

THE EFFECT OF MOTIVES ON ENTERPRISE SOCIAL NETWORK USAGE

(Full Paper)

ABSTRACT

Enterprise Social Networks (ESN) have brought revolutionary changes to business organizations as they offer enormous potential to enhance collaboration, interaction, innovation, and efficiency. However, despite of these benefits many organizations have failed to encourage its employees to actively engage with ESN, making their investment decisions questionable. Therefore, this study focused on examining the motivations to use ESN. A comprehensive literature review was conducted to identify the gratifications motivating the employees to use ESN. Accordingly, information sharing, self-documentation, entertainment and social interaction were identified as the gratifications driving the employees to use ESN at work. Data were collected from 146 employees in the software industry who use ESN at work, through an online survey-based structured questionnaire and data analysis was performed using partial least square based structural equation modeling using SmartPLS. The results revealed that amongst the four gratifications examined in this study, information sharing, self-documentation and social interaction have positive and significant effects on ESN use. The findings of the study have both theoretical and practical implications. Because the studies examining the gratifications driving ESN use are scarce, the present study helps to fill the existing knowledge gap in this context. This is especially significant in the Sri Lankan context.

Keywords: Enterprise social networks, Gratifications, Uses and gratification

INTRODUCTION

With the competitiveness in the environment, organizations are increasingly investing in creating a corporate culture which enhance communication, employee engagement, employee performance and knowledge sharing among employees. To assist organizations in achieving these objectives, a new class of information technology, commonly known as Enterprise Social Networks (ESNs), has gained prominence in contemporary organizations. The widespread adoption of social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter among the individuals prompted organizations to use similar systems within the organizations. Accordingly, organizations created Enterprise Social Networks (ESNs), using social networking platforms, within the corporate realm to improve communication among employees. ESNs are being widely utilized by organizations as a digital platform to facilitate internal communication, social interactions and knowledge sharing within an enterprise. The main motive of deploying ESNs is to provide employees with new ways of communication, collaboration, and creation and to use knowledge to enhance employee engagement and performance, within the organization (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017).

Adoption of the ESNs can bring variety of benefits and opportunities to the organization. Enterprise performance and success are increasingly dependent on the efficiency and quality of internal social interaction platform. However, despite of the high level of proliferation, many organizations have failed to successfully implement ESNs within the organization and to encourage the adoption of ESNs among the workforce (Alarifi, 2016). Recent studies have predicted that 80% of ESN initiatives may fail to leverage and materialize the intended benefits due to underutilization and lack of adoption (Mann et al. 2012 cited in Chin et al., 2015). According to Liu and Bakici (2019), majority of the ESNs implementation projects fail during first six months of the implementation. They identified a possible reason for failure as only a few employees actively use ESNs by accessing and sharing contents. They also stated that the business value of ESNs cannot be realized without active employee engagement. In order to increase employees' active usage of ESNs, it is essential to identify different motives driving employees to use ESNs. Even though the effect of motivation has been examined in relation to the other communication media, limited studies have been conducted in identifying the motivations to use ESNs. Further, when examining the limited literature available relevant to ESN use, it is apparent that the findings are not consistent. Therefore, there is a real practical and knowledge gap that need to be further explored.

The varied findings in the previous research may have emerged due to the cultural differences between different contexts. Also, factors like attitudes and individual differences among different workgroups may also lead to different findings. Therefore, it is difficult to generalize findings made in other contexts to the Sri Lankan context. Thus, it is apparent that there is a clear research gap in relation to the use of ESNs in the context of Sri Lanka. Therefore, in order to fill the identified research gap, the study is focused on identifying different motives and its influence on ESN usage in the Sri Lankan context. The researcher wanted to achieve two objectives from this study. First, objective was to identify the different motives affecting the usage of ESNs. The objective was to assess the effect of those factors on ESN usage.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Enterprise Social Networks

Enterprise Social Networks (ESNs) can be 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” (Leonardi et al., 2013, p. 2). Ellison et al. (2015) defined ESNs as a set of technologies that include the basic features of social networks but are implemented within an organization, are permitted by management, and have the capacity to limit membership to specific individuals of a selected organization. ESN is identified as a subset of Enterprise 2.0, which refers to the use of social software such as social networking sites, blogs, wikis, microblogging, and social bookmarking services within enterprises (Mäntymäki & Riemer, 2016). An increasing number of organizations are adopting social network-based application such as IBM connection, Yammer, Jive, or proprietary solutions that integrate social media technologies such as wikis, blogs, and social networking services, into a single platform facilitating internal communication (Kuegler et al., 2015).

