

DOCTORAL THESIS

Examining the impact of enterprise social media on chinese employee communication: affordance actualization, technology use, and relational outcomes

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ABSTRACT

The research adopts the technological affordance approach and the theory of planned behavior (TPB) to examine the role of enterprise social media (ESM) in employee communication and its effects on employees in the context of mainland China. The research postulated that organizations can actualize affordances of ESM to influence employees' cognitive perceptions of ESM (i.e., attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control) that further affect their ESM use intention and relationships with organizations (i.e., employee-organization relationships; EORs). Using a mixed-methods approach to examine Enterprise WeChat (EWeChat), the research interviewed 36 participants to explore organizational actions of EWeChat affordance actualization and employee perceptions about EWeChat use in mainland China. An online survey with 427 mainland Chinese employees adopting EWeChat was conducted to investigate the role of ESM affordance actualization in forming the employees' intention to continuously use EWeChat, as well as in cultivating their EORs through their attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and habits of EWeChat use. Key results of the research include the following. Thirteen EWeChat affordances and means of actualization (i.e., association, control, diversity, feedback, outeraction, perpetual contact, persistence, personalization, portability, privacy, social presence, synchronicity, and visibility) for specific organizational goals were identified. The influence of EWeChat affordance actualization on employees' intention to continuously use EWeChat was mediated by their

perceived benefits and risks of EWeChat use. The utilitarian benefit, hedonic benefit, avoidance of work-life conflicts, social concerns, privacy concerns, and perceived behavioral control were positive indicators of the continuous EWeChat-use intention, while performance risk was a negative indicator. The effects of affordance actualization on EORs were partially mediated by employees' perceived utilitarian benefit and perceived professional image related to EWeChat use. The research extends the TPB to predict ESM use in Chinese workplaces. It explicates ESM affordance actualization as the interaction between ESM and organization (actor 1), and also between ESM and employees (actor 2). It also evidences that ESM can be used as a relationship cultivation tool. The research sheds light on how organizations in mainland China can effectively configure their ESM to maximize the efficacy and relational outcomes of its mobile application in employee communication.

Keywords: *Organizational communication; Internal communication effectiveness; Enterprise social media; Affordance; Theory of planned behavior; Organization-Public relationships; Employee-Organization relationships; Social networking; Chinese employees*

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