Motivating Attributes to Social Media for Knowledge Sharing Success

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ABSTRACT
Social media allows easy and instant communication for knowledge to be shared. Thus, social media may contribute to the success of knowledge sharing among employees. However, identifying motivating attributes of why employees share their knowledge through social media is a matter of concern. This research provides a theoretical foundation illustrating how motivating attributes to social media can facilitate the success of knowledge sharing among employees. Panahi, Watson and Partridge’s (2012) model of potential contributors of social web tools to knowledge share was adopted in this empirical examination. Drawing on evidence from the survey, the research concludes that increasing information visibility for knowledge articulation and developing networking with colleagues were the most important motivating attributes for social media in increasing the success of employee’s knowledge sharing. This research offers recommendations in relation to mechanisms for monitoring social media activities for knowledge management initiatives. Lesson and implications for both theory and practice are discussed in the paper.

Keywords: Social media, motivation, knowledge sharing success.

1 INTRODUCTION
In the search for competitive advantage, scholars suggest that knowledge and social media can contribute to organizational outcomes that are difficult to imitate (Barney, 1991; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, and Silvestre, 2011). Social media, a medium that allows the activities of employing mobile and web-based technologies for creating interactive platforms for knowledge sharing, enables the society to interact with people around the world within a few clicks (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Muniandy and Muniandy, 2013; Zande, 2013). Social media can facilitate organizational sharing knowledge as it allows easy and instant communication by removing barriers and boundaries of different organizational structure and hierarchy (Adamovic, Potgieter & Mearns, 2012). The literature provides evidence on the role played by social media in facilitating knowledge sharing among employees. For example, Zande (2013) suggests that social media promotes knowledge sharing for learning processes. Panahi et al., (2012) emphasize the importance of social media for creating knowledge sharing culture. Adamovic et al., (2012) suggest the importance of social media as a communication medium for organisational members to engage in knowledge sharing. While sharing professional knowledge on social media has been seen as sharing tacit knowledge, personal information shared online improves organisational network relationships (Bakhuisen, 2012; Panahi et al., 2012). Cost saving and easy to be employed increases the chance of employees to utilize social media as interactive platforms for sharing knowledge (Panahi et al., 2012). Social media also enables text communication and interactive videos and pictures to be shared. As such, employees are more comfortable to use social media rather than face to face communication as social media is faster and interesting ways to communicate (Clutterbuck & Hussain, 2010).

Several attempts have been made to model the potential motivating attributes of social media for knowledge sharing as well as a number of identifiable attributes believed to influence its performance. However, very little research has been done to determine the motivating attributes to social media for knowledge sharing success that are preferred by employees, as well as their relationships with social media utilization. This research attempts to fill this void and will empirically examine these relationships in the Malaysian Service Training Department. Panahi et al.’s (2012) model of potential contributors of social web tools to knowledge share was adopted in this empirical examination. It is postulated that ability to socialize online, best practices demonstration, networking with colleagues, interactive storytelling, increasing information visibility and archiving articulated knowledge, and openness and trust might exhibit desirable values for successful knowledge sharing. Based on previous research (e.g. Panahi et al., 2012) these attributes play a significant role in defining the relationship between employees’ expectations and opportunities to break obstacles to knowledge management outcomes. Specifically, the question guiding this empirical investigation is: what is employees’ motivating attributes to share knowledge on social media?
II LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Zande (2013), social media is a medium for social activities and interaction. Bakhuisen (2012) suggests the importance of social media platforms such as wikis, facebook, Youtube, instagram, twitter, blogs and content sharing sites for publishing short messages or sharing knowledge about individuals’ observations, experiences and personal views. Researchers agree that human behavior to communicate and connect with their acquaintances, collaborate and develop new network relationships, gather new knowledge, and participate in sharing information are among the motivating attributes for individuals to engage in the virtual environment (Zammit, Martindale, & Lowther, 2012). Panahi et al. (2012) further suggest that employees are motivated to share their knowledge on social media because of their abilities to socialize online, to acquire and share best practice demonstration, to build network relationships, to have interactive storytelling, to increase information visibility and archiving articulated knowledge, and to portray their openness and trustworthy to the virtual community societies. In this research, Panahi et al.’s (2012) model was adopted for further investigation.

Within this research context, ability to socialize online explains the extent to which an individual is able to mingle and build connection through mobile and web-based technologies (Irwin & Berge, 2006). Panahi et al., (2012) suggest that individual’s ability to socialize online (i.e. by enabling individual to create space for face to face communication) portrays a significant contribution of social media utilization for knowledge sharing among physicians. Socialization in relation to social media facilitate the sharing of tacit knowledge as people can create a space for interaction in new and unique ways (i.e. face-to-face communication as compared to letters or telephones)(Zammit et al., 2012).

