IS THE ADDICTION TO THE ONLINE SOCIAL MEDIA, OF SOME INDIVIDUALS, AFFECTING THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT?

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Abstract

The internet and social media have changed the way individuals interact with each other and at the same time, it has changed the way the companies communicate with the individuals that may or may not be their customers. But at the same time, the Internet and especially the intensive usage of social media platforms has its own drawbacks, of which one is the addiction to social media and to the Internet in general. The current paper, is a brief literature review and is aiming to bring light on the issue of the Internet and social media addiction, we are presenting the concepts of addiction in general and the aspects shown before, in general and in the context of the business environment. We are showing that the addiction to the social media platforms can influence the business environment in certain conditions. The article is presenting the main characteristics of social media addiction, we are bringing forth a brief profile of users that are addicted to social media, we are underlining three dimensions of excessive social media use for employees at the workplace, while also pointing out several aspects related to consumer social media usage and social media advertising in the context of social media addiction.

Keywords: social media, addiction, internet, business environment, workplace

JEL classification: M00, M30

1. Introduction

The wide spread access to the Internet has created the proper environment for the individuals and for the companies to interact with each other. But at the same time, the usage of the Internet, the development of the

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social media platforms, have generated several issues that the business environment must to consider when designing their online communication or marketing strategies. Among the most important issues are the over usage of the Internet by the youth, social media addiction, addiction to mobile communication devices like (smartphones, tablets or laptops).

The penetration of smartphone and mobile social media has enabled users to connect with others regardless of location and time as well as blur boundaries between work and life. Even if some businesses consider the addiction to be a positive aspect for their companies and their strategies, they should consider the long-term effects of these aspects on the company and on their strategies. The current literature review paper is trying to underline some aspects related to social media addiction and at the same time the Internet's addiction influence on the companies.

2. Social media addiction – concept and characteristics

The Internet is accessed world-wide and the online based technology has begun to be included in almost all electronic devices that the individual and the companies are using. Some would say that these devices are practically run the world and have gained a substantial market penetration (Longstreet and Brooks, 2017). Starting from the statistics of Internet usage, according to internetlivestats.com (2019), we can observe that today we have more than 4,1 billion people that use the online environment, there are more than 100 billion emails are sent each day.

According to the same source, there are more than 2,43 Facebook accesses per day, more than 2,7 billion Google.com searches, there are more than 1,8 million sold today, more than 200 thousand tablets sold today, and more than 300 thousand computers sold today. Of course, this source (internetlivestats.com) is not the only one that shows these figures and the numbers may differ form the time of the day, the time of the year etc., but it shows our clear dependence on online technologies and their influence on the business world.

But, form these numbers to turning the Internet and the social media platforms into addictive elements is just a stone throw away. "As one becomes more dependent on this medium for their informational and entertainment needs, it may become increasingly difficult to stop using it. The drive to continue usage can quickly become debilitating as users feel that they are unable to accomplish regular activities due to their inability to disconnect from the Internet; this impulse control problem is known as "pathological Internet

use" (PIU) or "Internet addiction" (Young and Rogers, 1998 in Longstreet and Brooks, 2017).

The development of the online in the last decade has created the proper environment for the birth and growth of the online social networks. Social media has brought new management practices to the organizations, from creating innovative business models to transforming communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing (Cao and Yu, 2019). But at the same the increasing communication using social media platforms can lead to an information overload and distraction, it can lead to lack of focus from the employees and change the way they decide on certain matters (Mansi and Levy, 2013). According to Wang et. al. (2015 in Cao and You, 2019), there is a sometimes problematic and irrational usage of social media that has become used more and more by a large portion of the social media users, which can have a destructive effect on individuals and organisations.

In these conditions, we find ourselves. Before going forward with the characteristics of social media addiction we must "clear the air" on the internet and social media addiction concepts and on the addictive behaviour concept. Marlatt et.al. (1999 in Can and Kaya, 2016) defines the addictive behaviour as a "repetitive habit pattern that increases the risk of disease and/or associated personal and social problems" or "the behaviour continues to occur despite volitional attempts to abstain or moderate use".

Internet addiction is defined as "the state where use of the Internet becomes compulsive; the user starts to develop a dependence on the Internet for their psychological well-being and said user experiences unpleasant feelings when deprived of the Internet" (Longstreet and Brooks, 2017, Griffiths and Szabo, 2013). The same authors (Longstreet and Brooks, 2017), define social media addiction as "a subset of Internet addiction, dealing specifically with social networking sites." Also, Anderssen and Pallessen (2014, in Anderssen et.al., 2017), define social media addiction, as "being overly concerned about social media, driven by an uncontrollable motivation to log on to or use social media, and devoting so much time and effort to social media that it impairs other important life areas"

In the last decade, studies have started to come to life regarding internet and social media addiction. These studies have underlined the growing concern regarding the evolving problem of social media addiction, especially among the youth. As we know the age group that adopts and uses new web-based technologies and social media platforms are the adolescents. Therefore, it is easy to conclude that the teenagers are the ones that are most

vulnerable to developing Internet and social media addiction (Valkenburg and Peter, 2011 in van den Eijnden et.al., 2016).

