Social Media and Knowledge Sharing – What Do We Know So Far?

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to examine previous studies on topic of social media and how it influences knowledge sharing online and thereafter establish respective body of knowledge. The background investigation has been organized as a theoretical review with qualitative premises. The multi-layered Systematic Literature Review process has been utilized and carried out to fetch the most relevant peer-reviewed researches in the past. To the best of authors' knowledge no such a study has been performed earlier. It is intended that this review should determine research frontier and provide overview of what exactly, in what fashion and how profound has been investigated. This study may have not assured full coverage of the topic in question. However, based on the chosen methodology authors do assume that study covers large portion of studies available. The predicted benefits for academia are mainly two-fold. Firstly, it might lead to further researches by pointing out the places whereby such an additional research is desired. Secondly, it will consolidate findings from articles and present them in comprehensive conceptual manner together with all accompanying details.

Keywords: social media, knowledge sharing, online sharing, literature review

1. Introduction

We live in very demanding times whereby thirst for knowledge and information is taking huge momentum. This phenomenon has been primarily affected by latest ICT developments on one side and the individuals who are seeking ever greater portion of information and knowledge on the other.

Because of ICT developments, we do face and utilize so-called social media. There is a vast number of definitions on social media is so far. One of the most widely accepted is that social media is a group of Internet-based technologies that allows users to easily create, edit, evaluate and link to content or to other creators of content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Social media as such became so incepted in our daily routine that individuals rely on it to gather all sort of information imaginable (Rode, 2016). One of the ways to utilize effectively social media is to share knowledge (Rode, 2016). As Amidi, and others, would like to state that social media and internet hugely contributes to new ways of managing and dispersing knowledge at personal and organizational levels via social-collaborations and networking opportunities (Amidi et al., 2017). This goes in line with what group of authors around Cevik states. They (Cevik et al., 2016) claim that social media, through the Internet and other web-based technologies, has become a means of communication and knowledge-sharing.

Considering previously stated definitions and studies we conclude that importance of social media and internet in knowledge management and sharing is substantially growing daily. Although certain amount of studies in this field has been identified and analyzed, no comprehensive summary of those has been done so far. The purpose of this paper is to investigate and review the known impact of social media on knowledge sharing, to identify current scope and body of knowledge and eventually to direct toward certain research prospects in the future.

2. Theoretical background

So far, researchers have argued that specific knowledge about tasks, procedures, services, competitors and expertise is an increasingly valuable and scarce resource. This resource should be dispersed accordingly to those in need of them (Majchrzak et al., 2013). This is rather very general remark and it is applicable for both online and offline business environments. As a follow up, studies of knowledge creation, sharing and reuse in internet habitat are "relatively modest" (Edwards et al., 2017).

During the last decade in particular, we have witnessed substantial grow when it comes to interest in internet and social media platforms (Okazaki et al., 2017). Diverse set of internet and social media-based applications

and platforms found their niche markets and this trend is ever growing. This affected and still does all company's elementary function. One of those is surely knowledge management.

Knowledge management is process-based function and it normally takes place regardless whether a formal charter has been set in place within a company. According to Wee and Chua, there is a little consensus in literature as to what nowadays knowledge management precisely consists of. According to their findings (Wee and Chua, 2013) and further literature review there are three interdependent phases: knowledge creation, knowledge sharing and knowledge reuse. For the sake of this paper, only knowledge sharing phase will be considered and how it fits in equation together with social media. As a side note, literature and academicians distinct between two dominant forms of knowledge – tacit and explicit. Shen and Wang define tacit knowledge as personal, hard to formalize and difficult to communicate to others. Consequently, may also be impossible to acquire (Shen and Wang, 2017). On the other side, Panda and others define explicit knowledge as strictly formal, systematic and documented. In such a way, that it can be shared without bigger issues (Panda and Kapoor, 2017).

