Examining the Motives behind Knowledge Sharing Intention in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

The research seeks to find out the reasons that provoke learners (including students, teachers and researchers) to share their knowledge with others by utilizing social media. The conceptual model has been developed to examine the knowledge sharing intentions of learners specifically in regard to higher education through employing quantitative approach. The study helps out in extending literature by identifying the technology opting behaviour of scholars and learners in higher education perspective through employing two constructs i.e. Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use. Results reveal that individual's propensity toward perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness act as motivator towards their knowledge sharing intentions. The study additionally postulates that the perception of social media as being useful medium and its ease in use serves as main motives behind sharing knowledge via this medium.

KEYWORDS: Social Media, Perceived Ease of Use (PEU), Perceived Usefulness (PU), Knowledge Sharing Intention (KSI).

1. INTRODUCTION

The present age is manifested by the technological innovations where the use of technology is evident in every aspect of life; making the technology an obligatory part of individuals, students and teachers life. Under such circumstances, the various tools and instruments kept on emerging everyday under the heading of social media refer to as Social Networking Sites (SNSs) [25]. As specified by Wankel (2009), this medium has changed the educational world as well by modifying the educational aspects of learning and interacting [33]. The utilization of these tools have also been evident now in higher educational sector allowing the dissemination of knowledge through these tools [33]. The social media tools and SNSs are jointly termed as Web 2.0 technologies and hence can be categorized as a leading edge for educators and educational practices which promote communication and interactivity at higher level [26]. The social media also offers new and diverse dimensions to the knowledge seekers via formal and informal networking sites for interacting with other; therefore permitting a platform for information exchange related to educational contents [35]. Blogging on the other hand has also been specified as a form of interaction which improves learning process of students and teachers by adding to the previously shared knowledge [9].

Social Media is a growing way of communication among individuals and higher education institutions; providing a middle ground to learners' for enhancing their possibility towards scholarly based communication and a setting where students get involve with other students, acquaintances, peers and teachers [25]. The educators are trying to assimilate social media in the higher education institutions in such a way that social media becomes an essential medium of learning in higher educational sector [6]. Social Media is beneficial in research and development as well [23] providing the basis of worldwide knowledge seeking for the online scholars through offering accurate and required information to them [6]. The engagement of knowledge seekers such as students and other learners to such medium can lead to positive outcomes and consequences. Shakarami, Khajehei, and Hajhashemi (2013) has also pointed out that the learners' adopt social media tools as a mean of interaction and a way to enhance learning efficiency by sharing information on a social platforms [37]. Social Media is leading the world in various ways where the digital technologies are most used ones around the world; with the most prominent applications in use are Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and Wikipedia; hence allowing the sharing of content with ease [1, 22]. Moreover, SNSs are capable to endorse learning prospects [14] and is a potential facilitator for the knowledge seekers in delivery of learning; but still its potential is not addressed to the full as a medium of educational learning; hence requiring research in this regard [13].

With the alterations in higher educational structure, the students and teachers come across new challenges and prospects every day providing learning and conductive ground for learners independently [2]. These dominating technologies and social media applications have attracted the higher education institutions and educators all over the world for considering them in educational practices; predominantly with regard to higher education by serving scholars, researchers and faculty in their day to day academic needs [27]. Moreover, the radical change has been evident in the students' way of learning in educational sector via technology. This

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path of social media provides a way to communicate even beyond the classroom frontier; promoting the collaborative learning scenario to the students and educationists [14]. Social media not only facilitates students but also researchers and educationalists, providing them with a ground to cooperate and connect [34]. On the other hand, it has been evident that owing to insufficient infrastructure and technological resources in Pakistan, the learners (specifically university students) have not been provided with the adequate means to cope up with their academic needs [36].

The literature has specified the need to conduct research in order to find out the purpose that provokes the learners for adopting social media. For this, many scholars have specified that the few studies have been undertaken with respect to scholarly use of this medium [12, 25, 27]. Besides, the full potential of social media as a medium of knowledge seeking has to be clearly viewed. The current study focuses on the motives that foster students to seek knowledge through social media specifically in higher education and to explore the scholarly usage of social media; as the past studies are vague in this regard. The study will hence provide evidence that what fosters knowledge sharing intention among scholars of Pakistan through utilizing social media.

It has been evident that owing to insufficient infrastructure and technological resources in Pakistan, the university students have not been provided with the suffice means to cope up with their academic needs. The evidence suggests that the students use the medium for entertainment as well academic purposes to complete their assignments and projects [36].

1.1. Social Media Tools- Medium of Learning

Social Media comprises of social applications and software's which permit its users to generate a medium for exchanging contents and information since 2012; including various mediums including Wikipedia, and other social networking sites such as; Flicker, MySpace, Facebook, Twitter etc. [15, 23]. In this regard, these SNSs tools exist to support diverse learning pattern to facilitate and build a supportive ground for knowledge seeking [19]. Moreover, such mediums contribute to the learning aspects in higher education institutions as outlined in the social constructivist learning theory; hence can be utilized in formal learning process [33].