Uses and Gratification Theory

Uses and Gratification theory was originally developed in 1940 and used to examine the satisfaction of radio listeners (Liang et al., 2020). This theory has also been applied in the context of different types of print media such as newspapers and magazines, television (Dunne et al., 2010). As cited by them, users are capable of understanding their own needs and, as a result, selecting the appropriate media. This theory investigates the gratifications or benefits that draw audiences to various media platforms and the types of content that meet their social and psychological needs. (O’Donohoe, 1994 cited in Dunne et al., 2010). The goal of uses and gratifications theory is to better understand why individuals choose certain types of media as well as to investigate diverse motives of individuals when interacting with media. (Hossain, 2019). The emergence of new digital technologies has re-energized the use of Uses and Gratification theory for the new media. Therefore, this theory has been widely adopted with new communication media such as social networks sites, mobile social network sites, online games, and virtual communities (Hossain, 2019). When considering the ESNs, employees may enjoy the process of utilizing ESNs, the quality of content and information offered via ESN, or the social engagement enabled with others in the organization (Liu & Bakici, 2019). Such gratifications received from the use of ESN may encourage people to actively use ESN. Therefore, in identifying what motivates employees to use ESN, this theory can be best applied (Liu et al., 2010; Smock et al., 2011; Alhabash et al., 2014; Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Gan & Li, 2018; Hossain, 2019).

Gratifications and Enterprise Social Network Usage

One of the objectives of this study is to determine the different gratifications that drive individuals to use ESN. Since there were different studies conducted in order to identify the different gratifications or motives that directed people to use different medias, the researcher has adopted systematic approach identify the most suitable gratifications for ESN usage which can then be used to develop a justifiable conceptual framework. Accordingly, the researcher referred thirteen research articles which has examined the relationship between gratifications and ESN usage and identified fourteen gratifications which can motivate media usage. Out of the gratifications identified, the four gratifications were selected in order to conduct the study.

Hypotheses Development

Information sharing and ESN usage

Information sharing can be defined as the extent to which the contents were exchanged, distributed and received by the user on media (Kietzmann et al., 2011). In this study, information sharing is regarded as posting the contents and commenting on the contents using enterprise social networks. As cited by Laitinen and Sivunen (2019), in organizations, information sharing via ESN is critical since it permits members to stay informed about organizational issues as well as share and preserve knowledge in an accessible platform. According to Liu and Bakici (2019), the information sharing has a significant influence on ESN usage. Therefore, based on the existing literature it can be identified that there is a positive effect of information sharing on ESN usage. Hence, the following hypothesis was proposed.

H1: There is a positive effect of information sharing motive on ESN usage

Self- documentation and ESN usage

Social media, especially the blogs can be used for the purpose of self-documentation as it can be used to document the own life, activities and events of the users (Nardi et al., 2004). Similarly, ESN allows the employees to document their daily activities such as what projects they are working on, what is the progress so far and so on. As cited by Liu and Bakici (2019), the persistent affordance associated with ESN allows employees to document their activities similar to blog. According to the

studies conducted by Liu et al. (2016) and Liu et al. (2010) it can be identified that self-documentation creates a significant influence on ESN usage. Hence, the following hypothesis was proposed.

H2: There is a positive effect of self-documentation motive on ESN usage

Entertainment and ESN usage

According to Whiting and Williams (2013), entertainment refers to the use of media to deliver enjoyment. Study done by Liu and Bakici (2019) mentioned that the employees are encouraged to participate in such internal corporate communities facilitated via ESNs in order to have fun and enjoyment. According to Leftheriotis and Giannakos (2014); Liu and Bakici (2019) entertainment has positive influence on the usage of ESN. Hence, the following hypothesis was proposed.