In the broadest fashion defined, knowledge sharing implies a certain set of behavior that enhances and aids the exchange of previously gathered knowledge (Okazaki et al., 2017). More precisely, as stated by Wee and Chua, knowledge sharing is the exchange of knowledge between individuals to allow the recipient to apply or reshape the knowledge gained in a new context. This should be a process by which individuals discuss and disperse know-how in order to enhance general competitiveness of the organization (Wee and Chua, 2013). There are few necessary, and natural conditions, in order knowledge sharing to take place online (communication, cooperation and advise seeking) (Zappa, 2011). Knowledge sharing is the act of making knowledge available to others within the specific company. In its essence is should be a voluntary, conscious act between two or more individuals resulting in joint ownership of the knowledge between the sender and the receiver (Vuori and Okkonen, 2012a).

In addition, Oostervink and others argue that social media is implemented by organizations as knowledge management systems to increase knowledge sharing and consequently enhance productivity (Oostervink et al., 2016). All in all, we speak about sub process which consists of sequence of steps which should lead to further value generation in terms of company.

Even though the importance of social media for knowledge sharing has been addressed few times by researches so far (Amidi et al., 2017, Edwards et al., 2017, Eschenbrenner et al., 2015, Hajli and Hajli, 2013, Ho et al., 2011, Shen and Wang, 2017, Sirous et al., 2016) comprehensive summary of what has been studied, to what extent, possible gaps and identification of research frontier is still missing.

3. Methodology

For this research, so-called, Systematic Literature Review method has been taken into consideration. It follows an approach by (Ferenhof Helio, 2016). In general, Ferenhof proposed six principles that must be adhered to manage systematic review process properly. Those are the following:

1. Mapping the field through a scoping review
2. Comprehensive search and browsing
3. Quality assessment
4. Data extraction
5. Synthesis of the extracted data to show the known and to provide the basis for establishing the unknown
6. Final write-up of the article

In the upcoming few paragraphs more detailed explanation of the Systematic Literature Review process will follow.

Firstly, we defined specific research plan which successfully navigated us through the rest of research process. Within it we brainstormed on few occasion the goal of this research. Moreover, we defined keywords which should facilitate vast literature browsing. In addition, the authors decided on inclusion and exclusion criteria. As the topic of this paper is somewhat double folded it implies more keywords to be used. We have picked the

following ones: social media, knowledge, sharing, conceptual, online sharing, literature review. The inclusion criteria were empirical research papers, peer-reviewed, English language and indexed in following databases: EBSCO, Scopus and Web of Science. Exclusion criteria are following: so-called "gray literature" such as reports and non-academic research, other languages than English, articles published in so-called "predatory" journals.

Secondly, extensive browsing of databases using previously listed keywords was carried out. Besides only looking after keywords, browsing will include combinations of keywords in the titles, keywords section and abstracts. This way more relevant materials will be generated. Searching included materials up to the certain point in time – 31st of December 2017. First filter has been applied to eliminate those articles that are duplicates.

Third step was to read and assess each abstract to define its relevance to the topics in question. In few cases, it was needed to do more profound readings. This way it was assured that article lies in the scope of interest relevant to this study.

As a fourth step, we have divided total number of articles among authors in even fashion for further readings and elaboration.

Fifth step was to collect individual data and synthetize them from many articles into one. At this point, even greater reduction of number of articles has been done (because of the previous phase).

Sixth and the final stage of the review process is being devoted to the write-up of the findings.

Table 1: Number of articles per stages of research

Step	Number of Articles
Initial browsing	140
Filter 1 – duplicates removal	118
Filter 2 – Title/Keywords/Abstract readings	91
Filter 3 – Available for download	32
Totally analyzed	28

At the beginning we found 140 articles (in three different databases) which have had some connection to our keywords. We did remove those article that we found in more than one database (total of 22). Filter two was initial reading of Title, Keywords and Abstracts of articles to assess its relevance (we deducted further 27 articles). Final filter was to check articles' online availability (we reduced by 59 articles not being available for download). We ended up with total of 32 articles. We further found out additional 4 articles as not being suitable for further examination.

4. Findings and discussion

In the following sections we do present main findings we were able to extrapolate regarding Social Media and knowledge sharing phenomenon.

