

Employee Competitiveness and its Impact on
Enterprise Social Media Knowledge Sharing
Behaviour

Masterarbeit

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1 Introduction

Enterprise social networks¹ have been adopted by most of the larger companies around the globe. Especially companies with high numbers of employees in multiple facilities use enterprise social networks to ease the communication of information and knowledge among employees. Besides following a trend of social media integration in the business environment, enterprise social networks (ESN) provide extensive opportunities in the field of knowledge management. In the age of digitalization and globalization a fast, easy and reliable way of communicating information and knowledge is essential for the success of companies. While traditional intranets served this purpose by providing unidirectional information and knowledge flows, ESN can provide multidirectional information flows across the whole organization. These multidirectional flows result from sharing user-generated content in the enterprise social network environment. This content is hence generated and shared by employees. The quality and quantity of this knowledge sharing is therefore determined by the employees' knowledge sharing behaviour.

Menard and Sharma (2017) found an influence of competition on the usage behaviour of public social networks. Public social networks and enterprise social networks are very similar in functions, look and feel. Competitiveness is therefore a potential factor for the employees' behaviour in enterprise social networks too. This potential influence of competitiveness on the employee's knowledge sharing behaviour in ESN is therefore the subject of this thesis.

1.1 Motivation

After a first literature review, employee competitiveness seems to lack prior research towards the field of knowledge sharing behaviour in enterprise social networks. Neither an affirmation of an impact of employee competitiveness on knowledge sharing behaviour nor a denial of the relation is found in literature. Therefore, the target of the thesis is set on researching a possible impact of employee competitiveness on knowledge sharing behaviour and on investigating why employee competitiveness seems to be not yet considered as a factor of knowledge sharing behaviour. Hence, the first research question is:

¹ Enterprise social networks will be differentiated to enterprise social media in section 2.5. This thesis will be limited to enterprise social networks besides the title.

RQ1: “Is Employee Competitiveness influencing the Knowledge Sharing Behaviour in Enterprise Social Networks?”

A possible assumption regarding the lack of research in this specific relation is that prior research already covered the influence of competitiveness with factors towards KSB in ESM that include employee competitiveness in some form. This was regarded as a plausible consideration because many pre-researched factors seemed to relate to competitiveness in some form. Accordingly, the second research question is:

RQ2: “Is Employee Competitiveness already represented by pre-researched factors of Knowledge Sharing Behaviour in Enterprise Social Networks?”

1.2 Research Design

To answer RQ1 and RQ2 it is necessary to examine at first, in chapter 2, the fields of competition, employee competitiveness in organizations and knowledge sharing behaviour in ESN. For this purpose, a first model of competitiveness is derived from literature which gives further insights into the factors of competitiveness.

The next step in chapter 3 is to model the two research subjects. The first subject to model is the impact of employee competitiveness on knowledge sharing behaviour in ESN, to later enable validation of this impact. For this purpose, constructs of employee competitiveness and knowledge sharing behaviour are derived from literature. These constructs are then connected with hypotheses about possible impacts on knowledge sharing behaviour. The result of this process is a structural model that after validation helps answering RQ1.

The second subject to model is the connection of employee competitiveness to prior researched factors of knowledge sharing behaviour. To achieve this, constructs of factors towards knowledge sharing behaviour are collected from prior literature by searching for possible connections to competitiveness, using the factors of competitiveness in the model of competitiveness in section 2.1. These factors of knowledge sharing behaviour with possible connections to competitiveness, are then combined with the derived constructs of employee competitiveness. The result of this process is a structural model that after validation will answer RQ2.

To test both models, a survey is developed and conducted in chapter 4. For the survey, the items of the constructs of both models are combined.

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The collected data of the survey is then analysed in chapter 5 where the hypotheses are tested and the implications for the models are derived. The hypotheses between employee competitiveness and knowledge sharing behaviour are characterized by a clear directional impact and hence tested using linear regression. In contrast, the hypotheses between pre-researched factors of KSB and employee competitiveness do not implicate a directional character and are therefore stated and tested using correlations.

The results will be discussed in chapter 6, where a few additional findings from the data will be discussed too.

The thesis then will finish with a conclusion in chapter 7.

7 Conclusion

RQ2 and the corresponding research model were derived from the theoretical background of competitiveness and literature review and used to look for connections of pre-researched factors referring to knowledge sharing behaviour. Only a connection of some aspects of employee competitiveness was found. Hence, it was concluded that employee competitiveness was not completely represented by pre-researched factors of knowledge sharing behaviour in ESN.

After constructing and testing research model A and the hypotheses, RQ1 could be answered. Here, a rejection of a detectable and direct impact of both examined aspects of employee competitiveness on knowledge sharing behaviour in ESN was concluded. In the progress of this procedure only a direct influence was taken into account. Section 6.2 additionally exposed that an indirect influence in form of a moderating effect could be still possible. This potential moderating factor was not covered by the chosen research questions and hence must be further examined in future studies.

All in all, the research allowed answering both research questions regarding the limitations discussed in chapter 6 and additionally revealed further interconnections that future research must examine.