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Appropriation of social media for fostering effective tacit knowledge sharing: developing conceptual model

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Abstract. With the rising popularity of social media in the past few years, several researches ratiocinate that this type of interactive and collaborative technology could be a beneficial tool for the sharing of tacit knowledge. Nevertheless, very few literatures have tackled the subject of how social media could facilitate tacit knowledge sharing among medical practitioners, and what are its contributions in the area. Thus, the factors that drive individuals to share tacit knowledge need to be investigated further and included in literature. Through a systematic literature review, this study proposes seven enabling conditions which could potentially facilitate the sharing of tacit knowledge. TAM was applied as a novelty in this study in investigating the factors influencing knowledge sharing via social media, whilst taking into account the mediation effects of Attitude in social media usage. This study uncovered an important correlation between virtual settings and the conversion of tacit knowledge, which affects organizational members who are not co-located physically but have a crucial need for sharing information.

1. Introduction

Knowledge management (KM) has long been the main focus on social media for the past decade. Computer-mediated communications have come to depend on Online Social Networks (OSNs) as a crucial social platform KM initiatives involving information technology have been implemented by various organizations who have also invested heavily in the deployment of their KM systems. Such measures enable their employees to share explicit knowledge among themselves through corporate knowledge repository. Social media contributes new ways of managing knowledge at personal and organizational levels via social-collaborations and networking opportunities. Nonaka [1] explain two types of knowledge tacit and explicit. Tacit knowledge involves the internalization of individual processes such as experience, reflection, internalization or individual talents, which cannot be managed and learned in the same way as explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is stored exclusively within the human self, whilst explicit knowledge can be technologically or mechanically deposited in the form of information systems or handbooks for example. Since tacit knowledge is fundamentally technical or cognitive consisting of mental models, values, beliefs, perceptions, insights and assumptions [2], it is thus complicated to be communicated or documented in a form that could be shared with others. On the other hand, based on most knowledge management (KM) frameworks, explicit knowledge can be managed through the processes of capturing, storing, retrieving, transferring



and applying. This indicates that tacit knowledge is not only an important organizational resource, but also a strategic one as it is the only form of information that is renewable and sustainable which is an important competitive advantage for any organization. Tacit knowledge is estimated to contribute up to 80% of vital knowledge, which could prove to be beneficial in ensuring an organization's sustainability in competitive markets [3].

A review of literature shows a gap in the studying of the challenges involved in the establishment of social media for the effective and efficient sharing of tacit knowledge. Various discussions have been made with regards to the transferability of tacit knowledge and the best methods for transferring it. Despite the introduction of numerous models for tacit knowledge transfer, none have been specifically established. Although tacit knowledge transfer has been modeled fairly well in theory, practical problems still exist due to the strong linkage between this type of knowledge with the owner of the knowledge and his personality. Several researchers view social web tools as enablers of tacit knowledge sharing [4-13]. Their arguments indicated that certain technological factors have an influence on these variables with regards to knowledge sharing via the platform of social media. Although these researchers offer a view into the affordance of specific factors that influence knowledge sharing via social media, they do not particularly aim to comprehend these affordances for tacit knowledge sharing. Hence, the first main issue being tackled by this research concerns the viability of ICT in general for the sharing of tacit knowledge [4, 14, 15]. This study aims to close this gap by studying the motivational factors that facilitate the sharing of tacit knowledge. Hence, the proposed research model draws together technological factors that affect tacit knowledge sharing.

2. Theoretical background

In social media literature, the terms 'online communities', 'social media', 'virtual communities' and 'online social groups' are used interchangeably. Social media platforms are defined as a set of internet based tools that facilitate the creation and exchange of user generated content. These platforms consist of blogs, video-sharing sites, micro-blogs, forums, websites and wikis that are developed based on the concepts of Web 2.0. The digitization of healthcare is addressed by Stewart et al [8] who also examined the opportunities for IS research in the context of the healthcare industry. The researchers highlighted non-traditional areas such as the appropriation of social media by physicians, with a provision of opportunities for IS experts in this area through the creation of physician-centered virtual communities. The study also indicated that another potential research area for IS experts lies in issues related to the adoption and use of social media [16,17,60]. Another research conducted in Quebec, Canada indicated that female health professionals viewed Web 2.0 as a useful mechanism for transferring knowledge, but they also noted lack of time and technological skills as a significant limitation for them [18]. A social network analysis investigating the knowledge-sharing behavior among practitioners in an online clinical forum discovered that despite their limited number, the practitioners' inter-professional and inter-institutional links are strong [8]. Gormley [19] attempted to manage knowledge resources through the offering of a social media-based knowledge-sharing opportunity in the form of virtual communities of practice (VCoPs) to employees who are involved in strategic areas of the healthcare sector and its delivery.

