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Social Media as a Business Tool for Construction Companies

The impact of Social Media (SM) on our lives is undeniable, be it in the context of communication between organisations, communities or individuals. In order to understand the effects of SM interaction on one particular industry, writers Salman Azhar, Zainab Riaz and David Robinson conducted a study to examine the usage of SM as a tool in the construction industry. Their study also analyses the potential risks and rewards, and the collaborative and innovative aspects of online applications.

Although all major construction companies maintain their presence on SM, it is important to understand if the management of the companies consider SM only as a medium to showcase past projects and promote the company's social responsibility within local communities. Hence, the authors felt a need for an in-depth research study to fully understand the SM environment of construction companies. An SM log was developed to track activity on popular SM platforms for 10 construction companies.

The collected data, both primary and secondary, provided valuable insights about how construction companies have deployed SM. The study revealed that traditional SM platforms are being used within the daily operations of construction companies. Popular sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, are being used to share industry events with their followers. LinkedIn, on the other hand, is being used to develop professional networks and assist in recruitment. However, conventional forms of communication, e.g. emails and telephone calls, continue to be the preferred methods of connection with vendors and subcontractors. Uses of SM for collaborative and innovative initiatives outside the organisations' boundaries are minimal.

SM is still regarded as relatively new territory for many companies. Authors' findings suggest that over half of the surveyed companies agree that there are definite risks and challenges that need to be addressed, for example platform choices, management of multiple platforms, consumer interaction, security and privacy, and legal issues. There are no structured policies for the employees regarding the use of SM while on the job. Interestingly, half of the respondents surveyed were unaware of the internet usage policy of their employers. Research indicates that with the aid of internal auditing and through proper training and monitoring of activities, regulatory and employee-related challenges can be managed.



Traditional SM platforms are being used within the daily operations of construction companies and have developed a presence despite the risks and challenges. Multiple stakeholders, including prime contractors, subcontractors, design and construction services, and clients are employing these applications for information sharing. However, the potential for these online platforms is not being utilised to the fullest. Professionals working in the construction industry can benefit from the research being done in this area. SM can impact multiple aspects in a typical organisation, such as, communication and collaboration, networking, marketing, content co-creation, business process integration, innovation and creativity, and transparency.

Reference

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About the Author



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How are Islamic Banks changing the Banking Landscape?

Conventional banks that were once competing with non-banking financial institutions and the capital market today face the new challenge of being substituted/reintermediated by Islamic banks. Earlier academic research debated over disintermediation (reduction in the use of intermediaries between producers and consumers, for example by investing directly in the securities market rather than through a bank), or reintermediation, i.e., the transfer or bringing back of borrowing and investments from an outside credit business into the banking system, but failed to address reintermediation of conventional banks through Islamic banks as a possibility.

In a study by writers, Bushra Naqvi, S.K.A. Rizvi, Hina Ahmed Uqaili, and S.M. Chaudhry, the novel possibility of reintermediation within the banking sector is addressed, in what is the first attempt to analyse and compare Islamic and conventional banks from the perspective of reintermediated financial markets. As the authors point out, the main objective of their study is to test different financial and non-financial aspects that either helps the Islamic banks in conducting activities pertaining to intermediation more vigorously or convince customers to prefer Islamic banks.

After identifying reintermediation trends led by Islamic banks, the authors investigate several bank-specific financial and non-financial characteristics that might have enabled Islamic banks to emerge as an important player in reintermediated financial markets. By keeping the focus of study on a slightly modified version of CAMELS framework where 'S' represents "Service Quality" the study finds that along with better capitalisation (C) and improved liquidity (L), better service quality (S) is another distinguishable feature of Islamic banks that might be linked with their high degree of intermediation. This variable is important in explaining the performance of banks as they belong to a service-oriented industry. By bringing the customers' perspective into the analysis, a significant contribution is made in research on banking sector activity.

Although results signify Islamic banks to be important players of reintermediated financial markets, it is still too soon to say that Islamic banks have emerged as a competitive force for conventional banks. However, Islamic banks have a substantially lower non-interest income and/or fee-based income than conventional banks, and hence can be said to be more stable as well as more intermediated.

The study links two streams of literature in banking and financial markets: reintermediation and performance comparison between Islamic and conventional banks. Based on the preliminary hypothesis, results prove that conventional banks, once the major player in financial market competing with the capital market and



NBFIs, could become substitutable by their new competitor because of better liquidity and high capitalisation – and this presents reintermediation within the global banking sector. The thought that Islamic banks may replace conventional banks is a likely upcoming, but not immediate, option.

