

Chapter 8

Examining the Opportunities of Social Networking Adoption in the Health Care Systems

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ABSTRACT

Social Network Sites (SNSs) are known for providing the opportunity to quickly spread information faster than any other mode because of its ease of accessibility and ability to reach wider populations. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the opportunities of adopting Social Networking (SN) in the healthcare systems. Based on the current literature review, using a social network will enhance communication, collaboration, connection, coordination, and knowledge sharing. The healthcare profession of Bhutan undertook the survey for this study. Three new factors were generated from this study, namely 4Cs; it was found that the use of social networking enhances communication, coordination, collaboration, and connection with patients and among healthcare professionals. The second factor, Green and Sustainability, social networking enables the reduction of the carbon footprint, and the third factor is Exchange Knowledge via use of social networking.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social networking is commonly known as a platform on which social networks or social relations are built among people sharing similar interests. It is also defined as a public sphere wherein millions of people around the world interact and socialize. It enables people to become a part of a virtual community by sharing opinions, ideas and informations with people having similar interests. The rapid rise in social networking sites (Livingstone

& Brake, 2010) has shifted industries' focus to online communities through dedicated websites; moreover, it has been integrated into their daily practices. Similarly, it has also introduced freedom and flexibility in the workplace by providing a diverse range of new ideas, viewpoints and opinions.

SNSs are designed to provide information and education pertaining to health care issues, diseases, treatments and medications. Some of the common advantages of SNSs include: ability to freely communicate; and improved coordina-

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tion, collaboration and cooperation. SNSs can also enable users to better understand information and enrich their knowledge. As a green initiative, the use of SNSs will help to reduce carbon emissions and contribute to sustainability and green awareness. Although there are several risk associated with use of social networking such as data integrity, information security and privacy but this chapter focuses only on opportunities of adopting SN. However this study also explores, the attitudes towards social networking adoption as one of the modes for communicating with patients and among health care professionals themselves in Bhutan. This study was carried out using the qualitative method and the survey questionnaire was distributed and collected using an online survey tool.

The chapter is organized as follows: section 1 presents brief introduction on social networking; section 2 covers the social network aspects; section 3 discusses the methodology, which is followed by analysis and finally it presents the conclusion.

2. SOCIAL NETWORK ASPECTS

Social networking is a platform for building social networks or social relations among people sharing similar interests. Social networks can be profit-based sites that encourage people of similar backgrounds and similar interests to initiate relationships with one another (McLennan & Howell, 2010, p. 12). Social networking is a public sphere in which millions of people around the world interact and socialize in an open environment (O' Bien & Torres, 2012). Boyd and Ellison (2008) stated that a social network is a web-based service which allows individuals to establish a public or semi-public profile depending on users' interests. It allows users to share, interact and communicate with anyone with whom they share a connection. SNSs are used mostly for the purpose of remaining connected to people who are already part of the user's social network. It is also said that SN is on

the rise and continuing to expand. According to Boyd and Ellison (2008)

Social networking is defined as web-based services that allow individual to “(1) construct a public of semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (p. 211)

Grabner-Kräuter (2009) mentions that the Web 3.0 is a term used to describe advanced Internet technology such as social networking, blocks and wikis and it is said to have more collaboration among Internet users than traditional Web. SNS enables people to become the part of a virtual community by sharing opinions, connect and socialize with people of similar interests (O' Bien & Torres, 2012). O'Brien (2009) states that SNSs and powerhouse in social networking media sell ads targeting individual users based on data gathered from their personal information. SNSs enable the public to be active and selective by making information available online and making it easy for them to compare and decide based on their requirements.

SNS provides an opportunity to quickly spread real-time information (DeAngelis, 2011; Erica, Lorincz, & Dahlweid, 2012) and at the same time it delivers the platform that helps businesses to seize opportunities (Bonchi, Castillo, & Gionis, 2011). According to Bonchi et al. (2011), networking is the key to employee excellence as it increases the opportunity of having multiple advisors and mentors. McLennan and Howell (2010) state that SNSs have also changed the way people communicate, interact and respond mainly in terms of professional and personal relationships. It also helps to increase mobility by enabling people to interact, share information and freely discuss any topics with one another. Information spread faster through SNSs than through a real-life network

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