

Social Content Management Systems: Challenges and Potential for Organizations

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Abstract At around the time of the new millennium, Enterprise Content Management (ECM), a concept for the enterprise-wide management of information, emerged. However, the trend toward adapting social media technology brings a new situation for ECM, as organizations are challenged to manage diverse “social content” from social media in order to ensure quality and compliance. At the same time new opportunities arise from social content as a powerful asset for creating business value. Recognizing the importance of social content has led to the development of a new generation of information systems, Social Content Management Systems (SCMS). SCMS are ECM systems that focus on the management of social content. SCMS have yet to receive much attention in research, particularly in terms of their potential benefits and the challenges organizations may face in using them. This paper evaluates the importance, potential benefits, and challenges of SCMS for organizations through a survey of 89 professionals from several countries and industries. For the survey we draw on challenges and potential addressed in the existing literature of SCMS and social media use in organizations.

1 Introduction

Organizations are continuously challenged by the management of increasing amounts and varieties of digital information types and formats [24]. Particularly the management of unstructured information, such as emails, presentations, and Word documents, which constitutes around 80 % of an organization’s information

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assets [13], presents major difficulties. Around the time of the new millennium, Enterprise Content Management (ECM) a concept for the enterprise-wide management of information, emerged [13, 14, 23]. ECM can be defined as “the strategies, tools, processes, and skills an organization needs to manage its information assets over their lifecycle” [20].

The emergence of social media in organizations has created a paradigm shift in how people interact and communicate [1, 16]. Organizations have come to recognize the benefits of using social media technology for internal purposes, such as improved collaboration and knowledge sharing [15]. However, the growing use of social media in organizations has also led to high volumes of social content [6] which are not managed by most organizations yet. Nevertheless, it has to be acknowledged that social content, such as expert answers, team chats, and blogs, can be powerful business assets for creating business value over time [1]. Managing and controlling social content may further play an important role for quality and compliance purposes [1]. Recognizing the importance of controlling social content over its entire lifecycle has led to the development of a new generation of information systems for the management of content that is created through using social media, Social Content Management Systems (SCMS).

SCMS are ECM systems that focus in particular on the management of social content [6, 8]. Vendors promise that, through SCMS, organizations can enhance information sharing, improve collaboration, and increase productivity (e.g., [3, 11]). However, research has yet to systematically investigate SCMS, particularly in terms of the organizational need for SCMS and its potential and challenges.

In order to address this gap, we draw potential benefits and challenges from existing literature on SCMS as well as organizational use of social media and conducted a survey with 89 professionals from eleven industries in seven countries. Our evaluation of the potential and challenges of SCMS is not meant to be exhaustive but to provide a starting point for discussions on the significance of the emerging concept of SCMS.

The paper is structured as follows: First, we provide general background about SCMS and its potential benefits and challenges, drawn from the existing literature. Next, we give an overview of the data collection process (Sect. 3) and present the results of the study (Sect. 4). Then Sect. 5 discusses selected results of the study, and Sect. 6 concludes the paper with a brief summary as well as the implications and limitations of the study.

2 Background

2.1 Social Content Management Systems

SCMS is a new generation of ECM systems. The term “social content management,” coined by software vendors, refers to traditional ECM systems with built-in social media functionalities, such as commenting, chats, or blogs, that are designed to

manage content in a social world [6]. SCMS create an environment for communication and collaboration with a business purpose that provides information and content for discussions and is able to capture the results of these discussions [8].

The use of social media in organizations can be distinguished in two ways: the internal perspective, which is the use of social media technology within the organization to make employees more productive [7], and the external perspective, which uses social media technology to connect with customers, business partners, suppliers, or other external parties [19]. These two perspectives can also be differentiated in terms of how the social content is managed: the internal perspective refers to the creation and management of social content through the use of social media within the organization, while the external perspective refers to the controlled generation and publication of content on external social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Xing. Although some SCMS offer both functionalities, this article focuses on the internal perspective of managing social content.

The next section discusses some of the potential benefits associated with SCMS that have been presented in the literature

2.2 SCMS Potential

The literature has reported a number of potential benefits in the context of social media usage in organizations and SCMS. One major benefit of using social media in organizations is *transparency* [4, 27]. SCMS can support transparency by capturing social content, such as interactions and discussions between employees. This transparency supports organizations in complying with legal regulations but can also be used to generate business value.

