Use of blogging, social networking sites and microblogging for knowledge sharing, focusing on Information Management students in group work

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Abstract

Background: Social media such as blogging, social networking sites and microblogging are widely used in the business and education fields. Currently, much previous literature reveals different views and characteristics of social media use, but lacks investigation of social media use in students group work.

Aims: The aim of this dissertation is to investigate the current situation of using social media, such as blogging, social networking sites and microblogging for knowledge sharing in group work. It attempts to find out the reasons for their usage, and provides some recommendations base on the findings.

Methods: The qualitative method was adopted in this research. Ten Chinese information management students were chosen by snowball sampling for interviewing. The interview data was recorded through script, and the data was organized by different themes and analyzed by template analysis.

Results: The users’ degree of familiarity with blogging and social networking sites is good, but the degree of familiarity with microblogging is lower than blogging and social networking sites. Using social networking sites for knowledge sharing in group work is more popular than using blogging and microblogging. Only half of bloggers and one microblogger used blogging and microblogging for knowledge sharing in group work.

Conclusion: The research concludes with recommendation for users and further research. Students’ concept of using social media for knowledge sharing should be enhanced, and they need to understand the main advantages of social media and use them rationally. Further research can investigate a large sample of students, and also identify the lecturers’ thoughts on social media use for knowledge sharing in education.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This dissertation investigates the current situation of using social media for knowledge sharing in student group work and the key social media such as blogging, social networking sites and microblogging will be described in more detail.

In this chapter, the background and characteristics of social media will be illustrated. Additionally, the key social media such as social networking, blogging and microblogging will be briefly introduced. The research aims and objectives and structure of this dissertation will also be illustrated in this part.

1.2 Background

Social media is a concept, which has emerged recently. The definition of social medial will be discussed in section 3.1.1, but it can be briefly be defined as tools which can be use for information exchange (Evans, 2008). The most common social media are weblog (and micro-blogs), wikis, podcasts, forums and social networking services. Social media change the former “one to many” transmission mode; it is now a “many-many” mode of transmission media (Scott, 2010). Social media have the following characteristics:

1. Participation: Social media can inspire people to take the initiative to contribute and respond; they blur the boundaries between media and audience.
2. Openness: Most of the social media are free to participate in; they encourage people to comment and respond, and the sharing of information.
3. Communication: The traditional media are mainly one-way forms of communication. The advantage of social media is mutual communication between users.
4. Community: In social media, people can form a community quickly and discuss interesting topics and exchange views.
5. Connectedness: Most of the social media have a strong connectivity, they can be connected to the other media and integrate multiple media together (Evans, 2008). Based on these characteristics of social media, it is widely used in commercial, academic and people’s everyday lives (Sharratt & Usoro, 2003).

A weblog is one of the social media tools; it had a rapid development in the last ten years and depends on network. The blog can be used to publish the writer’s own experience easily and quickly, to communicate with others in a timely and effective way. Blogging is widely used in education is because it contains the following characteristics.

1) To encourage participants to express their different points of view. For teachers or books on the point of view, students can publish their blog for the understanding of their teachers’ view or personal opinion (Stauffer, 2008).

2) To provide evaluation of information. Through evaluation, the value of personal production will be displayed. It is good for filtering out useful information. Additionally, readers can provide additional valuable information and ideas (Rettberg, 2008).

3) To encourage students’ participation and collaboration. Blogs can be effective in encouraging student participation, not just reading and the evaluation of teachers or other students of the log. More importantly, they can create their own web logs, set up their own topics, and share their ideas with others. This is a great mobilization of the student’s interest and participation. In short, using blogs in education will be extended to many fields (ibid).

Social networking sites are another important form of social media. Facebook is leading social networking sites, which was established in 2004. People can maintain interaction with friends, colleagues, classmates and other people. In this website, people can exchange knowledge (Awl, 2011). Nowadays, large proportion of students is belongs to the net generation and they do not like one-way communication (Sandars & Morrison, 2007). Social networking such as Facebook plays an important role in their everyday life and is also important for students in the school. It is a relatively recent Internet phenomenon (Alemán & Wartman, 2009). Through Facebook people can
interact with their friends and do person-to-person communication. For the net generation (ibid), their means of communication may be different from other age groups, they sometimes express their views through using pictures. Many young people like to use social networking such as Facebook to talk about popular topic and phenomena. Using Facebook in education is nothing new. Many educators use Facebook as a teaching tool in the classroom, they fully understand the characteristics of Facebook and encourage students to use Facebook to share content, concerns about new events, publish useful links, discuss about assignments and collaborate for teamwork. At the same time, the high use rate of Facebook in turn promotes the popularity of Facebook (Munoz & Towner, 2009).

Micro-blogging is widespread due to the rapid development of the Internet. It is a newly emergent social networking service and popular since 2006. The advantage of microblogging is that users can release information anytime, anywhere via a variety of clients and regardless of each other's identity and status, i.e. they can exchange equally. The representative site of microblogging is Twitter (Wright & Branum, 2010). Currently, the role of microblogging in business is gradually increasing, with microblogging marketing becoming more and more popular. Users, through their own microblogging, update corporate, product information, establish a good corporate image and product image to their friends. Content which is updated daily can promote communication, or have an interesting topic to everyone, so that it can achieve marketing objectives. In terms of education, microblogging is still not widely used. However, this phenomenon will gradually be improved. Due to the characteristics of microblogging, it has been introduced by educators in education for exchanging knowledge, collaboration, group work management and collecting opinions. Microblogging will be a rapid development in the network-oriented society not only in the business aspect, but also in education and other fields (Wankel & Wankel, 2011).
There is a range of previous research involved in aspects of social media (e.g. Evan 2008; Hay, 2009; Powell, 2011; Scott, 2010 Harris, 2008; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009), a large part of this research is related to the role of social media such as social networking, blogging and Twitter used in business(Harris, 2008;Hay, 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009). With the increasing development of these applications, they are also used in the field of education for information-sharing and other educational activities. Currently, many previous literatures did research on social media use in the school's educational institutions. These previous literature also explored the new features of these applications and how users use these functions in their daily learning. However, less of the previous literature focused on the use of these social media in student group work for knowledge sharing activities. As we know, the new technologies develop very quickly in this information age and new functions of social media are emerging year by year. The new function of technology may affect the knowledge sharing in current society. Previous literature may not provide the latest development information and the current use of these applications by students. Thus, this paper intends to investigate the situation of using social media such as blogging, social networking sites and microblogging for knowledge sharing in students group work.

1.3 Research focus

1.3.1 Aims

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate the current situation of using social media, such as blogging, social networking sites and microblogging for knowledge sharing. Additionally, this dissertation attempts to find out the reasons for using social media for knowledge sharing in student group work and the reasons why users do not use social media for knowledge sharing in group work. Finally, through analysing the collective data and previous literature, some recommendations will be provided.
1.3.2 Objectives

In order to achieve the aim, the following objectives should be achieved:

(1) To examine the characteristics of blogging, social networking sites and microblogging through previous literature.

(2) To examine what function of social media such as blogging, social networking sites, and microblogging can be used for knowledge sharing through previous literature.

(3) To examine the users’ degree of familiarity with using social networking sites, Blogging and Microblogging.

(4) To investigate to what extent Chinese students in Information Management are using social media such as Social networking sites, Blogging and Microblogging for knowledge sharing in group work.

(5) To identify the characteristics in using social media for knowledge sharing, which emerge from the research.

(6) To provide some recommendation for users and researchers base on this research.

1.3.3 Research question:

There are two research questions in this research:

1. To what extent are students in Sheffield University Information School using blogging, social networking sites and microblogging for knowledge sharing in group work?

2. What characteristics emerge when using social media such as blogging, social networking sites and microblogging for knowledge sharing in group work?
1.4 Research structure:

1. Introduction:
In this chapter, the background and current environment of research topic will be illustrated. Additionally, the purpose and objectives of research will be introduced.

2. Literature review:
In this chapter, the related previous literature in this field will be critically reviewed. Different kinds of publications and views from different authors will be shown in this chapter. This chapter will be divided into several sections which are relevant to blogging, social networking sites and microblogging use for knowledge sharing.

3. Methodology
This part describes the methodology and methods that have been used in this research. It will also describe the reasons for using interview and choice of sample and questions.