H3: There is a positive effect of entertainment motive on ESN usage

Social interaction and ESN usage

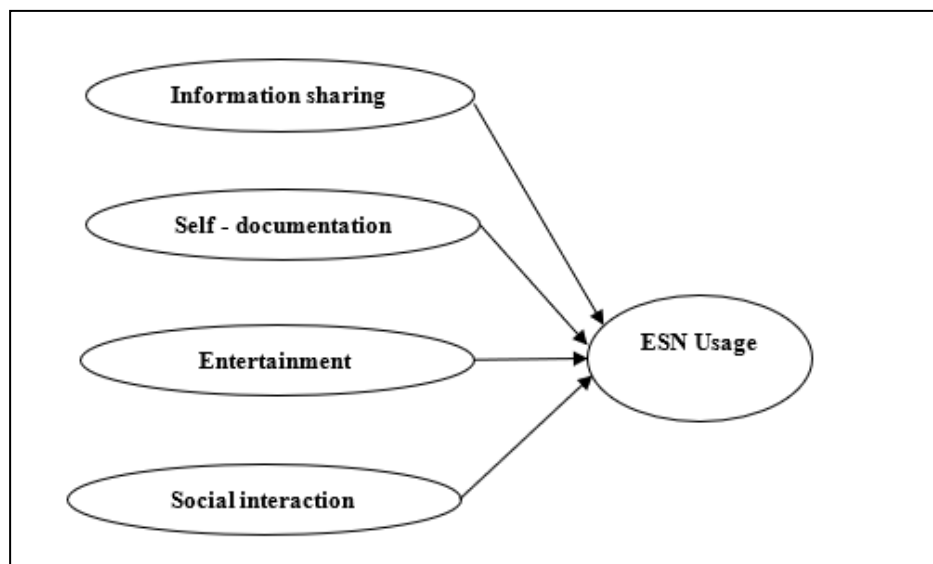
Social interaction can be defined as the use of media to communicate and interact with others (Whiting & Williams, 2013). Social media develop new opportunities for social interactions via chatting, instant messaging, posting, rating, and commenting etc. (Liu & Bakici,2019). According to Leonardi et al. (2013), ESN contributes to the development of social capital within the organization as it allows employees to know what others are doing, and also to easily establish new connection with other employees. Prior studies have empirically validated the important role played by social interactions in influencing the use of enterprise social media (Whiting & Williams, 2013; Liu & Bakici, 2019). Hence, the following hypothesis was proposed.

H4: There is a positive effect of social interaction motive on ESN usage

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Conceptual Model

For the purpose of this study, the researcher decided to select the most cited four gratifications as the gratifications that motivate employees to use ESNs. The selected gratifications have been used by more than 45% of the previous researchers hence it justifies the importance of these variables. These gratifications include information sharing, self-documentation, entertainment and social interaction. Based on that, the conceptual model depicting the relationship between these gratifications and ESN usage was developed (Refer Figure 1).



Source: Authors

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Sample

This study adopted both purposive sampling and snowball sampling as the sampling technique. In order to be a part of the study sample, the respondents needed to satisfy two criteria; respondents needed to use ESN at work and needed to work in the

software industry. On that basis, the researcher can justify the use of purposive sampling as a sampling technique for the study. On the other hand, as the researcher does not have information on the companies using ESN, the researcher used known contact to identify the organizations using ESNs first. Then an email invitation was sent to the contact person asking he or she to distribute the questionnaire among other colleagues in the respective organization. This process was repeated until the required number of responses were gathered. Consequently, the study employed snowball sampling technique as well. Here the sample was selected from the software industry due to several reasons. One is that the employee collaboration and interaction are of paramount importance in the software industry. It was deemed that the widespread use of ESNs in the software industry would lead to more realistic results from the present study.

Instrument development

The questionnaire method was employed in order to collect data from the target sample. The questionnaire consisted of 3 sections. First sections covered the demographic questions which included gender, age of respondent, functional area, job level, type of ESN and employees' experience with the ESN. The second section of the study focused on the four gratifications that induce the employees to use and the third section consisted of the items to measure ESN usage. The items to measure the constructs were adopted from the previous literature and each item was measured based on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Once the structured questionnaire was developed, it was pretested first using two academics and a few experts from the industry. Next, a pilot study was done using 20 respondents from the industry. Both the pretesting and pilot testing resulted in modifying and deleting several items from the original format of the questionnaire to improve the clarity of the questionnaire items and to make it more suitable for the Sri Lankan context.