The literature also provides evidence on the importance of social media in demonstrating the best practices. Best practice demonstration that illustrates the act of watching and observing practices of other individuals (e.g. technical know-how and skills) on videos or audio presentations, allows employees to share their skills and expertise (Panahi et al., 2012). For example, Panahi et al., (2012) in their research suggest physicians used video or audio presentations as a medium for sharing their practices and demonstrations. The effectiveness of virtual learning environment in increasing individual’s learning and understanding has also been emphasized by Stokes (2002). Although learning by watching and observing others’ actions is considered as a conventional way of learning, Panahi et al., (2012) suggest that the method is seen effective for tacit knowledge sharing. As such, best practice demonstration may increase willingness to share knowledge through the creation of “a space to watch, observe, demonstrate, and imitate best practices” (Panahi et al., 2012, p. 5).

According to Bakhuisen (2012), social media can be the most suitable space for employees to develop workplace network relationships and extend their business associations. Furthermore, Panahi et al., (2012) also suggest that social media enables the employees to find experts of their disciplines to be role modeled leaders. Thus, networking with colleagues that explains the extent to which individual is opening up the channel and medium for like-minded people for mutual relationships, may facilitate knowledge sharing success (Panahi et al., 2012). Some people are comfortable to express their feelings virtually as compared to face to face approach (Clutterbuck & Hussain, 2010). This is because they are not interacting directly to the other social media users. Interactive storytelling that explains the extent to which individuals are able to communicate and narrate their own stories and experiences in web-based tools, is found to be an interesting medium to share experiences and knowledge (Panahi et al., 2012). Thus, social media creates an interactive platform for employees to share their experiences, skills and knowledge on videos or pictures.

While archiving articulated knowledge explains the process of codifying tacit to become explicit knowledge for future use, the ability of individuals to interact with existing knowledge and expose themselves to information from various sources explains increasing visibility of information (Panahi et al., 2012). Tacit knowledge is difficult to express, formalise or share and exists in an intangible format (Sveiby, 1997). Thus, social media may facilitate the sharing of tacit knowledge by encouraging employees to document tips, tricks, personal thought or demonstration skills on videos that they gained on social media for future use (Panahi et al., 2012). Bakhuisen (2012) further suggests that social media tools may facilitate knowledge dissemination within wide range of people online. Social media also creates a cycle of information by providing links to other sources of information that enables employees to share and receive new knowledge.

Blumcke and Paas (2011) further suggest that social media leads to opening new paths for employees to possibly acquire new knowledge. As such, social media may facilitate knowledge sharing by enabling people to archive articulated knowledge and increasing the visibility of information. Knowledge sharing can also be achieved if organisation promotes and supports the development of trust. Trust reveals individuals perceptions on believing others in the
absence of clear-cut reasons to disbelieve (Rotter, 1980). Abrams, Cross, Lesser, and Levin (2003) suggest that trust facilitates the dissemination of knowledge within organization by minimising misunderstanding between the sender and recipient of knowledge. Successful knowledge sharing also requires an environment that emphasized the importance of freedom and openness. According to Panahi et al. (2012), openness is a condition in which individuals are awarded with opportunities to freely express their ideas or experiences and receive feedbacks from others. Therefore, employees are motivated to share their tacit knowledge as social media provides platforms for them to have their own voice or freely exchange their personal thoughts and experiences with others (Panahi et al., 2012). Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H1: There is a relationship between ability to socialize online and social media utilisation
H2: There is a relationship between best practice demonstration and social media utilisation
H3: There is a relationship between networking with colleagues and social media utilisation
H4: There is a relationship between interactive storytelling and social media utilisation
H5: There is a relationship between increasing visibility and archiving information and social media utilisation
H6: There is a relationship between employees’ openness and trust and social media utilisation

Drawing primarily on the previous findings and literature, a conceptual framework was proposed and is presented in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Motivating Attributes for Knowledge Sharing and Social Media Utilisation](image)

### III METHODOLOGY

The following section presents details of the research on the proposed model of the relationship between motivating attributes to share knowledge and social media tested through regression analyses with SPSS version 20.

The present study employs a questionnaire survey approach to collect data for testing the research hypotheses. All independent and dependent variables require five-point Likert style responses ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Social media utilization was assessed by a six-item adopted after Bakhuizen (2012). A sample item is: “Social media provides employees with valuable knowledge”.

