Information Sharing on Social Media by Multicultural Individuals:
Experiential, Motivational, and Network Factors

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ABSTRACT

Drawing upon social cognitive and social network theories, this study examines individual-level and network-level factors which potentially affect multicultural individuals' information sharing behavior via social media. The data has been collected from the foreigners (multicultural individuals) who visited visa centers in three different cities in China. The proposed model tests a combined effect of past sharing experience (PE), trust (TR), perceived benefit (PB), perceived richness (RI), and information sharing attitude (ATT) on information sharing behavior (Beh). The data has been analyzed through structural equation modeling (SEM). The results illustrate PE, TR, and PB positively affects ATT which further influences Beh. Since scant studies focus on information sharing behavior of multicultural individuals, this research contributes to the IS literature, particularly to the information sharing via social media in a multicultural perspective. The results are likely to be useful guidance for practitioners and scholars intending to evaluate social media information sharing behavior.

KEYWORDS

Experiential Factors, Information Sharing Factors, Motivational Factors, Multicultural Individuals, Network Factors, Social Media, Structural Equation Modeling, WeChat

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, online information sharing has become so convenient that has never been before. Today, social media platforms are turned into interesting multicultural phenomena for sharing information throughout the world. In recent years, the popularity of social media platforms have reached to new heights, as the monthly active users of Facebook surpassed 2.45 billion users having multicultural backgrounds as of 3rd quarter, 2019 (Facebook, 2019). Almost more than half of the world's population is using social media platforms to receive, share and re-share information (Tan & Lee, 2019). In this globalized world, social media such as Facebook, Twitter, WeChat, etc. provide a favorable environment where information can be shared smoothly and frequently among multicultural individuals, despite their geographical and cultural differences (Boamah, 2018). Longley (2019), defined *"multicultural individuals are the members of a society where people with different nationalities, languages, religions and ethnicities living together. People with different cultures have different traditions, lifestyles or imagine of values and ethics (p. 3)"*. Information sharing via social media platforms can broadly be categorized into four – sensitive, sensational, political and causal, having two dimensions: dynamic and static (Lewis, 2010; Boamah, 2018). In addition, the social media platforms such as WeChat, WhatsApp, Facebook, and MySpace deal with the daily usage, sharing and exchange of information to meet the socio-emotional desires of the multicultural users (Shang et al., 2017).

The decision to share information via a medium is psychologically associated with a combination of motivational factors and network factors (Liu et al., 2016). Therefore, individuals cannot deny the perceived benefits (motivational factors) as they can anticipate and expect to acquire while participating in a virtual setup (Zhang et al., 2017). These benefits and values ultimately influence users' satisfaction which can affect users' loyalty towards a social medium and their sharing behavior (Lien et al., 2017).

The information sharing behavior via social media varies from culture to culture, people to people and also society to society (Boamah, 2018). There is substantial literature examining information sharing behavior of monocultural individuals; however the literature about multicultural individuals' information sharing behavior via social media platforms is still sparse. A few studies have investigated the antecedents of Facebook use in a specific culture and environment (Zhang et al., 2019). There are two studies primarily focused on Chinese and Italian cultures that examined the factors affecting users' intention to share and seek health information on a medium by using net valence model (Li et al., 2018). Another cross cultural research has been conducted to do a comparative analysis of Instagram usage in Croatian and the U.S. culture – evaluated the relation between motives and outcome behavior (Sheldon et al., 2017). Their findings revealed that gratifications of a specific society, nation or masses determine the patterns of social medium (Instagram) usage and further they speculated that user's culture also plays a moderating role.

In addition, previous studies have limited descriptions about experiential factors which could be considered as one of the main antecedents of information sharing on a social media platform among multicultural individuals. It is the experiential factor (media experience) which brings forth the capability to use a medium in a proper manner (Yu et al., 2017). Therefore, by considering experiential factors (past sharing experience) as an essential factor along with motivational and network factors, it is important to understand the factors influencing multicultural individuals' decision to share information and content via a social media platform. To fill this research gap, the current study put forwards a comprehensive set of hypotheses and a model based upon social cognitive theory (SCT) and social network theory (SNT) which entails the effect of experiential, motivational and network factors.

SCT posits that individuals adopt optimistic behavior through experiencing, learning and observing others' actions and weighing the potential benefits (Bandura, 1986; Liu & Bakici, 2019). SCT further suggests that in order to adopt a social media platform by multicultural individuals for information sharing, the selection of a social media platform may be influenced by the users' (prior) experience (Bandura, 1997; Chang, 2018). Individuals having past experience in participating on

a social media platform are the most active users and likely to have more positive attitude towards expected outcomes (Hsu et al., 2007; Liu & Bakici, 2019; Qin et al., 2019).

SCT also describes that individuals are more likely to perform a positive action when they perceive trustworthiness and optimistic approach towards outcomes (Bandura, 1986). In the light of SCT users' information sharing attitude – behavior will be affected by the motivational factors (i.e. Trust and Perceived Benefits) (Butler et al., 2007; Lin & Chang, 2018). It means that higher relative values and benefits offered by a social media platform will increase the willingness of adoption for information sharing (Bandura, 2001; Qin et al., 2019).

Besides SCT, SNT further enunciates about the network factors such as, innovation with in a medium, information sufficiency of a platform, perceived complexity and perceived richness (in terms of network size and quality) which can be considered as key antecedents of information sharing attitude – behavior on a social media platform (Shang et al., 2017; Sullivan & Koh, 2019). The SNT explains the flow of information and asserts that the social media platforms or social networks can control the flow of information by enabling as well as restraining the flow of content and information among actors, groups and organizations (Liu et al., 2016). It stresses on the arrangement of network and interaction ties among its members (Caniëls & Romijn, 2008). Further, Shang et al. (2017) explained that the network feature as richness (RI) – the magnitude or the quality of information flow among the actors/users in a specific network.

In light of the rationale explained above, it is important to understand the factors influencing multicultural individuals' decision to share information via a social media platform. Besides, this study identifies the reasons that why most of the multicultural individuals are psychologically motivated towards a social media platform for information sharing. Based on foregoing discussions, this study aims to explore the answers of the following important research questions:

- What are the reasons behind multicultural individuals' selection of a social media platform for information sharing?
- How and why multicultural individuals are psychologically motivated to frequently use a social medium for information sharing and content exchange?
- What influences the multicultural individuals' acceptance and selection of social media platform?