4. Results and discussion:
This chapter will present the whole results from interview and summarise these findings. At the same time, it will use some literature and materials to discuss and support these findings.

5. Conclusion and recommendation:
This chapter will summarize the main points in the previous chapters and illustrate how the objectives are met by the findings. And finally, some suggestion will be provided in this part.

6. Bibliography
All the references cited in this research will be listed in this part.
7. Appendix

The appendixes include the original interview questions, revised interview questions consent form, information sheet and interview script will be shown in this part.
2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review chapter will examine the key issues of social media, especially the key social media tools which are social networking sites, blogging and microblogging. This chapter will discuss the definition of social media and knowledge sharing. Furthermore, the characteristics of social networking sites, blogging and microblogging will be discussed, and the previous literature which concerns using social networking sites, blogging and microblogging for knowledge sharing will be critically review in this chapter. Some key issues concerning students group work will be identified. At the same time, through this chapter of literature review, the objectives (1) and (2) will be met, which are

(1) To examine the characteristics of blogging, social networking sites and microblogging through previous literature.

(2) To examine what function of social media such as social networking sites, blogging and microblogging can be used for knowledge sharing through previous literature.

There are many important publications related to this area. This section will be divided into several subsextions which are a definition of social media and knowledge sharing, bloggings, social networking sites, microblogging and issues emerged in group work, in order to show a clear literature review of this topic.
2.2 Definition

This section will identify the definition of ‘social media’ and ‘knowledge sharing’ based on previous literature. It will combine the different authors’ opinions and give readers a good understanding.

2.2.1. Social media

Since 2000, Web2.0 developed very rapidly and new form of online media - social media gradually emerged. “Social media is exploding as a new media channel. It differs from other advertising media channels because messages are multi-directional and generated by many parties: the marketer, influencers, individuals and consumers (Powell, 2011, p.1).” There are many other publications which define social media. According to Evans (2008) Social media are changing very quickly; they involve various social channels for photo, video and other information exchange. According to Mayfield (2008), social media “blurs the line between media and audience”, it encourages users to post comments and share information. It is considered as a two-way conversation tool. It also contains the community characteristic and users can share their interests through it (ibid). The best “Social media provide the way people share ideas, content, thought, and relationships online” (Scott, 2010). It includes blogs, microblogging, social networking, wikis and the other servers for photo and video sharing (ibid). According to Kaplan & Haenlein (2009, p 61), social media are composed of a number of Internet-based applications; it is based on the “ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0” and allows users to exchange and create their idea and information.

The definition of social media is still not uniform, however, combining the previous literature, it can be considered that social media provides a platform for exchanging information. Users can produce, post comments, discuss and consume information through social media. There is no doubt that the previous literature are all agree that
social media is a good approach for knowledge sharing and creation.

### 2.2.2. Knowledge sharing

Knowledge sharing refers to the interaction of knowledge between members, which in a group context enables the knowledge to spread from a personal level to the group level. Finally, it can improve group efficiency.

According to Smith (2005), knowledge sharing is highly based on collaboration. Knowledge sharing always means exchanging the idea, experience or skill with other people or organizations (Huysman & Wit, 2002). Knowledge sharing means that knowledge is transported from one actor to another. The knowledge can be referred to as experience, text, conclusion (Sharratt, and Usoro, 2003). According to (Singer & Hurley, 2005), it is mentioned that not all information is knowledge; the most important thing is to identify the information and obtain the knowledge. According to Bernard & Tichkiewitch (2008), knowledge is derived from information and data. The information through being justified, evaluated or judged by personal experience, leads to people obtaining the knowledge.

Knowledge is divided into two types, which is explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Explicit knowledge means the knowledge that can be present by words or numbers, and can be easily shared. Tacit knowledge always means the knowledge that exists in the brain of people, it is difficult to explore. The conversion process of explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge is important in organization (ibid). That implicit knowledge and explicit knowledge are not separate, but complementary entities. In other words, the conversion process of implicit knowledge and explicit knowledge is highly based on knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing is not confined within the individual. It is an exchange of knowledge between different people in order to produce new knowledge (ibid). In
order to achieve knowledge sharing, technical support is essential. In many cases, face to face communication cannot be achieved because of the lack of some communication tools. Thus, social media plays such a role for completing the communication. Through them, people can share knowledge and transfer information easily (Mayfield, 2008). 

In the next section, the characteristics of key social media application will be discussed.

2.3 Blogging

This section will identify key characteristic of blogs such as personalization feature, timeliness feature, openness feature and interactive feature, and also identify the role of the blog in knowledge sharing.

2.3.1 Characteristics of blogging

The previous literature listed some characteristics of blogs:

1. Personalization features. The purposes of different people using the blog are not the same. Every blogger can write their own interests, post comments; record their insights, express their ideas, and express their feelings. At the same time, they can interact with the other bloggers by posting comments and message, and publish ideas.

2. Timeliness. In individual blog, bloggers can update or add to posts, modify, edit the content, they are easy to keep up-to-date, and these are significant differences compare to hard copy articles and writings.

3. Openness. Each blogger can record their own thoughts; insights, knowledge, and
information, published in his blog, opening up with other bloggers, and share with the public.

4. Interactive features. Each blog site has RSS and XML functions, which means the other bloggers and the public can read and reproduced content anytime and anywhere (Du & Wagner, 2005; Herring et al., 2005).

Harris (2008) stated some additional features of blogging in his book. He considered that blogs are free to all people and nowadays most blogs can be connected to by mobile phone, which means information can be faster and easier to exchange. Halic et al. (2010) stated that blogging is especially popular with young people under 30 years old.

**2.3.2 Weblog for knowledge sharing**

According to Razmerita et al. (2009), weblogs are a good platform for knowledge sharing, communicating and collaborating. Blogs are a new tool for knowledge management both for individual and organization. Minocha(2009) cites Franklin and van Harmelen’s research which shows that bloggers can generate relative knowledge through posts and comments: they can post their opinions and comments to others. Additionally, blogs can be used for supporting communication. Klamma et al. (2007) in their article also supported this view. Kobayashi (2008) stated that students use weblogs to share information and hence improve the “knowledge co-construction”. There are some ways for using weblogs in knowledge sharing, such as the weblog can providing “collaboration space” and people can post their comments to group writing or discuss issues on a weblog (ibid). Du & Wagner (2005) had the same point: they considered that weblogs supply a number of ways to students to be involved in collaborative learning. One is knowledge sharing: students can share their idea, opinion and thoughts with people. Another is “collaboration and group work”: the weblog contains the function of comment and response. Students can share and
exchange their knowledge and experience.

This view is supported by Ras et al. (2005) as well. Ras et al. (2005) did an empirical study in order to explore the new experience of information sharing using blogs, they observed blogs and the posts on blogs and mentioned that weblogs can be used to collect experience from other people. Through their monitoring over two months, they found that using weblogs can encourage knowledge exchange and obtain valuable information both from outside and inside of an organization. At the same time, weblogs also can be used for sharing personal experiences and knowledge. Bloggers use weblogs to record some academic material and views in order to share them with readers. Usually, these materials are good resources for others. The weblog has become new educational technology for knowledge sharing nowadays. Bates and Sangrà (2011) put forward this view as well.

Efimova (2005) describes how weblogs contain RSS (Really Simple Syndication) Web 2.0 applications, so it will be more convenient for readers to follow new information. Additionally, she mentions some findings which are:
(a) A weblog can help readers to identify whether the resources is quality through the recommendation from others;
(b) It can also encourage readers to capture, re-construct and organize the knowledge, in order to improve the quality of future retrieval;
(c) It provides conversation space.
Efimova (2005) makes a good summary; whether students are interested in these aspects of weblog will be explored in my research.
2.4 Social Networking Sites

This section will identify the characteristics of social networking sites which are 1. User-centric function; 2. Integration of diverse forms of communication; 3. RSS (Really Simple Syndication) function; 4. Entertainment function. It will also identify the previous literature which is involved in the field of social networking sites for knowledge sharing.

2.4.1 Characteristics of social networking sites

1. User-centric. Dissemination of information is based on interpersonal relationships. The network service provided by blogging is mainly focused on the content, through showing the content and then display to users. But a social networking site is different, it organizes and disseminates content which is user-oriented, the social networking sites aim to meet the diverse needs of customers (Abram & Pearlman, 2010).

