical structure is postulated based on analysis. Finally, the abductive approach is when the collection of data is used to explore a phenomenon, themes are discovered, and patterns are used to clarify new theory.

This study will take an exploratory, inductive approach. This is a flexible method that will enable respondents to reflect and see things from their own point of view and allow the researcher to take from the experiences and feelings of the respondents on their own terms. Exploratory research is usually associated with qualitative techniques.

## **Research Design**

A research method can be described as a technique for the collection of data. Baker (2000) identified three main primary research methods these are: observation, survey and experimentation research. Observation research was chosen as it is most suitable to address the research aim and questions posed. Domegan and Fleming (1999) suggest that when choosing the best research design to gain answers the responsibility is on the researcher. For this reason interviews were chosen to collect information and the opinions of the respondents.

## **Methodological Choice**

The two most frequently used research methods are quantitative or qualitative. Although, Bryman and Bell (2007) consider a mixed methods approach of both quantitative and qualitative to be the best approach, Munro and Bloor (2010) state that this approach may be difficult to generate. Quantitative methods are usually focused on numeric data but qualitative methods focus on non-numeric data which might be images or words. The



personal nature of this study means that all individuals will have different views on which context is being considered. The qualitative paradigm focuses on investigating subjective data, this is mainly the perceptions of the respondents in order to gain greater insight and knowledge.

### **Justification For Choosing Qualitative Research**

As stated, quantitative research focuses on the collection of numeric data and is often viewed as being deductive from a research perspective and situated within a positivist framework (Quinlan, 2011) whereas, qualitative research is more focused on words and associated with a research strategy which is inductive, subjective and interpretivist in nature.

The researcher is taking an inductive approach to research in order to formulate theories from the collected data. Merriam (2009) views qualitative research as the best method to use when working with data based on purely knowledge and experience. Gall, Borg, and Gall (cited in Smith, 2019) who are qualitative researchers discover concepts and theories after data have been collected. Qualitative researchers “prepare interpretative reports reflecting researchers' constructions of the data and an awareness that readers will form their own constructions from what is reported” (Gall *et al.*, cited in Smith, 2019).

Othman (2011) emphasises that qualitative research is important in regards to the discovery of new ideas or theories through the interpretation of data. For this reason, the researcher felt that overall a qualitative research was the best approach to use in this instance.

### **Research Instrument**

There are many research instruments available to collect data such as interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, observation and so on. The research method chosen by the researcher is through pre-arranged, in-depth, semi structured interviews with managers. The author hopes to use qualitative data collection methods in order to accumulate the personal accounts that they are viewed to offer (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009). Hakim (2000) suggests that the in-depth interview should be “flexible, accessible and ideally illuminative of the often-hidden aspects of human behaviour and belief.”

Structured interviews impose a certain rigidity (Bryman and Bell, 2015) which is why semi-structured interviews have been selected as they allow the researcher the flexibility to modify the interview if necessary, to do so. The author is cognisant also of the possibility of

interviewee sabotaging, where interviewees can give false or misleading replies for a variety of reasons.

The research time horizon was cross sectional, which means interviews were conducted with managers who were in position at the time the research was conducted, and the research problem was explored with them at the point in time during which the interviews were conducted.

## **Data Collection**

### *Primary Data (qualitative interviews)*

This research was carried out primarily by qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews during which interview notes are taken. It was necessary to speak and collect the information from the management themselves to get their experiences and opinions.

Participants were selected demographically in West Clare. The researcher chose to interview managers and focused on just the food and beverage industry. Information sheets were personally delivered which asked those suitable to participate and also discussed the purpose, confidentiality and that written permission was a requirement from those willing to partake.

The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. A respondent information sheet (Appendix 3) was provided to each interviewee outlining the purpose of the research and other information regarding the research, assurances concerning anonymity and confidentiality and that they had the opportunity to withdraw at any time from the process. This was also reiterated on the day the interviews took place prior to the conduction of the interviews.

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (2002) advise that great care must be given when considering issues surrounding interview-based approaches to primary data collection within organisations. In order to ensure that participants do not accidentally identify respondents because of the risk of harmful repercussions for the individual concerned if identified.

Once clarification of those who would partake was given, a suitable time for the interview was arranged. On the days of interviews, the purpose, the confidentiality was again discussed, and participants signed a permission form before beginning. Each participant chosen works as a manager in the food and beverage industry in West Clare in Ireland.