Since no extant measures were available to the researchers’ best knowledge while conducting this research, all constructs for independent variables were measured by a six-item each, developed based on the interpretation and findings of Panahi et al. (2012). These are sample items for the independent variables: “Employees have the ability to seek for a second opinion using social media” (ability to socialize online); “Employees like to share tips using social media” (interactive storytelling); “Employees can improve their skills through feedbacks of others in social media” (best practice demonstration); “Employees can find experts of their fields using social media” (networking with colleagues); “Employees have faith on other people according to how they represent themselves on social media” (openness and trust); and “Employees can reach wider community through social media” (increasing visibility and archiving information).

The population of interest for this research is all levels of employees of Malaysian Service Training Department. A convenience sampling technique was employed in this research. The total number of 309 accessible employees makes up the population for this research. According to guidelines provided by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the minimum desirable sample size was \( n = 175 \) to obtain a known precision \( \pm 5\% \) and a confidence level of 95\%. The sample size, however, can be increased to slightly more than the recommended size to allow the researcher to execute further analysis in order to answer research objectives using correlation and multiple regression analysis (Chuan 2006). Therefore, a final sample of 200 respondents was selected for this research. From these, 179 completed surveys were received and were considered usable, representing a 89.5\% response rate.

Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed in this research. Pairwise deletion was used to deal with missing cases, that is, whilst missing cases were omitted, cases with valid values for other variables were included in the statistics analyses. Respondents were asked to provide demographic information as part of the self-report questionnaire, including gender, age, and education level. Most of the respondents (75.4\%) were female and majority of them (42.9\%) of
total respondents) within the age range of 28 to 37 years old. As many as 42.9% hold a secondary school certificate. However, these variables do not account for any significant relationship in the model.

IV RESULTS

This study attempts to understand the relationships between motivating attributes to share knowledge and social media utilization. The reliability of the measurements in the survey was tested using Cronbach’s alpha. The alpha coefficients for all independent and dependent variables (refer Table 1) show that the majority are highly reliable and acceptable, with alpha scores exceeding 0.7; over the threshold recommended by Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2010). The value of the alphas indicates that each of the scales possessed a high level of internal consistency.

The hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis with SPSS version 20. Table 1 presents the results of regression analysis regarding the relationship between motivating attributes and social media utilization. A significance level of 0.05 was used in all regression analyses. The model was fit (\(F=132.454; F\text{-sig}=0.00\)). 84.1 percent of changes in the social media utilization were explained by the predictors (\(R^2 = 0.841\)). The results (refer Table 1) showed that all motivating attributes except openness and trust were important for social media in achieving a higher level of knowledge sharing success. Therefore, all hypotheses except \(H_4\) are accepted. Specifically, increasing information visibility for knowledge articulation and developing networking with colleagues were the most important motivating attributes for social media in increasing the success of employee’s knowledge sharing. These results suggest that the more employees are motivated to share knowledge, the greater social media will be used as an interactive sharing medium.

Table 1. Results of Regression Analyses of Social Media Utilisation on Motivating Attributes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>(\alpha)</th>
<th>(\beta)</th>
<th>Std. error</th>
<th>(t)</th>
<th>(p)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to socialize online</td>
<td>.824</td>
<td>.134</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>2.175</td>
<td>.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive storytelling</td>
<td>.809</td>
<td>.176</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>2.740</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best practice demonstration</td>
<td>.854</td>
<td>.139</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>2.343</td>
<td>.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking with colleagues</td>
<td>.769</td>
<td>.248</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>3.266</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness and trust</td>
<td>.765</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>0.696</td>
<td>.487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing visibility and archiving information</td>
<td>.807</td>
<td>.265</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>3.473</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(R^2 = 0.841, F = 132.454\)

V DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This paper addresses the relationships between motivating attributes to share knowledge and social media utilisation. The results indicate the importance of motivating attributes (i.e. of being able to socialize online, having access to interactive storytelling, developing network relationships, increasing information visibility for knowledge articulation and able to share the best practice demonstration) for social media in increasing the success of employee’s knowledge sharing. These findings support Pernisco’s (2010) connotation that social networking sites provide tools for people to easily share information, communicate online and create network relationships. Thus, this research contributes to the field by providing a more detailed understanding of why people share their knowledge on social media. These findings have important implications both at a managerial and theoretical level.

