Improving Employee Productivity through LinkedIn Networking: A Study of Banks in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

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Abstract

Social networking is rapidly changing the way employees interact with customers and the organization as a whole; and one form of social networking is LinkedIn networking. This study examined the relationship between LinkedIn networking and employee productivity measured in terms of service quality and employee task accomplishment of banks operating in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria. A survey design was adopted for the study using questionnaire as the research instrument. The population of this research work was made up of 77 employees of the money deposit banks in focus; all of who were administered copies of the questionnaire. With a response rate of about 84%, the returned and useable copies came from 65 employees. Frequencies and mean scores were used for the presentation of data; and the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient and regression analysis were used to test the relationship between the LinkedIn networking with each of the two measures of employee productivity used in this study and strength of explanation (co-efficient of determination). The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Windows version 22 with a criterion significance level of 0.05 was employed. The findings revealed that LinkedIn networking has significant influence on service quality and employee task accomplishment. It was, therefore, recommended that employees of the banks should use LinkedIn as a constructive and effective means for enhancing their productivity in terms of service quality and task accomplishment.

Keyword: Employee productivity, LinkedIn networking, Service quality, Social networking, Task accomplishment.

1. Introduction

The world has become a global village just as the economy of the world is now the heart of every country's business interest and activities. Business activities are undergoing exceptional revolution and no organization would want to be left behind. Umoru (2014) observed that things are changing across the world as new technologies are creating new environments for training, learning and providing interactive discussions for employees for better performance. Umoru (2014) further stressed that new technology, especially social networking, has opened new courses that are changing the ways we live, act, think, learn and communicate. These innovations represented by social networking such as LinkedIn has significantly diminished barriers, especially of distance and space, as a result of which valuable information can be created, modified and delivered in far-flung areas for the benefit of employees and customers across countries and continents (Gupta, 2014). This is what globalization aims to achieve – to bring about increasing relationships of culture, people, and economic activity. Banks in Nigerian are no exception to this globalization impact.

Social networking has changed the pattern of corporate communications, affecting the ways organizations relate with the public. Employees, generally, are no strangers to the social media trend wherein they obtain information on activities within and outside organizations on customers' needs. Employees sometimes use the social networking to share their thoughts, make inquiries, and react to posts shared by other members. LinkedIn have provided multiple channels for organizations to engage their publics directly without relying on the traditional means. It also gives them opportunities to share real time updates on activities of their organizations and receive immediate feedback from their publics. Prior to the digital explosion and the popularization of social networking, audience engagement was based on print and electronic media. However, the level of compliance of employees to the social media varies. While many employees value the social media, a few of them actually maximize the advantage it offers their professions (Lydia and Philip, 2015). It appears that a good number of employees are yet to understand how social media can help improve their productivity. Some of them simply use social media as another tool of personal communication while others do not even use them at all.

For several years now, the issue of social media utilization has been controversial. Junco, Heiberget and Loken (2011) observed that some employees have taken advantage of the opportunities offered by social networking to improve their professional practices and build global reputation for their organizations. Whereas,

there are also some employees who seem not to consider social media as serious channels that can be employed to achieve higher productivity (Weber, 2014). At best, they use social media for their personal interactions, leaving their organizations at the mercy of rumor mongers in the social space. Wang, Chen, and Lian (2011) reported that there have been reports of poor effect and influence when the social media is overused in such a way that does not improve productivity of the employee. This study, therefore sought to empirically ascertain how employee productivity can be improved through LinkedIn networking by examining the latter's influence on the service quality provided by employees and their task accomplishment using employees in money deposit banks operating in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria as the case. To guide the study, two research questions were asked thus:

a) How does LinkedIn networking affect the service quality employees of the banks offer?
b) How does LinkedIn networking influence the task accomplishment of employees of the banks?

2. Literature Review
This review covers the predictor variable (LinkedIn Networking), the criterion variable (employee productivity) and its two measures used in this study (service quality and task accomplishment).