The researcher used quotes from the respondents interviewed and transcripts are not included in the appendices, as it was felt to do so would identify the respondents in question. Research

was collected in this manner to get more detail and for easy comparison of the views and experiences of managers in the food and beverage sector. Primary data was collected by note taking during the interview and participants were assured their responses were confidential and anonymous. Generic questions were also initially asked at the interview to ensure participants felt at ease which also enabled them to discuss their feelings and opinions more openly. Immediately afterwards the interviews were transcribed from the notes taken and follow up phone calls/meetings made to clarify any discrepancies. This is primary data as in the information collected is directly first-hand.

The respondents participated and spoke freely on the condition of anonymity and the author has honoured their wishes in this regard. A copy of the transcripts have also been shown to the research supervisor as agreed and are available for inspection by college supervisors if necessary.

#### *Advantages of semi structured interviews*

Face to face interviews to retain research data is convenient for both respondents and the researcher. This form of research is relatively cheap to carry out and the interviews took approximately 30 to 60 minutes each to complete.

Conducting face to face interviews for research collection allows the researcher some scope to probe deeper and the interviewer can be flexible with the respondent in terms of time and what the respondent wishes to talk about. (Fisher, 2007). The interviews were semi structured which meant the interview was focused with a set of questions asked, but that the respondent was also free to give as much detail as they wished on the given topic and this could lead to other questions being asked also. The researcher and the respondent were not confined wholly to the questions set out. At the end of each interview the respondents were given the opportunity to add anything else they felt was relevant.

#### *Disadvantages of semi structured face to face interviews*

When conducting face to face interviews to collect research there is the need for a pre-arranged time with respondents, preparation of suitable questions and documents of consent etc, to carry out the interviews and then to eventually transcribe. Interview follow a basic set of questions and can be difficult to analyse and compare. The prevention of bias of the respondents' responses is of huge importance even by even just simply agreeing on the subject you may jeopardise the results. Simply the use of non-committal nods and utterance can create a bias and care needs to be taken. "They might seem non-committal to the

researcher, but they may convey to the interviewee that the researcher agrees with the interviewee's point of view" (Fisher, 2007, p. 170).

### *Secondary data*

This study is also consisting of secondary data research collected from library resources and articles in professional periodicals, which have been written on the subject in recent years. In unison these forms of research along with the literature review ensured the research was both comprehensive and thorough. The research conducted was to obtain the views of management in relation to social media usage, the existence/non-existence and relevance of a social media policy at work and the impact that has on job performance.

### **Validity and reliability**

Employees from 11 businesses within the food and beverage sector in a managerial position in west Clare were interviewed. Each has experience in dealing with job performance and policies within the workplace for this reason their feedback was obtained and is considered reliable.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis after conducting, recording and transcribing the interviews. Saunders *et al.* (2016) describe the purpose of this approach as a means of highlighting particular patterns or themes within the qualitative data.

Braun and Clarke (2006) and Maguire and Delahunt (2009) were two authors whose work was frequently referred back to throughout the process. Field notes were also taken during interviews to document the reactions of the participants. So in this research, "data" is describing the transcripts and the field notes as one.

This method was chosen as it is an accessible and flexible approach to analysing qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 78) describe thematic analysis as the "foundational method for qualitative analysis" and also argue that this method should be learned as "it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other kinds of analysis."

A process alike the process Maguire and Delahunt (2009) used in their research was used. The author was extremely familiar with the entire data set before the interviews were coded. This was to reduce the large body of data into more manageable areas (Maguire and

Delahunt, 2009, p. 3). Open coding was used in analysis of the research which entailed developing and modifying codes during the process. Hard copies of the transcripts were tackled with pens and highlighters, each section of text which addressed a research aim or question was coded.

Single words and short phrases extracted from the data were the codes which can be seen as quite a systematic approach but was the easiest way to analyse the data collected effectively (Braun and Clarke, 2006). After completion of the coding, the author repeated themes or patterns in the data which were searched for. Maguire and Delahunt (2009, p. 4) suggest that “themes refer to patterns in the data that are important or interesting in terms of the research question”.

Once identified these patterns and themes were reviewed and changed if necessary. The data and themes discovered were re-read numerous times to establish fully whether the data did support the themes. The author was conscious, to not becoming obsessed with endless re-coding as the generation of “themes could go on ad infinitum” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 92). The themes and sub-themes were chosen from this process and the findings will be discussed and outlined in the following chapters.