This study helps identify and highlight what factors are critical for the growth and/or the survival of the banking sectors, and among many factors, service quality emerged as a critical and decisive factor. Thus, the importance of customer satisfaction along with more focus on capitalisation and liquidity have been stressed upon for the growth and survival of commercial banks.

Reference

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Employment, leadership and South Asian Muslim women in the UK

Women of South Asian heritage in the United Kingdom face multi-faceted issues in gaining employment and leadership positions in workplaces. Muslim women, in particular, are likely to face greater discrimination as well as challenges based on their intersectionality than women from majority and other ethnic backgrounds.

Written by Memoona Tariq and Jawad Syed, this article focuses on the following research question: what are the implications of intersectionality for South Asian Muslim women's experiences of employment and leadership in organisations in the United Kingdom? It uses the notion of intersectionality to highlight the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class and gender as they apply to an individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

The research for this article is based on interviews with 20 women of South Asian descent, who are leaders, managers, and supervisors in the UK. A qualitative approach was taken to develop a nuanced understanding of issues and challenges South Asian Muslim women face in pursuit of employment and leadership positions in the UK.

Despite equal opportunity legislation and other institutional interventions, ethnic minority women remain under-represented and disadvantaged in employment and leadership positions in UK organisations. Furthermore, Muslim women are likely to face far more challenges and discrimination based on their intersectionality than are women from majority and other ethnic backgrounds. It is evident that there is a need for policymakers and employers to consider the effects of intersectionality in order to enable ethnic minority women's inclusion and leadership in workplaces in greater numbers.

The study explores how women of South Asian Muslim descent continue to face significant challenges related to their gender, ethnicity, and religion. While discrimination is not blatant in most cases, it does have an effect on these women's employment and careers. And even though rules and regulations are put in place within organisations, ethnic minority Muslim women still face subtle and refined discrimination at work. This suggests that organisations need to place greater priority on goals when it comes to diversity.

Muslim women in the UK are exposed to complex and refined forms of sexism and racism that are hard to prove. A key challenge that Muslim women face while trying to progress in their careers to gain the same level of recognition as others is lack of access to network and mentoring support within and outside the workplace. Some of those interviewed felt that they had to work harder than their white counterparts, while others had to put up with derogatory comments about their gender or ethnicity.



Yet, findings also reveal that while Muslim women continue to face issues and challenges in the workplace, some of them are able to use their individual agency and strategies to respond to such issues. Some women, for example, stood their ground in the face of discrimination at work, while others took their organisation to the industrial tribunal.

Research shows that South Asian heritage Muslim working women are much more likely to progress in their careers in organisations that actively encourage diversity. In order for organisations to take an active approach when it comes to diversity, strategic networks may be set up for mentoring and monitoring these women regarding their careers, preferably by female role models of similar ethnic backgrounds. Providing diversity training schemes could also help reduce negative attitudes towards ethnic minority female professionals.

Ultimately, however, these women have not been discouraged from progressing in their careers, in fact, some of them have drawn positive energy from their ethnicity, religion, and gender, to progress. It is significant to note, however, that, with the gaps in employment and leadership, organisational policies on diversity need further modification to enable equal and inclusive opportunities for ethnic minority women.

Reference

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Doi: 10.1007/s11199-017-0741-3

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Sales Force Incentives at Service Sales Corporation

THE CONTEXT

Prior to 2011, Service Industries Limited's (SIL) production for the Pakistani market was sold through the marketing and retailing network of Service Sales Corporation (SSC), as both SIL and SSC were owned by the Service Group. However, in 2011, the companies parted ways based on two main conditions. First, SSC would continue to buy shoes worth at least PKR 3.8 billion from SIL till 2021. Second, SIL would give exclusive license to SSC to use the Servis brand for the shoe business till 2021.

Omar Saeed, CEO of SIL, is reflecting on the previous four years' performance for the shoe business division. It has not met the sales target for 2014, domestic sales are dependent on SSC and Klara (SIL's own brand of wholesale), the European market is pressurising SIL to reduce prices as well as provide high variety and low volume orders, and more efforts need to be made to utilise SIL's manufacturing facilities. Omar has to make SIL's strategy for 2021, when SSC may not be there to give business worth PKR 3.8 billion, as well as plan the necessary roadmap. SIL's top management wants to see SIL as a global player in its line of business.

