Users’ Perspectives on Using Wikis for Managing Knowledge: Benefits and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge management (KM) has now become a key focus for many modern organisations in today’s knowledge-based economy era. KM helps organisations leverage knowledge, an important asset that is necessary to maintain a competitive advantage. Wiki is an emerging information technology (IT) that has become promising collaborative system for knowledge management. Wikis are, essentially, web-based hypertext applications which entail and enable a collaborative authoring, information flow, and communication in a bidirectional way. The literature shows that Wikis implementation is challenging, and most of the critical challenges are faced by individual users. Therefore, this research investigates the benefits, as well as the challenges of using Wikis for KM from a user’s perspective. A qualitative approach was used in a multi-method investigation, combining observations and one-to-one interviews. The study found that despite its considerable benefits introducing a Wiki for KM comes with challenges. These challenges are classified into technical, individual, and work context issues.

KEYWORDS

Benefits, Challenges, Implementation, Knowledge Management, Wiki

INTRODUCTION

In the new knowledge-based economy, knowledge is the key to success in business; hence, many organisations intend to make knowledge their critical asset (DeTienne & Jackson, 2001). Utilising this critical asset effectively helps organisations maintain their competitive advantages. Therefore, many organisations have become interested in knowledge management (KM), and the amount of funding they allocate to KM projects and technologies has increased dramatically (Kakabadse, Kakabadse, & Kouzmin, 2003).

Although KM is not limited to information technology (IT), IT plays a critical role in KM initiatives. The use of IT enables organisations to capture, codify, store, distribute and reuse knowledge (Money & Turner, 2007). Several KM technologies have emerged, including knowledge repositories, expert systems and Web 2.0 applications, such as Wikis (Schultze, 2008). Knowledge repositories and expert systems are examples of traditional knowledge management systems that are limited because they are centralised and only a small group of knowledge workers can access and manage the knowledge they contain (Levy, 2009). Web 2.0 applications are viewed as promising KM systems that are collaborative and support social interactions. Wikis, especially, are considered to be next generation KMs that offer an alternative to traditional KMs by addressing their constraints (Hasan & Pfaff, 2006). Wikis distribute the effort of managing knowledge and harnessing the collective intelligence. Moreover, Wiki technology supports the management of both tacit and explicit knowledge.
Due to the value of this type of emerging technology, this study focuses on exploring the use of Wiki for KM. The advantages of deploying Wiki as an emerging KM technology have motivated many organisations to implement it. Likewise, commentators’ interests in exploring the deployment of Wikis as a KM technology has increased (Alqahtani et al., 2010). Despite the increased interest in implementing Wikis for KM, research suggests that most organisations still face challenges in doing so (Kiniti & Standing, 2013). Most of the critical challenges are faced by individual users. Hence, this impacts the implementation of Wikis and inhibits their successful adoption (McAfee, 2009). Therefore, this present research study investigates the challenges Wiki users face as well as the apparent benefits of using this technology. This study aims to enhance the successful implementation of Wikis for KM in two ways. First, identifying the benefits of using Wikis encourages organisations to continue to invest in implementing Wikis for KM. Second, exploring the potential challenges of Wiki implementation enables organisations to address and effectively manage Wikis in order to reap the maximum benefits they offer.

Previous research in this area has been either conceptual (Grace, 2009; Kiniti & Standing, 2013), requiring further empirical investigation, or it has only investigated the obstacles decision makers face when deciding to invest in introducing Wiki technology (Bolisani, Scarso, & Giuman, 2014; Pfaff & Hasan, 2006). Because the scale at which users adopt a Wiki system plays a vital part in the success of these systems, examining and investigating the challenges to its success has been an important research endeavour (Venkatesh, 2016). Yet, the literature still lacks empirical studies exploring the challenges and the benefits that users encounter when using Wiki technology for KM (Bolisani et al., 2014).

The rest of this paper is structure as follows: the next section provides background information about Wiki technology and KM; that section is followed by a literature review of related studies that have investigated the benefits and challenges of utilising Wikis for KM; after that, the research methodology used in this current study is presented. This includes providing information about the data collection and data analysis techniques that were used. That is followed by a section presents the findings from this empirical study and then discusses the findings in relation to the current literature. The last section concludes this paper and provides a review of the study’s contributions as well as the study’s limitations and implications.

**BACKGROUND**

This section presents information about several concepts related to the topic being investigated in this paper. Firstly, it discusses the concept of Wikis, their functional attributes and their benefits as collaborative technologies. It then discusses KM, and the role that IT plays in supporting KM.

**The Wiki Concept**

The Internet offers a wide variety of opportunities to organise and share information. Recently, social software, known as Web 2.0, has become a popular medium for sharing and publishing information on the Internet. Wiki systems are important examples of the types of social software that are available. According to Wang and Wei (2011), Wikis are Web-based hypertext applications that entail collaborative editing; they are sustained through a system that monitors any changes and/or contributions that are made to the edited text. Wikis are viewed as a fast, effective and easy way to develop text collaboratively. Thus, groups of people, such as virtual communities and work teams, have adopted Wiki applications. It has been found that Wikis are useful for creating, sharing, disseminating and accumulating knowledge (Wagner & Majchrzak, 2007).
Privacy Statements as a Means of Uncertainty Reduction in WWW Interactions
www.igi-global.com/chapter/privacy-statements-means-uncertainty-reduction/18278?camid=4v1a

Semantic Composition of Web Portal Components
www.igi-global.com/chapter/semantic-composition-web-portal-components/18158?camid=4v1a