## **Limitations**

Limitations when conducting research are inevitable and need to be carefully considered for this study, there was a number of limitations which can be taken into consideration when conducting future research.

### *Sample Size*

A limitation of this research is questionably the chosen research instrument and method of yielding and analysing data. By using qualitative data, the researcher gained more in-depth information exploring the negative implications of social media use and the effects this had on the business overall of a small sample size consisting of managers from one town but could have used quantitative data which would have allowed for data of a larger sample size to be collected. Due to time and economic constraints, the researcher could only carry out 11 interviews, 5 females and 6 males more time. If the researcher had a longer time frame, more interviews would have been carried out.

### *Bias*

Another limitation was that when conducting the research in familiar surroundings and on familiar themes, the author had to ensure she remained impassive and impartial which can be difficult at times. The author guaranteed anonymity and that this had to be protected no matter what. The author also had to be observant in case of interviewee sabotaging, where interviewees can give false or misleading replies which would have a detrimental effect on the data collected. The possibility of times throughout the interviews where participants inflicted their bias upon the situation and the researcher needed to remain neutral would also be a limitation.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

### *Introduction*

This chapter establishes the themes running throughout the data set. The author undertook at the outset to establish the impact social media and social media policies have in relation to job performance.

11 semi-structured interviews were conducted with managers in the food and beverage sector in west Clare. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis and after the data analysis procedure, the interview responses were coded, and numerous themes emerged repeatedly throughout the data set. These emerging themes will be further discussed in greater detail below.

There was an apparent emergence of certain themes in relation to answers of interview questions. It is clear that businesses in West Clare have adopted social media for marketing because it is a faster and cheaper way of marketing in comparison to the traditional methods of advertising. But it was clear there is a growing awareness primarily of the darker side of technology usage within workplaces and the difficulties employers face now due to the liability for employees for their input on the internet and social media networks.

### **Social Media**

Social media had mixed responses although it was apparent that it was useful for advertising as the majority of respondents admitted like respondent 5 “We use social media for advertising, we post photos on Facebook and Instagram and customers can see what we offer and ask us questions without even entering the shop”. Although, personal use of social media was seen as a possible distraction. Respondent 2: “Social media when used correctly can benefit the business but when inappropriately used at certain times or in harmful ways it can be damaging and impact job performance.”

### **Communication**

The theme of communication appeared across all interviews. Most of the interviewees viewed communication, consultation and feedback when performing any task as being vital to organisational success. They all emphasised that by talking and explaining the advantages of the change both on a personal level and business capacity it would benefit the business as a whole. Those who have implemented a social media policy stressed that if you are having a

policy you need to make everyone aware of this. Social media providing access to customers and communication between workers is seen as positive. It is primarily used as a form of advertising for businesses. But, there are factors where social media provides a means of unwanted communication that can damage reputation and effect the job performance of those who are constantly using their phones at work.

Respondent 1: “In west Clare were lost in comparison to the big cities, so to get by we need to get the locals in, social media seems to be the way to go for us lately. Facebook has definitely helped us as we have started to post photos and people like, share and comment on them so that definitely boosts business in that context. We have had a few issues in relation to who posts and who is allowed on their phones but overall it has been useful for contacting each other if needs be. We have no policy as such as long as everyone gets their work done.”

Whereas, others felt a policy of no social media usage in work was more efficient in order for the usage of it not to have any effect on job performance. Respondent 2: “Honestly, I think it is okay for the usage of mobile phones within reason for emergencies, to call home or if any employee is expecting a call, but we don’t condone using them whilst working especially not when customers are in the premises. It doesn’t look very good. We are trying to communicate a strict no phones policy at the moment, but it can be quite difficult to monitor. You hear the ping off the devices even if they are in the cloak room.”

Others had no policy in place but were open to the idea. Respondent 3: “Social media is a great medium to communicate and keep in contact with staff and the public who we depend on to keep our businesses open as a means of advertising, we haven’t a policy in place as of yet, but we are looking into implementing one with the way things are going. Social media is becoming very popular and I can definitely see it becoming a big factor impacting performance in the workplace.” Some found it to be a distraction and as a negative impact on job performance.

