



Improving the agility of employees through enterprise social media: The mediating role of psychological conditions



Zhao Cai, Qian Huang*, Hefu Liu, Xiaoyan Wang

School of Management, University of Science and Technology of China, 96 Jinzhai Road, Hefei, China

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Enterprise social media usage
Psychological conditions
Agility performance
IT usage in workplace

ABSTRACT

Enterprise social media (ESM) is an emerging platform that can help employees handle uncertainties. This study examines whether and how ESM usage is positively associated with agility performance (i.e., proactivity, adaptability, and resilience). Drawing on Kahn's framework, this study investigates the mediating effects of psychological conditions (i.e., psychological meaningfulness, psychological availability, and psychological safety). Through data collected from 167 employees who adopted ESM in the workplace, the current research validates most of the proposed hypotheses on mediating effects. It specifically validates the following claims: (1) psychological availability mediates the relationships between ESM usage and the three dimensions of agility performance; (2) psychological meaningfulness mediates the link between ESM usage and proactivity; and (3) the associations of ESM usage with proactivity and adaptability are significantly mediated by psychological safety. This study contributes to extant ESM literature through incorporating Kahn's framework in investigating the role of ESM and suggesting that managers enhance employees' psychological conditions in order to realize the value of ESM.

1. Introduction

Enterprise social media (ESM) is an increasingly implemented digital platform for internal communication and social interaction within an enterprise (Kane, 2015; Leonardi, Huysman, & Steinfield, 2013). For example, *Slack* is an extensively used ESM application with various social functions, such as instant messaging, open conversation, enterprise wiki, and microblogging. In 2016, it raised \$200 million in its fourth round of venture capital funding at a post-money valuation of \$3.8 billion and boasted 2.7 million daily active users (Primack, 2016). The achievement of ESM is ascribed to distinctive characteristics that set it apart from other information and communication technologies. For example, ESM users can observe other employees' conversations and distinguish their social connections, facilitating the identification and transfer of specialized knowledge (Leonardi et al., 2013). On the basis of these features, scholars report various benefits of ESM, including the improvement of information sharing, team coordination, and collective intelligence (Gibbs, Rozaidi, & Eisenberg, 2013; Kane, 2015; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Ruhi & Al-Mohsen, 2015).

With such benefits, ESM can shed light on the findings of agility performance research, which focuses on an employee's ability to react and adapt to changes promptly and appropriately (Alavi & Wahab, 2013; Alavi, Wahab, Muhamad, & Shirani, 2014; Sherehiy,

Karwowski, & Layer, 2007). However, existing arguments regarding the link between ESM usage and agility performance are insufficient and controversial (Alavi et al., 2014; Kuegler, Smolnik, & Kane, 2015; Kwahk & Park, 2016; Leftheriotis & Giannakos, 2014). On one hand, ESM is considered conducive to responding to unexpected changes because it helps employees learn from colleagues about relevant knowledge (Leonardi et al., 2013; Turban, Bolloju, & Liang, 2011). On the other hand, some scholars assert that ESM reduces employee's effectiveness in sensing and reacting to market changes, as ESM could result in the abuse of Internet resources (Turban et al., 2011), an increase in absentmindedness (Turel & Serenko, 2012), and the apparent trend of groupthink (Leonardi et al., 2013). The polarity in these arguments indicates a need for further investigation into the underlying mechanisms by which ESM usage is associated with agility performance (Turban et al., 2011).

This lack of consensus regarding the relationship between ESM usage and agility performance has resulted in an increased focus on employees' psychological conditions. By using ESM, employees tend to feel their work is more meaningful, as they observe others' achievement and career growth resulting from their effort (Treem & Leonardi, 2012). With high psychological meaningfulness, employees tend to spend time and effort developing their capacity to handle unpredictable situations (Cheng & Lu, 2012). ESM also motivates employees to consider their

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: huangq@ustc.edu.cn (Q. Huang).

readiness for market changes in terms of physical, emotional, and cognitive resources (Kügler, Dittes, Smolnik, & Richter, 2015; Leonardi, 2015; Treem & Leonardi, 2012). Agility performance is improved when employees are confident about the availability of resources that can enable them to create good responses (Higgins, 1997). ESM creates an atmosphere in which employees feel psychologically safe and willing to interact with colleagues without shyness or low self-esteem (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Maintaining interactive relationships with colleagues enables employees to adapt to new situations (Ou & Davison, 2011). Therefore, the psychological conditions (i.e., psychological meaningfulness, psychological availability, and psychological safety) of employees serve as the mediating mechanisms in the relationship between ESM usage and agility performance.

The current study aims to investigate the relationship among ESM usage, psychological conditions, and agility performance through a survey conducted among employees in China. It contributes to extant ESM literature in three aspects. First, it examines the mixed findings on the value creation of ESM by considering intermediate variables in order to address firms' concerns over adopting ESM, as such a consideration allows them to determine if ESM serves as a facilitator or inhibitor of agility (Burrus, 2010; Turban et al., 2011). Second, this study contributes to research on agility performance by addressing the role of ESM. Although the value of employees' agility performance is widely acknowledged, efforts toward improving it are limited (Alavi & Wahab, 2013). Exploring the enabling role of ESM usage offers new insights into agility performance because ESM helps employees acquire requisite information and develop interactive social networks (Leonardi, 2014). Third, this research extends Kahn's framework of psychological conditions by applying it to ESM research. This study also provides an interesting perspective on how psychological conditions vary in accordance with different levels of ESM usage, and examines the mediating role of psychological conditions in the link between ESM usage and agility performance (Brzozowski, 2009).

