Knowledge Sharing in Online Community: A Review

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Abstract Rapid advancement of technology is unstoppable, spiralling at an exponential rate with new breakthrough almost everyday. In one area, social media has positively evolved into a platform for information and knowledge sharing among people whom eagerly willing and at times competing in sharing knowledge and experiences within these knowledge seeking audiences. Attractive attributes such as photo, audio and video have developed a new culture of sharing knowledge and experience into something very pleasant and satisfying. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to review previous research papers related to knowledge sharing in virtual communities. Seven research papers were selected to be reviewed based on its elements, methods and findings used by these researchers. There were several outcome differences that can be deduced from these papers. Most of the papers focus on attitudes, knowledge sharing, technologies intention to use, community participation, satisfaction level, identification, trust, culture sharing and knowledge content. No doubt that sharing information is important in disseminating information to people, but the easiness of sharing and obtaining information and experience from one’s own fingertip has upwardly propelled our living standards.

1. Introduction

Sharing of useful knowledge, informations and ideas comprises load of advantages and undeniably becoming most favourable culture, thus it is very recommended to be practiced. This is because knowledge sharing eliminates miscommunication, improve understanding of doing things, and etc. It reduces production cycles, improves customer service quality, increases cooperation between departments and consolidates relationship within partners which then may contributes to organization’s functionality and efficiency [1]. Thus, all workforces in every level should contribute, participate and share informations to promote the success of any organization [2].

ICT (Information and Communication Technology) was crowned as the king of fundamental in exchanging knowledge, informations and experiences among professionals with many advantages. In comparison to the traditional knowledge sharing methods, current ICT platforms can augment sharing knowledge by minimizing the time and space barriers between knowledgeable individuals thus improving access to information on knowledge [3].

Virtual knowledge communities is a term for these knowledgable societies whom share their knowledge through technology related medium such as electronic bulletin boards, electronic forums, emails, and others [4]. Thus, knowledge and informations are not only received via these ICTs platform, but people among communities also get to interact to these informations and knowledge shared [4].
Virtual community is a pool of talented individuals who get together to share a similar passion and interest with the purpose of obtaining new tricks, exchange ideas and spreading knowledge, informations and experiences among its members. Members may or may not interact willingly. Both academics and practitioners are studying the criteria that motivate knowledge sharing behaviour in virtual communities in order to stimulate knowledge sharing among online communities [5].

2. Literature Review

2.1. Knowledge sharing

Knowledge is the most important element in creating a competitive advantage and at the same time valuable to any organization. [6] stated that most of the authors of publication in the field of management found that knowledge is a valuable asset in any organization. Knowledge sharing is a typical process which included in knowledge management. Knowledge sharing involves the process of exchanging knowledge, ideas and experiences from individual to another individual, groups or organizations [7]. Process involved in knowledge sharing is depending on the purpose of sharing, for instance, knowledge sharing in research universities is depending on the effectiveness of its on-going research collaboration [8]. Value of these knowledge could possibly increases when it is shared with others [9]. The main focus is not only on the importance of this added value when a knowledge is shared, but also in creating a new value to the knowledge itself.

Nowadays, changes in the process of sharing knowledge itself can be seen through the vast transformation of technology. An expanding development in the utilization of web-based social networking facilitates how the knowledge sharing can be done. According to [10], virtual space uses media as an instrument to create support for knowledge sharing activities among individuals, communities and societies. This utilization of social media platforms offers more open doors for instant knowledge transfer between individuals with different topographical territories such as through search engines or databases [11]. Thus, [11] suggested that astound acceptance of social media as a knowledge sharing device spreading over various settings which involves work tasks, cultures or even customers has accomplished huge consideration in the industry and among academic scholars. The exchange of informations or knowledge through social media tools encourages productive information flow within the teams.

However, [3] explained about how ICT relates to the factors that influence knowledge workers in knowledge sharing. The research revealed that the role of ICT for knowledge sharing is related to the motivation of knowledge sharing and not only to maintenance factors.

2.2. Knowledge sharing and virtual community

According to [5], knowledge gain from community-related knowledge sharing has both quantity and quality. Individuals' quantity of knowledge gain increased but may not knowledge quality as social interaction ties, reciprocity, and identification increased. Moreover, positive and strong effects on trust are built from the norm of reciprocity and identification exerted. There are six practices which can be used to help sustain in knowledge sharing within virtual community: i) encourage existing or new online communities such as non-competitive environment, ii) practice of self-selection, iii) validation of one’s practice with others who share a similar working situation, iv) gain better understanding of current knowledge and best practices in the field, v) the role of the listserv moderator, and vi) asynchronous nature of the online communication medium [12]. In addition, not only depending solely on members’ knowledge sharing, but also administrators’ managing strategies of the virtual communities, develop and maintain a successful virtual communities [5].

Through explicit semantics, it is feasible to create conceptual connections around external and internal knowledge. Connections that were created to support virtual communities knowledge exchange can be applied to internal organizational knowledge, and used as a platform to external knowledge resources [13].
2.3. **ICT and Social Media platform**

ICT, internet, particularly social media is an important instrument which enables sharing knowledge, ideas and experiences easily, delightfully and enjoyably. This social media phenomenon has swept across the globe and it is a very popular knowledge sharing instrument regardless of social hierarchy creating multi-dimensional benefits to users. It attributes such as colourful photos, audios, videos, instant responses and gratifications greatly attract users to exchange knowledge in this knowledge sharing platform compared to the traditional methods. With new breakthrough in internet data transmission speed and current cellular 5G technology, access to informations and knowledge is almost instant.