Respondent 8: “Once I witnessed staff on their phones and customers at the counter left waiting to be served that was the end of social media and mobile phone use during work here. This is the type of social media usage that is unacceptable and not tolerated”

### **Social Media Policy implementation**

Implementation of the social media policy was a theme that arose with contrasting views throughout the interviews overall. It was widely understood by all respondents that it was of importance to understand the limitations of a social media policy and that there are aspects that a social media policy can limit safely; this usually is the exposure of sensitive



information related to the business and aspects some respondents just did not care to abide too. Information like this can be limited with a well-developed social media policy in place along with any comments that could tarnish the reputation of the business can be limited as well. Managers have responsibility when it comes to the implementation of policies.

Respondent 6: “As manager I have a huge responsibility to ensure the running of the business and safety of the workers, so implementing another policy that’s not really needed at the moment for the business seems like hassle. Everyone is working well and performing to the highest standard as far as I am concerned. I am a big believer in if its not broken don’t go tampering with it so implementing a social media policy right now wouldn’t be top priority.”

In contrast to respondent 6 who was quite against implementation of social media policies respondent 1 was more encouraging of them and had awareness of how one should be implemented.

Respondent 1: “I feel policies are necessary, they create clarity and help set up a barrier between what is accepted and what is not. The same goes for a social media policy without one there might be chaos. As manager I have to make sure everyone has awareness and is clear of what the social media policy entails and the penalties that will be applied if one fails to abide to the policy.”

## **Trust**

The theme of implementation was connected with trust. There are major consequences of trust as its important in order for any organisation to run smoothly. Trust in relation to the implementation of a social media policy is crucial.

Respondent 4: “If you cannot trust your employees to abide by all the rules and regulations and not only social media policies set within the business, then as a manager I think you would need to get the priorities of the business straightened and ask for more loyalty and respect from the employees”. It was apparent that a lack of trust requires monitoring of employees and can be costly to the business and time consuming. Poor trust may lead to poor quality. Professional confidence in managers is important, they must lead by example and be accessible and fair.

## **Flexibility**

Managers need to be flexible in their approaches, especially in small businesses.

Respondent 4: “you need to be aware that people have families, kids and other responsibilities, and may need to contact them so it can be tough to get a good balance. But they must be aware not to jeopardise the results of a social media policy. Respondent 6: “If you are too flexible with the policies you have in place then I feel from experience they become useless and disregarded and putting them in place initially would be a waste of time.”

Respondent 2: “Everything is not black and white so you need some flexibility, change is inevitable and as a business we need to adapt and move with it so that means being flexible in all our approaches”.

## **Responsibility**

It was clear that managers have a lot of responsibility especially in small businesses in west Clare, the majority of the responsibility appears to be put on one person, the manager.

Respondent 6: “Trying to change people’s behaviours in work is no easy task. I expect a certain standard from myself and I expect as high a standard from those I am managing as I feel it reflects on me.” Respondent 1: “I feel a lot of responsibility is on my shoulders making sure everyone performs to the highest standard.”

## **Performance**

Effective job performance of employees appeared to be of importance to all respondents. Regardless if the use of social media was tolerated at work and if a social media policy was or was not implemented, it was obvious that all managers wanted jobs and tasks to be performed and completed to the highest of standards. But they did recognise that the use of social media was a distraction and impacted performance negatively at times if not properly utilised.

Respondent 10: “If employees are constantly on their phones and customers are not being attended to, it has a negative reflection on the business and they are clearly not doing their job correctly. When social media usage begins to effect employees’ job performance that’s when it becomes an issue that will need to be dealt with seriously.”

Respondent 4: “For now, once everyone does their job and the customers are happy I don’t mind, they can use their phones and social media but once it becomes a distraction or effects the business negatively it will be banned.”

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### *Introduction*

In this chapter the consequences of the research findings will be examined and linked to the research objectives and to existing literature. The limitations of the research will be outlined and concluding from all areas explored throughout the research recommendations will be proposed.

The main research aim of this research was to establish how social media impacts job performance and how social media policies play influencing performance. Throughout both the literature review and the research findings it is obvious that management have a crucial role in designing and implementing policies. There is a lot of pressure on them. Each respondent interviewed acknowledged that they were responsible for employees and the implementation of workplace policies, however, some quantified this by saying in so much as they were able, some said they need to be flexible and some noted the size of the area and that it is difficult to retain staff as it is. This referred to responsibilities and the time that they would have to devote to making an impact.