The remainders of this study are organized as follows: theoretical background, research model and hypotheses, methodology, data analysis, discussion implications, limitations and future research, and finally conclusion.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Social Cognitive Theory

This study is based upon the combination of social cognitive theory (SCT) and social network theory (SNT). SCT was introduced by Bandura in 1970s and value-added onwards till 2009 (Bandura, 2009). Primarily, SCT is a psychological theory and has been widely used in research across a range of disciplines, including information science, sociology, organizational behavior, media studies, etc. (Lee, & Ma, 2012; Lin & Chang, 2018). SCT elaborates how individuals within a social system or network enact numerous human practices such as the adoption and usage of knowledge and information (Middleton et al., 2019). SCT proposes that the acquiring and disseminating of information and knowledge is based on certain expertise which totally rely on 'enactive prior experiences', i.e. direct experience of tasks (Gong et al., 2009). Cho et al. (2010) identified that those with higher past expertise and experiences are more likely to share information within their online communities. Furthermore, Lee, & Ma (2012) speculated that according to SCT, social media user's behavior could be influenced by his/her past experience. Because, past social media experience could assist users to master complex tasks and enhance the perceived usefulness (Hsu et al., 2007).

Although in previous IS studies, the implementation of SCT has not been fully focused, particularly in the research related to information sharing behavior and usage (Pálsdóttir, 2013; Case & Given, 2016). Pálsdóttir (2013) argues that SCT has been considered a valuable theory to evaluate the motivational factors (e.g. intrinsic benefits, extrinsic benefits & trust) which may influence the information seeking and sharing practices within a community. Therefore, the authors in this study applied SCT to examine the effect of experiential factor (i.e. past sharing experience) and motivational factors (i.e. trust and perceived benefits) on information sharing attitude-behavior via social media platform by multicultural individuals. Besides, it could be also predicted that this study will extend the understandings of SCT as a worthy tool for theory development in various domains related to individuals' social media information behaviors.

Social Network Theory

Social network theory describes how a social medium or network enables and restrains the resources and information flow among the actors, and hence influences their attitudes and behaviors (Akar & Dalgic, 2018). It elaborates the importance of network structure and information exchange among the nodes (actors) within the network (Caniëls & Romijn, 2008). SNT was promoted by Granovetter (1973) and defined as 'the study of how the social structure of relationships around a person, group, or organization affects beliefs or behaviors' (Rosenblatt 2013; Akar & Dalgic, 2018; Nam & Seong, 2020). It has been applied in numerous research domains including health, e commerce, psychology, information science, etc. (Fowler & Christakis, 2008, Akar & Dalgic, 2018; Nam & Seong, 2020).

According to SNT in a medium or network individuals, groups and organizations are connected by a set of meaningful social relationships and who mutually exchange ideas, values and information among one an another (Nam & Seong, 2020). It has been speculated that SNT primarily used to analysis the network factors e.g. perceived richness (RI) in a social medium or social network (Liu et al., 2016). It stresses on the arrangement of network and interaction ties among its members (Caniëls & Romijn, 2008). With regard to the network factors, social media richness can be represented as wide range of information propagated among multiple user contacts instantly (Liu et al., 2016). Further, Shang et al. (2017) explained that the network factor – richness (RI) as the magnitude or the quality of information flow among the actors/users in a specific network. As a distinctive network factor – RI has certain effects on users' cognitive sharing decisions via on a social platform (Liu et al., 2016). Therefore from the perspective of SNT, this study analysis the network factor – RI influencing multicultural individuals' information sharing attitude-behavior via social media.

In sum, the objective of this study is to investigate the experiential, motivational and network factors influencing multicultural individuals' information sharing behavior in the context of social media. Hence, the authors extend prior work by based upon the combination of SCT and SNT to explain experiential (PE), motivational (TR & PB) and network (RI) factors influencing multicultural individuals' information sharing behavior in social media. More specifically, the adoption of SCT and SNT in this study will help to fill the gaps and address the knowledge related to: (1) the reasons behind multicultural individuals' selection of a social media platform for information sharing; (2) How and why multicultural individuals are psychologically motivated to frequently use a social medium for information sharing and content exchange? (3) What influences the multicultural individuals' acceptance and selection of social media platform? This will contribute to the development of a framework which presents a clear picture of information sharing behavior via social media in a multicultural perspective.

Related Studies

In the current information age, multicultural individuals have myriads of options, means and latitudes to share and exchange information, audio/video and all sorts of contents through social media to a broader array of audience. There are numerous social media platforms; however, the popular platforms among multicultural individuals based on number of active users are Facebook, Twitter,

Instagram, WhatsApp; while WeChat and Weibo in China. All these social media platforms are used for computer-mediated communication.

Holistically, a social media platform presents the idea of content communities which is defined as: the exchange and sharing of information, ideas and content among the diverse or multicultural users of a social media platform (Zhu & Chhachhar, 2016). According to Zhu and Chhachhar (2016), users of all social media platforms (such as WeChat, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Myspace, etc.) have their own account or homepage. They can easily exchange and share all sort of content, including text, images, audio, and video etc.

Table 1. Related studies on Information sharing and social media platforms

Literature	Context	Theory	Independent Variable	Moderating/ Mediating Variables	Dependent Variables
Hu, et al., 2017.	Content share on Facebook	Experiential Learning Theory	Multicultural experiences, Informational social media usage & socializing social media usage	cultural intelligence	Creativity
Tan & Lee., 2019	electronic-word-of-mouth on online social networking sites		Tie strength between the sWOM author and the readers, sWOM readers' product knowledge	sWOM readers' perceptions of the author's expertise, & sWOM readers' perceptions of the author's marketing persuasiveness	sWOM message credibility sWOM message adoption
Qin et al., 2019	social tagging approach in an online knowledge community	TAM & SCT	Self-efficacy, Social Influence, Perceived Ease of Use, & Perceived Usefulness	Attitude	Behavior Intention

