



Understanding Public Social Media Use for Work. Content, Causes and Consequences.

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Summary

The multivalent involvement of public social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.) in both social and organizational life has raised a number of questions about how, to what extent, and with what effects organizational members use these technologies for work-related purposes. Yet, research has fallen short of providing adequate answers to questions about the *content*, *causes*, and *consequences* of public social media use for work. The central aim of this dissertation is to provide a more thorough understanding of public social media use for work.

In the first chapter of this dissertation work related social media content is examined. Chapter *one* provides a categorization of work-related social media messages. The study employed a manual content analysis, categorizing 38,124 tweets. The results show that work-related messages can broadly be classified into individual experiences, organizational news, and industry-related information. The categorization implies that employees who use social media to share work-related content adhere to individual –i.e., display experiences and knowledge – or collective goals – i.e., sharing organization related information. Furthermore, it is interesting to see that almost half of all work-related content is shared outside regular work hours, in the evenings and during the weekends. This confirms social technologies' ability to facilitate perpetual connectivity.

Chapter *two* builds on the findings presented in study one by exploring both individual and social drivers of work related information sharing on social media. Study *two* presents a mixed-methods study combining survey data with content analysis data. Survey measures on employees' desire for professional success and organizational identification were used to explain variance in manually coded work-related social media content they shared on Twitter. The results indicate that pride and respect are important predictors of desire to succeed and organizational identification. These underlying mechanisms, in turn, are related social sharing work-related social media messages. Specifically, a desire to succeed is associated with sharing individual experiences and knowledge about the industry, but to organizational information sharing. In turn, organizational identification is related to sharing work-related social media messages directly related to the organization, but not to content associated with individual experiences or knowledge about the industry. Furthermore, these mechanisms were not affected by encouragements of the organization for sharing information. These findings indicate that employees voluntarily use their public social media accounts to share individual experiences or organization-related information, depending on their identification with the organization or their commitment toward their own career.

The *third* chapter places social media center stage and combines this dissertation's focus by examining the mediating role of social media use in the relationship between boundary management preferences and work engagement.

There is general agreement that communication technologies—and social media, in particular—have made boundaries between work and life domains more permeable and destabilized the enactment of domain-specific roles in time and space. This chapter demonstrates that employees with a desire to integrate work and life domains enact these boundaries on public social media by sharing work-related content. In turn, this study aimed to unravel the causal ordering especially in the relationship between social media use and work engagement. The findings suggest social media use has causal priority over engagement, indicating that work-related social media use increases engagement.

The *fourth* chapter acknowledges that the relationship between social media use and engagement might be more complex by including opposing mechanism. Communication technologies and social media are associated with several advantages and challenges. This chapter draws on the job demands and resources model to propose a framework of social media related resources – i.e., advantages – and demands – i.e., disadvantages – which in are related to engagement and exhaustion. The findings suggest social media, on the one hand, increase work-life conflicts and interruptions, while on the other hand increasing communication efficiency and accessibility. These opposing mechanisms are in turn related to engagement and exhaustion.

The *fifth* chapter draws on paradox literature and examines the presence of an autonomy paradox the context of social media use. Additionally, this study examines the role of the norm to be responsive to technological demands. The findings demonstrate that employees who feel a stronger need to being responsive fail to reap autonomy benefits from social media use. The effect of social media use on work pressure was not affected. These findings add to the paradox literature by demonstrating that there are specific conditions – i.e., the norm of responsiveness - under which positive or negative effects might be more profound.

Finally, chapter *six* addresses social media's dark side. Over the past decades advancements in communication technologies have been increasingly linked to the blurring of boundaries between different life domains. As groups (e.g., family, friends and colleagues) and content (e.g., professional and personal) collapse into one context on social networks the potential for role conflicts increases. This suggests that social media use for work induce time, strain and behavior-based based work/life conflict, as it complicates, rather than aids, role transitions. This suggests social media use for work requires psychological expenditure that extracts from the finite resources available causing role conflicts. Additionally, this study demonstrated that the presence of social media policies in organizations did not hamper these effects.