

## Chapter 47

# Influences of Organizational Culture on Knowledge Sharing in an Online Virtual Community: Interactive Effects of Trust, Communication and Leadership

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### ABSTRACT

*The present study examined the influences and interactive effects of organizational culture, including trust, communication, and leadership, on online knowledge sharing based on social exchange theory and theories of trust, communication, and leadership. Two-hundred-ninety-seven members in three online engineering virtual communities from a knowledge management platform in a company were participants for filling in questionnaires. The results revealed that trust, communication, and leadership significantly affected online knowledge sharing. Members with high levels of trust, communication, or leadership had significantly better knowledge sharing than members with medium or low levels of trust, communication, or leadership. The results also showed a significant interactive effect of trust and communication on online knowledge sharing and a significant interactive effect of leadership and communication on online knowledge sharing, but there was no significant interactive effect of trust and leadership on online knowledge sharing. No previous studies have investigated the interactive effects of trust, communication and leadership on online knowledge sharing. That research finding is a significant contribution different from previous studies. Finally, this article offers suggestions for future research, implications of this study, and limitations of this study.*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

An online virtual community is an aggregation of individuals who interact with each other through social media and can post, reply, discuss, give advice and collaborate to pursue mutual interest or goal (Porter, 2004; Wenger, White, & Smith, 2009). As information technology has evolved, virtual communities on the Internet have become a main platform for knowledge sharing (Cheung, Lee, & Lee, 2013; Huang, Chen, & Mo, 2015). By participating in online communities, an individual can engage in knowledge sharing without time and space obstacles (Baxter, 2002; Booth, 2012; Young & Tseng, 2008; Wenger et al., 2009). Botkin (2000) indicated that a successful virtual knowledge community must be maintained by members very good in online knowledge sharing. A study done by Booth (2012) showed that online virtual communities can cultivate an individual's knowledge sharing and trust. Many previous studies have argued that online virtual communities might serve the needs of members for information and knowledge sharing and also might be considered as an innovative tool for organizational knowledge sharing (Jadin, Gnambs, & Batinic, 2013; Lin, Hung, & Chen, 2009; Ridings, Gefen, & Arinze, 2002; Shan, Xin, Wang, Li, & Li, 2013; Usoro, Sharratt, Tsui, & Shekhar, 2007). Online communities can facilitate information and knowledge sharing and are hence critical for organizations (Rothwell, 2011). An online community is an important platform for sharing knowledge in an organization, and knowledge sharing is a goal for virtual communities to achieve.

Porter (2004) proposed a dual-typology of organization-sponsored and member-initiated online communities. Organization-sponsored communities are established and managed by either commercial or non-commercial organizations (i.e. the online community existing within organizations). Member-initiated communities are created and maintained by members (i.e. the online community with no corresponding organizations). Member-initiated communities facilitate either social or professional relationships among members. Organization-sponsored communities facilitate relationships not only among members (e.g., customers, employees) but also between the members and the sponsoring organization (Porter, 2004). Organization-sponsored online communities are usually derived to achieve the organization's goals and missions. Organization-sponsored online communities are employee-oriented and retained for the organizational needs, with a tendency to be less social than member-initiated online communities (Daugherty, Lee, Gangadharbatla, Kim, & Outhavong, 2005; Porter, 2004). It has been shown there are many benefits to be obtained from both the online community existing within organizations and the online community with no corresponding organizations (Kardaras, 2003). Many organizations have created their online communities within or outside the organizations to facilitate knowledge sharing and employee performance. Online communities are very important for organizations' employees to exchange ideas and information across geographical locations. It is important to understand how employees share knowledge within online communities as those communities become more prevalent.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1. Social Exchange Theory and Knowledge Sharing**

By sharing knowledge, two individuals can gain more information and experience; and if both sides continuously exchange knowledge and give feedback to others, then they will gain more information and experience (Quinn, Anderson, & Finkelstein, 1996). For an organization, this approach will build

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