

WEB 2.0 TECHNOLOGIES IN BUSINESS: WHY NOT?

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to explore the barriers or the reasons behind the insufficient use of Web 2.0 technology in companies. The empirical research was conducted among managers in companies in Bosnia and Herzegovina during 2015. The results indicate that managers see information technology infrastructure (department size, technology implementation costs) and computer illiteracy as the main barriers to intensified use of Web 2.0 technology in business. The least relevant obstacles are related to the lack of support from, and the inability to protect the data privacy and integrity in an adequate manner. The results indicate that significant efforts to promote the benefits that Web 2.0 technology brings to the business are needed, which would, in turn, significantly affect the perception of their disadvantages.

KEY WORDS

web 2.0, barrier, Bosnia and Herzegovina, technology, obstacles

CLASSIFICATION

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INTRODUCTION

Although Web technologies, and in particular generation 2.0, are initially created for data and information exchange, today they are imposed as a powerful, dynamic and robust platform that enables two-way interaction of different users, in different ways and at any time. The two-way interaction involves much more than ordinary communication. It involves search, storage and exchange of data and information and multimedia content, communication and cooperation (private and business), the realization of economic exchange of goods and services, conducting business activities, creating and sharing new knowledge, acquiring new skills, etc. The list of possibilities does not end here since everyday use increases their possibilities in new areas of use. Thanks to the wide range of Web 2.0 technologies, they became an integral part of the business and private life. In addition, the literature, even more, explores their use in business and educational purposes [1-15].

The application of Web 2.0 technologies in the business context has significantly increased in recent years. As a result of interactivity they ensure, companies and large global companies in particular, increasingly invest in Web 2.0 projects. The Web 2.0 technologies not only have brought a variety of business benefits but also have driven the development of new business models and strategies that affect the way of decision-making, linking and communicating with suppliers and clients in companies creating additional values to each participant. The use of Web 2.0 technology in business is considered a strategic integration of Web 2.0 technologies in Intranet, Extranet, and all business processes of companies. The implementation of Web 2.0 technologies in business significantly affects data searches from internal and external sources, encourages and strengthens cooperation within and outside the company, expansion of the existing range of business computer applications in a company, and their flexible and innovative integration and simpler administration.

Writing about enterprise social media, Khajeheian states that enterprise social media as a communication platform can reach higher the level of integration and spirit of team working in an organization and promote the sense of belonging to the organization [16]. Suša Vugec et al. stated social software, technologies, and concepts could empower business processes management (BPM) in an organisation that creates social BPM. Social BPM strengthens internal process performance through a more efficient task and role recommendation, implementation of knowledge management, and/or improvement of external cooperation with key stake-holders and customers [17]. Referring to the literature, Mabić et al. stated Web 2.0 technologies, especially social networks helps banks to conduct targeted marketing and reduce marketing costs, get more detailed information on their customers, foster commitment and loyalty of their customers, get feedback on their products and services, build and strengthen brand, act proactively to prevent negative connotations associated with the bank, to improve their services for sending money through different online platforms, and to humanize their brand [8, 11, 18].

Besides various advantages of Web 2.0 technology in business, the disadvantages of its use also have to be mentioned. Decreased security, primarily related to weak and inadequate protection of confidential data, is pointed as a significant disadvantage. "Attacks" of malicious programs, as viruses, worms, Trojan horses at important data are much simpler and often, due to intensive digitalization and use of information and communication technologies. All this makes data more "vulnerable" and accessible to unauthorized users that can cause significant consequences for a company. In addition, digitalization also relativizes the issue of ownership and data significance as public disclosure on the Internet makes data more visible and accessible to everyone that ensures different interpretations and misuse.

But, despite this, the experiences of companies using Web 2.0 technologies in their business show that advantages are the main ones. Usually, they are reflected in productivity, efficiency, and effectivity of business processes and better business results [14].

