# The interplay between users' intraorganizational social media use and social capital

Yuan Sun [a,b,d,*], Rong-An Shang [c]

[a] School of Business Administration, Zhejiang Gongshang University, Zhejiang 310018, People's Republic of China
[b] Zheshang Research Center of Zhejiang Gongshang University, Zhejiang 310018, People's Republic of China
[c] Department of Business Administration, Soochow University, 56 Kuei-Yang St., Sec. 1, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC
[d] Contemporary Business and Trade Research Center of Zhejiang Gongshang University, Zhejiang 310018, People's Republic of China

## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

The wide acceptance of social media by the public has caused companies try to use intraorganizational social media to increase employee work performance. However, simply implementing a platform is insufficient for success. Companies must encourage employees to use social media for work-related purposes. This study divided the use of intraorganizational social media into social- and work-related use and proposed a model based on the theory of social capital to explore the effects of social-related use on work-related use. The model was tested using a survey of users of intraorganizational microblog systems in China. The results indicate the relationships among two types of intraorganizational use and the dimensions of social capital, and that social-related use fosters work-related use directly and indirectly by enhancing social capital. These results facilitate an understanding of the value of social activities conducted using intraorganizational social media in organizations.

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## 1. Introduction

Social media, a form of electronic media, is "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61)." Widespread public social media services such as Facebook and Twitter have led numerous organizations to search for using social media to improve coordination, knowledge sharing, and teamwork in organizations. Intraorganizational use of social media has also been an emerging study issue that many studies have tried to explore how organizations can take the opportunity to improve organizational effectiveness (Leonardi, Huysman, & Steinfield, 2013). Decision makers, however, are often concerned that using public social media at work may result in procrastination, hedonistic use, or misuse of time (Riemer, Richter, & Seltsikas, 2010a), and may cause serious problem in business secret and data security. Therefore, there have been many intraorganizational social media (also refer to as enterprise social networking sites or services

[SNSs]) platforms that provide social media functionality as well as additional control and security features supporting internal use. These platforms facilitate collaboration, information sharing, advice provision, the creation of strong working relationships, and the generation of social networking opportunities within corporations (DiMicco et al., 2008; Steinfield, DiMicco, Ellison, & Lampe, 2009; Tan, Nguyen, Tha, & Yu, 2009). Forrester predicted that the sales of corporate social media platforms will grow 61% annually, becoming a $6.4-billion business by 2016 (Mullaney, 2012). Examples of such systems include Salesforce Chatter, Microsoft Sharepoint, Yammer, and IBM Connections (Drakos, Mann, Rozwell, Austin, & Sarner, 2010). Companies can implement social media within the organizational environment to transform a traditional hierarchy into a progressive networked organization (Battilana & Casciaro, 2013). Several companies have employed intraorganizational social media to enable employees to share files and digital resources and connect with or follow partners (Leonardi et al., 2013).

Organizations implement intraorganizational social media to improve employee work performance (Cao, Vogel, Guo, Liu, & Gu, 2012), however, social media services are typically voluntary systems that people use initially for social-driven motivations (Brzozowski, 2009; Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011; Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004; DiMicco et al., 2008). Users create and maintain personal social ties with others on social media, but these informal

* Corresponding author at: School of Business Administration, Zhejiang Gongshang University, Zhejiang 310018, People's Republic of China. Tel.: +86 0571 28008018; fax: +86 0571 28008006.

E-mail addresses: d05sunyuan@zju.edu.cn, zorrnsun@163.com (Y. Sun), rashang@scu.edu.tw (R.-A. Shang).

links may be inconsistent with the formal structure of the organization. Intraorganizational social media can be used for both social-related and work-related purposes (Gonzalez, 2012). Companies encourage the work-related use of social media applications; however, social-related use may interfere with employees' work and companies may be hesitant regarding the effects of the social-related use of social media in the organization.

Numerous previous studies on SNSs have suggested the positive effect of SNS use on social capital, indicating the value of SNSs (e.g., Steinfield, Ellison, & Lampe, 2008). Intraorganizational SNSs provide the potential for interaction and communication among people, thereby facilitating the establishment of social interaction ties and nurturance of a shared vision and trust in the organization. By contrast, studies have shown that social capital might be a precondition for social-oriented systems, which can be more effectively implemented in an environment characterized by higher social capital (Chang & Zhu, 2012; Wang & Chiang, 2009; Wasko & Faraj, 2005). The social-related use of social media may enable the creation of an organization with high social capital. We proposed a model to illustrate the effects of users' social-related usage of intraorganizational microblogs on their perception of the aspects of social capital, and then on the work related usage of intra-organizational microblog. The results of this study facilitate an understanding of how encouraging the social-related use of microblogs in organizations increases social capital and enables work-related use of the system.