Contrary to the assumption that successful knowledge sharing is a mere technical problem that can be solved by knowledge management systems, this research shows the paramount important of individual’s willingness to share knowledge on social media. However, in a trusting and openness environment individuals are not willing to share knowledge. Thus, this research contributes to the field by providing a more detailed understanding of why people share their knowledge on social media. These findings have important implications both at a managerial and theoretical level.

These results also suggest that managers can improve the level of knowledge sharing success by ensuring that the designs of HRM practices are customised to support the increase of employees’ willingness to share knowledge. Such activities may include providing computer literacy training for virtual communication skills, and establishing interactive organisational social media platforms (i.e. facebook, Instagram, twitter, blogs, etc.) for network relationships, sharing best practices and knowledge articulation. In order to overcome individual disclosing any classified organisational information, policies and guidelines should be outlined. A recent study by Maxwell (2011) provides evidence on the importance of monitoring and control mechanisms for security threats over the social media. Thus, organisations should have comprehensive mechanisms to support, control and maintain employees’ social media activities for successful knowledge sharing. This may involve the development of guidelines of how frequent and when employees should chime into conversation on a social media.
most impact on the dependent variable. Practitioners who intend to achieve successful knowledge sharing in their organisation using social media should emphasize the importance of these attributes for motivating employees to share knowledge. Employees may be motivated to share their knowledge on social media for enjoyment in helping others as Lin (2007) suggests that knowledge self-efficacy and enjoyment in helping others were significant influences on employees’ attitudes and intention to share knowledge with others. Employees who believe that they can contribute to organisational performance by sharing their knowledge will develop a positive willingness to share and to receive knowledge (Lin, 2007).

Similarly, Bock, Zmud, Kim and Lee (2005) suggested that individuals’ attitudes towards knowledge sharing are influenced by relational motivators or anticipated reciprocal relationships. An anticipated reciprocal relationship refers to employees’ desires to continue ongoing relationships with other organisational members, in particular with respect to knowledge sharing (Bock et al., 2005). Similarly, Adler and Kwon (2002, p.25) suggest that the norm of generalised reciprocity is essential to bind communities and to resolve problems of collective action and suggest that generalised reciprocity “transforms individuals from self-seeking and egocentric agents with little sense of obligation to others into members of a community with shared interests, a common identity, and a commitment to the common good”. This suggests that employees with intrinsic values would value a working environment that emphasises equal status, democracy, independence, good leader-member relationships, minimum supervisory control, a less hierarchical structure and the practice of open communication (Hsu, Ju, Yen, & Chang, 2007).

As such, nourishing the values of care, enjoyment in helping others and collaboration for increasing employees’ motivations to share knowledge on social media is crucial important. One possible approach in this direction is to have managers to critically think of creating a conducive and acceptable team-working environment. The approach should be more employee-centered to allow more employees’ participation in promoting the cross-pollination of ideas among them. Encouraging them to engage in open discussion or debate during the discussion sessions, regardless of whether the sharing is virtually or face-to-face will further develop their communication skills and competency. Collaboration can facilitate the development of new workplace relationships and help to minimize individuals’ differences, leading to the promotion of trust throughout the organisation (Jalal, 2012). These unique interactions, in eliciting desired behaviours supportive of organizational competitive strategies, can create an isolation mechanism that makes replication/imitation difficult (Barney and Wright, 1998; Boxall, 1996; De Saa-Perez and Garcia-Falcon, 2002; Wright, McMahan, and McWilliams, 1993).

However, as with any research, issues came to light through the course of the study which imposed limitation. These include sample size and context of study as well as the nature and scope of questions measuring of all constructs. The evidence presented here is based on Malaysian Service Training Department. This inevitably limits its scope for broad generalisation. However, given the growing importance of knowledge sharing for competitive advantage, similar problems are likely to occur in other organisations, and across a wider range of industries and national contexts. Further empirical confirmation based on employees’ perceptions gathered from other types of organisations from different countries and in both public and private sectors is warranted to further generalise the findings.

Future research should also collect data from a larger sample size in other business sectors from both private and public employees in other cultural settings. Perhaps different and lengthier measures will be used to examine the relationship proposed. A comparative study should also be undertaken to see if differences of perceptions of motivating attributes to knowledge share and social media utilisation exist between private and public sector employees, as well as between generational cohort in both Malaysia and other international contexts. While this study makes important contributions to our understanding of the relationships between employees’ perceptions on motivating attributes to share knowledge and social media utilisation, clearly, future studies might gain additional insights by exploring the roles played by demographic factors or other knowledge management processes. To conclude, our study highlights the utmost importance of HRM and managerial practices in translating employees’ willingness into successful knowledge sharing on social media.

REFERENCES


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