Previous literature regarding information sharing on social media, primarily relied on users' motivation and their attitude, towards well-known social media platforms such as Facebook and Ren-Ren (a Chinese social media platform) – covering only specific countries(Chang & Zhu, 2011; Chu et al., 2011; Lien & Cao, 2014; Lien et al., 2017). In addition, individual's motivational factors are considered as driving forces to influence information sharing behavior via social media platforms (Tan & Lee, 2019; Qin et al., 2019). Furthermore, at network level, timeliness of information, technology readiness, information sufficiency, perceived complexity, perceived complementary and perceived richness are important network factors which may potentially affect users' information sharing behavior (Shang et al., 2017; Chang, 2018; Chen et al., 2018; Sullivan & Koh, 2019). We found fewer studies exploring the multicultural individuals' information sharing practices on social media platforms (Hu, 2017). Nowadays, due to advancement in internet-based technologies and social media Apps, information sharing and communication is considered as a routine practice among cross cultural and multicultural individuals (Hu, 2017; Wenninger et al., 2019). Hence, the authors define "multicultural individuals as a set of people from different countries having heterogeneous cultures live together, celebrate together and share things and ideas together". Therefore, the concept of information sharing in a multicultural perspective involves the values, beliefs and behaviors that influence the ways in

which multicultural individuals identify how they seek, evaluate, interpret and share information with others by using a medium (Boamah, 2018). Besides, there is limited research about the experiential factors of information sharing behavior. To fill this research gap, this study presents an empirical analysis based on experiential factors along with motivational and network factors which may influence multicultural individuals' information sharing behavior via social media platforms.

Past Sharing Experience

While the technology used to share online information – internet connectivity or Wi-Fi has been common, few studies found that information sharing through electronic media will be affected by sufficient technical expertise (Kim et al., 2015; Qin et al., 2019). Some scholars have suggested that users' experience about different social media features will positively affect their intentions to share e-content and information via social media platforms (Kim et al., 2015). Social cognitive theory (SCT) considers experiential factors (past sharing experience) which may influence information sharing attitude-behavior (Lee & Ma, 2012). Moreover, prior media expertise guides users to accomplish different tasks effectively by strengthening their caliber and abilities (Hsu et al., 2007; Qin et al., 2019). Past social media expertise may also increase users' belief in social media which may positively affects content sharing behavior (Lee & Ma, 2012).

Users particularly the young multicultural users tend to switch and navigate through various social media applications and desire to experience different kind of usage patterns. However, nowadays social media platforms (such as WeChat, WhatsApp, Facebook, etc.) have enough similarities in their operations and functions, as majority of them provide a generic purpose of information and content sharing, video/audio calls, and group conversation.

Trust

In addition to aforementioned factors, users' intention to share information through virtual communities is also influenced by trust (Benson, 2019). Trust controls information sharing because sharing activities create a flow process of information, ideas, and knowledge to others (Hsu et al., 2007). The perceived trust results in reciprocal responses from others in a network in the form of information re-sharing, commenting or liking the post (Shao & Yin, 2019).

According to SCT, individual's thoughts and perceptions influence trust that further affects actual behavior (Han et al., 2019). There are two different types of trust: *Cognitive trust* which is developed due to high-quality relationship based on trustworthiness, and *Affective trust* which is the result of emotional attachments between truster and trusties (Shao & Yin, 2019). Both *Cognitive* and *Affective* trust positively affects information sharing among multicultural groups and individuals (Hsu et al., 2007). Trust is based on positive expectations and others response behaviors (Han et al., 2019). Therefore, voluntary sharing behavior in online communities could be predicted by individuals' trust (Xu et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2015).

Perceived Benefit

Perceived benefit (PB), a key motivational factor and considered as combination of expected outcomes (convenient, quick accessibility, secured, entertainment, etc.). PB is the end value which an individual expects to acquire by using a new system or platform (Qin et al., 2019). A motivational factor identified in the light of SCT is users' perceived benefit (PB) from their behavior perspective (Butler et al., 2007). SCT further explains that the individuals are more likely to perform a positive action when they perceive it may bring forth significant and productive outcomes (Bandura, 1986; Lee & An, 2018; Qin et al., 2019).

Studies about IS usage examined the relationship between perceived benefits and individuals' behaviors, focusing on social responses and self-evaluative outcomes (Kim et al., 2015). Some studies argued that PBcould be in the form of financial incentives, support knowledge and productive information sharing behavior among workers (Bock et al., 2005; Lee & An, 2018). PB influences

the users' intention to share information as opposed to perceived risk (Lee et al., 2013). Therefore, it can be speculated that more multicultural individuals are psychologically motivated to opt those media platforms which possess attractive expected benefits.

Perceived Richness

Social network theory (SNT) entails that the importance of network factor – richness (RI) in accepting a social media platform for information sharing (Shang et al., 2017). SNT describes the exchange of ideas, information, services and goods among diversified individuals in a specific network (Khan et al., 2019). It also explains the network features – RI in users and facilities possessed by a media platform. Higher in RI, motivates people to share information in a network (Liu, 2016).

Due to fast development and innovations in social media technologies, a social media platform can withhold multiple users with multicultural backgrounds by offering them latest and distinctive network qualities. According to Evans and Wurster (2000), RI is the quality of information flowed through a network. It is strongly associated with the offered facilities i.e. the information flow quality, reliability, and appropriateness of information offered by social media platforms (Guo et al., 2017). Therefore, in the light of above discussion, RI is considered as one of a key antecedent of information sharing behavior on a social media platform.

Attitude - Behavior

In the attitude-behavior phenomenon, attitude is characterized by individual's tendency to like or dislikes a product, service, or place, etc. (Zhao et al., 2018). Behavior is the performed action based on attitude (Bandura, 2001; Han et al., 2018; Qin et al., 2019). According to the SCT, attitude is directly linked with individual's behavior (Bandura, 2001). Likewise, according to SNT, individual's attitude–behavior is influenced by the connection and relationship exists among the individuals within a network (Liu et al., 2016). The development of attitude is dependent on a combination of factors, such as perception, past experience, education, culture, trust, etc. (Alina, 2013). Attitude could be influenced by a set of utilitarian and hedonic factors (De Keyzer et al., 2017). In addition, it may induce pessimistic, optimistic, unfriendly or friendly actions in the form of resultant behavior. It is the attitude which brings forth behavioral intention to use or not to use a social media platform for information sharing and communication (Lien & Cao, 2014).

RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

By drawing on SCT and SNT, the proposed research model (as shown in Figure 1) is used to explore the factors that influence information sharing behavior of multicultural individuals via a social media platform.