2. Integration of diverse forms of communication. Social networking sites combine traditional Blog, BBS (Bulletin Board System), E-mail and instant messaging functions, while adding a variety of applications. They not only contain the advantage of traditional networks, but also have their own characteristic: it can be considered as having an integrated service platform (Hay, 2009; Abram, & Pearlman, 2010).

3. RSS (Really Simple Syndication) function. Through a subscribed link with friends, the newest updated content and new comments from others will be displayed in the RSS reader; it can establish a timely and efficient exchange of feedback mode (ibid).

4. Entertainment function

Currently, in order to satisfy a range of entertainment needs, social networking sites provide users with platform of entertainment mainly through three channels: (1) to develop entertainment sectors such as voting, movies and games; (2) users can organize their own entertainment groups and activities in social networking sites; (3)
organization by the social networking sites themselves or in combination with other social forces to organize large-scale activities (Cook, 2011).

### 2.4.2 Social networking sites for knowledge sharing

Facebook is one of the social media tools; it is a leading social networking service, from which people can maintain interaction with friends, colleagues, classmates and other people (Munoz & Towner, 2009). In this website, people can share their knowledge, pictures, video and links with other people to exchange knowledge (Awl, 2011). According to Awl (2011), Facebook contains different kinds of function, for example, it can be used to interact with friends by notes, links, photos or video; it can be used to create group page for group projects; it can be used to track friends or group members updated information. van Zyl(2008) did research intending to educate people about various applications and find out benefits and risks associated with social networking. He found that the individual success is based on the ability of the network, the size of social networking friends and the ability of forming connection to other social groups may affect the success. He also mentioned that, if an organization can use this material to manage knowledge efficiently, it will able to save cost.

Selwyn (2009) used the observation method in order to find out the purpose of students using Facebook, he investigated 909 UK undergraduate students using Facebook ‘wall’ activity, and he found some interesting points. The main purposes for students using Facebook are:

1. To show the university experience to people.
2. To exchange practical and academic information.
3. To add comments or show personal opinions. Selwyn (2009) observed that, many students used social networking sites for information exchanging.
Selwyn (2009) used the observation method and investigated UK undergraduate students. In my research the interview method will be used and to investigate Information School students. If the different methods and different sample of research obtain the same results, it could indicate the validity of my findings.

Hew (2011) did a piece of research which reviewed the current research studies centred on Facebook use by teachers and students. In this review, he mainly emphasized three sections: 1) the Facebook usage profile of students. 2) the effects of Facebook use 3) students’ attitudes toward Facebook. He collected 539 articles in total and reviewed and identified 36 papers in one year; a large part of the literature mainly focuses on university and college students. The data was classified according to the research questions. The findings of this research show that:

1) Motivation for using Facebook includes learning (e.g. finding answers or details for assignments, to share information and ideas for their work). (2) Management tools of tasks (e.g. storing important information such as photo or data). (3) Communication (e.g. to communicate and maintain relationships with friends via Facebook; find what their friends do.

2) According to Hew (2011) cited in Lewis & West (2009), regarding attitudes toward Facebook, many students use Facebook as fun not seriously. And some information may be revealed on Facebook.

In my research the methods are different from Hew (2011), and the findings from his research will be compared to my research.

Al-Daihani (2010) did a piece of research whose purpose is to explore the perceptions of students using social software. He focuses on Masters Students in information science and uses online questionnaires to collect the data. This paper is more focused on investigating the quantitative data and investigating in total 132 students participants in Kuwait. Through the investigation, he found some interesting information, the findings of Al-Daihani(2010) show that 89% of students were aware
of social software, about 56.03% students use social software such as Facebook and You Tube to chat with friends; 53.19% of students share reading books and articles; 23.4% students share files and 25% do not share anything. Through reviewing this figure from Al-Daihani(2010), it seems that the percentage using soft-ware for knowledge sharing is still not great.

The findings of Al-Daihani (2010) were completed in Kuwait. These findings may be compared to my research because people are very different in these two countries in terms of educational system and information behaviour. The perceptions of Information School students using social software will be found and discussed in my research.

2.5 Microblogging

This section will identify the characteristics of Microblogging and identify the previous literature which is related to microblogging use in knowledge sharing. The specific information will be illustrated in the following sections.

2.5.1 Characteristics of Microblogging

“A microblog is a shorter form of a traditional blog. Simply put, it’s a web service that allows users to broadcast short 140 character messages to other subscribers of the service, like a status update” (Allocca, 2011, p.141). According to Allocca (2011), the first key characteristic for microblogging is to ‘follow people’. People who have similar interests can follow each others’ microblog, sharing information or for other purpose. At the same time, this function is open to every users, anyone can follow the other users that they like. The second key characteristic of microblogging is it can usually publish no more that 140 characters; it can be used to publish context, links, opinion and status .(Hedengren, 2011; Wankel et al., 2011). Thirdly, convenience;
people can use a variety of channels such as computers, mobile phones or PDAs to publish. Fourthly, rapid spread; the basic function ‘follow people’ of microblogging accelerates the spread of news or information in microblog (Gómez et al., 2010).

2.5.2 Microblogging for knowledge sharing

Microblogging is a platform which is based on user information-sharing, dissemination and access. Through Microblogging, users can publish short texts, images or video links. The most famous Micro-blogging site is Twitter. Unlike weblogs, the context of Micro-blogging is simpler and faster spreading than weblogs. Microblogging has become very popular now and is widely used in different areas. In terms of education, Microblogging is a vital tool for practice communication, useful resource sharing, experience exchanging and project collaboration. Some people use it to “emphasize timeliness” or “course content”. It is increasing important nowadays (Java et al., 2007; EDUCAUSE, 2009; Wankel et al., 2011).

Gómez et al. (2010) found some advantages of Twitter. He considered that, on one hand, posting opinions on Twitter can improve users’ ability of describing code information. They cannot afford too much non-useful information because Twitter can only insert 140 characters. On the other hand, recipients will find it easier to understand the idea. Microblogging can be used for publishing some important information, for example, the submission deadline or test date. It is a useful communication tool especially for team work and other small scale activity. As with weblogs, group members can use Microblogging to discuss academic issue and offer different views. (EDUCAUSE, 2009 and Gómez et al., 2010).

Grosseck & Holotesch (2008) identified some advantages and disadvantages of Twitter being used in education, which they base on some previous literature and their own experiences. They described that Twitter can be used for project management. When we establish a group working, the tweets can be used to receive
the information through cell phones. It can impact on creating a learning experience and facilitating the discussion through the [@username] function. Users can sent out a question via Twitter and obtain the feedback and answers. In addition to this, tweets can also use Twitter to organize ideas, post notes, or reflect. It is helpful to make a good announcement.

Grosseck & Holotesch (2008) also identify some disadvantages of Twitter. They considered that a message on Twitter can only be received by users in the same network; people outside the network may miss this information. Additionally, Twitter lacks privacy; everyone can follow your Twitter feeds, so some important message or results may be stolen. At the same time, some of your followers may post tweets that do not improve your knowledge sharing, which causes Twitter spam. If Twitter exists without networking and sharing, it will lose its existential value. Will these advantages and disadvantages emerge in interviewing the Information School students? The results will be shown in my research and a comparison will be made.

Westman & Freund (2010) did research which use genre analysis to understand and identify the communication provided by Microblogging. In order to have a better understanding, they took the popular microblogging site Twitter for genre analysis. They investigated 200 tweets randomly from the Media Genres course at Aslto University. In their research, they illustrate some findings. The investigation of purpose shows that 56% of participants use microblogging for information sharing; 37% of participants use it for conversation, and 8% of participants use it for information seeking. In the survey on the use of the content of microblogging, 76% of participants publish personal information and commentary. It seems like that microblogging is used as communication tool to a large extent, especially in information sharing and personal commentary.
Zhao & Rosson (2009) did an investigation on microblogging use for informal communication in business department for teams work. That research aimed to explore whether and how microblogging could help to facilitate project awareness in time. In order to achieve this aim, they investigated whether and how team members would use microblogging for information sharing and its effects. Both surveys and interviews were adopted in their research. Through investigation, it is found that microblogging was used “as a lightweight informal communication media by co-workers”. The sharing of information from microblogging is less critical, however, microblogging is still a vital tool for work status updating, such as for showing some issue or problems on team work. They also found the other main findings:

1) Microblogging can provide timely conversations during the team’s work and improve the communication within teams, which is useful for collaboration in teams.