As far as barriers are concerned, they require special attention. In order to speak about the advantages and disadvantages based on experiences, it is necessary to implement Web 2.0 technologies in business. Precisely there barriers and reasons play a key role. Barriers to the use of Web 2.0 technology in business are described in works of Tebbutt, “Genie in a Bottle” [19], and Pauker Kreitzberg “Building a Web 2.0-Friendly Culture: Success on the Web is About People, not Technology” [20] (note: order of the following barriers, of the first and second author, does not represent the strength of the influence). Tebbutt mentions the following five obstacles [19]: (i) *Fear of control loss* – it starts from the presumption that excessive empowerment, freedom, and power that employees receive can negatively affect the power and control of managers. Namely, employees with excessive empowerment can reveal different business policies and procedures that management does not want employees to discover; (ii) *Lack of trust in employees* – this is strictly related to the previously described. As they get significant freedom and power, employees can also realize facts that should not be known according to managers’ opinions. This develops fear at managers that the facts can be misused, e.g., they can reach people outside the company, direct competition, and others; (iii) *Already seen* – In the past, some companies made (un)successful attempts to implement different applications, that develop an aversion to new attempts at employees due to their results, (iv) *Fear of Social Networking* – linking to the personality traits of people, it is almost inevitable that there are people in companies who have the problem of leaving old habits and adopting new ones. From the other side, a constant mutual connection and responsibility for created content can be repulsive to employees because of their overwhelming exposure and responsibility, and (v) *Hierarchical Anarchy* – raising the level of employees’ empowerment, there is a fear at management structures that employees will circumvent hierarchical structure and carry out unauthorized activities.

Pauker Kreitzberg points out the following [20]: security, compliance, public face, empowerment, transparency, generation gap, communication, and behaviour. Bradley has listed 25 barriers that business people mention as reasons for the insufficient use of Web 2.0 technology in business. Author, inter alia, mentions the following [21]: implementation of Web 2.0 technology in business is just a whim, it requires time, and business people have any time to waste, it is a risk because it can “fall”, it represents threat because of different inappropriate contents, possibilities of unauthorized “intrusions” in system and disrupted security; it can affect negatively on efficiency of employees, it is unnecessary due to existing systems etc. Pejić Bach et al. (2013), in their research, concluded that internal factors in corporations are crucial for adopting and using ICT in order to increase business performance and competitiveness [22]. Since Web 2.0 technologies belong to ICT, it is easy to conclude that the same factors are key to their implementation.

The aim of the article is to research barriers, that are according to managers, barriers to intensive use (reasons of insufficient use) of Web 2.0 technologies in BH companies and compare views of managers whose companies already use the technologies and those in which this is not practice.

The introduction of the article addresses the use of Web 2.0 technologies in business, advantages and disadvantages and reasons or barriers why these technologies are not used more intensively. The methodology describes the sample, the research instrument, and the course and data processing methods. After that, the results of the empirical research are presented and discussed, and the work ends with a conclusion.

METHODOLOGY

The empirical research is conducted in companies in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH) during 2015. The used questionnaire is originally prepared for empirical research as a part of writing the master thesis titled “Web 2.0 technologies in business” written by Mirela Mabić, 2015, Univesity of Mostar, Faculty of Economics. The questionnaire is structured in two parts.