The healthcare sector is comprised mostly of tacit knowledge [14], which forms 80% of the overall vital knowledge [3] that is necessary for better performance [20]. Although tacit knowledge amongst healthcare professionals is a crucial source of experiential know-how, numerous operational and technical reasons have rendered it to be unharnessed and unapplied in practice [21]. Tacit healthcare knowledge could contribute significantly to the enhancement of healthcare quality and delivery, when applied together with explicit (published) healthcare knowledge. Regular ICT tools such as emails and databases lack the appropriate setting for tacit knowledge transfer. Considering that the sharing of explicit knowledge renders less effort than tacit knowledge sharing [22], there is therefore a requirement for more open and unstructured solutions [23]. With the growing popularity of social media, healthcare educators need to think of different ways to communicate [24] considering that the

utilization of social media in the healthcare sector is still new with undiscovered depths and only partially realized advantages [25].

IS research on system appropriation normally tackles the common aspects of ease of use usefulness and perceived enjoyment as employed by theories like TAM in the domain of knowledge sharing of which emphasis is on the sharing of explicit knowledge. Collaborative work can be facilitated by information technology (IT) which can also help enable the process of knowledge sharing [26]. Nevertheless, technologies of such nature have limited abilities in transferring tacit knowledge [27]. As argued by researchers, technical infrastructures rely heavily on the value of the contents that they hold and the relationships that they can build. The motivation to act has been related to two aspects of systems use [28].

Mun, et al. [29] and Kim [30] in their investigation found inter-correlations between technology acceptance and knowledge sharing participation. In short, the knowledge sharing level amongst employees could indicate in their intention in using Social media. This study defines knowledge sharing as the extent of information and knowledge sharing amongst employees in an organization. A subsection

Some text.

3. Conceptual model

The TAM Davis [31] was initially used to understand and predict user adoption of new information technologies. TAM, the users' acceptance of new technology is influenced by three major variables: perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment. Perceived ease of use is the extent to which an individual perceives the usage of a certain system to be effortless physically and mentally. Meanwhile, perceived usefulness is the extent to which an individual perceives the usage of a certain system to be beneficial in enhancing his job performance. Knowledge sharing has been found to be driven by perceived ease of technology [32,33]. TAM has recently been employed to investigate the use of web information systems [34] and mobile healthcare systems [35]. Hsu and Lin [36] found that perceived ease of use significantly influences knowledge sharing in blogs. It was also found to encourage information sharing amongst the members of a certain network [37]. Knowledge sharing is more likely to occur when a social media user experiences an ease of interaction with the website. This indicates that the user is more likely to write a review of a product or service if the user perceives the review submission to be easy. Various studies have noted that perceived ease of use has an influence on knowledge sharing behaviors in virtual settings [38]. Similarly, other studies have also found a strong and consistent correlation between perceived usefulness and the use of a certain technology with sharing medical knowledge [39]. Li and Liu [40] found that perceived usefulness positively affects knowledge sharing in online travel services.

Despite all these findings, there is a lack of investigation on the impact of perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness on tacit knowledge sharing in an online setting. Hence, the following hypotheses are extrapolated:

Hypothesis 1: Perceived usefulness positively associate with tacit knowledge sharing in social media.

Hypothesis 2: Perceived ease of use positively associate with tacit knowledge sharing in social media.

Perceived Enjoyment is an addition to the main constructs in TAM that represents intrinsic motivations. Davis, et al. [41] defined it as the degree to which the ICT usage is perceived to be enjoyable. Perceived enjoyment has been deemed as a strong predictor that justifies a certain behavior such as technology adoption and utilization [41-45]. Social media sites commonly focus on utility, which is derived from the sense of entertainment and enjoyment from using them. Wasko and Faraj [46] found empirical evidence that perceived enjoyment has a positive correlation to knowledge contribution in electronic networks of practice.