## 2. Theoretical background

### 2.1. Social capital theory

Social capital is a set of resources rooted in the social relationships developed among social actors and is valuable in securing benefits for both individual and organizational participants (Adler & Kwon, 2002). The benefits received from social relationships can be conceptualized and defined at individual, organizational, interorganizational, and societal levels (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998). Coleman (1988) identified three dimensions of social capital as follows: obligations and expectations, the capability of the social structure to provide information flow, and norms combined with sanctions. Putnam (1995a) distinguished between bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital refers to the relationships of strongly tied or homogeneous groups who frequently exchange substantial emotional support. Bridging social capital refers to the relationships of weakly tied people from socially heterogeneous backgrounds who help each other broaden their social horizons and worldviews or expand opportunities to acquire new information and resources.

In the intraorganizational context, Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) defined social capital as "the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998, p. 243)." They conceptualized social capital according to structural, cognitive, and relational dimensions. They defined structural capital as "the overall pattern of connections between actors (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998, p. 244)" that reflects the interactions among actors and the social-network structure. Cognitive capital refers to resources that enable shared representations, interpretations, and systems of meaning among parties (Cicourel, 1973), emphasizing a common understanding that facilitates user actions in the social network. Relational capital refers to assets created and leveraged through social relationships, including trust and trustworthiness, norms, obligations, and identification (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Relational capital describes the resources embedded into personal relationships developed through a history of interaction.

Social capital comprises valuable resources used within a social context, such as social interaction ties, trusting relationships, and value systems, which are crucial in various fields for facilitating certain activities conducted within a social context (Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998; Yang, Lee, & Kurnia, 2009). Tsai and Ghoshal (1998) extended the conceptual framework of Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) and suggested that social interaction ties, shared vision, and trust can represent structural, cognitive, and relational dimensions of social capital, that the structural dimension affects both the cognitive and relational dimensions, and that the cognitive dimension affects the relational dimension. They demonstrated the effects of social capital on organizational resource exchange and product innovation. Follow-up studies, such as Wang and Chiang (2009), have verified these three causal relationships. We followed this research stream to verify these three causal relationships in the intraorganizational social media use context.

Social capital enables numerous prosocial behaviors and results in benefits that physical, human, and financial capital cannot explain (Coleman, 1990), such as facilitating cooperation and coordination to provide mutual benefit (Putnam, 1995a), knowledge acquisition, and sharing and exploitation (Yli-Renko, Autio, & Sapienza, 2001). Although most forms of capital are based on particular assets or people, social capital is woven into interpersonal relationships and embedded in people's connections with their communities (Putnam, 1995b; Wasko & Faraj, 2005).

### 2.2. Social capital and information system use

Social capital is critical in the field of information systems (IS). Because social capital elicits voluntary interactions and cooperation among people (Lin, 2011; Radin, 2006), it promotes information technology (IT) implementation by improving coordination between IS and user departments (Hatzakis, Lycett, Macredie, & Martin, 2005), thereby enhancing project effectiveness (Newell, Tansley, & Huang, 2004). Besides, social capital encourages user acceptance of numerous IS used in organizations, such as the electronic trading system (Montazemi, Siam, & Esfahanipour, 2008) and the paperless loan-approval system (Peng, Fang, & Lim, 2011).

With the growth and popularity of online social-networking applications, social capital has been a critical factor for successfully use these applications to facilitate collaboration. Greater social capital increases commitment to an online community and the ability to mobilize collective action. Social capital acts as a motivational factor in knowledge sharing (He, Qiao, & Wei, 2009; Kankanhalli, Tan, & Wei, 2005). Wasko and Faraj (2005) considered centrality, commitment and reciprocity, self-related expertise, and tenure in the field as key components of the structural, relational, and cognitive dimension, and observed that centrality and tenure in the field have a significant effect on users' volume of knowledge contribution in electronic networks. According to the three dimensional framework of the social capital (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), Chiu, Hsu, and Wang (2006) used social interaction ties, shared vision, and trust to represent the structural, cognitive and relational dimensions of social capital respectively and evidenced that these facets of social capital engender knowledge sharing in virtual communities. Social capital is crucial for social networking sites (Sun, Liu, Peng, Dong, & Barnes, 2014). Chang and Zhu (2012) indicated that the perceived bridging of social capital has a considerably influence on user satisfaction and intention to continue using social networking sites. In transaction-oriented communities, Wang and Chiang (2009) followed the model developed by Tsai and Ghoshal (1998) and demonstrated that various dimensions of social capital influence continuance intention in online auctions.

In addition, social capital is the outcome of social media use. Steinfield et al. (2008) conducted two surveys at a large U.S.