2) Using microblogging in teams work can obtain more views and opinions from every team members, particularly for people who do not like face to face communication.

In my research, the objectives such as the advantages of microblogging and the views of participants for microblogging will be met. The results of my research will be compared to Zhao & Rosson (2009) research to test whether there are any related points.

2.6 Issues in group work

Clark et al. (2007), did an investigation on identifying the situation of Chinese student in collaborative learning, in his findings he comment that “pseudo group” may affect the performance. Some group members worked together but each of them do an individual works, which may make group work do not achieve logical, coherence and completeness. Oakley et al. (2004) had the same opinion. Clark et al. (2007) cited Johnson and Johnson (1998) suggested that, team-based work type and
valuing cooperative working result is better than working independently, group members need to interact with each other and sharing information to determine how to complete the work.

Oakley et al. (2004) claimed that there are many problems in students groups, some group members may be belongs to hitchhikers, who did not contribute to the group work. Additionally, the expectation of group members may not be the same; some people want to get 70 marks, some may feel that 60 marks for them is acceptable. This will cause the different distribution of each group members. At the same time, he suggested that members in group should establish such as team policies, expectations agreement, evaluation or peer rating form to improve the group work effective.

2.7 The gap in previous literature

Through reviewing the previous literature, it can be found that the literature involved in the field of using social media for knowledge sharing in students’ group work is rare. Most of the literature (Efimova, 2005; Grosseck & Holotesch (2008); Selwyn, 2009; Westman & Freund, 2010; Al-Daihani, 2010; Hew, 2011) is involved in the education area but do not describe specifically how these tools are used in students’ group work. Thus, this is a gap in current literature to analyse the social media usage in students’ group work. This research will attempt to investigate this phenomenon of this aspect.

2.8 Reflections on the literature search

In order to find out good literature for this dissertation, the literature searching strategy was based on the Seven Pillars of Information Literacy model
Additionally, there were significant recommendations from my supervisor. The Seven Pillars model consists of:

1) Determine the information need of the research.
2). Distinguish a way of addressing the gap.
3). Establish information locating strategies.
5) Evaluate and compare information.
6) Organize, apply and communicate the information suitably.
7). Combine the current information to create new knowledge.

(SCONUL, 2007)

In the literature review part, the information need includes the means of “social media” and “knowledge sharing”, and their relationship. In terms of accessing, evaluating and comparing information, some useful suggestions from my supervisor are adopted in this part.

1). A large part of previous literature is cited from academic sources, such as books and journal articles, no references are cited from non-academic websites and non-academic articles. For example, many journal articles are found in Emerald, Web of Knowledge, Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) and Google Scholar database and some books are found in the University of Sheffield library.
2). Because social media is a concept which has emerged recently, its function and application is updated very quickly; early literature may not be convincing enough. Thus, most of the books and journal articles cited in this dissertation are published in about the last five years.

In terms of organizing the information, the previous literature is organized into different themes and categories, which are clearly shown in the above chapters. Through reviewing the current literature, it seems like there is no literature which is
involved in the specific area about using social media for knowledge sharing in students’ group work. This is one of the reasons for producing this research.

2.9 Summary

This literature review part provide a clear understanding of social media and knowledge sharing, it illustrated different authors’ definitions of social media and knowledge sharing. It identified the characteristics of social media and described the main function of blogging, social networking sites and microblogging used in knowledge sharing from previous literature, such as searching knowledge, exchanging the idea and opinion, sharing useful information and communication. Additionally, some issues such as pseudo group (Clark et al., 2007) and hitchhikers (Oakely et al., 2004) that may affect students’ group work performance are discussed.
3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will show the description and explanation of approach and methods used in this research. It includes the inductive approach, the data collection type which is semi-structure interview; the question type which is open-ended question, the sampling method which is snowball sampling and the data analysis technique template analysis method. These points will be described and explained. Additionally, some limitation of research will be illustrated in this chapter.

3.2. Research approach: Inductive approach

This dissertation uses inductive approach to show the current situation using social media, such as Social networking sites, Blogging and Microblogging for knowledge sharing. Inductive approach is a method that from the individual to the general, it moves from specific details to general phenomenon (Gray, 2004). It is through analysing many individual cases or sub-arguments, and then sums up the characteristics common to them, to acheive a general conclusion. Induction process can be divided into three steps: First, to collect and accumulate the experience or the material of knowledge; Second, to analyse basic nature and characteristics of the material and find out the basic law or common law; The third is to describe and summarize (make systematic judgments) from the rules and characteristics of materials, so these laws can be as the basic principles to predict the same type of things (Saunders et al., 2009). Gray (2004) described the inductive process simply: “Through the inductive approach, plans are made for data collection, after which the data are analysed to see if any patterns emerge that suggest relationships between
variables” (Gray, 2004, p.6). The aims of using inductive approach are to transform the data into a summary form and can also build a clear relationship between research objectives and findings which come from collected data. The inductive approach is a good approach for analysing the qualitative data (Lancaster & Crowther, 2005); it emphasises “understanding of research context.” (Saunders et al., 2009); it contains some features such as easily used and clear processes for qualitative data analysis. According to Lancaster & Crowther (2005), the strength of inductive research is flexibility; it is because this approach does not require the hypotheses or priori theories, we can through our data collection and show our interpretation of the issue. This dissertation is started by research question, and do not start with any framework and pre-set theory. Conclusions are drawn from data collected via interviews (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.3 Data collection

3.3.1 Semi-structured interview

The semi-structured interview method will be applied to collect the data. There are some reasons for using semi-structured interview. A semi-structured interview is a good way for communicating between researcher and participants. If participants have any questions, they can exchange the idea with the researcher directly. In other words, the interview method can clear up misunderstanding of participants. At the same time, the interview question is flexible; interviewer can change the order or questions if interviewee agrees that (Saunders et al., 2009). According to Denscombe (2007) interview method make researcher easily to locate the specific data from specific people. But there may be some limitations of semi-structured interviews: it is difficult to record the information; the interviewees may provide much information in interview and interviewer may lose some information. Secondly, the interpretative skill of researcher may affect the results, some important interviews context may not
be interpreted well (Walsh, 2001; Kumar, 2008).

In this research, because most of data are relevant to the experience of social media use of participants, it is not suitable to use questionnaire which is more focuses on collecting quantitative data. Based on the advantages of semi-structure interview that mentioned above, it is more suitable for this research. If interviewees have any misunderstanding, they can ask the researcher directly. At the same time, according to the different experience of social media using of participants, the interview content may be changed in order to obtain in-depth data to meet the objectives.

3.3.2. Sample: Snowball sampling

The sampling of this research will choose 10 Information management students who come from China, they contain 5 males and 5 female, and will use snowball sampling. The study was restricted to Chinese students, to make the same more homogeneous, with a similar cultural and linguistic background. Snowball sampling is nonprobability sampling and usually used in qualitative research (Rubin & Babbie, 2007). The process of snowball sampling can be shown that: Firstly select a group for interview, after interviewing these respondents, then asking them to provide another suitable person for interviewing, continue the following interview until achieve the number of respondents (ibid).

There are some reasons for choosing this sampling. One is students represent a large proportion of social media users, using students as sampling is more representative. Another reason is that students are easier to locate, using snowball sampling can obtain help from interviewees. They may introduce their classmates to joint this survey and make the number of participants increase, obtaining more data (Cohen et al., 2007). At the same time, using snowball sampling can save research cost to some extent.
3.4. Data analysis: Template analysis

After data collection, template analysis method will be applied (King, 2007). King (2007) stated that template analysis is a method for analyzing qualitative data by themes. It can be use to analyse interview scripts or the interview data which includes E-mail interview or textual context. According to University of Sheffield website (2008), template analysis means a data analysis method which analyses and organizes textual data base on themes. The strength of template analysis is that is can be adopted to analyse text data for different aims. Additionally, it is advantageous for exploring the trends and helpful to explain the meaning of data. The limitation of template analysis is that it divides the collected data into different themes, which may affect the data integrity and cause some information to be missed (ibid).

