Driving the Use of Enterprise Social Media at Work:
A Framework for Employees' Adoption

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Abstract

More and more organizations are using enterprise social media (ESM) to improve the efficiency of communication and collaboration. Although many studies have tried to investigate employees' adoption of this technology, most only provide limited insights and fail to capture the differences between ESM and other information systems used in organizations. In this article, we introduce a framework for enterprise social media adoption at the individual level. Our framework is based on the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) and enterprise social media affordances. It is necessary to divide employees' usage behavior into three types: not use, contribute, and lurk. We propose that the affordances initiate new types of factors that drive the three types of employees' usage behavior differently.

1. Introduction

Organizations have growing interests in deploying social media technology for internal use [33]. This technology, referred as enterprise social media (ESM), is defined as "web-based platforms that allow workers to (1) communicate messages with specific coworkers or broadcast messages to everyone in the organization; (2) explicitly indicate or implicitly reveal particular coworkers as communication partners; (3) post, edit, and sort text and files linked to themselves or others; and (4) view the messages, connections, text, and files communicated, posted, edited and sorted by anyone else in the organization at any time of their choosing" [38]. It is used to achieve effective collaboration, information transfer, knowledge management, and active employee innovation and to facilitate other informal, unstructured, or spontaneous activities [24].

Adopting this technology is the first step to capture its potential benefits. Many studies have largely focused on the factors promoting employees' behavior of using or not using ESM, including employees' expectations for performance improvement (e.g., [42]), social influence (e.g., [7]), facilitating conditions (e.g., [1]), and some individual factors (e.g., [35]). A few of them indicate that it is necessary to explore different factors that drive employees to contribute or lurk in the system (e.g., [33]).

These studies provide several predictive factors of employees' adoption of ESM. However, their way of analyzing this issue uses previous technology acceptance models with little modification and limits our understanding of the special issues relating to ESM adoption. Many information technologies whose adoption issues have been tested with theories, like TAM or UTAUT, are task-oriented, whereas ESM is mainly used for handling communication and collaboration issues [24]. Moreover, employees have experience of using ESM in daily life, while they do not have that for most of other technologies used in organizations. The existing theories of technology adoption do not capture this distinctiveness of ESM, and thus cannot fully explain employees' adoption of ESM.

The different characteristics of ESM call for adaptation of existing technology acceptance theories. To address this need, our study is mainly underpinned by the following question: With ESM affordances and employees' previous experience, is there some new factors affecting employees' adoption of ESM?

In this study, we propose a framework for ESM adoption at the individual level. Based on the suggestions of some previous research (e.g., [11]), we use acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) as the basis to develop the new framework. Our framework extends UTAUT mainly on two aspects: employees' behavior of using ESM and new types of factors influencing their behaviors. This study mainly

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contributes to two streams of literature, i.e., the literature on technology adoption theory and that about ESM use. It guides exploring new factors influencing employees' adoption of ESM.

This paper is organized as follows: We first introduce the existing research on ESM adoption and their problems in section 2. Then, in section 3, we explain the need for adapting existing technology adoption theory, UTAUT, and show the aspects that it can be extended. We introduce our framework for ESM adoption in section 4 and indicate theoretical implication in section 5. Section 6 concludes this study.

2. Enterprise social media adoption

2.1 Research on enterprise social media adoption

Many studies analyze the factors promoting employees' behavior of using ESM. Most of them focus on employees' intention on whether to use it or not (e.g., [10]). However, different factors impact employees' intention to contribute or lurk differently [33].

The antecedents that have been investigated mainly belongs to four types, i.e., employees' expectations for performance improvement, social influence, facilitating conditions, and individual factors. For instance, researchers found that perceived usefulness [1], the relative advantage [28] or some other technological related factors contributing to the improvement of employees' intention to use ESM at work. Besides, subjective norms [42] or perceived critical mass [17] are important social influence factors. Besides, facilitating conditions (e.g., training, or rules of conduct) also act as predictors of employees' intention to use ESM [16].

2.2 Problems remaining unsolved

The previous studies explore ESM adoption from the perspective of analyzing the adoption of other IS used in organizations before (e.g., OA, EPR, DSS, and portal). Nevertheless, ESM is different from other IS a lot. By taking an affordance perspective, we compare the differences between ESM and other information systems used in organizations. The distinct affordances initiate unique usage behaviors and processes of information transfer and collaboration in organizations, which indicates the insufficiency of our current understanding of ESM adoption.