Figure 1. Research model
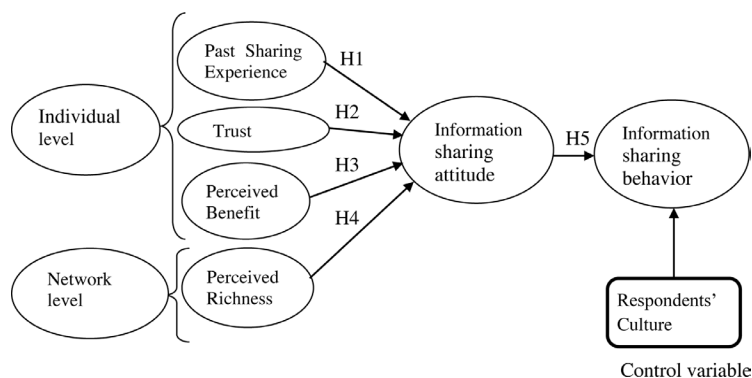
THEORETICAL RESEARCH MODEL

Past Sharing Experience and Information Sharing Attitude

According to SCT, person's abilities are based upon his/her experience – a capability that helps to perform a specific task (Bandura, 1997; Qin et al., 2019). Such capability, familiarity and acquaintance with a media platform may increase multicultural individuals' skills and knowledge. Social media experience is aligned with users' expectations and considered as a potential predictor of online participation behavior (Zhao et al., 2019). Furthermore, it is the prior social media experience which reveals the relationship existed among multicultural people, social media and its use. Therefore, the selection of related social media platform (for instances, WeChat, WhatsApp, and Facebook) depends on the level of past media experience.

By empirically studying the importance of past sharing experience (PE) which may affect multicultural individuals' information sharing via a social media platform; The authors put forward the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis One: Higher past sharing experience will produce higher effect on information sharing attitude.

Trust and Information Sharing Attitude

Trust is a main motivational factor which predicts user's confidence level and his/her willingness to belief in the other party (Moorman et al., 1992). People are more willing to share or re-share information with those who are the trusted ones (Shan et al., 2017). It is also considered as driver of attitude (Shin, 2010). A few studies described the effect of trust on information sharing attitude towards social media platforms like WeChat (Lien, et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2019). Trust in an online forum will positively influence individuals' attitude for its usage (Shih et al., 2013). It means that greater trust in a specific social media platform will increase the multicultural individuals' attitude towards adoption and use for sharing information and content with others.

In line with the SCT, the authors consider trust as an essential antecedent which may influence multicultural individuals' information sharing via a social media platform. Hence, the authors of this study propose the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis Two: Higher trust will bring forth higher information sharing attitude.

Perceived Benefit and Information Sharing Attitude

Perceived benefits are a combination of facilities and offers which can strengthen users' satisfaction, likeness (attitude) and attract new comers through infrastructure improvements to perform an actual behavior (Lien et al., 2017). Some previous studies have investigated the attitude and behavior towards technology usage that might be driven by its PBs and usefulness (Shang et al., 2017). In line with hypothesis (H3), substantial studies have confirmed the positive effects of PBs on users' intention which ultimately leads to actual behavior (Zhang et al., 2019). The decision to select a social media platform for information sharing is psychologically associated with expected benefits which might be gained by the individual against the adoption and information sharing (Shang et al., 2017).

Motivational incentive (benefit) is abstracted from the utility and usefulness of the adoptive behavior (Bundara, 2001; Qin et al., 2019). Therefore, in a multicultural perspective it can be inferred that better benefits provided by a network or platform will yield higher motivation towards its adoption for content and information exchange.

Hypothesis Three: Higher perceived benefits will bring forth higher information sharing attitude.

Perceived Richness and Information Sharing Attitude

Richness (RI) is also one of an important network factor which may affect information sharing attitude-behavior. RI explains the variety of quality information flow among individuals and how that information is processed in a specific network (Evans & Wurster, 2000; Shang et al., 2017). It is RI which represents the relationship among the actors and interaction ties due to which information flows in a network (Zhang et al., 2017). Nowadays among multicultural individuals the most accepted social media platforms are those which possess higher richness (Shang et al., 2017). It means that an individual is psychologically motivated to join that network which offers higher richness where he/she can share more information with multiple users.

In light of the above discussion, The authors can construe that RI will effect multicultural individuals' information sharing via a social media platform. Therefore, the authors hypothesize as:

Hypothesis Four: Perceived richness positively affect information sharing attitude.

Effect of Information Sharing Attitude on Information Sharing Behavior

Attitude is produced or expressed due to a series of factors: belief, experience, faith, information, predisposition, knowledge, etc. (Liu et al., 2015). It can be expressed according to the environment, need, and situation. By examining users' word of mouth (WOM), few researchers have identified that intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors and network environment can affect users' attitude which directly influence behavior (Lee & An, 2018). Besides, numerous studies asserted that attitude directs the decision making process and influences behavior (Bohner & Dickel, 2011; Lee & An, 2018). Therefore, studies have identified that positive attitude towards a social media platform encourages users to like, comment and share which is considered as positive sharing behavior by users on that media platform (Oeldorf-Hirsch & McGloin, 2017). Based on the above discussion, the authors of this study put forward the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis Five: The higher the level of information sharing attitude, the higher the level of information sharing behavior.

In addition to constructs of this study, the authors also consider respondents' culture as control variable because, as a whole the research respondents are belong to diversified and multcultural backgrounds. This will be helpful to know how the information sharing behavior of individuals having multicultural backgrounds are influenced via a social media platform.

METHODOLOGY

Research Setting

This study employs the quantitative research design and the data has been collected through an online survey. The research sample comprised of the foreigners-considered as multicultural individuals who visited selected visa centers situated in different cities/provinces in China. Multicultural individuals (foreigners) visited visa centers in three different cities and provinces (Changchun, Jilin; Kunming; Yunnan, and Beijing) were taken as target population. The questionnaire was disseminated among those multicultural individuals who are using WeChat (Chinese: ; pinyin: *Wēixìn*) as social medium. WeChat is the most popular social media platform in China and it is primarily used by the multicultural individuals (foreigners) for the sake of communication and information exchange. WeChat was introduced by Tencent Ltd., a Shenzhen based conglomerate, in January, 2011. WeChat is a multifunctional and multi-purpose social media App – providing services of text, video and audio calls, voice chat, mobile payments, etc. Crossing 1 billion monthly active users WeChat is increasingly

gaining popularity in China – given its convenience in downloading, user-friendliness and various features – and more so as of the absence of other social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter in mainland China (Tencent, 2019).