Although some studies and researches have been done in the last years, the lasts version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) mentions the Internet Gaming Disorder as a tentative disorder, there is no such mentioning of Social Media Addiction (van den Eijnden et.al., 2016). It seems that the current research related to social media addiction is quite fractioned and it relates mostly to the mental and psychiatrically aspect of the disorder, but it also underlines and targets specific aspects of the issue. This seems to be due to the fast pace changes that occur in this field and the lack of measuring tools related to social media addiction.

Some of the most important characteristics related to social media addiction, that can be used in describing the issue and of reducing the effects of social media addiction disorders relates to the following aspects:

- The addictive use of social media is found more among women, rather than among men, because women are more inclined develop addictive behaviours towards activities involving social interaction (Anderssen et.al., 2013).
- Social media addiction is frequent among younger individuals rather than among the older people, due to the fact that the adolescents are more used to being online and they adopt and use the new online technologies faster. (Prensky, 2001 in Anderssen et.al., 2016).
- Individuals without life partners are more prone to developing an online and social media addictive disorder, than those individuals that find themselves in a relationship (Kuss et.al., 2014).
- Social media addictive behaviour is linked with the narcissistic need of individuals to express their ambitions and show their successes to a potentially large audience, and to obtain highly visible rewards and recognition through "likes" and positive comments from other social media users (Anderssen et.al., 2016).
- It also seems that social media addiction has a connection to the individual self-esteem, especially when the people with low self-esteem regard social media as a safer place to express themselves than people with high self-esteem (Forest and Wood, 2012).

But at the same time, the debate is still going on, especially if we consider the different views related to technology addiction. There is a debate that is emerging in today's literature regarding the addiction to the mobile

devices and the addiction to the online applications and if there is a relationship between the two (De-Sola Gutierrez et.al., 2016 in Barnes et.al., 2019). But this distinction can and should be study studied in future articles. At the same time, we must look at the effects of social media usage and addiction in relation to the business environment.

3. Social media addiction and the business environment

The approach towards the business environment in this article is view from two different points of view: (a) the internal business environment or the workplace and (b) the external business environment. When discussing the workplace in relation to the social media addiction, we should consider that the usage of online social media has changed the management and communication practices within the organisation, especially those related to communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing between employees.

At the same time the development of the smartphone and its extensive usage in our personal and professional lives has reduced the lines between the two worlds. According to Mansi and Levy (2013) "too much communication via social media can cause information overload and distraction, confuse employee focus, and hamper abilities to make decisions" (Cao and Yu, 2019).

In the last years, there was an important development of the scientific literature related to the negative effects of social media on organisations due to excessive usage at the work place.

Studies have shown that elevated levels of social media usage can lead to "technostress and negative effect on task performance" (Brooks, 2015). But there are others (van Zoonen, 2016 in Cao and Yu, 2019) argued that "work-related social media use was a source of boundary conflicts for employees, which in turn resulted in emotional exhaustion".

Before going further with the discussions related to the dimensions of excessive social media usage underlined by Cao and Yu, one must understand the concept of excessive media usage at work. According to Caplan and High (2006), excessive social media usage at work is "the degree to which individuals perceive that they spend too much time and energy using social media in the workplace". According to the Users and Gratifications Theory (UGT) the main reasons for which the individuals are using social media platforms are: (1) to satisfy their social need; (2) hedonic needs and (3) cognitive needs.

Starting from the above-mentioned reasons, there are three distinct dimensions, (Cao and Yu 2019; Ali-Hassan et al., 2015; Deryakulu and Ursavaş, 2014), related to the excessive usage of social media:

- excessive social use of social media – at work refers to spending excessive time and energy using social media to build and maintain social relationships in the workplace;
- excessive hedonic use of social media – at work means spending excessive time and energy using social media to relax, escape, and entertain in the workplace;
- excessive cognitive use of social media – at work refers to spending excessive time and energy using social media to create and distribute user generated content in the workplace.

At the same time, the usage of social media platforms at work for professional purposes can be mingled with the usage of social media at work for personal reasons. From the point of view of the three above-mentioned dimensions, the excessive cognitive use of social media is in the most part orientated towards professional purposes usage; the excessive hedonic use of social media is mainly used for personal reasons; and the excessive social use of social media at work is a combination of professional and personal activities designed to creating and maintaining relationships (Koch, 2012).

But basicaly, not all is negative in relation to the usage of social media platforms within the workplace. Even if the employers are raising the issue of productivity in relation to the personal usage of social media platforms and Internet usage at work, there are studies (Wang and Kobsa, 2009; Aguenza et al., 2012, in Tulu, 2017) that show an increase in productivity if the employer is allowing the employee to take short breaks for online surfing.

As we can see the usage of social media at the work place raises several issues, especially in the context of excessive usage by the employees. The organisations should create a balance that gives the employees the opportunity to effectively use the online and social media technologies, while reducing the level of social media usage towards an optimal level rather than excessive and addictive usage. Moreover, an employee might not feel comfortable if their need for the online and social media is not met at the workplace.