2.2.1. Enterprise social media affordance. Affordance refers to "actual and perceived properties

of the thing, primarily those fundamental properties that determine just how the thing could possibly by used" [31]. Affordances of information technologies are action possibilities that users can potentially do through the technology ([25],[26]). The study of [38] proposes four affordances of ESM: visibility, editability, persistence, and association (see Table 1). Some studies indicate another affordance, i.e., openness ([22], [30]). These affordances provide the potential for organizations to get employees involved in a wide range of communications, decision processes and other management issues. For example, employees can post their comments on the organization's marketing plan. The organization will get advice more widely. Every employee has a chance to affect the organizations' decisions. Additionally, we suggest that ESM has the affordance of ubiquitous which means that ESM facilitates employees to get their job done overcoming the restriction of time, space and facilities [39]. Because ESM is web-based, employees can use it with accounts and passwords through various equipment, such as PC, tablet, or even mobile phone. They can use ESM no matter when no matter where they are (in the office or not) and no matter what equipment they use. Therefore, employees can focus more on their work, rather than how to get access to the information system.

Table 1. Enterprise social media affordance

Affordance	Definition	Literature
Visibility	Employees will get easy access to various types of information, such as announcement, knowledge, coworkers' behavior, and communication networks, which is previously invisible.	[8],[18], [38], [40]
Editability	Employees can craft and recraft the contents (e.g., chat, comment and document) at any time before they sent them.	[8],[18], [38]
Persistence	All information in the system remains "the same form as the original display" after the employees who create or revise it finished their presentation.	[8],[18], [38]
Association	The connections among employees, the connections between employees and contents and that among contents are facilitated.	[8],[18], [38]
Openness	Employees can get involved in a wide range of communications, decision	[22], [30]

	processes and other management issues.	
Ubiquitous	Employees to get their job done overcoming the restriction of time, space, and equipment.	

2.2.2. Differences between enterprise social media and other information systems in organizations.

We try to find whether ESM differs from other information systems used in organizations on the affordances (i.e. visibility, editability, persistence, association, openness and ubiquitous). To do so, we read the literature comparing enterprise social media and other types of information systems. As ESM has been viewed as an information technology for efficiency improvement [13], communication [24] and knowledge sharing [20], we include the work on comparing the affordances of ESM with that of task-oriented systems (e.g., OA, ERP), computer-mediated communication (CMC), and knowledge management systems (KMS) or the work studying the affordances of task-oriented systems, CMC and KMS.

Table 2 shows the differences in affordances between ESM and the other three types of information systems. In this table, we show whether the four types of information systems (i.e. ESM, task-oriented systems, CMC and KMS) has each of the six affordances we illustrate in this study. ESM has all of the six affordances, while the other three types of information systems do not.

It is worth noting that, although some affordances (i.e. visibility and ubiquitous) are facilitated by each of the four types of information systems, the systems enable a certain affordance to varying degrees. For example, all of the four types of information systems support visibility affordance, the degree of visibility of task-oriented systems can be rather low. Employees have the potential to view others' knowledge, preferences and communication networks in ESM [38], while they can only view information of their own tasks, documents or profiles in task-oriented systems. Based on the work of [38], ESM has a high distribution of all the affordances. Nevertheless, CMC enables these affordances at relatively lower level.

Table 2. Differences in affordance between ESM and other information systems

Affordance	ESM	Task-oriented system	CMC	KMS
Visibility	√	√	√	√
Editability	√	×	√	√
Persistence	√	√	×	√
Association	√	×	√	√
Openness	√	×	√	×
Ubiquitous	√	√	√	√

Based on the above comparison between the affordances of ESM and those of the other three types of information systems, we propose that ESM facilitate distinct usage behavior and processes in organizations. First, ESM is more than a task-oriented system [37]. ESM facilitates employees to communicate with coworkers or associate with others and information which may be not directly related to one's work. Second, it supports the broad and active participation of all employees. The editability affordance enables the employees to post content autonomously in ESM. Third, different from task-oriented systems, CMC and KMS, ESM supports not just a top-down or one-to-many information transfer process, but more a many-to-many information transfer process. In some information systems, especially the task-oriented ones (like OA or ERP), the information transfer process is somewhat predefined. Nevertheless, in ESM, employees can freely forward messages to one or many. The information transfer process usually emerges by itself. Forth, employees have experience of using social media in daily life, which is a completely different context from working environment. Their way of using social media outside work settings will affect how they perceive ESM [37]. All in all, different from task-oriented systems, CMC and KMS, the distinct affordances of ESM enable new usage behavior, i.e. contributing contents by every employee who uses the information system, and it is through this way that employees get the potential to craft the ESM used in organizations.

