

数字时代的 信息搜索

中美企业员工
新媒体使用研究

Organizational Information-Seeking

in the Digital

Area

居然 著

Model

of

New Media Use

Uncertainty Reduction

Identification and Culture



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FOREWORD | 前言

本书的写作由浙江工商大学人文与传播学院居然老师独立完成。

《数字时代的信息搜索:中美企业员工新媒体使用研究》描述了在这个信息时代,处于工作中的人们是如何利用各类新媒体来搜索与职业相关的信息的。这本书也进一步探究了员工的新媒体使用频率与两个重要的、有关工作效率及忠诚度的概念——不确定因素(uncertainty)及身份认同(identification)之间的关系。作者采用了网上问卷调查的方式,向中国和美国的全职工作者询问他们在工作使用新媒体的状况。基于回收到的有效数据,作者运用统计学原理,进行数据分析,总结出新媒体在工作环境中被使用的实际状况,同时根据不同媒体的使用情况总结出其使用频率,以及员工不确定因素与身份认同之间的具体关联。最后根据数据分析得出的结果,作者建立了一个概念模型,总结出在数字时代新媒体是怎样影响着人们的工作环境、工作效率,以及员工的忠诚度。以上的研究结果能够为企业在工作环境中如何制定新媒体的使用规则提供一定的事实依据。

本书适用于所有对“新媒体在职场中的作用”这一话题感兴趣的读者。那些对组织沟通与传播(organizational communication)、组织管理(management)、跨文化传播(intercultural communication)、新媒体(new media)、身份认同(identification)等概念感兴趣的读者会发现这些话题在本书中被一一阐述。那些对该如何管理员工在工作场合使用新媒体有困惑的企业管理者,以及那些对该如何使用新媒体使自己得到更多工作相关信息有疑问的工作者,会发现他们的疑问被逐一解答。而那些单纯对新媒体话题感兴趣的读者,会发现又一个关于新媒体的新兴话题被打开。作者在进行这一研究项目时秉承实践主义哲学,由衷希望本书既能为组织沟通传播学的理论研究发展做出贡献,同时也能为人们在工作中如何更好地使用新媒体这一新兴通信工具提供帮助。

新媒体是一个近年来在各个领域都受到高度关注的话题。传播学,作为一门专注于研究人类通过不同媒体进行交流沟通的状态的学科,更应该在此话题上积

极寻求发展。作者作为一名年轻的传播学学者与新媒体“狂热分子”，带着自己对这一门学科的热爱和对新媒体的使用经验心得，花费两年时间完成了这一项对于新媒体与组织沟通传播的研究。新媒体在社会各个方面都产生了巨大的影响，在专业的职场上也不例外，然而对于新媒体在职场中的作用的研究并不多见。作者期望本书能够作为少数结合职场与新媒体这两个话题的书籍之一，为读者们开辟另一个审视新媒体的视角。

一本书稿的诞生是一个痛苦而又幸福的过程。在这一过程中，许许多多的人给予了作者各种各样的帮助。作者在这里利用有限的纸张空间向这些人表达最诚挚的感恩和谢意。首先感谢指导和帮助我博士阶段四年学习的各位老师和同学。感谢我的博士生导师 Mirit Shoham 博士，她在四年的学习中给予了我无限的支持和帮助。感谢 Scott Titsworth 博士，他教会了我如何做研究，以及如何做一个严谨而又有创造力的学者。感谢贾沫宜博士、康东晶及李周同学，她们不仅是学校里最聪明机智、上进好学的学生，也是生活中难得的知己。其次感谢浙江工商大学人文与传播学院的各位领导与同事。感谢高万隆院长，新闻系李蓉主任、张雅娟博士、刘征博士与邵鹏博士对我工作的支持与帮助。他们让我感受到了人文学院大家庭的温暖，同时他们出色的工作与科研成绩也激励着我不断向前。感谢浙江工商大学出版社的任晓燕编辑与沈娴编辑，没有她们的高效运作，本书难以较快与读者见面。感谢 John Jia，他的关心爱护和幽默风趣伴我左右。最后感谢我的父母，他们给了我自由这一最大的财富，让我能够放心追逐自己梦想和想要的生活，才促成了这一本书的诞生。