### *Theoretical implications*

This study contributes to theoretical understanding in that it differs to previous studies that primarily looked at the positive effects of social media in an organizational context (Ali-Hassan *et al.*, 2015; Ou and Davison, 2011). This study focuses on both the positive and dark side of social media usage in the workplace, thus enriching social media research. Social media can create problems and the consequences of social media use at work should not be ignored, especially when the usage exceeds the optimum level and impacts the performance of the business.

This study contributions to managerial understanding of social media use in the workplace which impacts job performance and the implementation of social media policies in the food and beverage sector in west Clare. By showing the nature of social media usage in the food and beverage sector and how its use impacts on performance in the workplace, it can be said that even though social media should not be abandoned by organizations due to the possibility of productivity loss, it needs to be monitored in order to avoid future problems arising.

### *Social Media Use*

The literature suggests that social media has positives and negatives associated with its usage at work along with its impact on job performance (Cao *et al.*, 2016; White, 2014). The interviews conducted for this research compiled results in connection with that of previous studies. Schmidt *et al.*, (2016) concluded that social media usage for work can result in significant informational benefits which was also clear from the interviews conducted for this research as social media in the food and beverage industry was used to inform employees and customers. Interviewees also understood the negatives associated with social media which tests employees and managers.

It was clear from the results that some managers tend to resent social media to a large extent but realise they have to embrace it in some form due to the changing dynamics of business. Most businesses have a policy preventing mobile phone usage which partially eliminates the possibility of using social media whilst at work in the food and beverage industry.

It was also apparent that social medias primary use within the food and beverage sector of west Clare is for advertisement purposes. It seems that Facebook as a social media platform would benefit when dealing with mainly local customers who know of the existence of a business, whereas if a tourist used the likes of google maps to find a restaurant in west Clare would ones business pop up and be seen? Thus, from the perspective of 6 of the 10 managers from businesses of the food and beverage sector in west Clare that were interviewed felt that social media is constantly evolving and moving so fast and felt it is difficult to keep on top of things.

This is creating difficulty for the older businesses who are constantly trying to keep up to date and deal with the impact of social media usage on job performance. The majority of those that do not have a policy in place would consider putting a policy in place, but it is not seen as a priority as it not an area that these businesses are overly affected by just yet. Those that are accepting of social media usage still believe that those employed are trustworthy enough not to overuse social media. Many do not pay any attention to private use of social media as employees are expected to do the job they are hired for, perform their job in a satisfactory manner and to not become distracted.

Previous studies suggest that the younger, millennial generation has greater access to social media than those before them (Bolton et al., 2013), they use social media as a method of communication and they are better able to use and adapt with social media over all (Lundin, 2013). This was apparent from the results of the interview respondents also. All respondents referred to communication skills becoming a thing of the past which previous literature also suggested (Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010).

Face to face interactions are becoming less frequent as there is a surge in social media communication which is having a huge effect on job performance and businesses. All respondents explained that now “you could be at a table waiting for the individual to order and they will have their head stuck in their phone swiping through Facebook or Instagram” but one admitted “I have witnessed employees on their phones and neglecting customers this is where social media impacts negatively with employees not performing their jobs”.

### *Social media policies*

There appears to be mixed views toward social media policies but there was a consensus from the respondents that they think it is highly likely that social media usage policies will become mandatory for businesses in the near future. Literature explores how organizations react to social media and the respondents shared that whether they block social media sites or use disciplinary action towards employees abusing social media use in the workplace or encourage the use of social media for work related purposes depended on the context. If a policy would be implemented respondents emphasised that it would need to be “clear and flexible to cope with change” and would require a degree of flexibility to cope with change that is inevitable as technology (particularly social media) develops.

Regulation of social media usage and how social media is managed and its impact on job performance was discussed both in the literature review and by all the respondents. Employers are being held liable for employees’ inappropriate use of social media networks (Sanchez Abril et al., 2012), respondents were conscious that it’s a new area and one respondent said it is not really “black and white”. The area of social media usage at work and its impact has pros and cons and that is definitely apparent from previous literature and from the respondents.

## **Chapter 6: Recommendations**

From the findings and limitations of the research, recommendations have been provided as a guide to possible areas of future research and for other organisations to deal with this issue. Future studies could focus on a specific geographical area, or organisation or the job role of an individual to see if these have any influence in how social media impacts job performance.