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire items have been taken from highly cited articles that have authentic and tested related survey instruments. Some questionnaire items were slightly altered. The items for past sharing experience (PE) were chosen from Lee and Ma, (2012); Lee et al. (2013). This instrument includes 3 items, measuring the multicultural individuals' past exposure to social media platforms (e.g. WeChat). PE entails how prior social medium experience influences information sharing. Trust (TR) was assessed by drawing on the items from Lien et al. (2014). This instrument consists of four reflective items which tells us about the free and frequent sharing attitude – behavior of multicultural individuals through a social media platform.. Perceived benefit (PB) was evaluated by the items chosen from Kim et al. (2015). Four reflective items can reflect outcomes due to which multicultural individuals select a social media platform from information sharing. The items for perceived richness (RI) were taken from Shang et al. (2017) and Zhang et al. (2017). Four items evaluate the network quality and the smooth flow of information among multicultural individuals via a social network or social media platform. The items for information sharing attitude (ATT) were adopted from Sukhu et al. (2015). There are three items to evaluate the multicultural individuals' information sharing attitude via a social media platform. Finally, the items for information sharing behavior (Beh) have been taken from Zhu and Chhachhar (2016) and Liou et al. (2016). Four reflective items reflect complete information sharing behavior (Beh) of multicultural individuals on a media platform. All items were measured with the help of seven-point likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"

In order to ensure the precision and authenticity of the research instrument and items, the questionnaire has been cross-examined by five PhD students studying business management. Subsequently, the questionnaire has been sent to two professors for their expert opinion and further revision and corrections. The instruments and items discussed are cited in Appendix.

Data Collection

Keeping in view the convenience of respondents and increasing use of online platforms for research, the data has been collected through an online survey platform, known as Questionnaire Star (a popular Chinese online questionnaire and voting platform; www.sojump.com). The survey ~spanned 35 days (from December 20, 2019 ~ January 25, 2020), and received 493 responses. After deleting the unqualified responses, 436 correct and valid questionnaires were retained.

Demographic Information

Table 2 summarizes demographic statistics. 51.14% of respondents are males and 34.86% respondents are 26 to 30 years old. For respondents' education, 23.62% are doing masters. In term of daily usage, 33.02% spend more than 81 minutes. The data collected from Beijing visa center is slightly higher (i.e. 34.40%) as compared to other selected centers and most of the respondents are students (i.e. 37.61%) studying in different universities. Finally, the culture; as a whole the research respondents own multicultural backgrounds but the individuals belonging to subcontinent culture are greater in number, 22.47%.

DATA ANALYSIS

For effectively carrying out the data analysis process, first, the authors evaluated overall model fitness by using several statistical tools .i.e. chi-square, goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), comparative fit index (CFI), Normed fit index (NFI), and root mean square error

Table 2. Summary of demographic statistics (N=436)

Characteristics		Frequency proportion	Proportion%
Gender	Male	223	51.14
	Female	213	48.85
Age	16 to 20 years	30	6.88
	21 to 25 years	98	22.47
	26 to 30 years	152	34.86
	31 to 35 years	119	27.29
	36 years or above	37	8.25
Education	Language diploma	87	19.95
	Bachelors	91	20.87
	Masters	103	23.62
	PhD.	98	22.47
	Post Doc	51	11.69
Daily Usage	Less than 20 minutes	12	2.75
	21 to 40 minutes	36	8.25
	41 to 60 minutes	117	26.83
	61 to 80 minutes	127	29.12
	81 or more minutes	144	33.02
Visa centers / city name	Changchun visa center, Jilin	140	32.11
	Kunming visa center, Yunnan	146	33.48
	Beijing visa center, Beijing	150	34.40
Occupation	Student	164	37.61
	Research associate	51	11.69
	Teacher	75	17.20
	Sale and Marketing professional	54	12.38
	Entrepreneur	52	11.92
	Other profession	40	9.17
Culture	Sub-continent culture	98	22.47
	East Asian culture	73	16.74
	Central Asian culture	53	12.15
	European culture	67	15.36
	West African culture	89	20.40
	Gulf/Arabian culture	56	12.84

of approximation (RMSEA). Second, the authors performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to validate measurement model. Finally, structural equation model (SEM) was conducted to check the relationship among the constructs. These statistical tests were conducted by using SPSS 24 & AMOS 24.

Measurement Model

The measurement model was evaluated by calculating the overall model fit, construct reliability test, and validity test. The values of model fit indices are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Fit indices of the Measurement Model

Recommended values	X2/d.f (<3)	RMSEA (<0.08)	CFI (>0.9)	AGFI (>0.8)	GFI (>0.9)	NFI (>0.9)
Model values	1.89	0.045	0.97	0.91	0.93	0.94

Table 4. Confirmatory factor analysis

Construct and items	Factor loading (>0.7)	SMC (>0.5)	CR	Cronbach's α	AVE
Past Sharing Experience			0.824	0.823	0.671
PE1	0.81	0.66			
PE2	0.82	0.67			
PE3	0.71	0.51			
Trust			0.879	0.880	0.700
TR2	0.83	0.69			
TR3	0.82	0.67			
TR4	0.87	0.76			
Perceived benefit			0.833	0.830	0.594
PB2	0.79	0.62			
PB3	0.83	0.68			
PB4	0.75	0.57			
Perceived Richness			0.866	0.868	0.597
RI1	0.78	0.61			
RI2	0.77	0.60			
RI3	0.73	0.53			
RI4	0.86	0.74			
Information sharing attitude			0.833	0.832	0.616
ATT1.	0.77	0.59			
ATT2	0.83	0.69			
ATT3	0.77	0.59			
Information sharing behavior			0.811	0.810	0.572
Beh1	0.73	0.53			
Beh2	0.74	0.55			
Beh3	0.72	0.52			
Beh4	0.70	0.50			

Reliability tests were conducted by using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR). The values of CR and Cronbach's alpha must be at least 0.70 or above. CR represents the construct internal consistency and considered as suitable alternative of Cronbach's alpha (Hair et al., 2010). In this study, the two conditions of reliability were satisfied. The CRs ranging from 0.811 to 0.879 and Cronbach's alpha from 0.810 to 0.880 (see Table 4).