2.1 LinkedIn Networking
LinkedIn is a business-related social networking mostly used by professionals in different fields. Participants maintain and sustain a list of individuals with whom they have some level of relationship, called connections. It can be used to develop a contact of network, follow diverse individuals and organizations and to search for people, jobs and different opportunities. It was launched in 2003, and currently boasting over 200 million users from 200 countries around the world (Jose, 2013). LinkedIn is a business-oriented social media website that focuses on professional networking. The purpose of this social networking is to allow registered participants to connect with other business professionals they know and have confident in by maintaining a list of contact details. Participants can bring other users or nonusers to become a connection. Through this social network, participants recommend jobs, individuals, and business opportunities to one another, and use the social network to develop relationships with communal friends. According to Heather and Felicia (2013), profiles are strictly professional, with little or no information about hobbies, political or religious affiliations. Participants can canvass or request for and make necessary recommendations from/for other participants in the platform. LinkedIn supports the development of groups through a formal operation and acceptance process. Groups that are involved in this social networking are association of alumni and groups of employees in a particular organization. Also, LinkedIn networking provides the opportunity for participants to preserve relationship with other participants.

2.2 Employee Productivity
Prokepenko (1996) defined employee productivity as the relationship between the output generated by an employee and the input provided to create this output. Productivity is thus of fundamental importance to the individual worker of whatever status, to the organization whether commercial or not, and to the national economy at large (Yesufu, 2000). For organizations to enjoy competitive advantage, it is important for them to truly leverage on the productivity of their employees as a competitive instrument for success in attaining organizational objectives. The performance of the organization, which determines its survival and growth, depends to a large extent on the productivity of its workforce. The need to enhance the productivity of employees for optimal or higher value for the organization has become very significant for the reasons earlier mentioned in relation to globalization and business revolution. This can only be achieved when organizations invest resources to ensure that employees have the required competencies (knowledge, skills and attitude) to work productively in a rapidly changing and complex environment (Akinyele, 2007). For the purpose of the study, employee productivity was measured using **service quality** and **task accomplishment**.

According to Zeithaml, Valerie, Berry, Leonard and Parasuraman (1996), service quality can be defined as an overall judgment similar to attitude towards the service and generally accepted as an antecedent of overall customer satisfaction. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) opined that service quality is the capability of an employee or organization to meet or exceed expectations of customers. Service quality measures how much the service delivered by the employee meets the customers' expectations (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2011). In today's global competitive environment, delivering quality service is considered as an essential strategy for success and survival of the organization (Reichheld and Sasser, 1990). In the same vein, Sweeney, Soutar and Johnson (1997) observed that as a result of increased competition many organizations now consider quality as a strategic tool. Service quality has become more important and service providers such as banks seek to improve their service quality to gain sustainable competitive advantage, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty.

With respect to task accomplishment, Viswesvaran and Ones (2000) defined it as scalable actions, behavior and outcomes that employees engage in or bring about that are linked with and contribute to organizational goals. Campbell (1990) described task accomplishment as reflecting the proficiency (i.e. competency) with which an

employee completes a given. In other words, task accomplishment has to do with meeting prescribed work goals. In the words of Campbell, McCloy, Oppler and Sager (1993), it has to do with the behavior an employee displays at work, and such behavior must contribute to an organization's goals in order to be considered in the domain of task accomplishment. It includes work quantity, work quality, and job knowledge. Employee task accomplishment is of high importance for organizations and individuals alike because showing high performance when accomplishing tasks results in satisfaction, feelings of self-efficacy and mastery (Kanfer and Ackerman, 2005). Moreover, employees that have high task accomplishment get promoted, awarded and honored.

From the forgoing review of literature on LinkedIn networking and employee productivity measured in terms of service quality and task accomplishment by employees, the following hypotheses were suggested for the study:

(a) **H_{01}**: There is no significant relationship between LinkedIn networking and service quality of employees.