The first part of the questionnaire included general questions on the company: time of establishment, number of employees, primary activity, company size, ownership, degree of formalization. Buble and Klepić state that, in the classification of businesses by their size, two major criteria should be considered: the number of employees and the yearly revenue/yearly balance [23]. Accordingly, authors, depending on the size of the business, classify a business as micro, small, medium, and large. Micro business has up to 10 employees, and their yearly revenue/yearly balance does not exceed 200 000 €. Small business have anywhere between 10 to 50 employees, and their yearly revenue/yearly balance does not exceed 2 000 000 €. Medium businesses have up to 250 employees, and their yearly revenue/yearly balance does not exceed 30 000 000 €. According to Buble and Klepić there are three types of management: top (highest level), middle and lower or first-line management [24]. Top management consists of those managers that are responsible for a business as a whole (president, executive director, CEO). Their base responsibilities are as follows: setting goals, defining the strategy for achieving those goals, monitoring and interpreting the external environment, and making decisions that affect the business as a whole. Middle management consists of managers responsible for business units and main sections of the business (such as the head of the department, head of the sector, head of the development department, etc.). Their base responsibility is to execute the overall strategy set up by the top management. Lower management refers to managers that are directly responsible for the production of goods and services (supervisor, line manager, section chief, office manager). Their base assignments are to: apply the setup rules and procedures in order to ensure effective production, ensure technical assistance, and motivate their subordinates. In this article, the degree of formalization signifies the amount of freedom that the respondents had during the resolution of tasks, issues, and unplanned situations. In other words, it refers to the regulation, by internal acts, of the completion of tasks within the business. Three answers were given: a) complete formalization – no freedom in resolving a task; b) partial formalization – there is partial freedom in resolving a task; c) no formalization – there is complete freedom in resolving a task.

The second part of the questionnaire refers to the use of Web 2.0 technologies in the everyday business of companies, the advantages they ensure and barriers for their more intensive use. The barriers are given in Table 1, and besides the mentioned, respondents could identify other barriers as well that are considered to be significant for the use of Web 2.0 technologies in business.

Questions in the questionnaire are created as closed and opened. Likert five-point rating scale with the following interpretations of rates is used for evaluation of barriers/reasons for difficult acceptance and insufficient use of Web 2.0 technologies in business. 1 – no barrier, 2 – minor barrier, 3 – medium/moderate barrier, 4 – major barrier, and 5 – significant barrier.

An online survey has been conducted, a link to access the survey was sent to 317 e-mail addresses. In total, 135 questionnaires were collected, and after a logical analysis, 127 of them were accepted for further analysis, so the sample consisted of 127 top and middle managers. The return rate is 40,1 %, and the rate of utilization of questionnaires completed 94,1 %. The sample included 14 owners, 32 managers, and 81 department, branch, or sector managers (employee that executes their managerial tasks). The characteristics of the enterprises in which the respondents are working are presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Possible barriers (reasons) for difficult acceptance and insufficient use of Web 2.0 technologies in business. Source: authors' work.

| Code | Barrier |
|------|--|
| P1 | Lack of management support |
| P2 | Poor computer literacy of management |
| P3 | Size of IT department in the company |
| P4 | Costs of use/implementation |
| P5 | It is hard to measure the benefits of Web 2 technologies use |
| P6 | Poor computer literacy of employees |
| P7 | Demanding infrastructure |
| P8 | Existence of Intranet or another system that provides the same functionalities as Web 2.0 technology |
| P9 | Impossible adequate data protection |
| P10 | Security issues |
| P11 | Problems related to business control |
| P12 | Level of business activities formalization |

Table 2. The characteristics of the enterprises. Source: authors' work.

| Characteristics | | Percentage (<i>n</i> = 127) | Characteristics | | Percentage (<i>n</i> = 127) |
|----------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Company size | large | 39,4 | Time of establishment | before 1990 | 27,6 |
| | medium | 23,6 | | 1990-2000 | 40,9 |
| | small and micro | 37,0 | | after 2000 | 31,5 |
| Number of employees | < 50 | 44,9 | Ownership | domestic | 78,0 |
| | 50-250 | 19,7 | | foreign | 17,3 |
| | > 250 | 35,4 | | both | 4,7 |
| Primary activity | service | 61,4 | Degree of formalization | full | 18,1 |
| | manufacturing | 23,6 | | partial | 70,1 |
| | both | 15,0 | | no formalization | 11,8 |

Results are presented as proportion in the total number of responses (relative frequency) and mean (M), and standard deviation (SD). The student t-test for independent samples test was used for testing of statistical significance. All statistical associations were evaluated using a significance criterion of 0,05.