The construct validity and discriminant validity in the model were also tested. The benchmarks of construct validity tests are: (1) the value of CR must be at least 0.70 or above (Chin, 1998). (2) The value of average variance extracted (AVE) should be at least 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1987). (3) All the loadings must be greater than 0.70. After deleting items (TR1, and PB1) possessed low loading, remaining all other constructs and items met the required conditions for a good convergent validity. All the items having CR values from 0.811 to 0.879, AVE values from 0.572 to 0.700 and all factor loadings values from 0.70 to 0.87 indicating good convergent validity For a good square multiple correlation (SMC), the value of all items must be greater than 0.5, because SMC tells us about how well an item measures a construct (Hair et al., 2010). (See Table 4).

To obtain good discriminant validity, the square root of the average variance extracted must be greater than the corresponding correlations between that construct and the remaining other constructs (Chin, 1998). In order to get suitable discriminant validity results, we compared the square root of average variance extracted (AVE) of every construct and its correlation coefficient with other constructs (See Table 5).

Table 5. Discriminant validity

Constructs	PE	TR	PB	RI	ATT	Beh
1. PE	**0.781**					
2. TR	0.541***	**0.841**				
3. PB	0.550***	0.758***	**0.790**			
4. RI	0.547***	0.642***	0.652***	**0.787**		
5. ATT	0.564***	0.694***	0.657***	0.614***	**0.791**	
6. Beh	0.319***	0.459***	0.506***	0.426***	0.444***	**0.719**

Significance threshold values: * $p < 0.050$, ** $p < 0.010$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 6. Fit indices of the Structural Model

Recommended values	X2/d.f (<3)	RMSEA (<0.08)	CFI (>0.9)	AGFI (>0.8)	GFI (>0.9)	NFI (>0.9)
Model values	2.01	0.048	0.96	0.90	0.93	0.933

Structural Model

The outcomes of structural equation model test are shown in Figure 2. According to the model, all hypotheses are significant. PE has a positive and significant effect on information sharing attitude ($\beta=0.17$, $p<0.010$), hence, supporting H1. TR has a significant and positive effect on ATT ($\beta=0.34$, $p<0.001$), hence H2 is supported. H3, which corresponds to PB, is significantly and positively influences ATT ($\beta=0.21$, $p<0.050$). Similarly, H4 which represents RI has positive and significant effect on ATT ($\beta=0.18$, $p<0.010$), and according to H5, ATT significantly influences Beh ($\beta=0.50$, $p<0.001$). Besides, the combine variance effect of all exogenous variables (PE, TR, PB, and RI) on

ATT is 0.70, 70 percent and finally, ATT as mediator explained 0.55, 55 percent of variance effect on Beh.

The significant effect of the control variable (respondents' culture i.e. β=0.14, p<0.010) on information sharing behavior indicates that there is a positive and direct effect on individual's information sharing practices via social media in a multicultural environment.

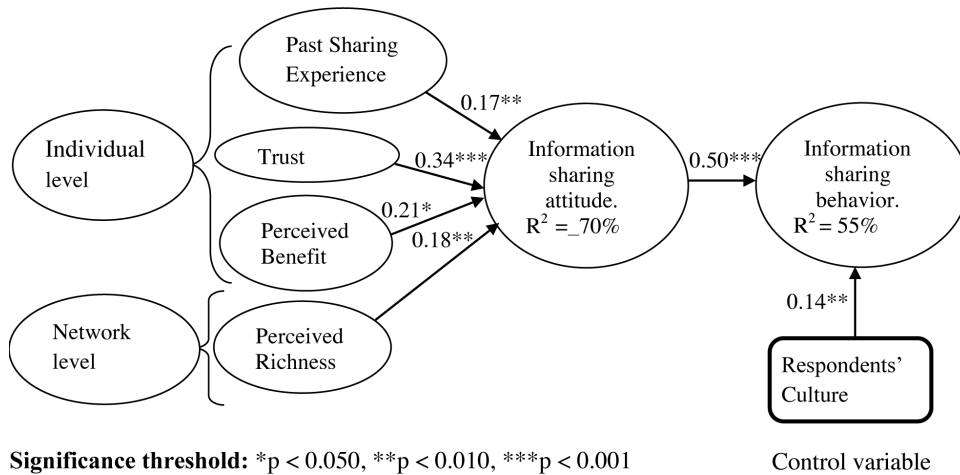**Figure 2. Structural model results.**

Significance threshold: $*p < 0.050$, $**p < 0.010$, $***p < 0.001$ Control variable

Table 7. Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses	Relationship	C.R. (t-value)	P	Standardized structural coefficients	Result
H1	PE→ ATT	3.005	0.003	0.17	Supported
H2	TR→ ATT	4.370	***	0.34	Supported
H3	PB→ ATT	2.498	0.012	0.21	Supported
H4	RI→ ATT	2.775	0.006	0.18	Supported
H5	ATT→ Beh	8.325	***	0.50	Supported

PE= Past sharing experience, TR= Trust, PB= Perceived benefit, RI= Richness, ATT=Information sharing attitude, and Beh= Information sharing behavior.

Significance threshold: $*p < 0.050$, $**p < 0.010$, $***p < 0.001$

DISCUSSION

Reaffirming the original objective, this study aims to examine the experiential, motivational and network factors that influence information sharing behavior of multicultural individuals via a social media platform. The results reveal some interesting findings. First, the results reveal that H1 is significant and supported (p<0.010) that PE (Experiential factor) positively affects information sharing

attitude (ATT) which further influences information sharing behavior (Beh). Therefore, it may infer that multicultural individuals are cognitively motivated towards a social media platform in which they may have usage expertise/experience.. Hence the authors may extrapolate that multicultural individuals tend to be positively motivated to share information in a social media platform in which they possess expertise, sharing experience and usage patterns

Second, the H2 is supported and significant. As trust (i.e. $p < 0.001$) positively influences information sharing attitude which further affects information sharing behavior. In other words, due to the distinctive features and variety of usages, the multicultural individuals possess an optimistic approach towards a social media platform – such as WeChat in China. Besides, this indicates, whether the social media platform is trustworthy in terms of the privacy and data protection.

