

Chapter 6

Social e–Enterprise through Technological Innovations and Mobile Social Networks

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ABSTRACT

Social electronic enterprises (e-enterprises) are an important part of the global business environment, which have developed from technological innovations that have enabled businesses to create and sustain financial endeavors that have an integrated social aspect. Part of the increase of social e-enterprises has been led by mobile social networks growing in popularity as people utilize mobile communication technology to communicate with stakeholders that are part of their social network. This form of community interactivity represents a technology innovation that has a strong combined business and social potential. This has enabled mobile social networks to form part of a social e-enterprises computer mediated communication that impacts the way technology is marketed to people. The purpose of this chapter is to review the existing research on technological innovations in social e-enterprise and mobile social networks by providing a set of research propositions that can be used to understand the adoption of social technology innovations. Suggestions for future research and practical marketing implications of social technological innovations in the context of facilitating social e-enterprise through mobile social communities are also stated.

INTRODUCTION

Social enterprises have increased in significance during the current economic climate as businesses combine their financial objectives with social goals (Austin, Stevenson & Wei-Skillern, 2006).

Social electronic enterprises (e-enterprises) are businesses that utilize technology to conduct business activities that have an integrated social element. This means that the dual objective for most social e-entrepreneurs is to achieve long term financial and social sustainability in order to de-

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liver continued technological innovation (Ratten & Welp, 2011). Social e-entrepreneurship involves an entrepreneurial activity that has an embedded social purpose. The social purpose often occurs in the third social sector of not-for-profit sector in which not-for-profits develop innovative approaches to utilizing their technological resources (Austin, Stevenson & Wei-Skillern, 2006). As more not-for-profits have technical capabilities the underlying drive for social e-entrepreneurs is to create social value rather than just financial profit. The characterizing feature of social e-entrepreneurship is the creation of something new in the online context rather than a replication of existing social practices. Social e-entrepreneurship can occur through a variety of technological innovations such as mobile social networks that encourage the development of new venture creation and maintain existing business success. This paper will examine social e-enterprises by focusing on the role of mobile social networks that foster communication between individuals, businesses (both profit and not-for-profit) and government agencies on social entrepreneurial topics.

Social e-enterprises can utilize their mobile social networks as a way of building on their economic effectiveness of harnessing people to communicate ideas about their social products and innovations (Humphreys, 2010). Moreover, mobile social networks can help social e-enterprises build networks with their stakeholders by focusing on the use of technology to manage knowledge and provide new services. Mobile social networks are patterns of interconnection among users emerging from the social use of mobile devices (Lugano, 2008). Communication occurs through mobile social networks by establishing linkages between people that enables flexible connections (Balasubramanian, Peterson & Jarvenpaa, 2002). As mobile devices facilitate both formal and information communication the changing environment means that social networks develop (Varnali, Toker & Yilmaz, 2010). The development of social e-enterprises has been facilitated by the

development of communication technologies, which encouraged the acceleration of information flows as people share information and interact across temporal and geographic boundaries with their mobile phones (Ratten & Welp, 2011).

The structure of this paper is as follows. First, the literature on technological innovations is discussed with a focus on the role of mobile communications. Second, the linkages between social networks and mobile technology are examined as a way to facilitate mobile social networking. Third, the practical implications for social e-enterprises and social entrepreneurs are addressed. The paper then concludes by suggesting a number of future research avenues for social e-enterprises, which focus on technological innovation and mobile social networks.

BACKGROUND

There are a variety of theories to explain technology innovation adoption depending on the context and determinants of the adoption process. There is not one specific theory that fully explains technology innovation adoption. Instead some researchers have combined different theories with different contexts to understand adoption decisions. There are a variety of technology characteristics that influence innovation adoption including relative advantage, complexity, communicability, divisibility, cost, profitability, compatibility, social approval, trialability and observability (Tornatsky & Klein, 1982). Theories about technology innovation adoption usually include various attributes affecting the adoption process. These attributes are influenced by different contexts which form potential determinants of technology adoption (Rogers, 1995). The characteristics of an individual together with environmental factors will influence technology innovation adoption decisions.

One of the first theories to explain the adoption process of a technology is the stages model, which proposes that there are a set of steps a person

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