(b) **H_{02}**: There is no significant relationship between LinkedIn networking and task accomplishment of employees.

3. Methodology

A survey design was adopted for the study using questionnaire as the research instrument. The population of the study was 77 employees working in five money deposit banks operating in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. The five banks are UBA (23), Skye bank (13), Access bank (16), Fidelity bank (14) and Eco bank (11). However, out of the 77 copies sent out, sixty-five (65) completed copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and used. Frequencies and mean scores in the data sets for LinkedIn networking, service quality and task accomplishment were determined. To test the relationships between LinkedIn networking and each of the dimensions of employee productivity, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Windows version 22 with a significance level of 0.05. LinkedIn networking was further regressed on service quality and task accomplishment to determine its effect on each of them for explanatory strength.

4. Data Presentation and Results
Table 1: Items and scores on LinkedIn networking

B	Linkedin Networking	SD 1	D 2	I 3	A 4	SA 5	Sum	Mean Score
B1	Linkedin serves as an essential tool for employee development, career management and personal branding	1 0.00 1	1 1.5 2	4 6.2 12	49 75.4 196	11 16.9 55	65 100% 266	4.09
B2	Linkedin helps to improve employee productivity and long-term career strength by leveraging on the expertise of other.	0 0.00 0	2 3.1 4	4 6.2 12	28 43.1 112	31 47.7 155	65 100% 283	4.35
B3	The use of Linkedin in the workplace leads to better productivity by meeting new people and gaining fresh ideas.	2 3.1 2	2 3.1 4	2 3.1 6	32 49.2 128	27 40.0 130	65 100% 270	4.22
	Total	3 3	5 10	10 66	109 436	69 340	196 855	4.36

Source: Field survey and SPSS Output, 2017.

Three measurement items in the research instrument, B1, B2 and B3, were employed to collect data on LinkedIn networking. The elicited responses and associated scores are presented in Table 1. The data or distribution in the table shows that the respondents agreed on all items of LinkedIn networking with a mean score greater than 4.

Three measurement items in the research instrument, C1, C2 and C3, were used to generate the data on service quality and the responses and scores are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Items and scores on service quality

C	Service Quality	SD 1	D 2	I 3	A 4	SA 5	Sum	Mean Score
C1	LinkedIn networking helps you to perform promised services to customer dependably and accurately.	1	2	3	43	16	65	
		1.5	3.1	4.6	66.2	24.6	100%	4.09
		1	4	9	172	80	268	
C2	LinkedIn networking helps you to identify customer needs and other members of the firm	3	1	6	27	28	65	
		4.6	1.5	9.2	41.5	43.1	100%	4.17
		3	2	18	108	140	217	
C3	LinkedIn networking makes communication with customers and other members of the firm easier.	0	0	5	27	33	65	
		0.0	0.0	7.7	41.5	49.2	98.5%	4.43
		0	0	15	108	165	288	
		4	6	14	97	64	185	
	Total	2	14	42	388	385	831	4.49

Source: Field survey and SPSS Output, 2017.

Table 2 shows that the respondents agreed on all items of service quality with a mean score greater than 4 indicating that the studied employees achieve the provision of service quality to customers through the adoption of LinkedIn networking.

Table 3: Items and scores on task accomplishment

C	Items	SD 1	D 2	I 3	A 4	SA 5	Sum	Mean Score
C4	LinkedIn networking helps in the fulfillment of the requirements of task that are part of the contract between the employer and the employee by getting information from colleagues online.	3	3	4	35	20	65	
		4.6	4.6	6.2	53.8	30.77	100%	4.02
		3	6	12	140	100	261	
C5	LinkedIn networking helps to provide some information that assist me in performing my given task	0	3	7	33	22	65	
		0.0	4.6	10.8	50.8	33.8	100%	4.13
		0	6	21	132	110	269	
C6	LinkedIn networking helps to provide learning platform that aids my task productivity	5	2	0	31	27	65	
		7.7	3.1	0	47.7	41.5	100%	4.12
		5	4	0	124	135	268	
		2	7	16	114	59	195	
	Total	2	14	58	456	295	798	4.09

Source: Field survey and SPSS Output, 2017

Three measurement items in the research instrument, C4, C5 and C6, were used to generate the data on task accomplishment. The responses and scores on the items are presented in Table 3. It shows that the respondents agreed on all items of task accomplishment with a mean score greater than 4, indicating that the studied employees accomplish their given task through the adoption of LinkedIn networking.