Another possible area of research could be in relation to do a quantitative study based on the amount of hours spent on social media and the impact of this on work performance due to offensive content being created and inappropriate relationships being established as there is no literature in relation to this area. Surveys could be dispersed to employees to gather their opinions on social media usage at work and social media policies information gathered would be useful to managers and organisations. This may even lead the way to a performance management system relating to social media usage being created if there is not one present.

Greater clarity in terms of usage would be advisable. This research and existing literature could be used to assist public policy makers in implementing new policies or improving already existing social media policies in the workplace. Codes of best practice and social media policies can be drawn up to outline how staff should behave on social media, ways organisations can control their social media use and the steps taken if policies are not followed. It is clear that there is insufficient research conducted on the range of negative implications of social media use (Kittinger *et al.*, 2012), so for one to delve further into that area would be advantageous.

It is becoming more likely that legislation will be further developed to protect both employees and employers from cases arising with relation of social media usage in the workplace as it is becoming more common. Organisations could also use the data to update and implement policies to manage social media use by employees, or to ban its use during working hours which some businesses have already done. Organisations should focus on increasing job performance, updating their policies or ban social media at work (Haynes, 2016; Sanchez Abril *et al.*, 2012).

### *Costing:*

Cost issues in relation to job performance and social media usage may arise, but these are hard to estimate. Costs may be in relation to drawing up and implementing social media policies if they do not exist or even just in relation to modifying the already existing policies and creating awareness of the changes occurring. Costs vary and could be significant, possibly taking a year or two to properly draw up or be very little and take a much shorter period of time.

Organisations should first determine exactly how social media is used by staff and the implication it is having on productivity. In order to establish this, questionnaires or surveys may be given to employees to get their opinions. Employees need to be assured that no negative repercussions will occur due to information they disclose, or it will be sabotaged data and essentially a waste of time and money.

From the results of the data collected, policies can be updated. Essentially, there would be very little financial cost in implementation, managers implementing the policies would need time to go through the information obtained and to adjust policies accordingly.

The time taken to implement the process varies depending on the size of the business or organisation. The larger it is the more time needed to implement policies while a smaller business would require less time. Deciding to ban internet sites can easily be done in a small business and would have no cost. Implementation can be immediate and have impact quickly.

Policies need to clearly outline acceptable behaviour by employers as if employees are fired unfairly cases can be taken towards the employer (Citizens Information, 2019) which can have an effect on the image of the business with possible effects on sales and on performance overall.

Decreased performance of employees varies depending on an employee's duties and the organisation in question. Other studies regarding social media usage in the workplace have recommended calculating a quantity by estimating their productivity level, calculating the time spent on social media in relation to their salary. If an employee earns €30,000 per year and spends 4 out of 40 working hours per week on social media, approximately 10% of their time is spent not working. This amounts to €3,000 of their salary. This is the cost to the company of a decreased performance for one employee per year, so if there is more than one employee behaving in this manner there would be a huge cost incurred.

Another possibility would be to implement a performance management system would allow productivity and effectiveness of employees to be tracked. A performance management system can be implemented over any period of time but must be conducted on a continuous basis (CIPD, 2017b) and would encourage employees to perform better improving productivity and job performance.

### *Conclusion*

The value of social media usage for west Clare businesses, particularly its impact on employee performance, is an area yet to be completely understood, which has essentially led to a social media ban or restriction of its use in most businesses.

It is debatable that missing out on potential business benefits in the form of improved communication, knowledge sharing, innovation and engagement can result from not using social media in the workplace but as noted throughout the research, it can also create problems which can drastically effect the business and job performance (Cao *et al.*, 2016; White, 2014). It is obvious that social media in the workplace will be a topic of great discussion in the coming years as it is an area full of research possibilities not only can research be focused on specific sectors but there are possibilities to see the impact on job performance of individuals of different generations and organisations.

From this study, we can create a greater awareness of the impact social media use may have on business performance, while simultaneously keeping up to date with knowledge of both the negative and positive effects that social media may have in the workplace. Managers benefit from understanding this as they gain the ability to develop better policies for social media use, which work to appease managerial fears surrounding loss of employee productivity.

The study was conducted through a range of interviews and results were organised thematically with regard to the literature also. There is definitely scope for further research on this topic with the option of using different methods of data collection than that used in this research. Based upon the findings and considering the limitations of the research, recommendations have been provided as a focus of future research and costings in relation to this are also discussed.