Meanwhile, Yu, et al. [47], Papadopoulos, et al. [48] and, Kankanhalli, et al. [49] found a positive correlation between perceived enjoyments of blogging with individual attitude towards knowledge sharing. Hau, Kim, Lee and Kim [22], and Kang and Schuett [50] supported the finding that perceived enjoyment enhances experience or knowledge sharing behavior in social media. The sharing of tacit knowledge normally involves intensive exchange processes such as years of intimate conversations on and off work, sharing of experiences and transfer of expertise [51]. Thus, the sharing of tacit knowledge takes more interactions over a longer period of time than explicit knowledge would. Considering that perceived enjoyment in knowledge sharing could be more crucial in the intimate and intense conversational processes among individuals, the hypothesis below is hence posited:

Hypothesis 3: Perceived enjoyment positively associate with tacit knowledge sharing in social media.

Although the topic of knowledge sharing is deemed important in ethics, vague terminologies still characterize discussions related to it. To fill this gap, a framework was developed for this study to better understand how social media affects the sharing of tacit knowledge and particularly to identify the degree of attitude towards social media usage as the mediator in the relationships between perceived ease of use, perceive usefulness, and perceived enjoyment with tacit knowledge sharing. Hence, one of research objectives is to develop a deep understanding of the formation, mediators, and antecedents of knowledge sharing through the opening of a black box of tacit knowledge sharing, which will eventually facilitate the success of tacit knowledge sharing. Technology acceptance is tested either in the form of behavioral intention or actual use. Attitude as a mediator is discarded due to its lack of validation [52, 53]. Attitude towards Using is taken from the construct by Davis et al.[31] derived from the technology acceptance model (TAM) that consists of Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU).

As a whole, empirical support from the TAM research leans more towards the importance of PU over PEOU and deems PU as a full mediator for PEOU and acceptance of technology [53,54]. Lin and Lu [55] in their study indicated the significance of perceived enjoyment and perceived usefulness as mediators. McGowan et al. [39] conducted an empirical study among physicians in the USA and found that the use of social media for information and medical knowledge sharing with other physicians relies heavily on the perceived usefulness of the technology and the general attitude that the physicians have towards the value that this technology has to offer. This study has shown that a positive attitude towards the use of social media is more likely to drive the use of social media and the sharing of medical information with other physicians through its use. In short, users will have a higher inclination to view a posted content when they perceive this information to be useful Perceived Enjoyment is also found to have a significant effect on user attitude with regards to using Facebook [56]. Therefore the hypotheses below are posited:

Hypothesis 4: Attitude toward social media usage positively related to the intention tacit knowledge sharing over social media.

Hypothesis 5: Attitude towards social media usage mediates the correlation between perceived enjoyment and the intention of sharing tacit knowledge.

Hypothesis 6: Attitude towards social media usage mediates the correlation between perceived ease of use and the intention of sharing tacit knowledge.

Hypothesis 7: Attitude towards social media usage mediates the correlation between perceived usefulness and the intention of sharing tacit knowledge.

As noted earlier on, TAM has gained significant focus in the field of information system (IS) over the last decade [36]. TAM proposes perceived usefulness, perceived ease-of-use and perceived enjoyment as the three primary factors of IS acceptance in its attempt to predict and explain system use. Attitude towards Using is derived from the construct by Davis et al. [31] from the technology acceptance model (TAM) which consists of Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use.

Perceived ease of use is the degree to which a user perceives the usage of the technology to be effortless. In this study, perceived ease of use refers to the extent to which an individual perceives the usage of social media to post or retrieve medical information to be effortless. Meanwhile, perceived usefulness is the degree to which an individual perceives that the use of the technology will improve his job performance [31]. This in turn will increase the individual's willingness to use it further in the future [57]. This model posits that perceived usefulness and perceived ease-of-use affect attitude towards usage. When a user perceives that the available tools could actually facilitate in a certain task's completion, the user will acknowledge the significance of the tool and thus make full use of it. Other studies suggest that perceived enjoyment the extent to which the user perceives the technology to be enjoyable, could also influence user attitude towards using the technology. Venkatesh et al. [58] found that there is a positive link between perceived enjoyment, perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness to the attitudes of individuals in using a system [30,59]. This discussion thus proposes the hypotheses below: Fig. 1 summarizes the conceptual model

Hypothesis 8: Perceived usefulness is linked positively to attitude towards social media usage.