Another potential benefit mentioned in the literature is that of *improving organizational knowledge management* [1, 18, 22] by capturing social content in SCMS and providing the content to other employees in the form of, for example, FAQs and wikis. This benefit is in line with *improving communication and interaction* in the organization [27], a potential benefit mentioned in the context of social media usage in organizations. SCMS support communication and interaction by providing tools needed for communication, such as chats or forums, and it supports interaction by making required content available to fellow employees.

Especially for teams that are geographically dispersed, such a virtual social environment can help to *overcome geographical barriers* [1, 12]. This environment provides easy-to-use virtual communication tools and ensures that all group members have the same level of knowledge by facilitating their ability to follow the activities in the environment independent of their location or time zone.

Another potential benefit of SCMS mentioned in the literature is *improvement of the team efficiency*, such that teams can achieve the same results in collaborative projects in shorter times [1] because of social media technology and the availability of required content. Finally, through a social environment that supports interaction and communication, organizations can realize *cost reductions* by minimizing the

need for travel and reducing communication that uses more expensive, traditional communication tools, such as telephones and fax machines [2, 27].

The next section presents some of the challenges organizations may face when adopting SCMS.

2.3 SCMS Challenges

A common challenge reported in the context of social business systems in general is the *reluctance of the users to contribute* [2]. Differences in age, personal attitudes toward social media, and hierarchical positions in the organization are just a few of the factors that can influence willingness to use such a system. SCMS that no one uses are clearly no benefit for the organization.

The second challenge concerning the use of social media in organizations is the additional *cost of usage* in terms of time and effort [21]. For an employee, contributing to SCMS may mean the expenditure of additional effort or time that he or she may not be willing to make if it is faster and easier simply to call or meet with someone to solve a problem. Another issue that has been mentioned in the literature is the *system as a barrier* if willing users perceive using SCMS as difficult and cumbersome [9]. Especially for people who are minimally IT-adept, this might hold them back from contributing to virtual communication and interaction.

Another possible challenge is that presented by users who are just *not willing to share any information or knowledge* because they fear losing power by giving up their exclusive hold on information to an environment like SCMS [26]. In addition, while transparency created through SCMS can be an important benefit for organizations, for employees it might be perceived as a threat since *transparency* also allows organizations to monitor an employee's actions and interactions. For example, organizations might be able to identify the person responsible for errors or problems, leaving the employee fearful of consequences and sanctions [17].

Finally, a challenge reported in the context of using social media technology in organizations is the *codification of knowledge* [25], which refers to the transfer of knowledge into accessible and applicable formats [5]. Although people might have the skills and knowledge to contribute in a social environment, in some cases it might not be possible to transfer their knowledge into a format that can be communicated easily.

The next section begins our report on the empirical study we conducted in November 2012.

3 Study Overview

We conducted a survey to evaluate the potential benefits and challenges of SCMS, to measure its importance from the internal and external perspectives and to assess the use of social media in organizations. Most of the survey questions used a

5-point Likert scale (1 = “very unimportant” to 5 = “very important”), with the option to mark items as “I can’t say”. After conducting a pretest to ensure the questions’ comprehensibility, we slightly rephrased some of the questions. Data from the pretest was not further considered. The survey was then distributed as a paper questionnaire at a practitioner conference in Austria and was in addition transferred in an electronic version via email to professionals in Switzerland, Austria, Liechtenstein, and Germany.

The survey returned 89 valid responses. The software IBM SPSS Statistics 20 was used for data analysis. The size of the organizations the respondents represented ranged from 1 to more than 10,000 employees. However, about half of the organizations had fewer than 500 employees. Forty-three percent of the organizations were from the manufacturing branch, 11 % were from the information and communication branch, and another 11 % were from the financial activities branch. While the turnover of the organizations ranged from less than 500,000 euros to more than 10 billion euros, most of the organizations (66 %) had a turnover between 1 million and 5 billion euros.

The next section presents the results of the study.