The themes of social media, communication, social media policy implementation, trust, flexibility, responsibility and performance were discussed with respondents and results were pretty consistent with what has been discussed in previous literature. There is a general consensus and an awareness that social media is becoming a big issue and that there may be a need for policy implementation. The fact of whether that becomes a mandatory requirement by law in the future or a business preference this research cannot determine but it is useful to see that other businesses are open to embrace these changes.

The information collected could be used to modify social media usage policies or primarily as a basis to consider implementing social media usage policies to control social media use by employees, or to ban its use during working hours. Costings have been included and show that there would potentially be a small cost incurred to introduce a basic social media policy. This could potentially lead to an increase in employee productivity and better job performance.

From contrasting interview responses and the existing literature, it is clear social media impacts job performance on both a positive and negative level, managers aware of this and try their best to monitor its usage and impact on performance. It is likely that the issue of monitoring usage will become a big factor for businesses as technology and social media continues to grow. The implementation of social media policies is also a divided matter which is clear from the findings and will be a topic of considerable debate and an area with lots of opportunity for research.

### **Personal Learning Statement (CIPD Requirement)**

This dissertation is the final step to completion of the MA Human resource Management programme in the National College of Ireland, Dublin. After taking a year's leave from studying and learning in order to work, save and travel. I am so happy I made the decision to come back to college. I feel I have gained invaluable knowledge of HR upon completion of this masters.

I really enjoyed conducting my research in the area of social media use as it is an area that has yet to be fully explored so I was very grateful for the opportunity. Social media and internet usage will continue to grow and new technology will be created so it is important that HR departments are aware of the impact it has on staff.

I have been motivated to constantly continue to strive and improve. I know I will remain on a lifelong learning path. Completing this thesis has been a demanding process as I have previously never written a thesis so I am very proud of myself. I have gained invaluable skills in areas of management and organisational skills in order to be able to reach assignment deadlines. I have also learned first-hand that once you put in the work you will strive the benefits. The knowledge of Human resources and insights I have gained will be of great use in my future endeavours and I am excited to see what the future holds.

During the process I did not realise how time consuming the transcription of the interviews and the thematic analysis of the data would be. For this reason, from a learning viewpoint if conducting this type of analysis in the future I would definitely prioritise allowing much more time for this process. Another learning point for me was regarding references, It is essential that you keep a clear note of them while conducting the research as it allows the researcher to be organised and have references at easy access. At times I have struggled to find references that I may not have added to my list and left until last minute when recently finalising this project. I have also learned that no matter how difficult things get, they will become easier once you keep focused.

The objective is to establish what impact exists with the usage of social media in the workplace; if a social media policy exists and whether it is implemented; and what effect these have on job performance from a manager's viewpoint. The researcher aims to collect findings that will be of use to other businesses or organisations encouraging future studies to be conducted in this area.

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## Appendix

### 1. Participation Information Sheet

**“An exploration of the impact of social media usage on job performance and the implementation of social media policies at work: A study within the food and beverage industry in rural west Clare.”**

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

#### *WHO I AM AND WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT:*

My name is Nicole Burke. I am currently studying an MA in Human Resource Management in the National College of Ireland in Dublin. This study is of social media usage within the workplace and social media usage policy implementation (if any) and its effect on job performance. The aim of this study of this study is to examine the relationship between the usage of social media, the social media policies implementation, its severity or flexibility of implementation along with the impact of this on employee job performance in the food and beverage industry with focus on a rural town in West Clare. This research aims to prove that social media impacts job performance and if social media policy is in the interest of the management to implement for job performance in the food and beverage sector to be satisfactory. Upon completion of my research, I will gain a level 9 qualification which will be an MA in Human Resource Management (CIPD accredited).

#### *WHAT WILL TAKING PART INVOLVE?*

Questions relating to a range of topics including social media usage, social media policy implementation and job performance will be asked in a face to face interview conducted at a time that suits you. The duration of the interview is expected to last between 20-45minutes. The interview with your consent will be audio-recorded for ease of transcribing which will then be erased once the research is completed and reviewed. The interview is completely

confidential and written permission of consent of audio-recording is a requirement to comply with general data protection regulation laws.

#### *WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED TO TAKE PART?*

You have been invited to participate because you are a manager within the food and beverage sector of West Clare and this research focuses primarily on the experiences of managers in this sector.

#### *DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART?*

Participation is completely voluntary, and you have the right to refuse participation, to refuse any question and withdraw at any time you wish without any consequence whatsoever.