The following section of the paper begins by providing a review of relevant literature. Subsequently, nine mediating hypotheses are presented. Section 3 elaborates on our research method, including the data collection process, sample demographic information, and operationalization of constructs. Section 4 presents the results of the data analysis. Section 5 discusses the results, presents theoretical and practical implications of the findings, and specifies the study's limitations. Section 6 makes a conclusion of this study.

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses development

2.1. Enterprise social media

Within an enterprise, ESM—such as blogs, social networking sites, wikis, and microblogs—refers to a new class of internet-based applications based on the ideology and technology of Enterprise 2.0 (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). According to McAfee (2006), Enterprise 2.0 focuses on the strategic integration of Web 2.0 technologies (i.e., platforms on which content and applications are continuously modified by all users) into an organization's intranet, extranet, and business processes, thereby allowing intensive knowledge-based collaborations. Empirical studies have validated the positive effect of Enterprise 2.0 technologies on knowledge management in organizations (Kane, Sinclair, Robinson-Combre, & Berge, 2010; Zheng, Li, & Zheng, 2010). Scholars have also investigated the sociological and technological factors affecting the use of Enterprise 2.0 technologies (Ruhi & Al-Mohsen, 2015). Although ESM pertains to Enterprise 2.0 technologies, it has its own distinct features. For instance, ESM is defined as “web-based platforms that allow workers to communicate or broadcast messages, indicate or reveal particular coworkers as communication partners, post, edit, and sort text and files linked to themselves or others, and view the messages, connections, text, and files communicated, posted, edited and sorted by others” (Leonardi et al., 2013, p.2). This

technology is popular in workplaces because it facilitates participation, conversation openness, co-creation, and socialization among employees (Panahi, Watson, & Partridge, 2012). An increasing number of firms have adopted ESM to improve employee performance because, as a socialization platform, ESM facilitates employee interaction, the development of mutual trust, and the establishment of virtual communities (Kim, Jeong, & Lee, 2010; Ou & Davison, 2011; Treem & Leonardi, 2012). Scholars have reported an enhancement of knowledge flow and work-related learning among employees after ESM adoption by firms (Cao, Vogel, Guo, Liu, & Gu, 2012; Puijtenbroek, Poell, Kroon, & Timmerman, 2014; Ravenscroft, Schmidt, Cook, & Bradley, 2012). Furthermore, ESM promotes knowledge share among workers (Fulk & Yuan, 2013; Gibbs et al., 2013) and increases awareness of peer behavior (Fulk & Yuan, 2013; Treem & Leonardi, 2012). Trust and friendship among employees has also been shown to positively correlate with an organization's uptake and usage of social media (Huang & Yen, 2003; Ou & Davison, 2011).

Yet, in addition to the affordances of ESM, some scholars have challenged its effectiveness by analyzing its negative effects. For example, Hoover (2007) considered ESM a waste of time and money because at times it fails to align its functions to workplace needs. Turban et al. (2011) similarly claimed that extensive engagement with social networking may lead to the misuse and abuse of Internet resources. ESM has also been linked to groupthink, in which conflicting perspectives are ignored (Leonardi et al., 2013). Therefore, whether or not ESM benefits employee performance remains unclear.

ESM usage refers to employees' use of ESM as a communication and socialization tool in the workplace. Employees use ESM to exchange ideas and knowledge, share documents, and expand their social networks. It has four affordances: visibility, editability, persistence, and association, all of which are effectuated by employees' use of this tool (Treem & Leonardi, 2012). Specifically, ESM enhances the visibility of employees' behavior, knowledge, preferences, and communication network connections to others in the organization. The information provided by ESM serves as meta-knowledge to help other employees gain access to specialized knowledge by revealing who knows what in an organization (Leonardi, 2014). For example, an enterprise social network service (SNS) lists the interests and hobbies of employees, thereby facilitating the development of a social network among colleagues. In addition, the enterprise SNS uses a social tagging tool to keep record of who bookmarks material on specific knowledge, thereby helping employees identify owners of specialized knowledge and skills in their organization. Therefore, the SNS renders employees' knowledge visible to their colleagues.

Editability refers to the function through which employees can craft and re-craft a communicative act before others view and modify the content. For example, users of an enterprise wiki can correct the errors in their posts so viewers can obtain accurate and cutting-edge information. As a result, the information is constantly updated and improved when it is transferred to the target audience, to whom the information is important (Razmerita, Kirchner, & Nabeth, 2014).

Persistence is demonstrated when communication remains accessible in the same form it was originally conveyed. For example, an enterprise SNS records each interaction conducted by organizational members and, as a result, task responsibility becomes traceable, and disputes can be avoided. In this way, ESM sustains and increases knowledge by recording each communication and accumulating valuable information (Treem & Leonardi, 2012).

Association in ESM refers to the established connection between entities, such as employees and content. For example, an enterprise SNS can offer employees the opportunity to find individuals with similar interests or identify potential mentors, particularly when they do not know others personally. ESM can create social ties among employees and manifest the relationship between employees and information, thereby supporting social connections and access to relevant information (Kügler et al., 2015; Kwahk & Park, 2016; Razmerita et al., 2014).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5110708>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5110708>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)