A coding template should be involved in template analysis. Saunders et al. (2009) cited King (2004) described that “A template is essentially a list of the codes or categories that represent the themes revealed from the data that have been collected” (Saunders et al., 2009, p.505). Themes which may contain different levels are identified by the researcher. Each theme may be consisted of several sub-themes (King, 2007).

The codes in this research will be categorized by different themes. Because in my interview planning, the main questions will be divided into three aspects to investigate data, which are

1). personal information. 2). users’ familiarity with social media. 3). the extent to which they use social media for knowledge sharing in group work.

The code designing is base on main themes. Sub-themes are guided by these three main themes. In the aspect of personal information, age, gender and subject are the elements of personal information investigation. Thus, they become the codes of personal information. In order to investigate users’ familiarity with social media, data should contain four aspects, which are usage status, usage history, main function for
using and the reason for using. Through collecting and analyzing the data of these four aspects, to identify the users’ familiarity with social media. Thus, usage status, usage history, main function for using and the reason for using are identified as codes in template. In order to understand the extent to use social media for knowledge sharing in group work, the interview data will be examined by four aspects, which are usage status in group work, the function they used for knowledge sharing in group work, role of social media for knowledge sharing in group work and the characteristics. Thus, the codes in this field are designed by these sub-themes.

Overall, in this research, the final coding template, reflecting interacting with the data, was as following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Personal information</th>
<th>1.1 Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2 Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3 Subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Users’ familiarity with social media</td>
<td>2.1 Usage status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.1.1 Blogging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.1.2 Social networking sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.1.3 Microblogging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2 Usage history and frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2.1 Blogging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2.2 Social networking sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2.3 Microblogging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3 Reason for using</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3.1 Recording information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3.2 Sharing information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3.3 Searching information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3.4 Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3.5 Adding new friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3.6 Updating status</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. The extent to use social media for knowledge sharing in group work.

3.1 Usage status
3.1.1 Blogging
3.1.2 Social networking sites
3.1.3 Microblogging

3.2 The reason for students using social media in group work
3.2.1 Establishing discussion group
3.2.2 Sending instant message
3.2.3 Searching knowledge
3.2.4 Publishing information for knowledge exchanging

3.3 The reasons for students not using social media in group work
3.3.1 Influenced by group members
3.3.2 Influenced by individual behavior
3.3.3 Influenced by function

Table (1) Coding template

### 3.5. Pilot Study

Before starting the interview, the pilot study was implemented to make sure the suitability of interview questions (pilot questions can be seen in Appendix A). The pilot study attempted to measure if the interview question can satisfy the objectives of dissertation. The pilot study chose one student to interview. The time of interview was about 15 minutes in the pilot study. The student provided a good feedback about the interview. At the same time, during the questions designing, my supervisor Webber provides some very good advice to me to improve the interview questions content and structure.
After receive the feedback from the interviewee and supervisor, the structure of interview question and content was changed. Interviewee suggested me that the question should be more specific. Most of questions contain the Blog, Social networking sites and Microblogging which make interviewee confused about answering. During the interviewing, the interviewer should illustrate clearly each application question and make interviewee easy to answer. Webber also suggested some of interview question should be divided into two streams which are “Yes” and “No”. Because some open-ended questions can affect the following questions answer. In order to make the interview questions structure more logical, dividing some questions into two streams was a suitable method. Thus, the revised interview questions make some changes based on the pilot study.

3.6 Question design

3.6.1 Question type: Open-ended question

This research is started by a research question and does not test any hypotheses, it is aim to investigate the current situation of using social media, such as social networking sites, blogging and microblogging for knowledge sharing (as is discussed in the Introduction chapter). According to Johnson & Christensen (2008), open-ended question are mainly used in exploratory research. In contrast, if researchers attempt to test specific hypotheses, closed-ended questions are used in this situation. Thus, in this research, open-ended questioning is adopted.

Open-ended questions allow respondents to answer question freely. The open-ended question does not provide specific answers require a response range to these questions, which allows interviewees unlimited fill in the survey answers. Open-ended question contains the advantages such as flexibility, adaptability, it is suitable for all types of questions to answer, especially for answering the answer
which is unknown or the content of the answer is a complex; it provides respondents the opportunity for self-expression, encourage them to perform initiatively, creatively and freely. Through open-ended question, investigators could obtain the unexpected and valuable information content. Generally, the open-ended question can provide more in-depth information than close-ended question. But there are some limitations of open-ended question. The answer of open-ended questions is low degree of standardization, it is difficult to collate and analyze (Lohmann, 2006; Berman & Shopland, 2005; Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

3.6.2. The reasons for questions

The main questions (See Appendix B) for semi-structure interview are designed to cover and meet the objectives of research. This section will explain the reasons for main questions designing for interview.

Question 1: Because different age group of interviewee may have different attitude to using the social media. This question tries to examine the age structure of interviewees in order to show a clear interpretation.

Question 2: This question is to balance the different gender number of interviewees, if most of interviewees are selected by single-sex, it might make the results lack reliability. Choosing roughly the same number of male and female as interviewees may control the number of variables and improve the reliability.

Question 3: This question is designed to identify the subject of students.

Question 4: This question is to indentify whether interviewee use these application such as blogging, social networking sites and microblogging or not, in order to facilitate the following interview. This question is divided into two streams which are yes and no. Through this question, the current situation and reasons of using these applications will be found out.

Question 5 and 6: These two questions are to examine the main function of these
applications that interviewees used and to examine the users’ familiarity with using blogging, social networking site and microblogging. Let users illustrate the function and difference of social media they used can make researcher know their current using situation.

Question 7: this question is to investigate to what extent are the functions of these applications used in group work for knowledge sharing.

Question 8: this question is to examine how social media such as blogging, social networking sites and microblogging can be used in knowledge sharing for group work and the reason for using these applications.

Question 9: This question attempts to find out the reasons for users who do not choose these applications for knowledge sharing in group work.

Question 10: This question is to examine how important the social media tools such as blogging, social networking sites and microblogging for students’ group work.

Question 11: This question is designed to fulfill the object which is to find out the characteristics emerging in using social media for knowledge sharing. Combining with question 5, they can collect the users’ view on these applications.

Question 12: This question attempts to collect what the personal opinions of social media functions from participants.

3.7 Ethical issue

Ethical issue is always present in academic research. Ethical issue emphasizes fairness (Orb et al, 2001). This paper should consider different kinds of ethical issues. Firstly, the voluntary principle should be considered. Because the semi-structured interview method will be applied in this research; the interviewees in this research will be chosen from Information Management students. Thus, the participants should be voluntary to join in this research. The researcher cannot force participants do any action they dislike. The researcher should negotiate with participants for data collection. Secondly, informed consent: participants have right to know the purpose
of this research. Researcher should explain the purpose to interviewees. Thirdly, the privacy aspect of interviewees should be considered. In this research, the data collected from interviewees is kept secret and is only used for academic area; it does not involve any personal benefits. Fourthly, do not harm interviewees. The interview in this research will focus on the interviewees experience, thus the questions should not contain any harmful factors (ibid).

In order to resolve these issues, every participant will receive the participants consent form and participants information sheet of this research before interviewing. From the material they received, participants can obtain specific information of this investigation, such as the purpose of research; the reasons for choosing them as sample; the researcher; how does data be deal with; etc. The appendix (D) shows the specific detail about the participants consent form and appendix (E) shows the participant information sheet.

3.8 Validity

“Validity is concerned with whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about. (Saunders et al., 2009, p157)” According to Cohen et al. (2003), there are many factors that affect achieving greater validity. The best way to improve validity is to minimize the bias. During the interview, interviewer and respondent bias may exist, which include the attitude and the opinion bias of the interviewer; sometimes the interviewer may misunderstand what the interviewees saying or respondents misunderstand the questions that interviewer asked. In addition to that, the content validity should be noticed. All the questions should cover the objectives of research, or the content validity will be reduced. Furthermore, the gender, level of education, religion, and age may affect the validity of research. Cohen et al. (2003) cited Lee (1993) commented that, if the researcher investigates the sensitive field, the interviewees may have bias. Cohen et al. (2003) cited Oppenheim (1992) mentioned
some factors that affect interview, which are included (1) Sampling bias. (2) Poor relationship between interviewer and respondents. (3) Poor management of interview. (4) Poor interpreted or transcripts of data. These factors will reduce the validity. All these aspects are considered for this dissertation. These bias that affect validity should be reduced as much as possible. Researcher realizes the bias and prohibits the occurrence of these biases.