2.2.3. The necessity to reexamine adoption theory.

The existing literature cannot fully explain employees' adoption of ESM because they fail to capture its difference from other IS. First, employees have new usage behaviors, i.e. contribute contents or not in ESM. Second, it is necessary to depict ESM software from a perspective integrating affordances and contents created in the system.

(1) Employees' behavior of using enterprise social media

In line with the literature on online communities, we identify three types of employees' usage behavior of ESM, i.e., not using it, contributing and lurking in the system. Employees with contributing behavior actively add information, knowledge or initiate communications or collaboration with coworkers. On the contrary, lurkers just acquire information, knowledge or passively respond to coworkers. In this study, we refer to everything input by employees

(including messages posted by them, chatting among employees, documents uploaded by them, forwarding messages or other interaction activities) as employee-generated content.

The behavior of contributing is very important for successfully eventual adoption of ESM. One of the important objectives of ESM is to elicit employees' learning and collaboration [24]. This cannot be achieved without employees' participation. For example, if all employees are lurkers, there will be no information or knowledge in ESM. Employees will find no information or knowledge to learn, and no one to collaborate. Eventually, they will quit.
(2) New forces driving enterprise social media adoption

Employees' perception of using a system is a key predictor of their behavior of adopting it [9]. We propose that both ESM affordances and the contents in it will play a role.

The affordances of ESM makes it different from other IS used in organizations before [38]. As mentioned before, affordance indicates actual and perceived properties of the thing that determine the particular ways in which actors perceive and, subsequently, use the system ([26], [38]). ESM affordances will affect employees' perception of how it can be used in the workplace.

Moreover, it is the content that defines what the system is used for. For instance, if there are only regular work reports submitted by employees to superiors, the system can be viewed as one for supporting organizational routine. If the content in ESM is mainly suggestions for organizational management issues, the system is one for innovation.

To sum up, whether and how these differences affect employees' usage behavior of ESM is limited explored. The differences between ESM and other IS initiate a need to reexamining the theories of information technology adoption.

3. Adapting adoption theory for enterprise social media

We develop our new framework for ESM adoption based on the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT), a widely used theory of IS adoption. We first show why UTAUT can be used as a basis and then explain how we try to extend it.

3.1 UTAUT

Some researchers have synthesized various competing models of IS adoption (e.g., technology acceptance model) and developed UTAUT [41]. They identified that four key factors predicting people's intention to use or actual use of information technology, are performance expectancy, effort expectancy and social influence affected people's intention to use a system, and people's usage intention and facilitating conditions were predictive for their actual use of a system. UTAUT has repeatedly been proved to be useful in predicting the adoption or actual use of various types of IS used in organizations, such as health information technology [14] and wireless LAN technology [2], which are different from ESM.

For social media acceptance, UTAUT is suggested as a good starting point [11]. Some of the key factors in UTAUT are found effective predictors, such as performance expectancy and social influence [11]. Nevertheless, using UTAUT to explain ESM adoption is not without limitation. It does not capture the distinctive characteristics of ESM mentioned above, i.e., new employees' usage behavior and distinctive affordances. Whether and what effects these two aspects will bring about remain unknown. We propose that incorporating the distinctiveness of ESM will help us deepen our understanding of its adoption.

3.2 Extending UTAUT

To extend UTAUT model for ESM adoption, we reviewed the literature on user behavior in online community and social media for public use. We propose that, to investigate ESM adoption, it is necessary to integrate findings of these three fields.

After investigating the antecedents resulting in different usage behaviors (i.e. contributing, lurking and not using a system), five types of factors can be initiated by the affordances and contents of ESM and employees' past experience of using social media to influence employees' acceptance of ESM, i.e., perceived usefulness, effort expectancy, use validation, social influence and facilitating conditions.

Table 3 presents our definition of each factor based on relative previous studies in other contexts. The "Literature" column shows the study which we use as our basis to redefine the constructs. As Table 3 shows, we propose that ESM facilitates two types of perceived usefulness to employees' work, i.e., perceived instrumental usefulness and perceived psychological usefulness. Besides, the ease of using enterprise social media also consists of two parts, i.e., ease of use and easy access.

