



Understanding the continued use of intra-organizational blogs: An adaptive habituation model



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Keywords:

Intra-organizational blogs
Continued use
Adaptive habituation model
Network externalities
Managerial incentives

ABSTRACT

As intra-organizational blogs are expected to provide a flexible, intra-organizational networking platform that can effectively facilitate knowledge sharing, it is worthwhile to address why employees embrace a blogging system and engage in continual blogging. Drawing upon the existing literature, this paper proposes a conceptual model that suggests the continued use of internal blogs by employees is strongly driven by the force of habituation, which is repeatedly adapted by the effects of network externalities and managerial incentives. To empirically test this “adaptive habituation model”, actual usage data are collected from the internal blogging platform of a large telecommunication company to measure all related constructs. Statistical results from regression analyses illustrate that the proposed model effectively explains why employees continue to use corporate internal blogging systems. Practically, our findings suggest that while managerial measures, such as a ranking mechanism, may help leverage the benefits of intra-organizational social networking applications, it may take some time for these effects to emerge.

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1. Introduction

Web 2.0 applications, such as blogs, wikis, group-messaging, and micro-blogs, have become commonplace throughout the world. During the past ten years, many of these applications have also been introduced into corporate contexts, creating a new form of collaborative environment known as “Enterprise 2.0” (McAfee, 2006). As a typical Web 2.0 application, blogs are usually considered as a suitable technology for building flexible intra-organizational communication platforms that can effectively facilitate knowledge sharing (Efimova & Grudin, 2007; Huh et al., 2007; McAfee, 2006; Yardi, Golder, & Brzozowski, 2009). Meanwhile, blogs may also provide a reliable channel for companies to connect with their customers and other stakeholders (Aggarwal, Gopal, Sankaranarayanan, & Singh, 2012). A notable number of companies are spending considerable resources on constructing internal blogging platforms and encouraging their employees to use these platforms in their daily work (Chui et al., 2012).

When an internal blogging system is introduced into a corporate setting, decision makers expect that employees will actively participate in blogging, reading, and commenting on the platform.

However, the actual use of blogging systems among employees may not necessarily align with the expectations. Although the initial acceptance of a blogging system may be achieved by enforcing mandatory regulations, the effects of such compulsory methods gradually diminish over time (Zhang, Guo, & Chen, 2011), especially given that, in most cases, the blogging systems are only loosely coupled with employees’ daily work.

As the value of Enterprise 2.0 systems is mostly determined by the continued use from the employees (Ortiz & Markus, 2009), it is worthwhile to address why and how employees accept and continually use a blogging system. Prior literature has explored certain factors that potentially influence employees’ adoption and use of enterprise blogs, showing that personal attributes (Huang, Singh, & Ghose, 2010; Schler, Koppel, Argamon, & Pennebaker, 2006; Wattal, Racherla, & Mandviwalla, 2010), network externalities (Wattal et al., 2010), and organization incentives (Lee & Ahn, 2007; Lee, Hwang, & Lee, 2006) are important factors that affect the acceptance and use of employee blogs. Most of the studies, however, have not yet clearly identified the determinant drivers for continued use, and it remains arguable what kinds of incentives may motivate employees to keep using the blogging systems over the long term.

Drawing upon the existing literature, this paper proposes a conceptual model that suggests the continued use of internal blogging systems by employees is largely driven by the force of habituation,

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while being repeatedly adapted and shaped by the effects of network externalities and managerial incentives such as ranking mechanisms. Furthermore, individual characteristics such as age and gender will moderate the effects. To empirically test this “adaptive habituation model”, actual usage data are collected from the internal blogging platform of a large-scale telecommunication company to measure the related constructs. Statistical results from ordinary least squares regression analyses illustrate that the proposed model effectively explains the continued use of corporate internal blogging systems. By using the actual record data obtained from an in-practice system, our study manages to avoid the possible self-report bias that inevitably perplexes conventional survey-based research. The findings of this paper contribute to the literature on intra-organizational social media user behaviors with respect to both theoretical and methodological aspects, thus allowing decision makers to better understand the use of internal blogging systems and, accordingly, better leverage the benefits of such applications in corporate contexts.

2. Related literature

With respect to the continued use of intra-organizational blogs, our study draws upon three major research themes: (1) the continued use of IT; (2) social influences; and (3) ranking as a managerial incentive. In the following sections, we briefly review these three topics.

2.1. Continued use of IT

Considering that the value of information systems is often strongly related to users’ continued use, scholars are increasingly interested in individuals’ continued use of information technologies (Ortiz & Markus, 2009). Consequently, IT continuance has recently become a topic of enduring interest to both researchers and practitioners (Bhattacharjee, 2001; Hong, Thong, & Tam, 2006; Joyce & Kraut, 2006; Karahanna, Straub, & Chervany, 1999). Research in this area can be broadly classified into two categories.

