A Model Construction for Investigating the Impact of Enterprise Social Media Affordances on Employees' Perceived Creativity

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Abstract: Enterprise social media (ESM) is increasingly applied in modern enterprises to promote knowledge sharing and social intereactions among employees, and has an important potential for enhancing employees' creativity. However, it is still unclear whether ESM can help boost employee creativity, and the technical design factors that cast ESM as a creativity support system needs investigation. To fill this research gap, this study constracts a research model based on the affordance lens to examine the influences of association and visibility affordances of ESM on employees' perception of creativity. The moderating role of job autonomy in the relationship between ESM affordances and employees' perceived creativity is further explored. Conclusions and implications of this study will be discussed.

Keywords: enterprise social media, creativity support system, affordance, job autonomy

1. INTRODUCTION

Creativity support systems (CSS) have attracted much attention in organizational practice and academic research due to the important value for employee innovation and subsequent organizational competitive advantage [1]. As an emerging communication and collaboration tool based on Web 2.0 technology, Enterprise social media (ESM) plays an important role in promoting employee performance, knowledge sharing and organizational learning [2], and has the potential for stimulating creative thinking and new perspectives. However, whether ESM can help boost employee creativity and act as a CSS still needs to be explored.

Affordance provides an alternative perspective for social media research by taking into account both technical capabilities and user goals. Scholars have focused on different affordances in existing research, such as visibility, editability, persistence, association, and searchability [3]. Among these affordances, visibility and association are closely related to creativity. Visibility can improve employees' understanding of the organizational environment [4], make communication and social network more transparent, reduce knowledge stickiness, and promote knowledge interaction and collaboration among employees. Association helps to enrich employees' social networks and social capital, break down hierarchical constraints within the organization, expose employees to different sources of knowledge, gain different ideas, opinions and perspectives, and thus accelerate the creative process [5]. Therefore, this study focuses on the effect of the visibility and association affordances of ESM on employees' perceived creativity.

As an important situational condition, job characteristic has an important impact on employees' creativity by influencing their work motivation. In the CSS literature, the interaction between job characteristics and technical factors on employee creativity has not received much attention. Among the five dimensions of job characteristics, job autonomy means that employees have more control over employees in their work, which enables employees to actively manage the work environment to get more returns [6]. Therefore, we consider that the job autonomy will affect employees' motivation to utilize ESM affordances for innovation. Based on the

above, this study aims to address the following two research questions: (1) Do the visibility and association affordances of ESM affect employees' perceived creativity? (2) Does job autonomy have a moderating effect on the relationship between ESM affordances and employees' perceived creativity?

2.   RESEARCH METHOD

An online questionnaire survey targeting at the full-time employees who use Dingtalk was conducted to test the effectiveness of the research model. The measurement items for each variable were based on the existing literature.

3.   DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study can enrich relevant academic research and provide guidance for enterprise practice. In terms of theoretical contributions, this study takes job autonomy as a situational condition to explore the influence of ESM affordances on employees' perceived creativity, and examines whether ESM can act as a CSS, which can further enrich research on CSS. This study also adopts the perspective of affordances and comprehensively considers technical capabilities and user intentions to explore the influences brought by ESM.

With regard to practical contributions, this study provides guidance for employees to make use of the visibility and association affordances of ESM for innovation. This study also provides guidance for designers to consider whether it is necessary to increase the visibility and association affordances of ESM. Finally, by exploring the moderating effect of job autonomy, this study helps managers consider entrusting authority or tasks to capable co-workers or subordinates, so as to motivate them to innovate with ESM affordances.

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