Data collection

In order to collect the data, a questionnaire was prepared as an electronic questionnaire using google forms. The online questionnaire invitation was distributed among the selected employees from the software industry who have experience with ESN. The data collection process was continued for two months and hundred and sixty-eight (168) responses were received. Out of all the responses, there were twenty-two (22) respondents who did not have experience with ESN. Since the sample had to consist of employees in software companies who use ESNs, those responses were dropped from further analysis. This left the researcher with a total of one hundred and forty-six (146) responses.

Method of data analysis

For the purpose of data analysis, the researcher utilized two statistical software namely, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and SmartPLS. SPSS was used for the purpose of data cleaning, demographic analysis, descriptive statistical analysis and multivariate assumptions testing. Partial Least Square based Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used for comprehensive data analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

As a part of multivariate analysis, the normality and multicollinearity assumptions were tested. The normality was tested using Skewness and Kurtosis (Hair et al., 2014). The results of the analysis indicated that the skewness value of all items were ranged between -3 to +3, while the kurtosis values of all items ranged between -10 to +10, thereby indicating the normal distribution (Kline, 2016). Multicollinearity of the variables were tested using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). The results of the study indicated that the VIF values of all the variables are below 5, hence there is no issue in relation to multicollinearity.

Respondents' Profile

The respondent's demographic characteristics indicated that 56% of the respondents were females while 43% were males. The majority of the respondents (72%) were from the age category of 26-35 years. Also, a higher percentage of the respondents were from the middle level management (39.7%) and the operational level employees (38.4%). Further to this, the majority of the respondents were from the information technology (79.5%) division. It was also observed that the 35.4% respondent were using Workplace by Facebook, 28.7% respondents were using Yammer and 25% respondent were using Slack. Further, it was indicated that the majority of respondents (58.1%) had 3-5 years' experience with ESNs and 42.5% respondent had 1-3 years' experience with ESNs.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability can be identified as the degree to which the observed variable measures the true value (Hair et al., 2019). According to Hair et al. (2019), composite reliability and Cronbach alpha are considered as the measures of internal consistency. The acceptable level of composite reliability is 0.7 or above (Hair et al., 2011), while the generally accepted lower limit for Cronbach alpha is 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). However, the Cronbach alpha values greater than 0.95 is not good as it may indicate the redundancy of questionnaire items (Hulin et al., 2001; Ursachi et al., 2015). According to

Table 1, the Composite reliability and Cronbach alpha values of all five constructs were above 0.70. Therefore, the internal consistency reliability of the constructs was established.

According to Hair et al. (2019), validity can be defined as the extent to which the indicators of a construct jointly measure what they are supposed to measure. This was ensured using content validity and construct validity. In this study constructs were developed using the existing literature and also the independent and dependent variables were operationalized referring to the previous literature. Therefore, the content validity is satisfied.

Construct validity can be measured using convergent validity and discriminant validity measures. According to Hair et al. (2014), convergent validity can be measured using Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The general rule for an acceptable AVE is 0.50 or higher (Hair et al., 2019). According to the

Table 1, AVE values of all the constructs were greater than 0.5, thus the convergent validity is established. Discriminant validity was tested using Fornell-Larcker criterion. In order to ensure the discriminant validity, the square root of AVE value of each construct should be higher than its highest correlation with any other construct. As depicted in Table 2, the square root values of AVE of each construct are higher than the correlation with other constructs. Therefore, the discriminant validity is established.

