Social Media Platforms, Social Capital, and Idea Co-creation: Towards a Theory of Social Ideation

by

Pratyush Bharati, University of Massachusetts Boston
Kui Du, University of Massachusetts Boston
Abhijit Chaudhury, Bryant University
N. M. Agrawal, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore

Abstract: Social media has long been discussed as a rich source of information, knowledge, and new ideas, yet, whether or how it can directly intervene with organizational ideation processes remains unclear. In this study, we investigate the impact of external and enterprise social media platforms on organizational ideation. Grounded in seventy-nine cases and built by adapting social capital theory and its application in social media contexts, this paper attempts to develop a theory of social ideation. Social ideation consists of social media-enabled mechanisms that generate social capital and enable multi-level social exchanges, and then idea co-creation activities, including idea sourcing, filtering, elaboration, and integration, emerge from the dynamics of social exchanges that are lubricated by social capital and ultimately lead to better ideation performance. Our study contributes to social media and innovation research by developing a theory of social ideation that reveals the detailed intermediary mechanisms that link the use of social media platforms to organizations’ performance in generating ideas.

Keywords: Social Media, Social Capital, Idea Co-creation, Ideation, Innovation