

A Conceptual Model for Dimensions Impacting Employees' Participation in Enterprise Social Tagging

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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a conceptual model of the key factors that drive employees' effective participation with social tagging systems within the corporate environment. The proposed model is based on integrating and applying existing findings from various disciplines in a novel conceptualization to explain the motivations of participants in organizational social tagging systems.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

H.5.3 [Group and Organization Interfaces]: Collaborative computing, Computer-supported cooperative work

General Terms

Management, human factors

Keywords

Social computing, collaborative tagging, social participation, motivation, online community, social networks, contribution, collaboration

1. INTRODUCTION

Enterprise social tagging is a tool that offers strong potential for organizations in knowledge sharing and collaboration. Tags can be used as keyword descriptors to label web content for the purpose of personal and shared organization of information resources [1]. Social tagging tools allow corporate communities to build their own vocabularies that fit their own environment [2]. Combined with dynamic web technologies, tagging can play an important role in solving some of the challenges of knowledge management such as managing unstructured data [3].

Despite the potential of these benefits, social tagging systems are not always working as effectively within organizations as intended. Many organizations are struggling to achieve these benefits because these applications suffer from a lack of effective participation from their employees [4]. Bughin [5] stressed the importance of employees' quality participation in social media and called upon managers to generate enthusiasm among their employees to use these tools.

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Koh et al.[6] indicated that sustaining a virtual community requires securing enough active participants. Like many social media applications, social tagging systems can offer increasing marginal productivity as they scale, at both the individual and organizational levels [7].

The objective of this paper is to build a theoretical model which can be empirically validated to test the drivers of on-going effective participation in social tagging systems within organizations' intranets. This study will bring together the key factors motivating employees to both use tags and to contribute to organizational tagging systems. This research will be later quantitatively examined in an effort to identify the strongest factors driving participation, which can then become focal points for managers who wish to improve the participation and value of their investments in social tagging.

2. PROPOSED MODEL

The proposed model was adapted from the following previous studies: Phang et al. [8]; Preece & Shneiderman [9]; Wasko & Faraj [10]; and Davis et al [11]. A prerequisite for achieving the benefits is participation in terms of tag seeking and contributing to the organizational social tagging system. We propose that perceived usefulness, perceived usability, and perceived sociability positively influence Tag seeking and contributing. The conceptual model in Figure 1 below shows the dimensions of each of these concepts and the proposed relationships between them. We subsequently discuss each of these factors.

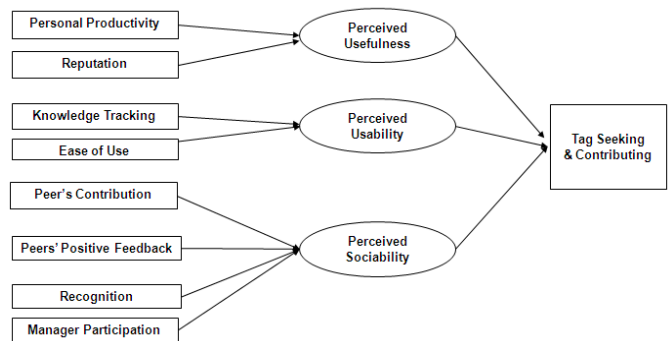


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Model

Usefulness

Perceived usefulness is defined as the degree to which a person believes that the use of a system would improve their performance [12]. In their technology acceptance model, Davis et al. [13] stated that useful and relevant content will yield more participation among users. Butler [14] went in the same line by noting that members of online communities will take part and actively participate in social media tools only if they perceived personal benefits and usefulness of these media.

Personal Productivity

Personal productivity refers to the capability of the system to offer benefits to help users become productive in their daily tasks. Ames & Naaman [15] ran a comprehensive study on users' incentives to tag in Flickr and ZoneTag. The result of their study showed that participants were motivated by the usefulness of tags to self promote their photo collections; and by self organization, to organize their photos for future retrieval. Velsen and Melenhorst [16] found that users mainly tag their video material for indexing and personal organizational purposes. Suchanek et al. [17] indicated that tags help users browse, categorize, and find items. Further, tags are used as a form of information discovery, sharing, and social ranking. Accordingly, users would use tagging systems if it is beneficial for them and if it helps them achieve their daily tasks efficiently.

Reputation

According to the social exchange theory, users engage in social interaction if they receive social rewards such as reputation, status, approval, and respect [18]. Results from previous studies on virtual networks of practice were in line with social exchange theory and showed evidence that participation is strongly correlated with building individual reputation [19]. Within an organization environment, individuals tend to improve their reputation by offering useful guides and advice to others [20]. There is also evidence that individual perception that their knowledge contribution will enhance their professional reputation impacted their contribution activity within an organization environment [10, 21].

Usability

Usability was defined as the system effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction that help users fulfill their goals in a particular situation [22]. Previous studies found a strong correlation between usability and users-system participation [23, 24].

Knowledge tracking

Knowledge tracking refers to the capability of a system to allow individual to track knowledge activities that they perceive valuable [8]. An example of such systems is *Dogear*, a bookmarking application that runs inside the IBM environment and that features an advanced navigation capabilities for knowledge tracking. These advanced features in online applications help users know of whether or not a shared resource has been useful or relevant and hence decide if they want to pursue with it or not. Features like these may encourage users to increase their knowledge seeking and contributing to the system [25].

Ease of use

Ease of use is the extent to which an individual perceives that using a particular system would be effortless [13, 26, 27]. Davis et al. [11] claimed that "an application perceived to be easier to use than another is more likely to be accepted by users" (p.2).

Sociability, Peer Contribution, Feedback, and Recognition

Sociability is the result of the community members' interaction through the mediating technology. In other words, it is the human-human interaction that takes place by using social tagging tools [8]. According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, sociability refers to characteristics of a virtual community application that supports "the

state of being social". Preece [28] noted that community members find it appealing to socially interact with one another on similar purposes through technology-enabled space. Social presence is defined as the degree to which a medium enhances awareness of other people and activate interpersonal relationships during interaction. "According to the social presence theory, awareness of the online presence of fellow members can influence online community activity [29]. Nov et al. [30] studied the motivations associated with the tagging behavior on Flickr. Basing their work on a qualitative study conducted by Ames and Naaman [15], they confirmed that social presence works as a main motivator for users to add tags to content. Some tagging motivations come from a group contribution perspective. When users get the feeling that their contribution is important to groups, they are more likely to contribute more to the system [31]. When Beenen et al. [32] conducted a study on the "under contribution" of some users on the movie recommender system MovieLens, they found that users, when reminded that their tag contribution will help others to choose the right movie, perceived a sense of uniqueness to their tags and hence added more movie tags to help the group. A study at HP found that bloggers are likely to participate on the company' blog if they see visual feedback responding to their posts [33].

Management Involvement

Managerial influence is the degree of influence that a direct manager would have on his/her subordinates to adopt a new technology [34]. Although TAM models was quite equivocal about manager's role in adopting technology, IS research showed support to the fact that managers impact adoption through their own adoption of technology [12]; through being visible and watching employees participation [35]; through persuasive communication [36]; and through employees' perception of the managers' views on new IT ventures [13].

3. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In this paper, we illustrated the factors potentially leading to participation in organizational social tagging systems and proposed a theoretical model. Although the relationships in our model are supported by prior research, we intend to validate it through empirical testing within a corporate environment.

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