RESULTS

Average rates on the importance of a barrier to more intensive use of Web 2.0 technologies in business are shown in Figure 1, while Figure 2 shows the distribution of rates at certain barriers/reasons based on respondents' answers. All barriers that the respondents have rated as either 1 or 2 have been considered as small barriers, barriers that got a rating of 3 were considered medium, while all barriers rated 4 or 5 were considered as large barriers.

When asked if Web 2.0 technologies are used in your company, 58 (45,7 %) respondents answered that they use the technology, 53 (41,7 %) do not use, while 16 respondents answered that they do not know, so they are excluded from the comparative analyses of opinions. The results of the comparison of the average rates of "users" and "non-users" of Web 2.0 technologies are shown in Table 3.

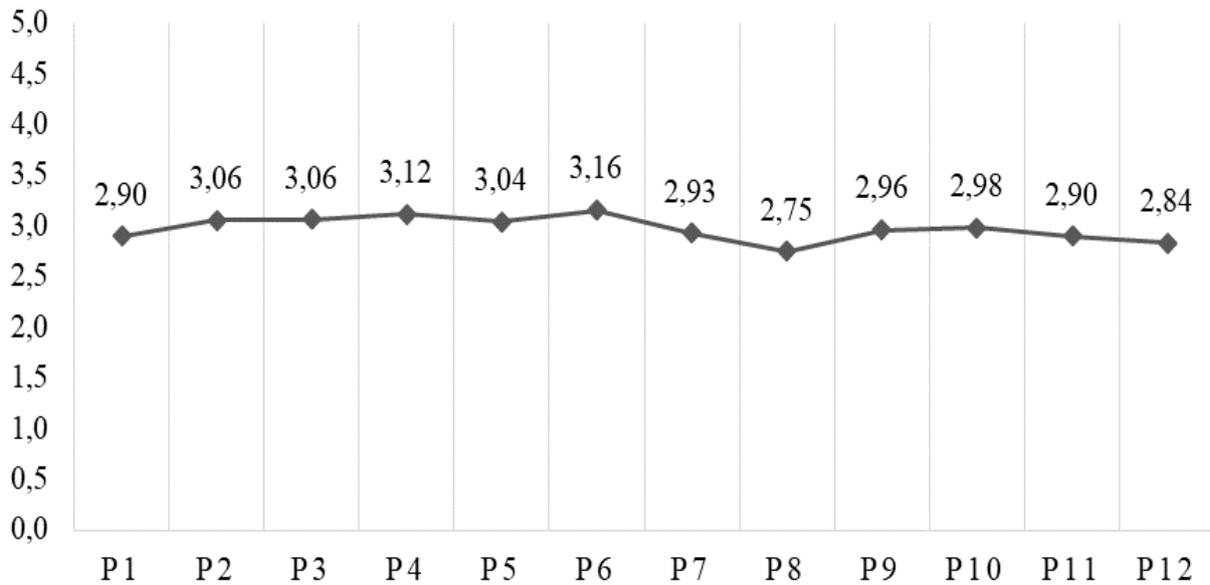


Figure 1. Average rates of possible reasons (barriers) for difficult acceptance of Web 2.0 technologies in business. Source: authors' work.



Figure 2. Distribution of rates at given reasons (barriers) for difficult acceptance of Web 2.0 technologies in business. Source: authors' work.

DISCUSSION

The results show that respondents see all mentioned reasons for the insufficient use of Web 2.0 technologies in business in BH companies, to a certain extent, as a barrier. All given barriers get at least one rate 1 and at least one rate 5. The dominant rate at all barriers except at the barrier *Lack of management support* (P1) is rate 3 “Size of IT department in the company”. This shows that respondents consider given reasons as moderately significant or

Table 3. Importance of possible barriers for acceptance of Web 2.0 technologies (users vs. non-users). Source: authors' work.