Table 4 shows that the Spearman's correlation coefficient (r) = 0.623. This value is high, which indicates that a strong relationship exists between LinkedIn networking and service quality. It also shows that a positive relationship exists between the two variables due to the positive sign of the correlation coefficient. This implies that improvement in LinkedIn networking will bring about increase in service quality in the studied firms.

Table 4: Correlations between LinkedIn networking and service quality

Correlations

Type	Variables1	Statistics	Linkedin Networking	Service Quality
Spearman's rho	Linkedin Networking	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.623 **
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	65	65
	Service Quality	Correlation Coefficient	.623 **	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	65	65

. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **Source: SPSS Output, 2017

The results in Table 5 show that the correlation coefficient is 0.623. They indicate that a significant and strong relationship exist between LinkedIn Networking (LN) and service quality. The coefficient of determination (R^2) = 0.645. It implies that 64.5% variation in service quality is explained by variations in LinkedIn networking. This indicates that this model has a good fit. The other 35.5% is elucidated by other variables not captured in this model. The F-calculated of 134.7 had a corresponding significant F-tab of 2.68; meaning that the model is useful. This is based on the fact that F-cal = 134.7 > F-tab $_{(0.05, 65)}$ = 2.68. Also, the Table 5 shows that LinkedIn networking had a calculated t-value of 3.119 and a corresponding sig. value/probability value (PV) of 0.002. From the decision rule, since the t-calculated = 3.119 > t-tabulated $_{(0.05, 64)}$ =1.96; then the applicable null hypothesis (H_{o1}) is rejected to have the finding that there is a significant relationship between LinkedIn networking and service quality provided by employees in the banks studied.

Table 5: Regression of LinkedIn networking on service quality

Variables	Coef.	t-cal	sig. t	t-tab (0.05, 1, 64)	R	R^2	F-cal	F-tab (0.05, 65)	sig f
Constant	1.187	7.631	.000	1.96	0.623	0.645	134.7	2.68	0.000
LN	.160	3.119	.002						

Dependent Variable; Service Quality. **Source: SPSS Output, 2017.**

Table 6 shows that the Spearman's correlation coefficient (r) = 0.762. This value is high, which indicates that a strong relationship exists between LinkedIn networking and task accomplishment. It also shows that a positive relationship exists between the two variables due to the positive sign of the correlation coefficient. This implies that improvement in LinkedIn networking will bring about improvement in task accomplishment in the studied banks.

Table 6: Correlations of LinkedIn networking and task accomplishment

Correlations

Type	Variables1	Statistics	LinkedIn Networking	Task Accomplishment
Spearman's rho	LinkedIn Networking	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.762 **
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	65	65
	Task Performance	Correlation Coefficient	.762 **	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	65	65

. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Source: **SPSS Output, 2017.

The results in Table 7 shows that the regression coefficient is 0.762. It indicates that a significant and strong relationship exist between LinkedIn Networking (LN) and task accomplishment. The coefficient of determination (R^2) = 0.616. It implies that 61.6% variation in employee task accomplishment can be explained by variations in LinkedIn networking. This indicates that this model has a good fit. The other 38.4% is elucidated by other variables not captured in this model. The F-calculated of 118.8 had a corresponding significant F-tab of 3.92; meaning that the model is useful. That F-Cal = 118.8 > F-tab $_{(0.05, 65)}$ = 3.92 supports this view. The table also shows that LinkedIn networking had a calculated t-value of 5.623 and a corresponding sig. value/probability value (PV) of 0.000. From

the decision rule, since the t-calculated = 5.623 > t-tabulated $_{(0.05, 64)}$ =1.96; then the second null hypothesis (**H$_{o2}$**) is rejected; leading to the finding that there is a significant relationship between LinkedIn networking and employee task accomplishment in the deposit money banks studied.