Third, the H3 of this study is also positive and significant ($p < 0.050$), it means that perceived benefits positively influence information sharing attitude which leads to positive effect on information sharing behavior. This signifies that multicultural individuals evaluate medium's benefits and offerings before becoming loyal users, such as convenience, periodic updates, user-friendliness, features and safety and security of their personal data and contents.

Fourth, the results indicate that H4 (RI) has positive and significant effect on ATT (i.e. $p < 0.010$). This means that while sharing content and information among different users, how much important a medium environment – the information flow and service quality among individuals using a social media platform (WeChat). Besides, it elaborates, smooth flow of information among users. For instance, multicultural user can share and disseminate information, news, and content among diversified groups and users with no time, because WeChat as a media platform has huge number of monthly subscribers and active users

Fifth, H5 (ATT) have positive and significant effect Beh (i.e. $p < 0001$). This signifies that initially there is a combine significant effect on multicultural individual's ATT which further affect their Beh. In addition, the authors identified that as control variable, individuals' cultures ($p < 0.010$) also significantly affect their information sharing behavior via social media platform

IMPLICATIONS

Theoretical Implications

This study has the following theoretical implications for research. Focusing on outcomes of the information sharing, this study identifies that how multicultural individuals' information sharing is influenced via a social media platform. Although, there is enough literature on information sharing behavior among monocultural individuals (Liu et al., 2016), however, the literature on multicultural individuals' information sharing behavior through social media is scant. In addition, this study is based upon SCT and SNT. SCT can help the researchers to link the gap between information science and psychological factors particularly the factors related to learning social media expertise in multicultural perspectives. As the study results point out that there is a correlation between multicultural individual's past sharing expertise and information sharing attitude – behavior via social media. With the insights of SCT, SNT further extends the understandings that how the social structure of relationships around multicultural individuals affect social media information sharing behavior. As the findings reveal that the RI (Network factor) play a vital role to influence social media behavior. Besides, there are enough studies in which Facebook was taken as platform (Khobzi, 2019) and ignored other multi-functional platforms such as WeChat, Weibo, Twitter, etc. Therefore, this study has taken WeChat as a social media platform and investigated the patterns of information flow and sharing among diversified users.

Moreover, our research bears strong empirical support for information sharing model which presents that past sharing experience (experiential factor), trust (motivational factor), perceived benefits (motivational factor) and perceived richness (network factor) have significant effect on information sharing attitude and information sharing behavior of multicultural individuals.

Besides, this study considers experiential factor i.e. (Past sharing experience) as one of the key antecedent of information sharing behavior. In prior studies, less attention has been paid to the experiential factors and their effect on information sharing behavior. Although there is an array of studies in the past focusing on motivational factors (Liu et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2019) and network factors (Shang et al., 2017). However, this study contributes to the literature on effective information sharing via social media taking to account experiential factors as one of the main factor along with motivational and network factors.

Finally, to the best of our knowledge, this study will be considered as one of those studies which discuss the information sharing behavior on a social media platform by multicultural individual in a diversified environment.

Practical Implications

This study reveals that multicultural individuals' information sharing attitude is positively influenced by past sharing experience, thus indirectly leads to increase in information sharing behavior. Multicultural Individuals having past sharing experience tend to frequently share contents on social media. Therefore, social media providers need to arrange awareness events about their services, usage, benefits, market worth, and future goals where multicultural individuals are living. Such events and seminars will enhance users' expertise and may update their past sharing skills, especially much more beneficial for the newly joined multicultural individuals. Such events will also affect users' preference group (parents, family member, etc.), indirectly. In addition, to enhance multicultural individuals' experience, the social media providers need to initiate TV advertising campaigns which seem missing so far. The practitioners need to spread awareness about different newly added techniques, distinct features through TV advertisements time and again in a universal language.

In order to make the multicultural individuals familiar to the operation, the social media platforms need to provide 24/7 expert's assistance in multi languages. This will also help to increase their expertise and experience in a multicultural environment.

Besides experiential factor, trust may affect information sharing attitude and behavior of multicultural individuals. It means that multicultural individuals, particularly the new individuals are psychologically motivated to adopt a social media platform in which they trust. Trust in the sense of better privacy, security policies, and features which ensure that the data is protected and not used by third party without permission. Moreover, the service providers need to make concerted efforts to secure multicultural individuals' content, free from all kinds of cyber threats, identity theft and hacking of account, etc. Besides, during the process of signing up, the media provider (e.g. WeChat) should provide security guidelines in English to multicultural users regarding protecting their account and groups' information, content and privacy, etc. Such measures will help in boosting the trust and confidence of users and may entice new user to join the growing social media (e.g. WeChat) community throughout the world. This increase in trust not only motivates multicultural individuals to frequently use a social media platform without any concern of data security, but also make them loyal users for a long term.

Perceived benefit (i.e. feeling of joy, increase in knowledge, source of communication with others, etc.) is one of a motivational factor in this study. The authors may infer from the results that multicultural individuals are motivated to join a social media platform in which they could yield better benefits as compared to others. In order to attract more subscribers and users to a network, the service providers need to diversify its product and service ranges, and make them user-friendly and adequately addressing their communication needs. The practitioners also need to continuously update their software and features, and aligned them with the changing needs and demands of the multicultural users. To keep themselves abreast with the multicultural individuals' needs – the service providers may also conduct surveys and market researches periodically to get their feedback and information about the challenges they are facing while using the social media services. Such a feedback mechanism will be helpful for the practitioners not only to provide better services and help to increase user loyalty,

but also inspire them to expand their services beyond borders, cultures and other territories. This will also help the service providers to benchmark and gauge themselves vis-à-vis their competitors. In addition, for practitioners it is a challenge to gain more and more users and make them loyal at the same time. So the social media service providers should make the users experience pleasant by making it simple, user-friendly, and hassle-free. They also need to swiftly fix the technical bugs and timely address the multicultural users' complaints. Such efforts will directly affect users' satisfaction which results in enhancing user loyalty and increase in monthly active multicultural users.