4 Study Results

Nearly 80 % of the respondents reported that their organizations are using social media. Comparing the size of the organization with the use of social media in organizations showed a significant ($p = 0.002$) positive correlation (contingency coefficient: $c = 0.4$).

More respondents who indicated that their companies were using social media agreed that it is used more for internal communication (3.2) than for external communication (3.0). When asked what type of social media technology is used in the organization, 60 % named messaging, 59 % wikis, 51 % project sites, and between 20 and 26 % for newsfeeds, forums and blogs. Although they played a secondary role, forums ($c = 0.404$) and blogs ($c = 0.423$) showed a significant ($p < 0.003$) positive correlation with the organization size.

Nearly 33 % of respondents from organizations that use social media for internal communication said that their organizations store content created in this way, while another nearly 23 % stated that they didn’t know. Around 44 % reported that their organizations provide stored social content to other employees, so more people agreed that social content is provided to other employees than that the content is stored in the organization.

We asked the respondents to evaluate the importance of SCMS in their organizations’ internal and external communications, and most confirmed that both perspectives were important for their organizations. However, the average value shows a slightly higher result for the internal (3.3) than for the external perspective (3.1). Comparing the organization size with these results showed a low but significant ($p = 0.002$) correlation (Kendall-tau b: $\tau = 0.248$) between the size of the

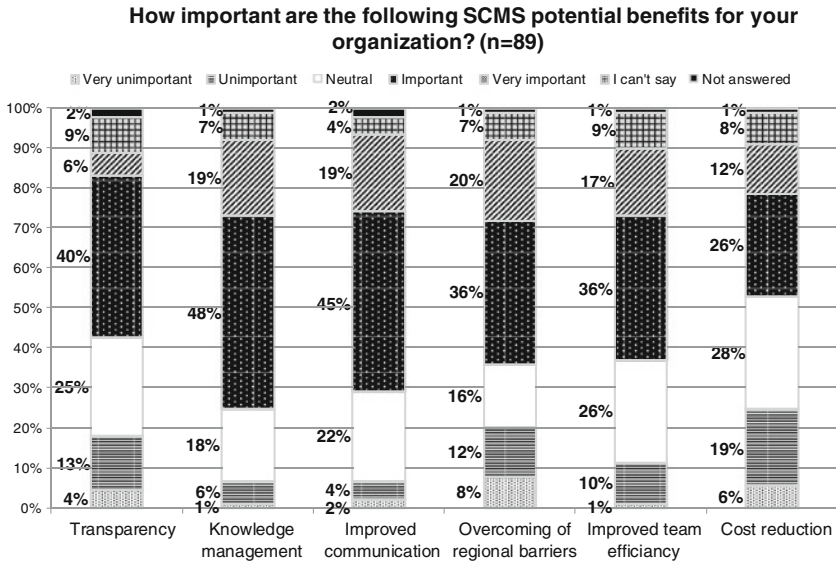


Fig. 1 SCMS potential

organization and the importance of SCMS for the internal perspective. However, no relationship was identified for the external perspective.

Finally, we asked for the respondents’ assessment of the identified SCMS potential benefits for their organizations. All SCMS potential benefits had a value above 3, so all were rated as important.

The two highest-rated SCMS potential benefits were knowledge management (3.9) and improved communication (3.8), whereas cost reduction (3.2) had the lowest value (Fig. 1). The average number of people who couldn’t evaluate the importance of the SCMS potential benefits was only 7 %. With one exception, we found no relationships between SCMS potential benefits and demographic data like organization size, branch, or turnover: there is a low but significant ($p = 0.003$) correlation ($\tau = 0.241$) between the potential of costs savings and turnover.

The respondents rated the challenges of SCMS lower than the benefits (see Fig. 2). All challenges had an average value around 3, with problems with knowledge codification (3.4) and reluctance of the user (3.3) the two highest-rated challenges, and cost of usage (2.9) the lowest-rated. The average number of people who couldn’t rate the challenges was again relatively low, at 7 %. We tested for correlations between demographic data and the challenges and found no significant relationships.