The second part of our study relates to the usage of the online social media platform by consumers. But before discussing the issue of addictive usage of social media sites by the consumers, we consider it necessary to present briefly the evolution of major social media platforms. Therefore, at the

time of writhing this article, Facebook.com (the world biggest social media platform) mentions on the official website the following statistical data (Facebook.com, 2019):

- 1.52 billion daily active users on Facebook on average for December 2018;
- 2.32 billion monthly active users on Facebook as of December 31, 2018.

In Romania, there are more than 9,6 million Facebook.com users, with a population penetration rate of 49%, and a 66,7% Internet penetration rate (Facebrands.ro, 2019). The world largest professional social media platform, LinkedIn.com has had at the end of 2018 a number of 590 million users, from which about 260 million users are monthly active users.

A profile from OnmiCoreAgency.com (2019), underlines that 61 million LinkedIn users are senior level influencers and 40 million are in decision-making positions, 56% of male users, 44% female users and 13% of Millennials (15-34 Years old) use LinkedIn and 44% of LinkedIn users earn more than $75,000 in a year. "The level of worldwide social media advertising revenue expected to reach in 2019 a level of US$100,927m. The revenue is expected to show an annual growth rate (CAGR 2019-2023) of 24.5%, resulting in a market volume of US$242,724m by 2023" (Statista.com, 2019).

According to the American Marketing Association, advertising is defined as: "the placement of announcement and persuasive message in time or space purchased in any of mass media by business firms, non-profit organization, government agencies, and individuals who seek to inform and persuade member of a particular target market or audience about their product, service, organizations, or ideas" (Can and Kaya, 2016).

In the context of excessive and/or addictive social media usage can be based on the number of times one consumer / individual uses the online platform per day. But at the same time there are not numerous studies that show the social media addictive behaviours.

Hong et.al. (2014) mentioned that there is a different behaviour between the consumers on social media platforms who use the websites four times per day; those that use for 60 min per day; or even those that use the platforms for more than five hours each day.

Anderssen et.al. (2012) shows that in the case of social media addiction, as in other cases of addictions, there are several important symptoms that one should consider: tolerance, withdrawal, relapse etc. All these elements can cause problems for the consumers in their every day social

activities and interaction for the online and offline environments (Elphinston and Noller, 2011, in Can and Kaya, 2016).

4. Conclusions

As we can see from the above presented literature review study, the topic of Internet and social media addiction is a special one, that needs dutiful study and long-term dedication to understand its implication for the individual, the society and for the companies. We have seen that the aspect of internet addiction has not been recognised by the professionals only recently, furthermore the idea of social media platforms addiction is not yet considered an addiction, but there are articles and researchers that study this "affliction" that could affect a large part of the worlds' population.

Another aspect that should be considered when discussing the issue of internet and social media addiction, is the individuals' dependency on technology, on the smartphone and on the communication platforms and apps. Even if there are some real benefits from having and using a social media account, we also must underline the potential negative aspects of social media, like online social media stalking, bullying and social media addiction.

There are people that are literary chained to their smartphone and their social media account or accounts. Everywhere they go, they must check in, they take pictures and they share the information with their online connections. In this paper we have tried to underline a short profile of the social media addictive user as: possibly be a woman, with no life partner, of a young age (not minor), that needs "to express her ambitions and show her successes to a potentially large audience, and to obtain highly visible rewards and recognition".

But this brief description can also be just as good available for the male social media user. To establish this, the author of this paper has started working on a qualitative and quantitative sociological research in this field.

The current paper also underlined some of the aspects related to the excessive usage of social media platforms at the workplace and by the consumers. From this point of view, we have found, by extensive literature review, that there are three dimensions of social media addictive behaviour at the workplace: excessive social use of social media, excessive hedonic use of social media, excessive cognitive use of social media.

If the companies want to harness the potential of high level social media usage at the work place, they must allow the employees to use at some degree social media, but to try and limit the negative aspects of such usage,

like reducing the time they spend on social media for their personal benefits and increase the time they spend on social media for professional and business related activities, without completely eliminating access of social media form their computes.

We consider that the same approach can be taken with the consumers and the advertising activity. Too much social media advertising destined for a social media addict can lead to reduced or negative impact, because they no longer influence the consumer, but at the same time, low levels of social media advertising shown to the consumers that use these platforms with high regularity will lead to negative effects for the company. Therefore, a balance must be developed to have an efficient advertising campaign.

But as a general conclusion, the business environment can, as it can be seen from our literature study, be influenced by the addictive usage of internet and social media websites that are in use today. We hope that this paper is a first step in understanding social media addiction and its influence on the individuals and on the business environment and we will continue its study in future papers that are being developed as we speak in relation to brand loyalty, work environment and more.

At the same time, if a company, or a marketing manager wants to develop a successful advertising social media campaign, he or she must understand that there are issues like addiction or excessive social media usage that should consider when developing such an advertising campaign.

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