3.9 Reliability

“Reliability refers to the extent to which your data collection techniques or analysis procedures will yield consistent findings” (Saunders et al., 2009, p156). There are some threats to reliability, such as the error and bias of participant. This dissertation does not involve any commercial or personal interests. At the same time, all participants will be informed the contents of interview and the purpose of data collection in advance. The time of interview will be discussed with interviewees, which is to avoid dissatisfaction with the timing which may affect the results. These are not sensitive questions and interviews will be take place in a safe environment. All the participants are postgraduate students who study in Information School of University of Sheffield, their responsibility is to be honest to talk about their experience. Thus the participants’ bias will be reduced to a large extent.

3.10 Limitation of methodology

Although the methods choosing are identified, this research still includes some limitations. Firstly, the interview method contains some limitation, such as difficulty in recording, the interviewees may provide much information but some information may get lost. And the collected information may not be fully explained in this research. Secondly, the snowball sampling method may contain questionable
representativeness. Nonprobability sample method such as snowball sampling usually contains some disadvantage. It is not in accordance with the principle of equal probability, error is relatively large, and this error cannot be estimated, which may affect the validity and reliability of research (Rubin & Babbie, 2007). Thirdly, this research may contain the researcher bias more or less due to the researcher’s knowledge capacity constraint. Researcher in this field is not authoritative, thus the capacity constraint will make this research lack validity. At same time, the participants’ bias may exist as well. The participants’ bias may be caused by some factors, such as the interview environment. Fourthly, due to the limited time, the sample size only chose 10 Information Management students in University of Sheffield. All these factors are the limitation that affects the validity and reliability of research.
4. Findings and discussion

4.1 Introduction:

In this chapter, the data collected from semi-structured interviews will be presented and organized by different themes. At the same time, in order to explain the phenomenon rationally, these findings from interviews will be discussed with current publications. The findings will be divided into three different themes, which are

1). personal information.
2). users’ familiarity with social media
3). the extent to which social media is used for knowledge sharing in students’ group work.

The analysis method will be template analysis which was discussed in methodology chapter. Through data analysis, this chapter will meet the objectives (3), (4), and, (5) which are

(3) To examine the users’ degree of familiarity with using social networking sites, Blogging and Microblogging.

(4) To investigate to what extent Chinese students in Information Management are using social media such as Social networking sites, Blogging and Microblogging for knowledge sharing in group work.

(5) To identify the characteristics in using social media for knowledge sharing, which emerge from the research.
4.2. Personal information

This survey interviewed 10 Information Management Chinese students; they were composed of 5 males and 5 females and are all postgraduate students. Through data collection, it can be found that, most interviewees are belongs to 20-25 age group, only one interviewee is belongs to 26-30 age group.

This means the entire sample belongs to what Sandars & Morrison (2007) call the “net generation” born between 1982 and 1991. They grew up in a computer-based technology environment and their learning methods or teaching methods are different from large number of people who are belongs to previous generation. They suggested that, net generation has the experience of using online tools such as social media and their attitude of using social media tend to be positive (ibid). Jones et al. (2010) stated that net generation have grown up with internet for a long time, they spend a lot of time everyday in Internet and they have strong willingness to try new things in Internet. For some new social media such as microblogging and social networking sites will get their attention as well.

4.3. Users’ degree of familiarity with social media

This section will focus on describing and discussing users’ usage status of social media, users’ usage history and frequency of social media and users’ main reason for using social media, in order to examine the users’ familiarity degree of social media and identify the basic use environment of users.

4.3.1 Usage status

When being asked if they have used social media such as Social networking sites, blogging and microblogging before, the findings are listed as following:
The table (2) illustrates usage status of blogging, social networking sites and microblogging of interviewees. All interviewees used blogging and social networking sites before. In terms of microblogging, 8 participants have used it and only 2 participants do not use it. In the deeper interview, the participants who do not use microblogging described the reason. One interviewee (Interviewee 10) commented that “because he does not have any interest in microblogging and he thinks he do not have enough time to follow people. Additionally, he said that the function of microblogging is not as good as social networking sites, it limits the number of words that can be published.” Another participant (Interviewee 7) who does not use microblogging commented that: “Microblogging is lack privacy. I do not like it.”

Overall, the usage status of blogging, social networking sites and microblogging shows that these applications tend to be popular with students. Although two participants do not use microblogging, most of interviewees are using of blogging, social networking sites and microblogging. This phenomenon seem to confirm the statement of net generation have strong interesting in new emerging internet applications (Sandars, & Morrison, 2007; Jones et al., 2010). Halic et al. (2010) stated that 76% internet users are above 30 years old, but more than half bloggers in American are under 30 years old. It seems that blogging is more popular with young people than older people. Al-Daihani (2010) did research which has described in literature review social networking sites section, focuses on master students in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Used (Quantity)</th>
<th>Blogging</th>
<th>Social networking sites</th>
<th>Microblogging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not used (Quantity)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (2) Usage status of blogging, social networking sites and microblogging of interviewees
information science. Findings show that 89% information science students were aware of social software. The result in my research is higher than his. In short, the usage rate of social media is very high for young people.

### 4.3.2 Usage history and frequency

**Findings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee Number</th>
<th>Blogging (Begin to use)</th>
<th>Social networking sites (Begin to use)</th>
<th>Microblogging (Begin to use)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (3) the different begin year of users to use blogging, social networking sites and microblogging of interviewees.

This table is to describe the started time of using blogging, social networking sites and microblogging of each interviewee. The specific description will be shown in following sections.
4.3.2.1 Blogging

It is clearly to see that, the time when participants started blogging is not concentrated, the data obtained from interview shows that 1 people started to blog in 2002, 4 people started to blog in 2005, 3 people started to blog in 2006, 2 people started to blog in 2007. In addition to that, when being asked how often they blogged, 8 interviewees indicated that they blogged almost every day; they said they will use it as long as they are online. The other 2 interviewees said they used blog about once in two days.

4.3.2.2 Social networking sites

The data from interview shows that 5 participants started to use social networking sites in 2006, 3 participants started to use social networking sites in 2007, 1 participant started to use it in 2008 and 1 participant started to use it in 2009.

When being asked the frequency of using social networking sites, one person used it at about every two days; the other 9 persons used it every day.

4.3.2.3 Microblogging

The data collect from interview shows that 2 people never used microblogging before, 4 people started used it in 2010 and 4 persons started used it in 2011.

The data from interviews also show that the frequency of using microblogging of participants is that, except two persons who do not use it, all participants indicated almost every day.
Discussion

Through analyzing the data collected from interview, it can be found that most of participants have the experience of using blogging application for at least 4 years; One students (Interviewee 9) used it achieve about 9 years. According to investigate data, this people’s age group is 25-30; compared to the other interviewees he was in touch with blogging earlier. At the same time, for this student, the data from table shows that his started time of using social networking sites and microblogging is the earliest, he is in high degree on pursuit new emerge things of internet.

In terms of social networking sites, a large part of people have used for 4-5 years, small number of people have used for 2-3 years. Social networking service was developed later than blogging. In this research, because most of participants come from China, Due to a number of political factors, the world's leading social networking service FACEBOOK is banned in China, and the biggest social networking service in China is “RENREN” (www.renren.com) which was built at 2006. It was also during that time many students started to use social networking sites. This is why the using time of social networking sites of interviewees shorter than blogging.

The microblogging is new concept and popular in recent five years. As the same situation of Facebook, the word’s learning microblogging service Twitter is banned in china. Most of students started to use it at recent two years, it seem like that late development of microblogging affect the using history of students. Overall, the students’ usage history of blogging and social networking sites are relatively long.

It is interesting to mentione that, in this research, the interviewees who early using of blog (Interviewee 2, 6, 8 and 9) are the same people who earlier using of social networking sites and microblogging. According to Hartshorne & Ajjan (2009),
behavior and attitude can affect their decision of using web 2.0 applications. Their perceptibility of previous applications may influence their future use.