Our findings further reveals that network factors such as perceived richness (i.e. in terms of number of users and information flow among the users) also play pivotal role to influence the willingness of multicultural individuals in selecting a social media platform for information sharing. It is the human nature or psyche that every individual is intentionally or unintentionally attracted towards a medium which is widely used or popular on a large scale. The multicultural individuals (new users) are also influenced by peer, close friends, buddies and people-around. Therefore, the service providers (media platforms) need to devise effective policies and enabling conditions that encourage frequent interaction and help emboldening relationships among old and new-users. For instance, a small token of appreciation in the form of gift or red-pocket (a popular form of present in China) for the old multicultural users who invites a certain number of new multicultural users could be one of the best strategies to foster relationship with the diverse users. The social media platforms could also introduce some additional features such as language learning and cultural orientation tools for the multicultural individuals – which may encourage reciprocity among loyal individuals and entice new multicultural individuals who are using other social media platforms.

CONCLUSION

Information sharing has been revolutionized with the advent of social media platforms some two decades ago. This massive stream of information sharing is unabatedly influencing people's lives – so do their information sharing behavior and exchange of ideas. This study attempts to explore about the information sharing behavior of multicultural individuals, and the findings of this study contribute to the IS literature by evaluating the factors affecting information sharing behavior of multicultural individuals via a social media platform. This research provides substantial empirical evidence to support the findings, and contributes to both theory and practice of social media usage – as the study tests the application of social cognitive theory (SCT) and social network theory (SNT) to identify the underlying reasons due to which multicultural individuals are psychologically motivated to adopt a suitable social media platform (e.g. WeChat) for exchanging of information and contents. Furthermore, this research expands the body of IS literature on information sharing through social media by gleaning data from multicultural individuals and rigorously collating and analyzing the information to reach the conclusion. Therefore, the findings of this study are expected to be a value addition in IS literature, especially in the domain of the information sharing behavior and help practitioners in better understanding of social media attributes to make more smooth and timely information sharing in a multicultural perspective. The authors of this study hope that this research will provide new insights to the scholars with strong interest in understanding multicultural individuals' information sharing behavior on various social media platforms.

Although this study is a novel addition in literature on information sharing through social media, nevertheless like any scholarly work, there are still limitations that could lead the future research. First, majority of the respondents are males as compared to females. In future studies, it is suggested to have proportional representation of both male and female respondents. Second, the generalizability of the results may be problematic, as the study respondents belong to a set of selected cultures. Future studies could include more diversified sample of respondents. Third, this study investigates the WeChat users having different cultures, but future studies may include other social media platforms e.g. Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc. Fourth, like any study on human behavior, the human bias could

not be overlooked and there may be possibility of biasness in the results. Nevertheless, the researchers made utmost efforts to avoid their personal biases to ruin the results. One of the strategies to lessen the individual biases was to have multiple co-authors and each co-author draw his/her own results and conclusions, which have been deeply deliberated and integrated together to give refined results.

Moreover, future studies have to adopt multiple methods of inquiry by employing both quantitative and qualitative methods, known as mixed methods which could unleash the unexplored insights about the nuances of information sharing through social media platforms. In addition, future research may investigate other factors i.e. perceived security, norms of reciprocity, personality traits, reputation which may potentially affect information sharing behavior of multicultural individuals on social media platforms.

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APPENDIX A. QUESTIONNAIRE

1: Demographic Questions
1) Gender: Male Female
2) Age: 16 to 20 years 21 to 25 years 26 to 30 years
   31 to 35 years 36 years or above
3) Education: Language Student Bachelors Masters Ph.D Post Doctorate
4) Daily Usage: Less than 20 minutes. 21 to 40 minutes. 41 to 60 minutes. 61 to 80 minutes. 81 or more minutes.
5) Visa Centers/City: Changchun visa center, Jilin. Kunming visa center, Yunnan.
   Beijing visa center, Beijing.
6) Occupation: Student. Research associate. Teacher.
   Sales & Marketing professionals Enterpreneur
   Other profession _____
7) Culture: Subcontinent culture. East Asian culture. Central Asian culture.
   European Culture. West African culture. Gulf culture.

2. Survey Questions	Please tick (√) the relevant box							
	1 Strongly disagree	**2** Disagree	**3** Slightly disagree	**4** Neither agree nor disagree	**5** Slightly agree	**6** Agree	**7** Strongly agree	
1. Past Sharing Experience (PE) adapted from Lee and Ma (2012) & (Lee et al., 2013)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	
PE1: I can easily use WeChat; because it has enough similarities with those social media platforms which I used before								
PE2: I can do effective content sharing on my WeChat account, because I'm using WeChat for several years								
PE3: I'm good at sharing and seeking upto-date information via WeChat.								
2. Trust (TR) adapted from (Lien et al., 2014)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	
TR1: WeChat is the most reliable social medium for content and information sharing with others.								
TR2: I believe that the content I share on WeChat will not be misused								
TR3: I know, WeChat secures my personal information and will not share without my permission.								
TR4: I confidently share my ideas and contents with others via WeChat.								
3. Perceived Benefits (PB) adapted form (Kim et al., 2015)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	
PB1: WeChat is easy to use as compare to other social media platforms								
PB2: WeChat is a suitable media platform where I can find good friends with whom I share information and new ideas, frequently.								
PB3: Content shared on WeChat by others improves my knowledge.								
PB4: I feel pleasure while sharing information, pictures and video content on my WeChat account.								
4. Perceived Richness (RI) adapted from (Shang et al., 2017 & Zhang et al., 2017)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	
RI1: WeChat provides variety of information according to my requirements								
RI2: WeChat is a social media platform with a huge number of diversified users.								
RI3: On WeChat I get quick response, comments, and feedback from others on my shared content.								
RI4: With the help of WeChat I can share all kinds of information and content with multiple users at a time								

5. Information sharing attitude (ATT) adapted from (Sukhu et al., 2015)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
ATT1: I think WeChat is the most convenient social media platform for sharing information and contents, especially in China.							
ATT2: I like to share pictures, videos and information via WeChat							
ATT3: I have positive attitude towards content sharing on WeChat in the future							
6. Information sharing Behavior (Beh) adapted from (Zhu & Chhachhar, (2016); (Liou et al., 2016)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Beh1: I regularly use WeChat as a source of communication and sharing information with others							
Beh2: From time to time I involve in group discussions on WeChat							
Beh3: Most of the time on my WeChat account I upload useful documents and files to share with others							
Beh4: If WeChat introduces any new application for smooth exchange of content, I will use it, definitely.							

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