Chapter 3
Exploring Determinants of Knowledge Sharing in a Social Network of Practice

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Abstract Network of practice (NoP) operating on social media have been rapidly grown in recent years since the social media allows users not only to create contents, but also to interact with each other. A new type of NoP using social networking services (SNS) is defined as a social network of practice (sNoP). SNoP involves a collection of individuals who communicate, collaborate, and exchange knowledge openly with others sharing a common practice. Relatively little has been published focusing on the factors that influence the participation in knowledge sharing within the sNoP. This study focuses on the determinants of knowledge sharing in sNoP whose inquiry requires not only social theories, but also socio-technical views. Building on the social cognitive theory, the social capital theory, and the technology acceptance theory, this research-in-progress paper aims to explore how personal cognition, social capital, and technology acceptance attitude affect knowledge sharing in sNoP.

Keywords Social network · Network of practice · Social network services · Knowledge sharing

3.1 Introduction

In the knowledge economy, social networks play a critical role since knowledge work is often getting done through knowledge sharing. Recently with the explosion
of social media, social networks enter a new level. Social media empower individuals to form social networks not only of personal relationships, but also of the shared interest or practice. In particular, using SNS like Facebook and Twitter, practitioners engage in social interaction, exchange information, and share their knowledge through a wide variety of devices.

As more people communicate, interact, and socialize through social media, both businesses and academics are keenly interested in understanding the factors affecting the participation in sNoP. This is because the sustainability and success of sNoP are dependent upon the participation in knowledge sharing. Understanding the factors of the participation in sNoP is of concern to organizations, which want to create value from the use of social media. Academics have been interested in theorizing factors that influence knowledge sharing in communities and networks [8, 18, 33, 35].

This study focuses on the determinants of knowledge sharing in sNoP whose inquiry requires not only social theories, but also socio-technical views. Drawing on the social cognitive theory, the social capital theory, and the technology acceptance theory, this paper proposes a model and tests it with a sNoP of IT professionals in Korea to explore determinants of knowledge sharing through social networks. This study contributes to the literature by exploring determinants of individuals’ participation in sNoP through a holistic view by considering the context not only of social but also of technical factors.

The paper is organized as follows: after an overview of the new issues of knowledge sharing in sNoP, literature review is summarized in Sect. 3.2. Sect. 3.3 provides a research model with hypotheses to explore determinants of member participation in sNoP. Sect. 3.4 discusses the plan of an empirical study for the research model developed. Conclusions and expected contributions are discussed in Sect. 3.5.

3.2 Backgrounds and Literature Review

3.2.1 Knowledge Sharing through Social Media

The importance of using social connections and social relations in achieving goals is well understood. It is through these informal networks—not just through traditional organizational hierarchies—that information or knowledge is acquired and work gets done [38]. Individuals are no longer restricted by the formally commanded relationships in organizations or the organizational boundary.

When individuals have a common interest or are engaged in a similar practice, they create network of practice (NoP) to engage in knowledge sharing. Knowledge management discipline distinguishes two kinds of communities: community of practice (CoP) and NoP. In NoP, relations among network members are significantly looser than those within a CoP. In NoP, relations among members are loose and most of the people within such a network may never know or come across one