| Barrier | Web 2.0 users | | Web 2.0 non-users | | p |
|---------|---------------|------|-------------------|------|-------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | |
| P1 | 2.86 | 1.54 | 2.92 | 1.45 | >0.05 |
| P2 | 3 | 1.49 | 3.13 | 1.48 | >0.05 |
| P3 | 2.79 | 1.23 | 3.38 | 1.43 | <0.05 |
| P4 | 3.05 | 1.32 | 3.11 | 1.25 | >0.05 |
| P5 | 2.79 | 1.2 | 3.23 | 1.1 | 0.05 |
| P6 | 3.21 | 1.2 | 3.08 | 1.39 | >0.05 |
| P7 | 2.74 | 1.12 | 3.08 | 1.24 | >0.05 |
| P8 | 2.66 | 1.12 | 2.83 | 1.24 | >0.05 |
| P9 | 3.14 | 1.3 | 2.83 | 1.22 | >0.05 |
| P10 | 3.1 | 1.27 | 2.91 | 1.2 | >0.05 |
| P11 | 2.95 | 1.19 | 2.87 | 1.09 | >0.05 |
| P12 | 2.9 | 1.18 | 2.75 | 1.09 | >0.05 |

M - mean; SD - standard deviation;
*Student t-test for independent samples

moderate barriers. At the mentioned barrier, the dominant rate is 1 that can lead to the conclusion that managers consider themselves, or management, the least problem in innovation and improvement of business processes, or business in general. An overview of average rates leads to the same conclusion. The mentioned barrier has a lower average rate, but the differences between a few of them are very small. Here it is necessary to mention that managers of different levels have rated eventual reasons for the insufficient use of Web 2.0 technologies in business. Therefore, it is expected that they will not point themselves as the biggest problem or the biggest barrier, and the obtained results have to be considered with caution. In order to get the real picture on managers as initiators or barriers to innovation, the managers' opinions should be "corrected" by employees' opinions (their subordinates), i.e., taken into account in the context of answers of all employees of questioned companies.

Results show that, according to respondents' opinions, the main barriers to more intensive use of Web 2.0 technology in business are *Size of IT department in the company* (P3) and *Computer literacy of employees* (P6). 40,9 % of respondents rated the mentioned barriers with 4 or 5, e.g. they considered them as major and significant barriers. If we analyse this results together with results for barriers *Costs of use/implementation* (P4) and *Demanding IT infrastructure* (P7), we can get a better image on how many respondents are familiar with Web 2.0 technologies. As an important feature of Web 2.0 technologies is mentioned the fact that they can be put into a function without IT experts and demanding technology and their use, at least part of them, does not require IT knowledge of expert level. One more thing that has to be pointed here is the fact that people competence to use some technology is not always conditioned by their precognition and the current computer illiteracy of employees cannot be considered as a significant barrier, even though respondents do not share this

opinion. Quality training, practical examples and instructive classes, those “Web 2.0 illiterate” as well as computer illiterate in general can become literate for Web 2.0 technologies. Some people, when becoming aware of benefits for them, get the will to master new knowledge and acquire new skills. The same is applicable to Web 2.0 technology. Particularly, it should be emphasized that the desire to facilitate work can positively influence the acceptance of innovation.

The following barriers are considered as the least significant *Impossible adequate data protection* (P8) and *Level of business activities formalization* (P12), that is understandable. The business activities formalization represents the exact definition of activities in resolving individual tasks, what Web 2.0 technologies would not change. They can just ease data and information availability and cooperation with others (communication and teamwork on the same things, documents, etc.) Likewise, as a result of improvements in the field of IT protection and security, the level of data protection is raising every day that leads to a higher level of security.

When comparing to reasons that authors mention in literature, opinions of questioned managers partially depart. The most reasons according to Tebbutt [19] and Pauker Kreitzberg [20] are related to people and not technical components since Web 2.0 technology, or any application within this group does not require complex nor expensive technology. People are the one who has to change their awareness and accept innovations for their own and companies' benefits. Ideal ground for fruitful “breeding” of technologies is an open organizational structure and high motivation of employees to exchange their own experiences and to acquire new knowledge. Unfortunately, contrary to the mentioned, practice has shown that the lack of employees' interest for further training, cooperation and exchange of information and knowledge with others, not perceiving organizational success as their own and necessity for additional incentives and stimulations are basic barriers for implementation of a new paradigm (no matter which) in business of a company. Compared to people, all other barriers become minor.