### 4.3.3 Reason for using

**Findings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification of reasons for using</th>
<th>Blogs</th>
<th>Social Networking Site</th>
<th>Microblogging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Recording information</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sharing information</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Searching information</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Communication</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Updating status</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Adding new friends</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Entertainment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (4): the number of times of main purposes which are mentioned by interviewees

The table (4) shows the number of times of main reasons which are mentioned by interviewees. The main reasons are classified into seven categories, which are recording information, sharing information, searching information, communication, updating status, adding new friends and entertainment. The specific findings are
illustrated in the following sections:

4.3.3.1 Recording information
It is clear to see that, two interviewees used blogging to record information. Interviewee 3 said that “I used blog to record daily life”. Interviewee 10 commented that she used blogging to record photos for personal retrieval. “Basically, I used blog only to record some pictures for personal retrieval, and use social networking sites only for entertainment, other features are rarely used.” No users mainly used social networking sites and microblogging to record information.

4.3.3.2 Sharing information
In terms of sharing information, 6 interviewees mentioned that they used blogging. For example, interviewee 2 and 5 said that “Blog is used for sharing my knowledge and information, and share my experience (Interviewee 2).” “Using Blog for sharing experience and feeling or other type of information (Interviewee 5)” 4 interviewees used social networking sites, for example interviewee 4 comments that “Social networking is used for sharing ideas and resources together such as some useful links; information etc.” 3 interviewees used microblogging. Interviewee 4 claimed that “microblogging always used for letting your friend know what are you doing and share your feelings anytime anywhere. For example, I am in trip, I always update my status or feeling to share to my friends and make my friends know what I am doing now.”

4.3.3.3 Searching information
2 interviewees said they used blogging for searching knowledge. Interviewee 9 indicated that “Blog is one of my searching systems. I can always find some useful information when I need some specific information (Interviewee 9)” Interviewee 6 has the same opinion. No one indicated the main reason for using social networking sites and microblogging is searching information.
4.3.3.4 Communication

There are 7 interviewee indicated the main reason for using social networking sites is to communicate with friends. “Using Social networking for updating status and communication with friends” (Interviewee 5). No people mentioned they mainly used blogging or microblogging for communication.

4.3.3.5 Updating status

7 Interviewees described that the main reason they used microblogging is to update status, they usually share what they are doing on microblogging. “Using Microblogging to let the other people know what I am doing now, update status (Interviewee 5).” Interviewee 5 claimed that she mainly used social networking site to update status. “The main purpose of using social networking is for updating status and communication with friends (Interviewee 5)” No any interviewee mentioned they mainly use blogging to update status.

4.3.3.6 Adding new friends

Only one interviewee mentioned the main reason they used social networking sites is to add new friends and for entertainment.

“Usually I Use Social networking sites to add new friends and communication with friends (Interviewee 2).”

4.3.3.7 Entertainment

There is only one interviewee mention that they mainly used social networking sites for entertainment. This situation is not happened on blogging and microblogging.

“Use social networking sites only for entertainment, other features are rarely used (Interviewee 10).”
Discussion
Through analyzing the data, it can be found that, the primary reason for using blogging is to share information. It is different with social networking sites and microblogging. Social networking sites are primarily used for communication and microblogging is primarily used for updating status to let others know what they are doing now. According to Du & Wagner, 2005 and Herring et al., 2005, interactive and openness are two main features of blogging, each bloggers can publish their thoughts, idea, knowledge and other type of information on their blogs, it is open to public. Additionally, each blogs site has RSS and XML function, which make readers can easily and quickly read and reproduced. But social networking sites emphasize social intercourse, it combines various function include adding friends, instant message; it is an integrated service platform (Hay, 2009). User will more focus on communication when using social networking sites. Microblogging is base on users’ information sharing to a large extent. It contains two main functions, which are ‘status update’ and ‘follow people’ (Allocca, 2011). But, information sharing is the ultimate goal for microblogging. This is why main purposes of tweets are to update status and share information.

4.4. The extent of use of social media for knowledge sharing in group work
This section will examine three aspects, which includes
1). usage status of using social media for knowledge sharing in group work
2). the reason of using social media in group work
3). the reason they do not use social media in group work.
Through examine these three aspects to identify to what extent the users use social media for knowledge sharing in group work. And find out what the characteristics of social media for knowledge sharing in group work.
### 4.4.1 Usage status

**Findings**

X means NOT USED, √ means USED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee No.</th>
<th>Usage status of blogging</th>
<th>Usage status of social networking sites</th>
<th>Usage status of microblogging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (5): Usage status of blogging, social networking sites and microblogging for knowledge sharing in group works.

This table shows the usage status of blogging, social networking sites and microblogging for knowledge sharing in group work. It can be saw that, in terms of blogging, 50% of interviewees used it for knowledge sharing in group work. In terms of social networking sites, 70% of interviewees have used it for knowledge sharing in group work. And only 10% of interviewee mentioned he used microblogging for knowledge sharing in group work.

**Discussion**

The usage status of social media of students shows that, the usage rate of social
networking sites for knowledge sharing in group work is highest. Following is blogging; the usage rate of microblogging in group work is lowest. Social networking sites are relatively popular compare to the other two tools. According to Awl (2011), social networking sites contain various functions together; it contains blogs and instant message. It can be used to interact with friends, discussion or track friends status. The function of social networking sites is stronger than blogging and microblogging. Grosseck & Holotesch (2008) stated that microblogging contain some disadvantage, it can only be received by users in the same network the other people may miss some information. In addition to that, too much junk information in microblogging. It seems that these reasons affect the usage status of microblogging for knowledge sharing in group work.

### 4.4.2 The reason they used social media for knowledge sharing in group work

**Findings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Blogging</th>
<th>Social networking sites</th>
<th>Microblogging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.Establishing discussion group</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.Sending instant message</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.Searching knowledge</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.Publishing information for knowledge exchanging</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (6): The number of times of exist reasons mentioned by interviewees.

The table above shows that the number of interviewees has mentioned the different reasons they used social media for knowledge sharing in group work. It can be saw
that, the reasons they used social media for knowledge sharing in group work are categorized by establishing discussion group, sending instant message, searching knowledge, publish information and exchanging idea.

4.4.2.1 Establishing discussion group
In the aspect of using for discussion, it is clearly that 5 interviewees used social networking sites for discussion and there is not any interviewees use microblogging and blog for discussion. In discussion group, the reasons they mainly used can be classified into three aspects:

(1) Exchanging idea. Interviewee 1 and interviewee 6 claimed the same opinion “We use social networking to exchange idea, creating a discussion group in social networking sites. Each group member can illustrate their idea or opinion within this group, it is quite useful. (Interviewee 1) ”

(2) Recording information. Interviewee 4 claimed that “Actually, this is the most common place we use in group work, we can establish discussion groups and use network database to record our data. (Interviewee 4)”

(3) Sharing useful sources. Interviewee 2 claimed that “In social networking, we establish a discussion group to exchange our group members’ ideas and share some useful sources (Interviewee 2)”

4.4.2.2 Sending instant message
In the aspect of sending instant message, interviewee 5 and interviewee 9 used social networking sites to send instant message for group members “I seldom used social media in group works, only sometimes use Facebook to sent instant message. (Interviewee 5)” No interviewee used blogging or microblogging to sent instant message.