#### *WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?*

The possible results of this research are that management can gain a greater insight from the results and possibly use them to better ones business. Businesses can use information gathered to improve or modify aspects of their businesses. Overall no negative consequences are anticipated.

#### *WILL TAKING PART BE CONFIDENTIAL?*

A number of steps will be taken to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants and any individuals they talk about. Confidentiality will only be broken: if the researcher has a strong belief that there is a serious risk of harm or danger to either the participant or another individual (e.g. physical, emotional or sexual abuse, concerns for child protection, rape, self-harm, suicidal intent or criminal activity) or if a serious crime has been committed. Any non-anonymised data in the form of signed consent forms and audio recordings are collected and retained as part of the research process.

#### *HOW WILL INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE BE RECORDED, STORED AND PROTECTED?*

The interview will be recorded using an audio recording device and the research data will be safe guarded only to be accessed by the researcher and those grading the research if required. Anonymity will not be compromised. Respondents will be identified solely as Respondent 1, Respondent 2 and so on. Each respondent's details will be known to the researcher and only disclosed to a college supervisor should clarification be desired. The college Supervisor is the only other person that may view a transcript of a full interview. Once the dissertation is submitted The College Policy in relation to confidentiality will prevail. Once the dissertation is complete and assessed all audio recordings will be erased.

*WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY?*

The final research product of approximately 20,000 words will be bounded as a hard copy and submitted as my dissertation to the National College of Ireland, Dublin.

*WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?*

Name of researcher: Nicole Burke

Mobile Number: 0857591446

Email Address: [X18153267@student.ncirl.ie](mailto:X18153267@student.ncirl.ie)

(Thank You 😊)



## 2. Consent Form

**“An exploration of the impact of social media usage on job performance and the implementation of social media policies at work: A study within the food and beverage industry in rural west Clare.”**

Consent to take part in research

- ☐ I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- ☐ I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- ☐ I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- ☐ I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- ☐ I understand that participation involves participation in a face to face interview.
- ☐ I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- ☐ I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- ☐ I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- ☐ I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- ☐ I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in a dissertation with possibilities to be published in a conference presentation or published papers.

- ☐ I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
  
- ☐ I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in a secured file kept in a file cabinet until the exam board confirms the results of this dissertation.
  
- ☐ I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years from the date of the exam board.
  
- ☐ I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
  
- ☐ I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Signature of research participant

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Signature of participant

Date

Signature of researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

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Signature of researcher

Date

### 3. Interview Schedule

#### **Generic Questions**

Q1: What is your role in the business?

Q2: How long have you worked in the business?

Q3: How long have you worked in a managerial role?

#### **Social media**

Q4: Are your staff allowed to use social media whilst at work? And if so to what extent is it permitted?

Q5: As a manager at \_\_\_\_\_ during any time did you observe any specific actions taken by employees that created an issue when using social media? If so, how did you deal with this issue?

Q6: Do you use any forms of social media for business purposes? If so, who controls/manages this?

#### **Social Media Policy**

Q7: Is there policy in relation to social media usage present in this workplace?

**If answer to Q4 is YES -**

Q: How is it implemented?

Q: who is it implemented by?

Q: Are the policies ridged or flexible? Can you explain this in more detail for me?

Q: When are workers made aware of the social media policies?

Q: Can you take me through what your policy entails?

Q: Do you think the policy is effective? And why?

**If answer to Q4 is NO-**

Q5: Would you ever consider implementing a policy in the future?

**If answer to Q5 is Yes-**

Why would you consider implementing a social media policy now when you haven't before?

**If answer to Q5 is No-**

Why isn't there a social media usage policy on your future agenda?

Q6: Do you think a social media policies will become mandatory for business in the future?  
And if so how do you feel about this?

Q5: Do you think a flexible policy is of any benefit to the business?

### **Performance**

Q6: In your opinion what does Job performance for a business like yours entail?

Q7: How do you feel social media impacts job performance in this business?

Q8: Do you feel it has or would have a major effect on employees' performance if social media is being used during working hours?

Q9: What impact (if any) is it having on your day to day running of the business?

Q 10: Have you any other observations or insights of how social media impacts job performance in the food and beverage sector?

(Questions varied from interview to interview)

## 4. Key Themes

Key themes that arose throughout my research were:

- Social Media
- Communication
- Social media Policy Implementation
- Trust
- Flexibility
- Responsibility
- Performance