Usage of ICT as a platform of exchanging and sharing knowledge among the community is important in life, for example intranets, blogs, facebook and other social networking platforms [14][15]. Thus, facebook and blogs have been considered as the most common platform used in social media technologies [15][16] for users to communicate via online, making new friends and interacting with them [16]. Facebook also is an online community with user friendly features to allow users to exchange ideas, share informations and work together within the community [16]. However, there are some dissimilarities between facebook and blogs in a way users attained knowledge and activities [17].

A study done by [18] in south-west Nigeria prefers ICT as a platform of sharing knowledge. Based on the finding revealed that majority respondents were young professionals and highly educated. In addition, fresh graduates and information technology staffs were the two groups quickly started using Web 2.0 technologies in companies [19]. Furthermore, more than 90 percent of education background of the respondents were university graduate or higher, which indicated that the communities were competent in learning [20].

Sharing culture and self-efficacy have an impact on attitudes toward continuation intention to share. It indicated that a sense of competence is required for community to participate in knowledge sharing. A community that believes in their capacity have strong desire to share their knowledge. Thus, a culture favourable to knowledge sharing is necessary to encourage positive user attitudes [21].

3. **Findings**

Table 1 shows summaries of the findings from seven research papers reviewed. These papers have been reviewed and discussed regarding information sharing through online among the community.

| No | Author (Year) | User Context (Number of Respondents) | Findings |
|----|---------------|-------------------------------------|----------|
| 1  | Liao, C. et.al (2013) | A survey of 473 questionnaires were distributed and analyzed using structural equation modelling to test the research. | Results indicated that users’ attitude toward knowledge is determined by utilitarian motivation, control belief, hedonic motivation, and contextual force. Users’ attitude, sharing culture and self-efficacy have an effect on continuation intention in knowledge sharing. |
| 2  | Wang, W. et.al (2011) | A survey data was collected from 232 wiki community members and using structural equation modelling to analyzed the data. | This research examined the concept of virtual community, knowledge sharing, and wiki apps as a novel technology for facilitating knowledge accumulation and sharing. Research revealed that there are positive influence using wiki applications for knowledge sharing, intention through the mediating effects of member interactions, community promotion and community participation. It can be concluded that community identification and community trust had no effect on knowledge sharing. |
4. Discussions

One dominant similarity between all researchers is that every single one have migrated from manual, time consuming data gathering into a friendlier data processing online base gathering [26] [23] [22] [21] and [20] all opted online questionnaire surveys. However, the researches differ in the techniques of obtaining the data.

[26] have done a research on knowledge sharing among green fashion communities online. Demographic of respondents should be explained clearly as the profile of the respondents are very important to identify each background. The authors supposed to explain the term “more educated” falls in which type of education background. However, the explanation on selected forum discussions are explained in a very clear and well manner state. In addition, it is better if the gender of each forum members discussing the topics of interest are acknowledged.

Next, [23] used email link for respondents to answer questionnaire and found that the result was in low response return rate due to the usage of the email itself. Method of respondents’ selection does not clearly affirmed in this research. The selected respondents of this research should be briefed well when using types of techniques. However, the research was explained very well. Furthermore, the research...
methodology used was similar to [22] which is by using questionnaires but [22] focused on open source software communities to obtain data.

In another research, [21] and [20] uses structural equation modelling to test the hypothesis but somewhat differs from [22] who uses SPSS software to analyzed data. The data from research done by [21] obtained through announcements in forums, Kimo knowledge group, PPT and Yahoo.

Another studies by [20] targetted interactive sharing through wiki application. The researcher and [22] applied similar Cronbach’s alpha to test the validity of the variables. Moreover, the researchers adopted the same quantitative approach with data collected through the usage of an online questionnaire survey. However, [20] conducted an interview to obtain qualitative interpretations of the sharing experience obtained by the questionnaires. A total of six interviewees were randomly selected, where three of them adopted the CC option while the remaining students adopted the read-only option.

In a nutshell, there are many benefits of online knowledge sharing. To start, online knowledge sharing promotes the effortlessness information spreading capability and information obtaining ability as it can be done from within one’s finger tip. Another benefit is the competency of the attained information, which is normally in a easy-to-understand material such as e-book. Other than that is the instantaneous means of information obtained, where this information is shared within seconds to others without any constraints. Next, is the size of the audience, where online knowledge sharing can be shared to quite a large audience because of the number of online community nowadays is huge with multiple and different background cultures thus resulting in a more credible information gained.

5. Conclusions

Sharing of knowledge, informations, ideas and experiences is essential to all human being as it may close knit community or people who in physical close contact only. But after the existence of internet, a new category of community has emerged, that is, virtual community consists of a pool of variety of people not restricted to the same country, yet extend beyond the country border.

The above findings indicated that research on virtual community lead to user’s attitude towards knowledge sharing which focus on several factors: knowledge sharing on pre-purchase decision making, technology intention to use, community participation satisfaction level, identification, trust, culture sharing and knowledge content. It can be concluded that virtual community is very important to people with similar passion and interest regardless of nationality, where these people can get together to share knowledge and experiences. Informations and knowledge gain from all around the world can be discussed real time to determine its accuracy and effectiveness.

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