How can Mobile Accounting Reporting Benefit from the 'Imagined Communities'?
A Conceptual Communication Framework

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ABSTRACT

Are there theoretical foundations that may substantiate communication in an online environment in regard to accounting reporting and implementation of information via mobile accounting technologies that brings together communication, numbers and computing? This conceptual paper explores the creation of an imagined community that has all the characteristics to connect accountants together with the implementation of mobile devices based on Anderson's theory of imagined communities. It describes a wide range of trends in relation to current and emerging technologies used and maps processes of financial reporting into this milieu via the notion of imagined communities. It argues that a sense of coherence exists between its members who feel a sense of belonging to the same group, even if they have never met. The paper examines for the first time in this conceptual multidisciplinary study whether the characteristics of the imagined communities that construct identity are related to accounting community formation and this is the theoretical contribution of the paper.

KEYWORDS

Bitcoin Technology, Identity Formation, Imagined Communities, Mobile Accounting, Mobile Devices and Communication, Online Communities

INTRODUCTION: COMMUNITY MATTERS

Social media have been incorporated in people's everyday lives and enterprises are increasingly employing them to get in touch with customers and communicate related information about their products and services to them. Social media are tools that adopt new technologies to enable communication between disparate parts that can create online content and gather together because of common interests.

With the advent of new technologies, information is transmitted quickly crossing the geographical and time boundaries and managers need to take into consideration how best to implement innovative tools for communicating their messages (Maresh-Fuehrer & Smith, 2016). Mobile computing offers services while the user is on mobility (Prakash & Balachandra, 2015).

Advances in technology and new forms of media change the way companies respond to information and how managers report financial statements offering interactive opportunities for reporting and communication of financial information (Miller & Skinner, 2015).

With globalization where boundaries blur, firms are able to operate nationally, internationally and locally at the same time. They aim to find common background and a framework to communicate and respond to international publics for research, production, management, marketing and communication

processes. To do so, firms and states aim to formulate common international standards that are under negotiation in order to be approved, accepted and adopted. In that way, they may create a common framework with the use of a common language literally and metaphorically to communicate all over the world. Accounting and finance sectors in businesses, especially in the field of getting in contact with the public through financial reports, billing, statements and other economic activities, has not remained uninfluenced by such changes.

Innovative communication tools are in the process of being implemented in the scientific field of accounting and finance so technology's advancements may contribute to accounting reporting. Such tools can be mobile ones which is the near future's trend in accounting technology. Little research though has taken place in regard to accounting reporting and implementation of communication of financial information via accounting technologies and the potential offered from the use of mobile devices (Edmond, 2015; Samaha & Khlif, 2016). In addition, accountants are presented as those who mainly deal with numbers although a more community oriented system that has an entity, needs and interests is needed that can bring them together under one group since social and psychological reasons may account for the successful implementation of work projects (Seol et al., 2016). The implementation of emerging technologies in different sectors and fields -accounting cannot be the exception- brings forth challenges such as disclosure of information, adhering to the international standards of accounting and financial reporting, adopting a common language to communicate internationally, educating accountants as experts in the field to implement these new technologies on accounting and thus, creating a community of common interests. The creation of a community with a specific identity is the key to overcome the emerging challenges in mobile accounting where stakeholders involved may feel part of the group and create a sense of belonging.

The paper aims to examine in this conceptual multidisciplinary study whether the characteristics of the imagined communities, related to Anderson's theory of imagined communities (1991), which argues that a sense of coherence exists between its members who feel a sense of belonging to the same group, even if they have never met, and initially employed in the creation of nations, can be applied in the accounting sector. Mobile technology has been recently implemented in accounting. Nonetheless, a bond among those involved is needed.

The aim of the paper is (a) to present current trends in accounting in regard to mobile devices' use as communication tools for reporting accounting information based on accounting technology, (b) to illustrate how different agents associated with accounting may employ mobile devices and applications to enhance communication and management of financial reporting, and (c) to propose a conceptual communication framework in the process of accounting reporting that can be implemented via mobile devices and can lead to identity construction for the creation of communities associated with accounting, leading to a proposed framework that may overcome existing challenges. The creation of identity may bring coherence and eliminate challenges in mobile accounting reporting and may offer value to business managers. At the same time, online financial reporting may have effect on identities and behavior.

Although most of the discussion around the use of mobile devices for accounting purposes has been recently applied in the industry such as mobile cloud and online reporting, not much discussion has taken place for the contribution of the creation of online accounting communities with specific characteristics that can take mobile accounting solution forward. Accounting firms that embark on the use of mobile and cloud technology for their management and reporting need to consider how they can create bonding among those involved in mobile accounting. In that way, each one of the participating agents involved, may not only employ a software but may be part of the online accounting community, thus, paying attention to its viable existence.

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