Table 7: Regression of LinkedIn networking on task accomplishment

Variables	Coef.	t-cal	sig. t	t-tab (0.05, 1, 64)	R	R^2	F-cal	F-tab (0.05, 65)	sig f
Constant	.815	5.003	.000	1.96	0.762	0.616	118.8	3.92	0.000
LN	.303	5.623	.000						

Dependent Variable; Task Accomplishment. **Source: SPSS Output, 2017.**

5. Discussion of findings

In view of the above findings, Hunt (2010) observed that LinkedIn helps to improve employee productivity and long-term career strength by leveraging on the expertise of others, leveraging on groups to meet new people and gain fresh ideas. Social networks such as LinkedIn can be seen as alternative communication tools which embrace existing relationships and activities in a fun and colorful way that enriches the employees' experiences which affect the service quality of the employee (North, 2010).

Also, LinkedIn serves as a kind of think tank or open brainstorming session by offering expertise to those in the same network, helping to establish trust, improving reputation and increasing service quality of the employee. This is as a result of LinkedIn been a medium to finding out more about the customers and organizations that employees do business with. Professional networks like LinkedIn facilitate vast interactions, connections, and networks of people by enabling collaboration anywhere and at any time. For instance, imagine an employee is about to meet with an important potential client. The employee can do a quick search on LinkedIn and discover that the person went to the same school as the employee or share the same or similar interests. With this information an employee can have a valuable conversation starter that will help him or her build rapport with the client.

Furthermore, Barwise and Meehan (2010) noted that LinkedIn gives an opportunity to learn from available instant information and get feedback which help to equip the employee with current issues around him or her; hence, helps to enhance his/her task accomplishment. LinkedIn networking allows an employee to network with customers and professionals in different organizations in the firm's industry. This helps the employee to stay up-to-date with the happening in the industry and share information with other employees who doe work similar to his or hers. In addition to networking with people in an employee LinkedIn extended network, he or she can also set up and join specific social networks to discuss ideas and share industry news that will enhance the performance of the employee. The information gotten assists the employee in performing designated task.

Through the use of professional networks and online communities, decision-makers connect and collaborate with peers, experts, customers, and colleagues far and wide in an on- demand environment, about the issues that bother them. The impact of these far-reaching business networks is becoming clearer every day as lots of consumers, partners, suppliers, and business organizations review and share their professional experiences and knowledge with each other with increasing levels of trust and reliance.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this research show that LinkedIn networking has significant effect on service quality provided by the employee and task accomplishment. Hence, managers should encourage their employees to be involved in LinkedIn networking because social networking provides a prime opportunity for organizations and its employees to get to know their customers personally and keep their fingers on the pulse of their needs and behaviors. It is therefore appropriate for firms to embrace LinkedIn networking because it assists the organization to serve their customers better and faster. In addition, it allows all employees to communicate with one another and grow relationships that would enhance the smooth running of the organization. Introducing LinkedIn networking allows people from different departments to communicate with each other and explain their needs which affect their productivity.

Furthermore, the social nature of decision-making has improved by linking generations of professionals to one another, altering and changing the dynamics of customer relationship with management and marketing due to the presence of LinkedIn networking; hence the improvement in the service quality of the employees. Thus, employees should use LinkedIn networks as a constructive and effective means for learning new things, ideas, creating social contacts, in other to increase their productivity. They should not hang back in joining LinkedIn networks that will help them to get important, current and relevant information from far and wide to perform their task.

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