Lee and McLoughlin (2010) implies that the users should add to the previous knowledge positively and actively rather than using them passively [17]. Moreover according to the Selwyn (2012); the existing social media tools and applications are the inspiring ones, not like the conventional ideas; therefore can be utilized in educational provisions as well for providing and ensuring learners with innovative and constructive information and data [27].

1.2. Constructs taken from TAM Model

The current study has used two constructs; perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use in order to examine the educational utilization of technology. Moreover, the model as helps out in seeking association between perception and adoption behavioral intentions [28]; therefore has been included in the current research in order to forecast the intentions of students, researchers and faculty. The main idea behind employing TAM's construct is basically that they have been supported in the literature [24, 29, 30].

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS

2.1. Perceived Usefulness

This construct has been derived from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Perceived usefulness [7]. We encompassed perceived usefulness as a substantial predictor in our theoretical model; as its academic use has been supported in the literature [5, 18].

Hypothesis 1: Perceived usefulness of social media affects knowledge sharing intentions positively.

2.2. Perceived Ease of Use

Perceived ease of use can be defined as level to which an individual believes that using a specific system will make the task easier [12]. Social Media is utilized by its users owing to its easiness; hence it is included in our conceptual model to determine its role in academia.

Hypothesis 2: Perceived ease of use of social media affects knowledge sharing intentions positively.

Hypothesis 3: Perceived ease of use of social media affects its perceived usefulness positively.

2.3. Conceptual Model

In the present study, two constructs are being employed in order to develop conceptual framework including; perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. These two constructs use have been taken from TAM model to forecast the technology adoption by scholars, educators and various researchers for educational perspective.

Figure 1. CONCEPTUAL MODEL
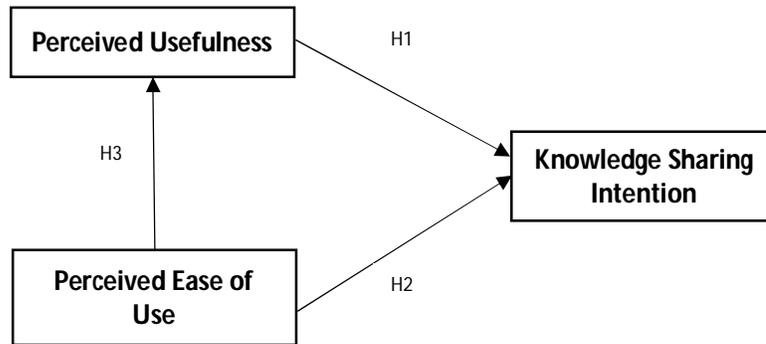
These two constructs of TAM model are considered as key to determine technology adoption in the past work [7, 31]. Therefore the study is outlining that the perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness are being predicted through knowledge sharing intentions; as shown in figure 1. The model can provide understanding that what ultimately predicts the technology adoption in academia and educational perspectives.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sample and Procedure

The data has been gathered from education sector with special emphasis to higher education institutions in Pakistan; where respondents were students, faculty or the academic researchers. They were contacted in universities either in classes or within the campus. The total of 400 filled questionnaires was received, out of which 381 were used for data analysis. The sample comprises of 194 females and 187 males. The students, researchers and teachers reported that they utilize Social Media in their studies, research and academic career respectively; where only 5.2% are those who never used social media for academia ever, 33.3% utilizes it 5-10 times per semester/research project while 38.3% utilizes is quite regularly in their courses, research projects/ assignments and studies.

3.2. Measures

The measures for this study were adopted from the past research. All the constructs were assessed on 5 point Likert scale (1= Strongly Disagree, 5= Strongly Agree). The items adopted to measure 'perceived usefulness' and ' perceived ease of use' were taken from Davis (1989) and Venkatesh and Davis (2000) [7, 32]. The construct comprises of eight items; and were included in the survey questionnaire in a continuous flow as recommended by early researchers Davis and Venkatesh (1996); suggested such grouped pattern as an improved and effective way to calculate and predict technology user behaviour [8]. The 4 items for knowledge sharing intentions have been adopted for current study in context of social media from the study of Bock et al (2005) [2].

4. RESULTS

The conceptual framework has been tested through Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) in order to assess the convergent and discriminant validity of the scale. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the convergent validity of constructs hold if its average variance extracted (AVE) is greater than 0.5; while for the discriminant validity the AVE for each construct should be greater than the square of correlation among the constructs (The validity and reliability of the constructs are provided in Table 1). Both these conditions were met thus it can be stated that the convergent and discriminant validity holds for the scale [11]. Furthermore, composite reliability (CR) values for each construct is also greater than 0.70; indicating the reliability of each adopted measure.