Table 3. Factors influencing ESM adoption

Factors	Definition	Literature
Perceived	Employees' perception of	[41]

usefulness	the benefits they can get by using ESM.	
Perceived instrumental usefulness	The extent to which employees perceive ESM help them acquire information, knowledge, improve capabilities and achieve better performance, that is, performance usefulness, information/knowledge usefulness, and capability usefulness.	[5], [21], [41]
Perceived psychological usefulness	The extent to which employees think that their psychological needs are satisfied by using ESM.	[19], [43]
Effort expectancy	The degree of ease associated with using the systems	[41]
Ease of use	The extent of effort employees have to pay when using the ESM features to get their job done	[41]
Easy access	The extent to which employees have to care about when, where and with what equipment to use ESM	
Use validation	To what extent that employees think that social media match with the work environment.	[37]
Social influence	The degree to which an employee perceives that others in the workplace think he/she should contribute in ESM (referred as social influence of contribution) or lurk in it (referred as social influence of lurking).	[41]
Facilitating conditions	The degree to which an individual believes that an organizational and technical infrastructure exists to support the use of ESM.	[41]

4. Framework for employees' adoption of enterprise social media

Five types of factors (i.e., perceived usefulness, effort expectancy, use validation, social influence and facilitating conditions) have been identified to influence employees' acceptance of ESM. In the following sections, we will show how these factors are facilitated by ESM affordances and content in ESM and employees' previous experience, and then discuss our expectation on their relationship with employees' behavior of using ESM.

4.1 ESM affordances, employees' past experience, and adoption behavior

4.1.1. Perceived usefulness.
(1) Perceived instrumental usefulness

Improving performance is one important reason for employees to use information systems at work [41]. So it is when they use ESM (e.g., [42]). The affordances of association and ubiquitous improve the efficiency of communication and collaboration, which saves employees' time and energy. Then they can be more focused on their work.

Besides, to do one's work efficiently and effectively, employees need to acquire rich information, relevant knowledge and capabilities (Innovation, collaboration, etc.) [5], which can be supported by ESM through the mechanism of social learning [21]. Social learning refers to that people can learn in a social context. They can learn through observation or direct instruction [4]. We propose that the ESM affordances facilitate employees' learning process, while the content in ESMs define what they can learn.

ESM support social learning process through mainly two of its affordances, that is, visibility and association. First, the affordance of visibility enables employees to provide easy and timely access to information or knowledge others possess. The contents of ESM, such as posts, comments, and pictures, may carry information, opinions, knowledge and so forth. Every authorized employee can see the content [38]. Any status update, new messages or activities from coworkers can be immediately accessed because employees can follow them in ESM as they do on social media used in daily life. Furthermore, the affordance of visibility enables employees to improve capabilities by observing others' behaviors. For instance, the process coworkers tackle problems, how they fulfill tasks or the process of how they collaborate with others are all recorded and presented in ESM. Employees can learn from others' experience or imitate others' behaviors to improve their skills [3]. Second, the affordance of association contributes to the heterogeneity of employees' observed information or knowledge. In ESM, employees can maintain their social connections or build new connections with their coworkers. Different people usually have different information or knowledge. Therefore, the employees who can connect with more people have higher chance to get rich information.

Because of the instrumental usefulness, ESM can bring about, employees with high perceived

instrumental usefulness will be more likely to adopt it in the workplace. However, the instrumental usefulness does not necessarily prompt their contribution behavior. Viewing the information, knowledge or observing others behaviors in ESM cost them little; while posting contents usually cost their time and energy a lot [12]. To save effort, they may be more willing to lurk. Therefore, we propose that perceived instrumental usefulness would positively affect employees' lurking behavior.

Proposition 1: ESM visibility affordance is positively related with information/knowledge usefulness (a) and capability usefulness (b).

Proposition 2: ESM association affordance is positively related with information/knowledge usefulness.

Proposition 3: Users' perceived instrumental usefulness is positively related with their lurking behavior, while it has no effect on contributing behavior.

(2) Perceived psychological usefulness

Previous studies show that employees have a psychological need at work (e.g., [19]). Satisfying these needs will bring positive effects (e.g., good performance, task motivation, psychological adjustment at work) [31].

Social media has the potential to fulfill employees' psychological need [14]. We propose that mainly two affordances play a role, i.e., editability and association. For instance, editability affordance enables every employee to post contents, ESM may get autonomy to do their job and thus satisfy employees' autonomy need. With the help of association affordance, employees can feel connected with others.