4.1 General Observations

Among twenty eight articles we were able to retrieve and to successfully process, the oldest one was dating from 2011 (Zappa, 2011) and few of them were published in 2017 (Amidi et al., 2017, Edwards et al., 2017, Hitchen et al., 2017, Okazaki et al., 2017, Panda and Kapoor, 2017, Shen and Wang, 2017, Soto-Acosta et al., 2017, Świgoń, 2017). This promising trend surely indicates the ever-increasing interest in the fields of Social Media and knowledge sharing both quantity and quality wise. Academia and individuals tend to dig more profound and draw more specific conclusions.

As for the methodology used whilst researching, out of twenty-eight published articles, eighteen of those were some sort of qualitative research (Bjursell, 2015, Cevik et al., 2016, Edwards et al., 2017, Eschenbrenner et al., 2015, Gibbs et al., 2013, Grant, 2016, Hajli and Hajli, 2013, Majchrzak et al., 2013, Oostervink et al., 2016, Rathi et al., 2014, Razmerita et al., 2016, Rode, 2016, Shah et al., 2013, Sirous et al., 2016, Sloan et al., 2015, Świgoń, 2017, Vuori and Okkonen, 2012a, Vuori and Okkonen, 2012b, Xu et al., 2015, Zaidan et al., 2015). In addition, seven were quantitative studies with strong statistical background (Edwards et al., 2017, Eschenbrenner et al., 2015, Okazaki et al., 2017, Panda and Kapoor, 2017, Soto-Acosta et al., 2017, Wang et al., 2015, Zappa, 2011)

and additional three were conceptual papers (Amidi et al., 2017, Hitchen et al., 2017, Ho et al., 2011) which were theorizing on bonds between social media and knowledge sharing as such. This rather indicates that academicians tend to use qualitative methods (case studies and surveys as a predominant tools), whilst the smaller portion of studies have been utilizing quantitative approaches (mostly tests available within IBM SPSS). The smallest portion of studies has been around developing and defining concept which are under the general topics we were investigating.

When it comes to publishing journals we rather have very colorful situation. The twenty-eight papers were published in eleven different journals. The journal with the highest number of studies is Journal of Knowledge Management with five published articles (Grant, 2016, Rathi et al., 2014, Razmerita et al., 2016, Sirous et al., 2016, Vuori and Okkonen, 2012a). Substantial majority of journals in question could be categorized in the fields of knowledge and information sharing and management, computer science and medical sciences. All in all, the combination of journals suggest that so far greater multidisciplinary approach is desired when it comes to studying topics in question. As it is now, we rather witness very limited focus.

4.2   Body of Knowledge Regarding Social Media and Knowledge Sharing
In the following few paragraphs we are summing up some of the main findings when it comes to the topics we were studying.

Amidi and a group of authors around have been using similar method (Systematic Literature Review) in order to find out what has been known when it comes to sharing of tacit knowledge via social media (Amidi et al., 2017). They found out that current literature provides studies that were primarily conducted from a technology perspective, without the provision of a holistic understanding of user intention specifically with regards to tacit knowledge sharing in an online setting. Furthermore, they theorize if social media empowers tacit knowledge sharing. In continuation, one of the rare multidisciplinary studies that were investigating social media support for tacit knowledge sharing is coming from physician's perspective (Sirous et al., 2016). This study found five major concepts as eventual contribution of social media onto tacit knowledge sharing among physicians. Those factors are: socializing, practicing, networking, storytelling and encountering.

Razmerita, Kirchner and Nielsen were one of the first ones to investigate factors that are influencing knowledge sharing on social media (Razmerita et al., 2016). They performed extensive literature review to find out what has been written so far on this topic. They found out that drivers to share knowledge are: enjoying helping others, rewards, management support, management encourages and motivates knowledge sharing behavior etc. Some of the main barriers identified: change of behavior, lack of trust, lack of time etc Moreover, Vuori and Okkonen were investigating the motivational factors behind knowledge sharing in intra organizational social media platform (Vuori and Okkonen, 2012a). They found that primary motivation to share knowledge is the ultimate desire to help the organization reach its goals and moreover to help colleagues. On the other hand, financial rewards and career advances have been least motivating factors. Susan Grant was (Grant, 2016) aiming to research on case of early adoption of the use of social media for the purposes of knowledge and information sharing across a supply chain in the United Kingdom. She found out a set of emerging practices and procedures which support both information and knowledge exchange. However, those are mainly influenced by factors such as buyer power and supplier competitive influencing.