Regarding differences in opinions of respondents with the practice of using Web 2.0 technologies in business and one without the practice, results show that respondents significantly differ at barriers *Size of IT department in the company* (P3) and *It is hard to measure benefits of Web 2.0 technologies use* (P5). Respondents in companies that use Web 2.0 technologies have rated those barriers with lower rates than the ones who do not use Web 2.0 technologies in their business. This can lead to the conclusion that, according to their opinion, the mentioned is not such a large brake to more intensive use of Web 2.0 technologies in business. The mentioned is also expected because they, in the position of Web 2.0 users, have already realized that the size of the IT department does not condition the use and that it is possible to rate the benefits they bring. Respondents with no experience with Web 2.0 technologies in business think the opposite, i.e.; they consider the size of IT departments and measurability of benefits as major barriers.

Observing average rates of barriers of these two sub-groups of respondents within the range of set rates (1-5), it can be seen that both groups agree that major barriers are not *Lack of management support* (P1), *Existence of Intranet or another system that provides the same functionalities as Web 2.0 technologies* (P8), *Problems related to business control* (P11) and *Level of business activities formalization* (P12). The mentioned claims have average rates of less than 3. As for the comments on obtained results, the presumption is that both groups of respondents already have a situation of introducing new solutions and innovations in organization and they are aware of factors that can be adapted more easily. On the first sight, it may seem that “to have their opinions and hardly depart from them” can be a major barrier for any innovation, but by appropriate approach, presenting examples of good practice and pointing out good sides without concealing the bad ones, people can change their opinions.

The sub-group of questioned managers who use Web 2.0 technologies in their business gave higher rates to part of barriers than the respondents not using it, i.e., they characterized it as significant barriers to insufficient use of Web 2.0 technologies in business. It is about the following barriers: P6 – *Poor computer literacy of employees*, P9 – *Impossible adequate data protection*, P10 – *Security issues*, P11 – *Problems related to business control* and P12 – *Level of business activities formalization*. However, it has to point out that the difference between average rates is not so large, especially at two last barriers. The reason for this can be just experienced in the implementation and use of Web 2.0 technologies in business. Respondents using the technologies have probably already met with certain problems in their implementation, and they are aware that computer illiteracy of employees in addition to fear of new and unknown is a significant problem because people are the ones who need to use mentioned technologies. Of course, this problem is not insoluble, but beside efforts that go “regularly” with innovation (implementation of new solutions), additional efforts have to be done to educate employees and gain their trust.

CONCLUSION

In the opinion of almost half of the respondents, the main barriers to the more intense use of Web 2.0 technology in business are the barriers of “IT nature” or the size of IT departments and the computer illiteracy of employees. In addition to these obstacles, they point out the costs of the use/implementation of Web 2.0 technologies and their demanding infrastructure. Among the less significant barriers are the level of business activities formalization and the existence of Intranet or another system that provides the same functionality as Web 2.0 technology. Managers see themselves, i.e. management of the company as the least barriers.

The use of Web 2.0 technologies in BH companies is still on the beginning. As the research has shown, Web 2.0 technologies are not used enough, and users based on a limited group of technologies. Compared to literature, opinions of managers in BH companies on reasons to insufficient use of Web 2.0 technologies partially depart. Differences are seen in the fact that managers point out IT infrastructure as a major barrier and management support as a minor barrier. The literature points out that the lack of management support in companies is a major barrier, while most of Web 2.0 technologies require very small or no investments in infrastructure.

The results obtained are the starting point for further research and cannot be the basis for making general conclusions. Such opinions of managers in BH companies require significant efforts in eliminating the wrong perception on Web 2.0 technologies that would also intensify their use in business activities.

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