The psychological need is an important type of factors which drives users' behavior of using social media or participating online community (e.g., [19]). Some of them are associated with contributing behavior, such as need for competence and need for autonomy [43]. We propose that employees' contributing behavior and lurking behavior may be related with different psychological needs.

Proposition 4: ESM editability affordance is positively related with the satisfaction of users' need for autonomy.

Proposition 5: ESM association affordance is positively related with the satisfaction of users' need for connectedness.

Proposition 6: The satisfaction of users' need for autonomy is positively related with their contributing behavior (a) and lurking behavior (b).

Proposition 7: The satisfaction of users' need for connectedness is positively related with their contributing behavior (a) and lurking behavior (b).

4.1.2. Effort expectancy. Ease of use indicates whether employees think that it takes little effort to use the ESM features to get their job done. Employees' previous experience of using social media in daily life will positively affect ease of use. They have known well what features ESM has and how to use the features, which enable them to use ESM without learning.

As enterprise social media can be used by employees no matter when, where and with what equipment, employees will perceive that the system is easily accessed. Easy access is facilitated by the affordance of ubiquitous. With the help of this affordance, employees can use ESM with little cost. They do not have to care about when, where and with what equipment to use ESM.

Both ease of use and easy access will positively affect employees' lurking behavior. Nevertheless, they may have little effect on their contributing behavior. The cost associated with contributing behavior mainly comes from the hardiness to create contents [12]. This is determined by one's knowledge and capability, and cannot be decreased by the ease of use and easy access.

Proposition 8: Users' past experience of using social media is positively related with ease of use.

Proposition 9: ESM ubiquitous affordance is positively related with easy access.

Proposition 10: Ease of use is positively related with lurking behavior, while it has no effect on contributing behavior.

Proposition 11: Easy access is positively related with lurking behavior, while it has no effect on contributing behavior.

4.1.3. Use validation. By using social media in daily life, employees can form their perception of what social media is used for [37]. We propose that three aspects of social media use in daily life will affect their perception, i.e., private purpose use, hedonic purpose use, and social purpose use. First, people use social media in daily life for private purposes, such as sharing funny stories in personal life or contact with intimate friends [23]. Second, using social media is associated with hedonic activities. People sometimes use it to kill time. Third, people use it to maintain their social connections with others. Having previous experience will have a negative effect on use validation. Private purpose use, hedonic purpose use, and social purpose are contradictory to the norms in organizations. For instance, employees may think that social media is used to contact close friends. They may feel that they cannot become friends with bosses [37].

We propose that use validation is positively related to lurking behaviors of employees. If they think it is not appropriate to use social media in the workplace,

they will be less likely to use it for fear of violating organization norms.

Proposition 12: Users' past experience is negatively related with use validation.

Proposition 13: Use validation is positively related with lurking behavior, while it has no effect on contributing behavior.

4.1.4. Social influence. Social influence can be facilitated by the affordances of association and visibility. Researchers indicate that the structure of social connections among employees and the contents flowing through exerts a predictable influence on their behavior of using technology (e.g., [36]). The affordance of association support connection establishment and maintaining, while the affordance of visibility makes the structures of connections and the contents highly visible to employees in organizations [38]. However, ESM may also hinder social influence. The affordances of association and visibility can promote the spread of negative information of not using ESM. For example, if most coworkers do not use ESM or post messages expressing a negative attitude toward ESM, an employee will probably think that others do not want him/her to use it when collaborating with them.

Employees tend to conform to norms in the workplace [29], learn from others' behavior [6] or have to obey the rules of superiors [34]. Therefore, social influence of contribution and that of lurking will positively affect employees' behavior of contributing and lurking respectively.

Proposition 14: Social influence is positively related with contributing behavior (a) and lurking behavior (b).

4.1.5. Facilitating conditions. Facilitating conditions have been found important in promoting the adoption of various types of IS (e.g., [16], [44]). For promoting ESM adoption, facilitating conditions are still necessary. First, employees need guidance on posting messages. Employees may be concerned that what they post in ESM may conflict with organization norms, leak information to unauthorized people or spread around negative emotions. Employees may be more willing to contribute more if organizations have clear guidance of posting. Second, they need support to conduct new business processes. Using ESM may change the way people doing work or collaborating with others [24]. Without support from authority, implementation of new ways of working will fail within the organizations. Therefore, facilitating conditions will be positively related to employees' behavior of using ESM (i.e., contributing or lurking).