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the role of new media in individuals' organizational socialization process across cultures. First, this study explores individuals' use of new media in their organizational socialization process in two countries, China and the United States, to gain a general understanding of the usage patterns. Second, this study proposes that identification should be a more communicative-related outcome of the socialization process; it also tests the relationship between information-seeking behaviors through social media, as a socialization effort, and individuals' identification levels. Third, this study proposes that in the relationship among information-seeking behaviors, uncertainty level serves as a mediator, and tests the mediating model of information-seeking, uncertainty level and identification levels. In particular, this dissertation highlights the role of social context in individuals' daily interactions. It compares the different new media use patterns and levels of different identifications (local and global) across the two cultures to emphasize social context's influence. This dissertation reveals the general information of new media usage in the working setting, informs the relationship among information-seeking through new media, identification and uncertainty across the two cultures.

Chapter 1 presents a conceptual foundation of this dissertation. Using pragmatism as the meta-theory, this chapter argues that new media provide opportunities for scholars to update current knowledge and suggests that culture, as a social context, should be taken into consideration.

Chapter 2 provides a systematic review of both empirical and theoretical literature. The literature covers topics of uncertainty reduction theory, socialization, and social information processing theory, suggesting that organizational members in divergent

cultures may rely on very different modes of uncertainty reducing communication strategies. From a pragmatic point of view, the practical implications of these divergent behaviors must be accounted for; therefore, organizational identification is proposed as an outcome measure to explore the repercussions of the different meanings and behaviors surfacing across cultures. Research questions and hypotheses are presented in this chapter, resulting in a conceptual model presenting the predicted relationships among the above-mentioned topics.

Chapter 3 offers an in-depth description of the research methods used to collect and analyze data. The sampling method, participants, procedures, and methods of assessing organizational members' new media usage, levels of uncertainty and organizational identification are described.

Chapter 4 explains the statistical procedures used to analyze the data and reveals the results of research questions and hypotheses suggested in Chapter 2. At last, the result of the conceptual model is presented.

The final chapter (Chapter 5) outlines the findings of this study and discusses them within the context of prior theories and research. Theoretical and practical implications are offered. The limitations of the study and areas of future research are also outlined.

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Chapter 1

Plurality of Innovations in Practice

“The new technology applied in production and commerce resulted in a social revolution. The local communities without intent or forecast founded their affairs conditioned by remote and invisible organizations. The scope of the latter’s activities was so vast and their impact upon face-to-face associations so pervasive and unremitting that it is no exaggeration to speak of a ‘new age of human relations.’”

—Dewey (1927, p. 98)

Technology has largely been associated with social change. The development of technology does not only bring changes to industry and commerce, it also brings changes to societies and human beings in what Dewey (1927) described as a “new age of human relations” (p. 98). Historically, the advent of steam and electricity has changed the way people associated with each other dramatically (Dewey, 1927). With these technologies, individuals were brought together to create “The Great Society” (Dewey, 1927, p. 98), characterized by mechanical models of combined human behaviors. Some manifestations of this great society include that individuals flocked together to massively produce goods and live in large cities. Later on, inventions in transportation (i. e. trains, cars) and communication (i. e. telephones, fax machines) have made long distance travelling possible, which facilitated the flow of goods and connected people in ways never previously imaginable.

Technological innovation is a continuous process; we need not reflect on inventions from the last century but merely look around at our current state of innovation. Today, although the inventions of steam machines and electricity are

no longer novel to societies, developments in information technology keep bringing opportunities for social change. Such changes, from a pragmatic point of view, trigger inquiry and therefore merit scholars' attention.

These social changes, however, are not as deterministically linked to technology as Dewey (1927) insinuated above. Dewey acknowledged that every technological innovation results in social change, but he neglected to explicitly recognize human beings' agency (Giddens, 1986) in socially constructing the uses of technology and making sense of these technologies. In other words, the argument above fails to recognize the mutual influence between technology and human beings. Technological innovation provides opportunities for social change by arming humans with new tools that they may use in their daily work, interactions with others, physical navigation, and so on, and yet the changes to society come not with the tools themselves but with the meanings that users ascribe to them in dictating their functions and meanings. We, as a society, negotiate the changes facilitated by our ever-changing technological toolbox.

Berger and Luckmann (1967) argued that all reality is derived from and maintained by social interactions. Social actors create a shared perspective, which later becomes common sense. When individuals interact with others, they follow their respective understanding of reality and through this interaction in specific social groups they reinforce, negotiate or reconstruct their understanding. As a result, social groups create a shared perspective, which becomes common sense of reality. This means then that reality, grounded in social interaction and meaning making, takes different shapes and forms from group to group.