The first research stream argues that continued IT use is a rational decision process. At its fundamental level, continued IT use is driven by conscious intentions resulting from a rational decision making process that involves beliefs, attitudes, expectations, satisfaction, etc. Scholars have drawn upon traditional IT adoption models, such as the technology acceptance model (TAM) and the theory of planned behavior TPB (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989; Lee, Yan, & Joshi, 2011; Venkatesh & Bala, 2008; Venkatesh & Davis, 2000), to analyze users’ continuance. In recent years, efforts in this direction have focused on a widely cited model called the expectation-confirmation theory in IT (ECT-IT) (Bhattacharjee, 2001; Bhattacharjee & Premkumar, 2004; Hong et al., 2006; Saeed, Abdinnour, Lengnick-Hall, & Lengnick-Hall, 2010; Venkatesh & Goyal, 2010). The ECT-IT argues that the continuance intention of users is determined by their satisfaction with the technology as well as the perceived usefulness of the technology. User satisfaction, in turn, is influenced by their confirmation of expectation from prior IT use. Meanwhile, post-acceptance perceived usefulness is also influenced by users’ expectation confirmation level (Bhattacharjee, 2001). The ECT-IT and its extended models have dominated the area of IT/IS continuance research during the past several years, showing considerable explanatory power on users’ IT continuance (e.g., Hong et al., 2006).

Another research stream emphasizes that continued IT use is mostly a phenomenon of habituation (Ortiz & Markus, 2009). From this perspective, after a technology has been adopted and used in a stable context over a period of time, continued use would

become a habit, which means that well-learned action sequences may be activated by environmental cues and then be repeated without conscious intention. Researchers have shown that one can improve the explanatory power of models, such as TPB, by including the habit constructs (Bergeron & Gara, 1995; Limayem & Hirt, 2003). Other research also reveals that IT habituation plays various roles in IT continuance. In some cases, habituation moderates the impact of intentions on the guidance of IT use (Cheung & Limayem, 2005; Kim, Malhotra, & Narasimhan, 2005; Limayem, Hirt, & Cheung, 2007), while in other cases, habituation influences the user’s future intention to use IT (Gefen, 2003). In still other cases, habituation directly affects IT use (Kim, 2009; Kim & Malhotra, 2005; Limayem & Hirt, 2003). Accordingly, it is argued that planned behavior and reasoned action may not provide the best theoretical foundations for the study of continued IT use and future research should place much greater emphasis on unplanned and unreasoned actions (Ortiz & Markus, 2009).

2.2. Social influences

Social influences play an important role in employees’ adoption and use of new technology in the organizational environment (Fulk, 1993; Kraut, Rice, Cool, & Fish, 1998; Rice, Grant, Schmitz, & Torobin, 1990). Research has examined the role of social influence from both sociological and economic perspectives. Research from a sociological perspective uses the term *subjective norm* (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Taylor & Todd, 1995) and draws upon theoretical foundations such as the theory of social learning (Sykes, Venkatesh, & Gosain, 2009) and social information-processing models (Barass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004) to conceptualize the social factors that potentially influence an individual’s behavior. Subjective norm reflects an individual’s perceptions that their significant referents desire the individual to perform or not perform a behavior. Subjective norm shows a certain explanatory power in new technology usage (Taylor & Todd, 1995).

Research from the economic perspective uses the term *network externalities* to capture the broad range of social processes that influences individual behavior (Katz & Shapiro, 1986; Kraut et al., 1998; Markus & Connolly, 1990; Wattal et al., 2010). Network externalities arise when the value of participating in a network increases with more people’s participation (Markus & Connolly, 1990). People tend to use a technology more when there are more people using it. Kraut et al. (1998) observed that people used a particular system more, when more people were using it and when more people in their work group were using it. Wattal et al. (2010) found that usage of blogs within an individual’s network is associated with an increase of one’s own usage.

Based on the inherent social features of Web 2.0, previous literature has frequently examined the social influence on the adoption and use of Web 2.0 (Bruque, Moyano, & Eisenberg, 2008; Govrisankaran & Stavins, 2004; Oinas-Kukkonen, Lyytinen, & Yoo, 2010; Wattal et al., 2010). Conceptually, it is reasonable to predict that social network applications, including blogs, are strongly subject to network externalities. Thus, it is worthwhile to further address the effects of network externalities on the continued use of intra-organizational blogging systems.

The existing literature also points out that, in the enterprise environment, the adoption and continual use of a new technology are inseparable from the support and influence of the managers (Guo & Zhang, 2010; Karahanna & Straub, 1999). Managers serve as important components of employees’ social networks and significantly affect the employees’ use of new technologies. Studies have shown that employees’ adoption of new technologies may be influenced by their managers’ use of the technologies, by persuasive communication from their managers, or by favorable

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