Edwards and others in their study were aiming to understand the knowledge sharing structure and co-production of trip-related knowledge through online travel forums (Edwards et al., 2017). Ultimately, they concluded that knowledge structure is created by residents who camouflage themselves as experts and serve as ambassadors of a destination. They further found that residents connect with each other and form a knowledge constellation with information covering various travel domain areas. On the other side, based on social capital theory Okazaki and others were investigating tourist's behaviors in terms of knowledge sharing on social media (Okazaki et al., 2017). Their analysis found that neither trust nor shared vision drives specific knowledge sharing behavior on Tripadvisor – while shared vision affects knowledge sharing in Facebook. According to them, social interaction and connection plays crucial role in motivating users to act as they usually do.

Back in 2013, Gibbs and others were investigating, in a form of case study, ways in which social media literally limits and narrows down knowledge sharing possibilities (Gibbs et al., 2013). They found that their participants navigate tensions in visibility-invisibility, engagement-disengagement, and sharing-control and strategically

manage these tensions to preserve both openness and ambiguity. These respective findings highlight ways in which organizational members limit as well as share knowledge through social media. On the other side, Hitchen and others in their conceptual paper from 2017 were investigating how social media empowers innovations from the perspective of knowledge sharing in small and medium companies (Hitchen et al., 2017). They brought up the concepts of trust, reliance, size and industry of the company into the story for the first time. Very fresh quantitative study, by Panda and Kappor was studying the relationship between consumer dedications through knowledge sharing and sustains innovation in small and medium companies through the integration of social media (Panda and Kapoor, 2017). The research showed the increasing significance of customer loyalty on distinct levels and various contexts onto the knowledge sharing and social media.

In 2015 Eschenbrenner and others were investigating knowledge sharing via social media in public accounting firms (Eschenbrenner et al., 2015). This group of authors is the only one using both quantitative and qualitative methods in their study. They firmly concluded that big accounting companies use social media to share knowledge, onboarding and branding management. They firmly believe in immense importance of social media for this industry. From 2014, we found a study that was investigating knowledge sharing in NGOs and non for profit organizations via social media (Rathi et al., 2014). The sharing of knowledge is defined uniquely in terms of directionality (e.g. uni-directional, bi-directional, multi-directional knowledge sharing) and formality (i.e. informal, semi-formal or formal knowledge sharing). Some practices also arise from examples the use of social media to support informal and community-driven collaborations.

Bjursell performed a qualitative designed study in order to further investigate processes of knowledge sharing on social media from the perspective of different generations – cross generational investigation (Bjursell, 2015). He was introducing and specifically comparing knowledge co-creation online and offline. Oostervink and others were researching the use of enterprise social media (like Wiki or different briefing systems) to disperse company relevant knowledge (Oostervink et al., 2016). Their case study shows that professionals usually tend to find way to manage the ambiguities they experience by engaging the affordances of social media in such a way as to develop certain practices in relation to: connection management, reputation management and information management. In continuation, Shah and other were trying to develop theoretical model to highlight the role of social media in developing effective knowledge management processes for professional service firms (Shah et al., 2013).

