

Chapter 79

Exploring Determinants of Knowledge Sharing and the Role of Social Media in Business Organizations: Overview and New Direction

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge sharing is one of the greatest challenges for a business organization. Organizations not only need to focus on innovation of new products and services, but also to pay specific attention to effective knowledge sharing which is of vital importance to their success. In this context, social media have become increasingly popular. They have a profound impact on personal relationships, enable individuals to contribute to a number of issues and generate new possibilities and challenges in order to facilitate knowledge sharing. However, scarce attention has been devoted so far to the theme of social media security and its effects on behavioral intention in relation to knowledge sharing. As a response to this challenge, this chapter illustrates a research roadmap of knowledge sharing which includes important collective variables. This study aims at highlighting a new direction for the evaluation of social media as a tool for knowledge sharing in business organizations. Finally, it concludes with the discussion of several open issues and cutting-edge challenges.

INTRODUCTION

The rising popularity and the recent development of knowledge management are considered to be the result of the organization's needs to obtain a competitive edge and strategic differentiation, in the face of globalization and of the explosion of media and information phenomena. Industrially developed coun-

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-9020-1.ch079

tries claim that the third era of development has not been recently induced by agriculture or industry, but by information and knowledge (Gaál et al. 2015; Usman, & Oyefolahan, 2014; Yassin, et al. 2013).

This is an era of rapid change and uncertainty, characterized by both the increasing importance of knowledge and knowledge management as well as a wide use of new information technologies which can, potentially, change radically the way organizations work. As it has already been stated, the Internet has been the single most significant technological development in the last 20 years. It allows individuals to connect, collaborate and share knowledge, information, documents, photos, videos, etc. continuously with anyone in any place around the world. As several authors (Gaál et al. 2015; Usman, & Oyefolahan, 2014; Yassin, et al. 2013) have noticed, second generation web-based technologies are increasingly becoming popular in the managerial context.

This phenomenon is emphasized by the dramatic development of social media that constitute a meaningful example of users' involvement in knowledge dissemination and in collaborative content creation. In particular, new web technologies enable people to engage and to share information all over the world and across different platforms through the use of multiple modalities for interaction and contribution (Eijkman, 2011). While relying on the same knowledge framework (Dawson, 2007; Vuori & Okkonen, 2012), these technologies support and encourage collaborative writing (e.g., Wikis), content sharing (e.g., text, video, and images), social networking (e.g., Google+, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter), training (e.g. webinar) social bookmarking (e.g. ratings, tagging), and syndication (e.g., web feeds: RSS, Atom) (Dawson, 2008).

More recently, as organizations have recognized the power and purpose of these tools, they have begun incorporating social media into their business processes (Gaál et al., 2014). However, with increased collaboration and communication, there are cyber security risks that a company may monitor and/or face with new technologies, especially with social media (Zhang & Gupta, 2016). Given the numerous cases of data interception, information fraudulence, privacy spying, and copyright infringement from disorganized social organizational forms and non-friendly participation bodies that have been reported and discussed over the last few years, it is now even more crucial that organizations address this fundamental issue.

The first part of this chapter aims to present an overview of previous studies conducted on knowledge and knowledge sharing. In analyzing the literature it becomes evident that there is a research gap between the importance of social media tools as a source of knowledge sharing and the role of security as a level of analysis in knowledge sharing mechanisms. The second part of this chapter develops a research roadmap of knowledge sharing which includes important collective variables of organizational factors: individuals, groups, organizational culture, and technological factors as security, to determine whether they influence users in organizations or institutions to share knowledge via social media. Finally, this study discusses the role of social media tools in knowledge sharing in relation to our roadmap.

Specifically, the present study aims to introduce a new framework which may serve both as a tool for enhancing the understanding of knowledge sharing mechanisms in business organizations and also more generally as a useful guide for future research on knowledge and social media. This study could also be further elaborated, as it would be interesting to make a comparison between knowledge sharing practices and usage of social media across different countries. The content discussed herein attempts to establish the building block toward the development of a theory of knowledge sharing and usage of social media tools. Conclusive comments and managerial implications, as well as new directions for future research, are presented in the final part of this chapter.

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