This philosophy of social constructionism (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) suggests that different social groups may have different collective understandings of the same social phenomena. Therefore, culture — the set of norms, rules and values shared by members of a certain community, organization, and/or social group (Hall, 1976)— plays an important role in this sense-making process. The norms, rules or values of the group may be reflected in the unique meanings constructed.

Take technology as an example. Different cultures have different understandings of the uses of certain technological innovations. In the United States, the national train system is considered as a means mainly for transporting goods and products. However, in China, the national train system is considered as a mode of public transportation for people to travel (Zhao, 2010). In these two cultures the same

technology is perceived and made sense of very differently. From a social construction perspective, then, we must acknowledge Dewey's (1927) social revolution not merely as the product of technology but also as the impetus for technological innovation.

When examining changes associated with technological innovation, on the one hand, the impact of the changes on society surely need to be recognized. However, on the other hand, the ability that people have to make sense of the change should also be acknowledged. Both pragmatism and social constructionism recognize that technological innovations can lead to changes and human beings have the ultimate control over that change. Social constructionism holds the idea that reality is socially constructed and this reality is created in response to the social environment rather than a by-product of any inherent quality that it possesses in itself (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). This notion is similar to the philosophy of pragmatism, which is against absolutism and emphasizes the importance of time, space, and perspective (or social environment) (Dewey, 1927; James, 1991). Therefore, when exploring social changes and technological innovations, social context is of the utmost importance. This study explores the intersection of culture, communication and social change by investigating, from a pragmatic perspective, the reliance on new media in oriental and Western organizations. More specifically, social changes are explored by way of updating current understandings of organizational socialization as an ongoing sense-making process that occurs to reduce environmental uncertainties via socially constructed technological innovations. This chapter first uses pragmatism as a meta-theoretical framework to argue why such exploration is necessary. Then, it presents the plural nature of new media, which is the essence of pragmatism, to further make the argument. At last, this chapter ends with narrowing down the exploration to the context of the organizational setting.

1. Pragmatism

Social construction occurs through communication, situating reality in social contexts. Therefore, social construction and pragmatism are complementary philosophies that address how and why social groups collectively create their respective realities. Pragmatism is a philosophy that claims that an ideology or a proposition is true if it works satisfactorily and that meaning is embedded in practical consequences (Dewey, 1927; James, 1991). Pragmatism therefore rejects any idea that is not

practical. Pragmatism concerns the problems of pluralism and incommensurability, which suggest that inherent differences exist across different entities and these differences cannot be unified. But acknowledging difference is not the end of pragmatism. On the contrary, pragmatism strives to find a way for this pluralistic world to work together. Culture, defined as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another” (Hofstede, 1991, p. 5), contributes to the diversity of the world. Members of different social groups think and act in different ways and thus make the world plural. The notion of pluralism highlights the critical influence of culture in the sense-making process grounding any social change.

2. Shared Perspectives: Pragmatism and Culture

Pragmatists believe that there is no absolute truth in this world (Carey, 2005). One thing that works in one culture may not work at all in another culture. Therefore, pragmatic inquiry should be situated in context. That is to say, social context, explored here as culture, should be treated as a vital component in the inquiry process. Time and space, which are the two manifestations of social context, are two essential parts of the inquiry (Dewey, 1927; 2004; James, 1991). Time means the differences in social environment due to temporal changes of eras, and space indicates the differences in social environment due to physical differences in location.

Recent innovations in information and communication technology have led to trends in globalization (Christians, 2011). Technologies (such as the Internet) break the boundary of time and space to connect people all around the world together, making cross-national or multi-national organizations possible with the low cost of communication (Simons & De Ridder, 2004). These changes contribute to the phenomenon of globalization, which emphasizes unified norms governing human beings' interactions at the expense of more local norms. This emphasis is against the essence of pragmatism. Pragmatism believes that there is no guarantee that everything works the same for everyone (James, 1991). In this specific context, the use of technologies is not the same in every culture. Pragmatism acknowledges that there is an increasingly shared reality across the world but it also acknowledges inherent differences that cannot be unified. As James (1991) stated, “...the world is one just so far as its parts hang together by any definite