Hypothesis 9: Perceived ease-of-use is linked positively to attitude towards social media usage.

Hypothesis 10: Perceived enjoyment is linked positively to attitude towards social media usage.

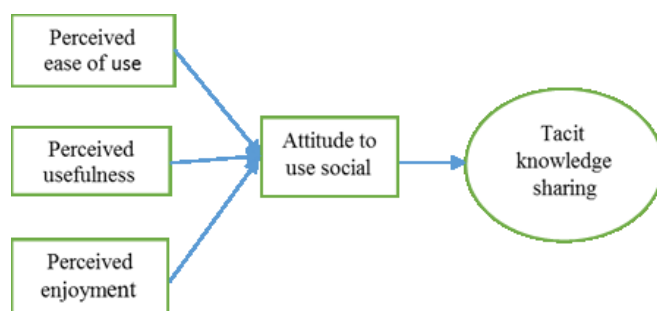


Figure 1. Conceptual tacit knowledge sharing model

4. Methodology

This paper is organized in the form of a general review, which includes study designs that are used to identify the best evidence to tackle the research objective. Scientific publications were selected and grouped according to their respective aims and contents, which eventually comes down to three categories namely: (i) TAM literature reviews and extension of TAM, (ii) social media, and (iii) tacit knowledge sharing. Scientific publications concerning TAM are identified based on a structured approach namely: (i) search on particular keyword(s) in leading databases, (ii) selection of publications with the corresponding criteria, and (iii) a quick scan of the titles, abstracts, and full text of the selected publications to determine their relevance; and (iv) reading and analyzing the full text of the selected publications. The resources were purposely examined to determine the analytical gap and to understand the social media applications for the disbursement of knowledge sharing.

The search was contained within English-language studies that have been published. Comprehensive electronic search had used the ISI Web of Knowledge and Google Scholar. Although scattered across journals and conferences, the studies appeared more frequently in journals such as Computers in Human Behavior, Computers & Education, Communications of the Association for Information Systems, Decision Support Systems, Expert Systems with Applications, Government Information Quarterly, Information & Management, International Journal of Electronic Government Research, and MIS Quarterly. The analysis of the articles is based on a series of characteristics consisting of the types of correlations between the model's constructs, external variables, limitations of studies, and methodological details.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Based on the findings and the hypotheses developed in the previous sections, a new conceptual framework (See Fig. 1) has been proposed with regards to the correlation between the TAM initiatives and the behavior of tacit knowledge sharing in social media. The proposed model shows that these features create opportunities for an effective flow of tacit knowledge in a social media setting. The model facilitates a better understanding of the phenomenon of tacit knowledge sharing via social web initiatives as well as provides a new avenue for discussion in this area. The model provides an important link between the requirements of tacit knowledge sharing and the contribution of social media in complying with those requirements, which has not been investigated in any literature. There are several aspects to the model which can be criticized. For example, the inclusiveness of the model is questionable because the process of tacit knowledge sharing is quite complicated and is influenced by various surrounding conditions. Furthermore, empirical evidences for justifying the hypothesized relationships are rare and require testing. Despite the shortcomings above, the model gives way for new theoretical grounds which brings us closer to fully exploring the applications of online social tools for the sharing of tacit knowledge. This study suggested a research model based on the technology acceptance theory.

Current literature on social media provides studies that were conducted from a technology acceptance model perspective, without the provision of a holistic understanding of user intention specifically with regards to tacit knowledge sharing in an online setting. Hence, the literature analysis in this study indicated a direct link between perceived ease-of-use, perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment with regards to the sharing of tacit knowledge. Furthermore, the mediation role of Attitude in the use of social media was hypothesized in the relations between perceived ease-of-use, perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment. The findings of this study bring several noteworthy implications. This study contributes to the body of knowledge in the field of IT acceptance and particularly the sharing of tacit knowledge in social media. For the first time, this study hypothesizes the mediation effect of Attitude on the TAM construct and tacit knowledge sharing. This study could be regarded as a working paper. Subsequent empirical studies could be conducted to verify the findings of this study. The correlations in conceptual frameworks need to be validated and tested in various social media contexts.

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