Table 1: Summary of reliability and convergent validity results

	E	EU	IS	SD	SI
Entertainment	0.897				
ESN Usage	0.436	0.882			
Information sharing	0.535	0.579	0.933		
Self-documentation	0.488	0.540	0.583	0.924	
Social interaction	0.650	0.627	0.631	0.530	0.892

Source: Survey data

Table 2: Discriminant validity results

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Entertainment (E)	0.939	0.953	0.804
ESN usage (EU)	0.928	0.946	0.779
Information sharing (IS)	0.950	0.964	0.870
Self-documentation (SD)	0.915	0.946	0.854
Social interaction (SI)	0.949	0.959	0.796

Source: Survey data

Testing of Hypotheses

The main objective of this study was to identify how different gratifications of media use affect the ESN usage. Following the PLS-SEM, the path coefficients and the significance of the relationships were assessed using the bootstrapping results. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	Path	Path coefficient	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
H ₁	IS → EU	0.223	2.102	0.036	Supported
H ₂	SD → EU	0.221	2.858	0.004	Supported
H ₃	E → EU	-0.054	0.700	0.484	Not Supported
H ₄	SI → EU	0.402	3.497	0.000	Supported

Source: Survey data

As depicted in Table 3, the path coefficients for information sharing, self-documentation and social interaction are positive and significant at 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that Information Sharing, Self-documentation, and Social Interaction have positive and significant effect on ESN usage. Therefore, hypotheses H1, H2 and H4 are accepted. However, it is apparent that the Enjoyment has no significant effect of ESN usage ($p > 0.05$). Thus, H3 was rejected.

Once the significance of relationships between variables were tested, the Coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to measure the proportion of the variance in the endogenous variables that is explained by the predictor constructs (Hair et al., 2019, p.760). The analysis reported R^2 value of 0.479 and adjusted R^2 value of 0.460 which indicates that 46% of the variance in ESN usage is explained by Information sharing, Self-documentation, Enjoyment and Social interaction. This indicates that there is a moderate level of explanatory power in the conceptual framework depicted in Figure 1 above (Hair et al., 2011).

DISCUSSION

The analysis of the study was undertaken to achieve the research objectives set at the beginning of the study. In order to achieve the first objective, the researcher carried out an extensive literature review which were based on the theory of Uses and Gratifications. This resulted in the identification of four gratifications, namely, Information sharing, Self-documentation, Enjoyment and Social interaction.

In order to achieve the second objective of the study; four hypotheses were proposed and tested. The results of the analysis indicated H_1 is supported, indicating that information sharing has a positive and significant effect on the employees' use of ESNs at work. This finding was consistent with the previous studies of Smock et al. (2011); Whiting and Williams (2013); Alhabash et al. (2014); Ali-Hassan et al. (2015); Alhabash and Ma (2017); Gan and Li (2018); Liu and Bakici (2019); Meske et al. (2019); Hossain (2019). The significant effect of information sharing on ESN usage can also be explained by identifying how ESNs function within the organization. According to Liu and Bakici (2019), in general ESNs incorporate different features of social networks such as blogging, posting, and chatting which allow employees to create contents and share those contents with others in their organization. Therefore, employees consider ESNs as a convenient medium which satisfy the information sharing motive (Leonardi et al., 2013). Further it was identified that the employees' desire to share required information more instantly with others may enhance their engagement with the ESN.

According to the results, H_2 is supported. Therefore, it indicates that there is a significant positive impact of self-documentation motive on ESN usage. This result is also confirmed by several previous empirical studies done by Liu et al. (2010); Alhabash et al., (2014); Liu et al., (2016); Alhabash and Ma, (2017). As cited by Liu and Bakici (2019) using the features such as blogging associated with ESNs, employees can create posts and documents related to their daily activities and track their working progress. The employees can document on their daily routines such as what they are currently doing using ESN platform. When ESN associated with the facilities which fulfill the employee's motivation of self-documentation it will improve the ESN usage by employees (Liu & Bakici, 2019).

The findings reveal that H_3 is not supported. Hence, it can be inferred that the entertainment motive does not have a significant influence on ESN usage. This finding is consistent with several past studies conducted by Liu et al. (2010); Liu et al. (2016); Sun et al. (2020). According to Sun et al. (2020), even though employees seek those entertainment related features of ESNs to release their stress while working, but due to their responsibility for work, they may be compelled to focus back to work after a short break rather than spending too much time with ESNs pursuing entertainment. Further, employees may not use features of entertainment as it is governed by the organization. Rather, they may prefer to use other public social networks as their activities are not monitored and controlled and they may be able to get engage with more interactive content that are entertaining. The above explained reasons would have contributed to the fact that entertainment motive does not have a significant effect on the use of ESNs in the present study.