Proposition 15: Facilitating conditions is positively related with contributing behavior (a) and lurking behavior (b).

4.2 Content in ESM and employees' adoption behavior

As aforementioned, the content in EMS defines what the system is used for. Content in ESM decides whether certain affordances can facilitate the mechanisms which promote or hinder employees' acceptance of ESM. For example, if an organization just uses ESM as a system to make announcements, not for knowledge sharing or prompting employees to make suggestions, employees can only find some useful information in the system. In this case, for the "perceived usefulness" type of factors, only the information usefulness factor can be facilitated by ESM. In a nutshell, it is the combination of ESM affordances and content in it decides which factors have an influence on employees' behavior of contributing, lurking or not using the system.

4.3 The framework for employees' enterprise social media adoption

The following figure depicts our research framework.
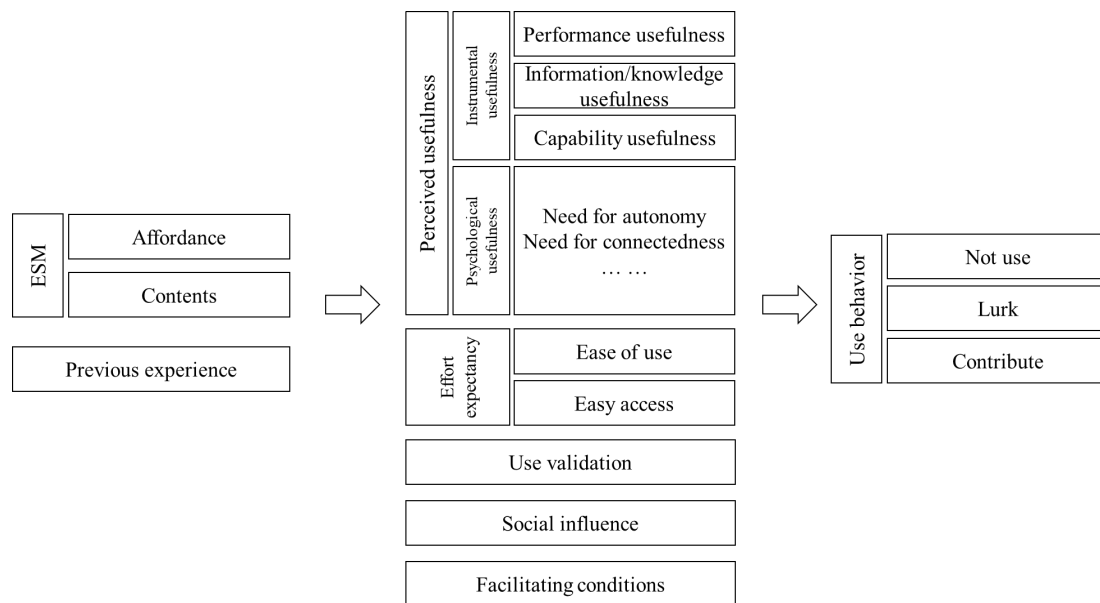
Figure 1. The framework of employees' enterprise social media adoption

5. Theoretical implication

This study mainly contributes to the literature on ESM adoption by proposing a new framework. Previous studies offer limited insights into employees' acceptance of enterprise social media. They are mainly based on traditional technology acceptance theory (e.g., TAM, UTAUT). Few of them focus on the potential effects of its new affordances different from other information systems used in the organization. We propose that UTAUT model should be adapted to capture the distinctiveness of ESM. Our way of analyzing the antecedents based on ESM affordances and employees' previous experience can also guide future study on exploring more possible factors.

Our framework also provides some guidance for future research on enterprise social media adoption. Based on our framework, researchers can identify what factors will affect the adoption behavior of a certain ESM. They should pay attention to what ESM is used for in an organization when they explore antecedents of employees' adoption behavior. Besides, when comparing different adoption models, researchers should pay attention to whether ESMs are used in the same way in different contexts.

For future research, researchers can explore new driving forces in case that ESM keeps evolving and gains new affordances or different effects of these driving forces on employees' contributing behavior or lurking behavior.

6. Conclusion

In this study, we extend UTAUT and develop a framework for ESM adoption at the individual level. This framework distinguishes three types of employees' adoption behavior, and propose new antecedents of them. We hope this framework can guide future research on investigating ESM adoption.

Acknowledgments

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