THE DECISION

It was March 2015 and Omar Saeed, CEO of Service Industries Limited (SIL), was reflecting on his company's previous four year performance while going through 2014's annual report that had just arrived on his desk. The annual report of SIL, which had two manufacturing businesses, that is, shoes and tyres, carried mixed news. The tyre business had made satisfactory progress towards the company targets in the preceding four years. However, the shoe business had gone through ups and downs and was a source of worry for Omar.

Prior to 2011, SIL's annual production of 11.4 million pairs of shoes for the Pakistani market was sold through the marketing and retailing network of Service Sales Corporation (SSC), as both SIL and SSC were owned by the same group. In the last four years, SSC had bought only the contractually required minimum number of shoes from SIL, that is, for PKR 3.8 billion per year. SIL started its own wholesale brand, Klara, which represented only six percent of SIL's total shoe sales in 2014.

In the international market, SIL was working with two main customers, Caprice and Workout, and several small volume customers. Almost 90 percent of SIL's export customers, mainly from Europe, were asking for reduction in prices, thus squeezing SIL's margins. Moreover, the European customers, except Caprice, gave high variety and low volume orders along with cost pressures.



Recently, SIL had obtained two orders from the European division of Zara, a mainstream international fashion brand. Since Zara offered large volume and less variety, SIL aspired to seek more business from Zara and the US market, where the economy was more stable and prices were attractive. However, Zara required better quality, low delivery lead times and a faster product development process.

Omar wondered what his strategy and roadmap for 2021 should be when SSC might reduce or completely cut down its purchasing from SIL. According to his brother and director of the company's tyre manufacturing division, "SIL is the leading shoes manufacturer in Pakistan but we are not satisfied because we want to be a global player in our line of business."

Reference

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Performance Appraisal Challenge at Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)

THE CONTEXT

The case discusses the multitude of challenges that CAA faces with respect to its performance appraisal system. Sumair Saeed, Chief Human Resource CAA, feels that problems lie in the implementation of the current appraisal system. Firstly, the system of targets and objectives between and the appraiser and the appraisee at the start of the year is not being followed. This leads employees to feel unfairly treated because no criteria for performance appraisal for their evaluation have been agreed upon. Secondly, Sumair feels there is no buy-in for the performance appraisal system since supervisors regard appraisal as extra workload and an uneasy time of the year. Supervisors consider it to be a confrontational rather than developmental/feedback exercise with the subordinate. Moreover, supervisors lack training in providing feedback on appraisals. It is felt that the culture of the organisation develops hostility and distrust when the appraisals are being conducted. The appraisal system doesn't differentiate between performers or non-performers; thus decisions on promotions or career progressions can't be based on appraisals. The problem of demotivation among employees is also a result of an ineffective performance appraisal system, as no differentiation exists between star performers and non-performers. Sumair is now contemplating changes in the design or the implementation of the performance appraisal system which are required to rectify the process of performance appraisal at CAA.

THE DECISION

On 2 August 2014, Sumair Saeed, Chief of Human Resources at the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), sat in his office, puzzled by the feedback that he had received regarding the performance appraisal process at CAA. In a recent senior level management committee meeting, the performance appraisal system had been hotly discussed and criticised for its ineffectiveness in the organisation. Sumair knew that performance appraisal had become a contentious topic of discussion at all levels of the organisation as employees' promotions and trainings were linked to it. The problem arose when CAA wanted to give promotions to employees. The selection committees gathered to decide on the promotions, but it became evident that there was no basis of differentiation among individuals. All employees' appraisals showed no marked difference in the past years, as appraisals were either filled half-heartedly or subjectively. Moreover, the collaborative process of setting targets and objectives at the start of the year for appraisal by the supervisor and subordinate was not being properly implemented. As the targets were not set, it further undermined the process as appraisers avoided appraising and ranking subordinates for promotions.



Sumair faced the challenge of developing a buy-in among employees to increase the effectiveness of the appraisal system. A fair performance appraisal system was required so that identification of performers and non-performers could be made for rightful promotions of hardworking employees. Sumair felt that by conducting proper appraisals, the CAA would have a motivated human resource pool as employees would feel that they were treated fairly. He also wanted the CAA to become an organisation of choice for employment so that it could attract a competent pool of human resource. Motivated employees ultimately would help CAA achieve its mission of becoming an efficient and leading aviation authority and lead to improvement in its service quality.

Reference

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Doi: 10.1177/0972820117712304

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