Finally, the analysis revealed that H_4 is supported, indicating that there is a positive and significant effect of social interaction motive on ESN usage. Findings of the previous research done by Smock et al. (2011); Whiting and Williams (2013); Alhabash et al. (2014); Ali-Hassan et al. (2015); Chiu and Huang (2015); Alhabash and Ma (2017); Liu and Bakici (2019); Meske et al. (2019); Hossain (2019) are consistent with the findings of this study. According to Liu and Bakici, (2019), ESNs are interactive in nature as they incorporate social networking features which allow employees to build their personal profiles, interact with other employees and build social capital. In was cited by these authors that it is easier to create social capital when people know about their coworkers and what they are doing. When more interactions are built with coworkers, it makes it easier to establish new connections with people (Leonardi et al., 2013).

THEORETICAL AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study contributes to the existing knowledge by applying the Uses and Gratifications theory to the enterprise social networks context. This provides an opportunity to analyse the usage of ESNs purely from a motivational perspective. Also, by exploring and validating four constructs (information sharing, self-documentation, entertainment and social interaction) which have been cited most by the previous researchers, this contributes to the existing literature. This study presented a unique theoretical framework depicting the relationships between different gratifications motivating the employees to use ESNs and ESN usage. This study fills an important research gap in the domain of using ESNs in the Sri Lankan context as there were limited number of research conducted on the use of ESNs. Finally, this study can induce future researchers, especially in developing nations, to examine the use of ESNs due to the important role played by Enterprise Social Networks in today's organizations.

This study also provides several insights to the practitioners and organizations who have already adopted ESNs and who intend to adopt them in the future. First, with the implementation of ESNs one of the main challenges that managers face is motivating and encouraging their employees to use ESNs for their work. The literature review revealed four important motives established through prior research, which can be focused by organizations to induce employees to increase the use of ESN.

Especially, the findings revealed that information sharing, self-documentation, and social interaction have positive and significant effects on ESN usage. With this knowledge, organizations can especially focus on increasing the awareness of employees on those capabilities, which would in turn result in higher usage of ESN at work, giving more benefits to the organization. Further, creating a more collaborative and interactive organizational culture within organizations can increase the necessity for areas like information sharing and social interaction, which in turn can drive ESN usage.

Since the findings revealed that the most critical gratifications that induce employees to use ESN are information sharing, self-documentation, and social interaction, ESN developers can focus on improving those capabilities and associated features more which could result in higher use of those systems by the employees.

CONCLUSION

This study focused on identifying the gratifications that affect the ESN usage. Therefore, a systematic literature review was conducted in order to identify the gratifications/motives affecting the ESN usage. In identifying these gratifications, the Uses and Gratifications theory was used as the primary theory. Amongst the many gratifications identified through the previous studies, the researcher identified information sharing, self-documentation, entertainment and social interaction as the most cited by previous researchers. Consequently, they were used as the specific gratifications affecting the ESN usage for the present study. The conceptual model and hypotheses were developed based on these four gratifications.

PLS-SEM was used to test the hypotheses. The analysis revealed that information sharing, self-documentation and social interaction motivations significantly affect ESN usage, while entertainment does not have a significant effect on ESN usage.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTION

This research study consists of several limitations. Data were collected only from the employees in the software industry it affects the generalizability of the findings to other industries. In addition, the smaller sample size can too restrict the generalizability of the results. Also, the study only focused on testing the direct effect between the gratifications and ESN usage. However, the possible indirect and mediation effects were not examined in this study.

The findings and the limitations discussed in the study clearly reflect different avenues which can be examined in future research. This study focused only on four factors affecting ESN usage. The future researchers can expand this framework to incorporate more factors. Further, the future researchers can examine possible indirect and mediating effects, in addition to the direct effects examined in this study. Rather than focusing on a single theory, future researchers can integrate several theories to identify the factors motivating employees to use ESN. The motivations identified can differ from industry to industry. Therefore, the future researchers can replicate this study in a different industry or conduct a cross industry analysis and compare the results.

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