Group of authors around Sloan (Sloan et al., 2015) were investigating the role knowledge sharing plays in both firm sponsored and user generated communities on Facebook. They found out that in both types of communities, knowledge sharing has substantial influence on pre-purchase decision making. Moreover, it has been proven as a mechanism for a trust building online. One very interesting approach is the study by group of authors around Xu. Namely, they were investigating if Twitter hashtags are helping out with knowledge sharing, in particular with health related conversation (Xu et al., 2015). They consequently found that knowledge sharing flow in most of the cases goes between participants of the same healthcare roles. However, there is considerable amount of knowledge dispersion between healthcare providers to average "consumers". Group of authors around Cevik were investigating the usage of social media during the medical conferences and what type of knowledge has been shared simultaneously (Cevik et al., 2016). They concluded that we need more tangible assessment tools to understand clearly the effects of social media on knowledge sharing. Shin and others in their quantitative study from 2015, were investigating into practices of knowledge sharing in virtual professional communities (Shin-Yuan Hung et al., 2015). They seek to provide public with exact knowledge sharing intention when it comes to social media and online habitat in general. Hajlis in case study were researching on the ways how to develop and enhance knowledge sharing in online brand communities on social media (Hajli and Hajli, 2013). They theorize around the concept of value co-creation for final customers.

Back in 2013, Majchrzak and other were, in their conceptual paper, theorizing on how four affordances of social media represent diverse ways to engage in public knowledge sharing conversation: metavoicing, attending, network-informed associating and role taking (Majchrzak et al., 2013). Very broadly defined study regarding the general influence of social media on knowledge sharing.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to investigate on previous studies on topic of social media and how it influences knowledge sharing online and thereafter establish respective body of knowledge. The background investigation has been organized as a theoretical review with qualitative premises. The multi-layered Systematic Literature Review process has been utilized and carried out to fetch the most relevant peer-reviewed researches in the past. To the best of authors' knowledge, no such a study has been performed earlier. It is intended that this review should determine research frontier and provide overview of what exactly, in what fashion and how profound has been investigated. Tangible outcomes for academia are two-fold. Firstly, it might lead to further studies by addressing the places where additional research is desired. Secondly, it consolidated findings from available articles and present them in comprehensive conceptual manner together with all accompanying details.

Time frame considered was between 2010 and 2017. This led to the total number of twenty-eight eligible and suitable articles for further analyses and elaboration.

Among twenty-eight articles we were able to retrieve, the oldest one was dating from 2011 and few of them were published in 2017. In addition, eighteen out of those twenty-eight were some sort of qualitative based studies. On the other hand, only seven of those had quantitative research design as a backbone. At the end, we managed to retrieve three papers written in conceptual fashion. When it comes to the journals, in total eleven different publishers appeared in search results. Out of those, we found five articles to be published in Journal of Knowledge Management alone.

As for the topics covered, the list is rather not exhaustive since there were some overlapping between few authors and consequently, articles. Basically, three group of authors were tackling motivational factors behind knowledge sharing on social media (Razmerita et al., 2016, Sirous et al., 2016, Vuori and Okkonen, 2012a). Some were investigating how social media support knowledge sharing (Amidi et al., 2017), usage of social media to disperse knowledge during conferences (Cevik et al., 2016), coproduction and sharing of knowledge on trip websites (Edwards et al., 2017), if social media limits knowledge sharing (Gibbs et al., 2013), ways to develop knowledge sharing in online communities (Hajli and Hajli, 2013), social media empowers innovation through knowledge (Hitchen et al., 2017), Influence of social media on knowledge sharing (Majchrzak et al., 2013), enterprise social media and knowledge sharing (Rode, 2016), if social media supports tacit knowledge sharing (Sirous et al., 2016), processes in micro level knowledge sharing online (Wang et al., 2015), dispersion of knowledge on Twitter (Xu et al., 2015), consumer commitment to share knowledge via social media (Panda and Kapoor, 2017) etc.

This study, of course, implies limitation that we are certainly aware of. First one is the time frame we managed to capture (2010-2017). It goes without saying that there are high chances that we missed some relevant piece of material. Secondly, the organizational issues we have been having to manage the methodology properly in respect of software solution. At one point, it got us totally distracted from the goal of the study. However, with both limitations we do believe that this paper presents a solid body of findings that might enable and enhance future awareness towards the social media and different practices when it comes to knowledge sharing. This can be useful for practitioners in better integrating social media in their future planned knowledge management and knowledge sharing endeavors.

Acknowledgments

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