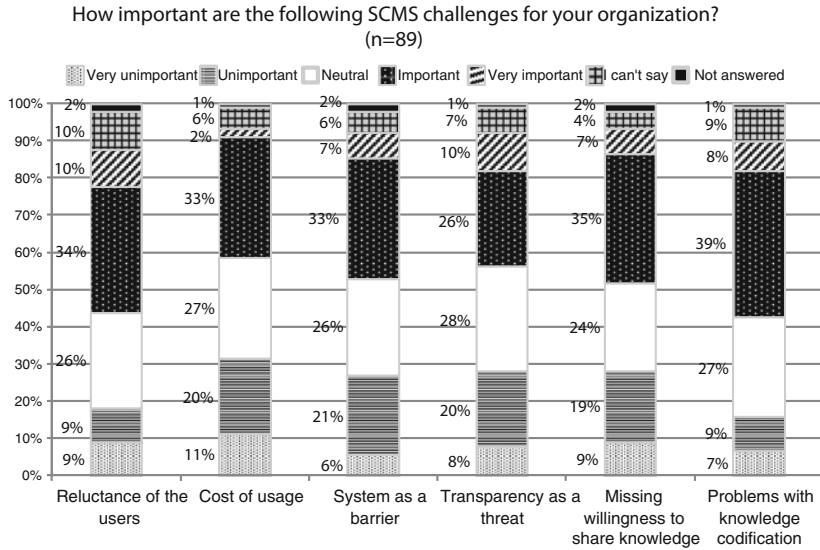


Fig. 2 SCMS challenges

5 Discussion of Selected Results

This section focuses on a few selected results from the survey that concern mainly the SCMS potential benefits and challenges. The results suggest that organizations in general recognize the importance of SCMS, especially for the internal perspective, and that the SCMS potential benefits tend to be rated in average higher (3.6) than the challenges (3.2), although the difference is moderate.

Interesting is also the fact that the reduction of costs has the lowest value of the SCMS potential benefits, although it still has a value above 3. This indicates that for organizations improving their practices by enhancing their knowledge management, communication, and team efficiency has a higher importance than reducing costs.

Another finding worth review is that improving knowledge management was suggested as the biggest potential benefit of SCMS (3.9), while problems with knowledge codification was rated as the biggest challenge (3.4). The two items are moderately but significantly correlated (Pearson’s R: $r = 0.508$; $p < 0.001$). Previous research has shown that the conversion of tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge is often problematic and time-consuming (e.g., [5]), and the present research shows that organizations also see knowledge codification as a problem in the context of SCMS.

It is also interesting that the costs of usage had the lowest rating among the SCMS challenges. A qualitative study we conducted in the area of ECM showed that users are often not willing to spend additional time and effort using systems, including ECM systems, to store and search for information and content [10], even

though doing so would benefit the organization. The study also showed that users would rather use faster and easier ways to get their work done, such as calling a colleague [10]. Nevertheless, it seems that the participants in the SCMS survey did not perceive this challenge as highly problematic.

Finally, we find that neither the SCMS potential benefits nor the challenges are related to any particular organization size, branch, or level of turnover, suggesting that these potential benefits and challenges are likely to be of concern to any organization.

6 Conclusion

The present paper reports on an emerging concept of SCMS through a survey fielded to evaluate the relevance of the SCMS' potential benefits and challenges drawn from existing literature. The survey, which was conducted with 89 professionals from several countries and industries, also assessed the importance of SCMS for organizations and the organizational adoption of social media. The study is not meant to be exhaustive but should be seen as a first attempt to understand the relevance of SCMS for organizations.

The results indicate that organizations have recognized the importance of SCMS, especially for their internal communications. Further, there were above-average ratings for all of the potential benefits of SCMS, particularly improving knowledge management and enhancing internal communication. The challenges of SCMS were rated somewhat lower, but the results still indicate that the challenges are relevant for organizations, particularly the challenge related to knowledge codification.

For research this study is an initial step in investigating the emerging concept of SCMS and its relevance for organizations. Practitioners can gain an understanding of what organizations could gain through SCMS but also what challenges they might face when using SCMS.

The study's limitations include the comparatively small number of survey participants, which cannot be considered representative. In addition, the survey addresses only a few selected SCMS potential benefits and challenges and cannot be seen as exhaustive. However, the study should be understood as a good starting point from which to begin to understand SCMS and its relevance to organizations. We will address this study's limitations through further research.

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