Table 1. CONSTRUCT VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

CR	Constructs	PU	PEU	KSI
0.865	Perceived Usefulness (PU)	0.616		
0.827	Perceived Ease of Use (PEU)	0.208	0.545	
0.851	Knowledge Sharing Intention (KSI)	0.461	0.358	0.590

Structural regression model has been employed to measure proposed relationships in the conceptual model. The model showed a good fit as depicted by the fit indices (χ^2 = 105.981, df = 51, χ^2/df = 2.078, CFI = .975, TLI = .967, GFI = .955, AGFI = .889, RMSEA = .053). Table 2 presents standardised estimates where H1 and H2 postulate the impact of Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEU) on Knowledge

Sharing Intention (KSI) respectively. The results postulates that PU (β=0.45, *p*<.001) positively influences KSI; hence can be said that social media has perceived as a useful medium in sharing knowledge. PEU (β=.36, *p*<.001) also positively affects knowledge sharing intentions; suggesting that the perception of ease regarding social media usage also contributes in sharing knowledge via this medium. Therefore, the evidence from the results portrays perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as significant components that serve as essential motives behind sharing knowledge via this medium.

Furthermore, H3 has also shown significant impact where perceived ease of use has also established a significant positive effect (β=0.46, *p*<.001) on perceived usefulness. Therefore, the results are portraying that perception of ease in use (i.e. social media utilization) contributes to the perception of this medium as more useful for individuals.

Table 2. RESULTS FOR STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELLING

Hypotheses	Relationship	Estimates
H1	PU→KSI	0.45***
H2	PEU→KSI	0.36***
H3	PEU→PU	0.46***
****p<0.001.*		

4.1. DISCUSSION

The hypothesized model in present work addresses the intentions that serve behaviour of learners' behind sharing their knowledge with others, specifically in regard to higher education. The results of the model suggest that individuals share their knowledge via social media owing to its ease in use and perceived usefulness; coinciding with the previous work of Mazman and Usluel (2010) who also implied that social networks are the path that are being opted by individuals with an insight of its ease in utilization [21]. The result further indicates that the individuals who adopt social media in higher education perceives and view this medium as a useful and beneficial mean to share their knowledge with others which contributes to the success of such individuals. In addition, social media is being adopted by scholars owing to its ease of use while interacting with other students, companions or either with faculty in resolving their educational issues; providing an edge of interactive learning to the larger audience within the less time, hence providing the evidence of scholarly use of social media. The perception that social media provides easy and interactive path way for knowledge sharing community influences the more usage of this medium by scholars, teachers and researches in higher education. These mediums (SNSs) are opted by individuals, particularly students in educational context due to its ability to exchange practical and academic contents and resources; as specified by the Selwyn (2007) [26, 36]. Additionally, scholars use social networks for knowledge exchange; engaging with other scholars, faculty and colleagues with the intention to make communication easier and more feasible. Mazman and Usluel (2010) also depicted these result and SNSs as a forum of communication in educational contents [21]. The learners' utilize various SNSs with the intention to socialize, communicate with others to share their mutual interest, evaluate informal learning via this medium. The previous researchers have also specified that in higher education, knowledge sharing via social mediums and tools is being opted because it serves as a mean of collaborative learning that can be refer to irrespective of time and place, hence paved the way towards success in learning [4, 9, 10, 16, 36].

The study helps out in extending literature by identifying the technology opting behaviour of scholars and learners in higher education perspective through employing two basic constructs of PU and PEU; therefore outlining the motives that contribute towards information exchange. The present study coincides with the few previously conducted work which supported the academic utilization of social networks [e.g. 20, 27]. Overall, it can be said that individuals are more likely to share their knowledge and resources with the intention to spread and seek more knowledge through interacting and communicating with others. The social media learning hence enhances their productivity by allowing learners and scholars to outperform in their academic accomplishments; it has also been reported by Shakarami, Khajehei, and Hajhashemi (2013) in their study. Therefore, inclined them to obtain the technology and social networks with the more positive energy and outlook.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The research has some limitation in regard to its sample size where the learners (including students, researchers and faculty) with larger sample size can be targeted in future to overcome this limitation. The cross-sectional analysis can be conducted in future to analyse the knowledge sharing intentions among them. Moreover, the comparative analysis of developing and developed countries can be taken into account in next studies to get a clear sight that what fosters and determines the knowledge sharing motives among developing and developed world. The extended number of motives that provoke learners' to share their knowledge resources with other can be taken in to account in future research.

Moreover, the faculty can also work to establish a more proficient networking and collaboration among students and pupils for knowledge sharing where the knowledge seekers can gain information or else can assist others. The pedagogical guidance by the teachers can positively influence the students to adopt technology for such purpose.

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