

Chapter 21

The Role of Social Media Tools in the Knowledge Management in Organizational Context: Evidences Based on Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

The advancement of the economy based on knowledge makes knowledge management critical for organizations. The traditional knowledge management systems have presented some shortcomings on their implementation and management. Social media have demonstrated that are not just a buzzword and have been used increasingly by the organizations as a knowledge management component. This chapter was developed aiming at exploring and critically reviewing the literature of social media use in organizational context as a knowledge management component. The review suggests that, while traditional knowledge management systems are static and often act just as knowledge repositories, social media have the potential for supporting different knowledge management processes that will impact on the organizational culture by encouraging on participation, collaboration and knowledge sharing. Despite their recognized impact on knowledge management processes, some uncertainty remains amongst researchers and practitioners and is associated to the difficulty in understanding and measuring their real impact.

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INTRODUCTION

In the last twenty years knowledge management emerges as a distinct area of study, consolidating as a significant source of competitive advantage and as one of the most important resources in the capacity of progress of modern organizations (Mårtensson, 2000; Pekka-Economou & Hadjidema, 2011). The ability to define, implement and manage business opportunities depends largely on the availability and quality of knowledge.

To meet the challenge of capturing, organizing and disseminating knowledge, the organizations have undertaken heavy investments in technology, however, with “significant failure rates” (Malhotra, 2005, p. 8). In general, the system was not appropriated or the organization was not prepared for the required cultural change.

Despite the wide agreement that knowledge management occurs within a social context, some authors have the opinion that organizations have been focused primarily on the technology and little on people and process (Kakabadse, Kakabadse, & Kouzmin, 2003), and most of the solutions were centralized within the organization with lack of interactivity (Panahi, Watson, & Partridge, 2012).

Social media became a global phenomenon (Schlagwein & Hu, 2016) and have been used increasingly by the organizations. There are several examples of social media use in line with different organization objectives across countries and different types of industries. According to Von Krogh (2012, p. 154), “the increased use of social software by firms is often the result of a strategic imperative for more openness toward the outside”, including, for example, universities, suppliers, customers, and users.

Social media, also called social software, has become in a driving force by exploiting the collective intelligence (Chatti, Klamma, Jarke, & Naeve, 2007). Social media are a set of features, grouped into software applications, which enables to recreate online various types of social interactions that are possible to find in physical environments.

The strategically chosen social media can be internal or external to organization and its use can have as objective to achieve internal or external goals. Schlagwein and Hu (2016, p. 3) add that “technologically different social media tools might achieve the same organizational purpose, or technologically similar social media tools might achieve very different organizational purposes”. These purposes can be such as to improve productivity, increase the interaction between departments and team workers, create a channel with consumers or enhance the management of knowledge.

Truly, almost none of the social media acts alone. The combination of different tools in an appropriate measure can produce excellent results for organizations. However, often identifying the perfect match of tools can be somewhat difficult due to the dynamism and versatility of social media tools (Schlagwein & Hu, 2016).

Social media are very close in its principle and attributes to knowledge management (Levy, 2009), providing inexpensive alternatives and solutions that can overcome many failures of traditional knowledge management models (von Krogh, 2012). These tools have also shown to be an efficient mechanism in supporting knowledge sharing, particularly tacit knowledge, helping organizations to capture knowledge based on the knowledge from different stakeholders (Al Saifi, Dillon, & McQueen, 2016; Clark et al., 2015; Costa et al., 2009; Panahi et al., 2012; Paroutis & Al Saleh, 2009; Tee & Karney, 2010). Based on the crowd-wisdom, the social media enable to keep knowledge relevant and up-to-date (Chatti et al., 2007).

According to Kane et al. (2014, p. 276) “the impact of social media on and for organizations, represents an important area for information systems research”.

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