4.4.2.3 Search knowledge
In the aspect of searching knowledge, interviewee 6 and interviewee 9 used blogs as searching tools, and not any interviewee used social networking sites and
microblogging for searching. Interviewee 6 claimed that “I used to use blogs for search some knowledge that I need. Large people publish their knowledge or academic materials on blogs, it contain huge information. Lots of them are very useful. So I used it in group works. (Interviewee 6)”

4.4.2.4 Publishing information for exchanging

In terms of publishing information for exchanging, 2 interviewees mentioned it; interviewee 3 and interviewee 4 mentioned they used blogs to publish useful and organized knowledge or idea to make their group members share. “If we find some relative and useful information, copied it and inform group member see it; they can post their opinion, exchanging idea through blogs (Interviewee 3)” “We can publish our ideas on blogs to let more people exchange the idea. Or sometime publish some organized resources to show to group members (Interviewee 4)”

2 interviewees use social networking sites to publish good resources and obtain comments. Interviewee 3 commented that “We use social networking sites to exchange idea. We publish some good resources to share with my group members, achieving knowledge exchanging (Interviewee 3)” and interviewee 6 said that “I can get the knowledge through information exchange. You know, from it we can publish some topics and exchanging opinion by posts (Interviewee 6)”

One interviewee usually publishes some short information which relevant to their group works, such as links and website in microblogging to share with group members. “If we find something short, useful in the book or online, immediately send it by micro blogging. (Interviewee 3)”

Discussion

There are many students use social networking sites to discuss group project is because social networking sites contain the group function, which is very convenient and easy to use. Within the creative group in social networking sites, group members
can share their idea and provide suggestion to achieve the purpose of knowledge exchanging. This is why many users like to use social networking sites in group work. Social networking sites also includes instant message function, people can send instant message to their friends or peers, and it is useful and convenient (Abram, & Pearlman, 2010). Compare to social networking sites, microblogging has the similar function, which is [@username] function, through this function, users also can discuss with the other users (Grosseck & Holotesch, 2008). But as the result shown in section 4.4.1, seldom users use microblogging for knowledge sharing in academic group works.

Some people use blogs for searching knowledge is due to the characteristic of blogging to some extent. According to Du & Wagner (2005) and Herring et al. (2005), bloggers usually record their thoughts, knowledge and some useful information in their blogs and public openly. According to Ras et al. (2005), a lot of bloggers use blog to record academic materials and usually these resources are good material to the other users. Thus, many people attempt to find out some useful knowledge from blogs. It seems like that these factors encourage people to search useful knowledge from blogs. The useful knowledge from bloggers can be searched by public from search engine searching or within blogging website searching as well.

People use social media to publish knowledge for sharing in group works is because the social media is a communication platform for users. As discussed in the literature review chapter, users of blogging, social networking sites and microblogging can post comments to the other users or obtain comments from the other users (Gómez et al., 2010; Selwyn, 2009; Awl, 2011; Kobayashi, 2008). This function increases communication between group members, they can publish knowledge which relevant to group works to social media tools such as blogging, social networking sites and microblogging and exchange idea or obtain some suggestion from group members. They also can be used for publishing various types of documents and more suitable
for sharing longer context than microblogging. Due to the word limitation, microblogging is usually used for publish short content (Allocca, 2011). It is very common to use microblogging to publish links, opinion and status (Hedengren, 2011; Wankel et al., 2011).

### 4.4.3 The reason they do not use social media for knowledge sharing in group work

#### Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Blogging</th>
<th>Social networking sites</th>
<th>Microblogging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Influenced by group members (not in the same network service)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Influenced by individual behavior</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Influenced by social media function limitation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (7): The number of times that reasons mentioned by interviewees.

This table (7) shows the different type of reasons for students who do not used social media for knowledge sharing in group work. The number in table means how many time the interviewees mentioned for each type reasons. The reasons is organized by three types, which includes (1) Influenced by group members (2) Influenced by individual behavior (3) Influenced by social media function limitation. This data is collected from interviewees who do not use one of blogging, social networking sites or microblogging for knowledge sharing in group works.
4.4.3.1 Influenced by group members

In terms of blogging, there is no interviewee in this category. Only 1 interviewee mentioned the same situation for social networking sites (which shown at below interviewee 8)

Interviewee 2, 4 and 8 indicated that they do not used microblogging in group works is influenced by group members. Interviewee 4 claimed that “I think few classmates used it in group work. And a main reason is there are many microblogging services, such as Twitter, Sina (Chinese most popular microblogging services) and QQ (Chinese microblogging services). It is difficult to use it in group works”. Interviewee 8 mentioned that “The main reason is not all group members are on the same social networking sites / microblogging. It is not necessary to create new account in order to be used in group work.”

4.4.3.2 Influenced by individual behavior

Interviewee 7 and 10 indicated that the fact that they do not use blogs for knowledge sharing in group work is influenced by individual behavior, they do not like used it in group work. Interviewee 10 said that “I think it is personal habit. Some people do not like use for knowledge sharing in groups.”

Interviewee 7 and interviewee 10 also mentioned that they do not use social networking sites in group works is influenced by individual behavior. One like face to face communication, another only use social networking sites for entertainment.

“I like face to face communication. In group works, if we need to discuss anything about work, we will go to information common to discuss it. If we find any useful material, we usually sent by message or send instant message through MSN. It is more accustomed to do that.” (Interviewee 7)

“I only use it for entertainment, do not consider using in studying” (Interviewee 10).
3 interviewees mentioned the reasons for not using microblogging for knowledge sharing in group works is influenced by individual behavior. Interviewee 7 and interviewee 10 do not use microblogging before. Interviewee 2 claimed that “Microblogging is usually used to send some emergent information, but in group work she always uses telephone instead” (interviewee 2)

4.4.3.3 Influenced by social media function limitation

There are 3 interviewees (Interviewee 1, Interviewee 5, Interviewee 8) who mentioned they do not use blogs for knowledge sharing in group works due to function of blogging. The privacy issue is the key factor that mentioned by interviewee 1 and 5.

“You know in University, Plagiarism is a serious problem. If we publish our group works in website, it is not safe. So I think privacy is the key issue.” (Interviewee 5)

And interviewee 8 claimed “Functions of blogs are threatened by the popularity of social networking sites.” (Interviewee 8)

In the aspect of social networking sites, there is no social networking sites users have this problem. And there are 4 interviewees (Interviewee 2, Interviewee 5, Interviewee 6, and Interviewee 7) mentioned same situation for microblogging, they think it lack privacy. Interviewee 6 said that “Some information on microblogging could be known by somebody who I don’t want to let him/her know.”

Discussion

Through analyzing the data, there are three factors that affect people to use social media for knowledge sharing in group work which are group members, individual behavior and functions limitation. Currently, there are many Social networking sites and microblogging services in the world. If you want to read the other users’ social
networking page, you must have to log in your same service account. For example, if you want to read your friends Facebook page, you need to have a Facebook account. In China, most of students use RENREN, but in UK, most of students use Facebook, which lead to students, cannot fully achieve knowledge sharing through social networking sites. Microblogging has the same situation. Lot of Chinese students use Sina, which is the most popular microblogging service in China. But, in UK, most of students from all over the world use Twitter, different microblogging service affect the knowledge sharing in group work. Grosseck & Holotesch (2008) identify the disadvantage of microblogging indicated this point as well. However, blogging do not like that. Everyone can see bloggers page regardless of whether have the same company's account, except special setting, for example set the password.

Individual behavior is another factor that affects using social media for knowledge sharing in group work. Although some interviewee used them in daily life, but they do not like to used them in group works. According to Efimova (2005), blogs encourage users to capture and organize the knowledge; it also can provide a conversion space for group members. But some users still do not have interest in using weblog in group works. Some useful information they always print them out and share with friends, they prefer face to face communication, which restrict the use of blog in group.

The last factor that affects use of social media in group for knowledge sharing is the inadequate function of social media. Bloging and microblogging is less intimate than social networking sites. Many users afraid that, if they publish the group result on blogs or microbloging, the results are possible to be plagiarized by the other groups’ members. Although sometime we can set the privacy, but if not set successfully just in case, will lead to unnecessary trouble. The inadequate function of social media gives them low motivation to use them. Conversely, if use creates group function of social network site, it will be much better; only group members can see the discussed context, privacy of group works can be protected. Microblogging contain another
function is word limitation. Gómez et al. (2010) indicate the word limitation of microblogging can encourage users use simple sentence to communicate, recipients will be easier to understand the idea, and it improves information exchanging. But, this statement cannot be proved by this investigation. Word limitation of microblogging make some users do not use microblogging for knowledge sharing.

### 4.5 Summary

The personal information of interviewees shows that all interviewees are Information Management Chinese students, they are all belong to what Sandars & Morrison (2007) call the “net generation” born between 1982 and 1991. They spend a lot of time everyday in Internet and have much interest in new emergent Internet things. Through identifying their usage status, usage history, usage frequency and main reason for using of social media social, it can be concluded that their familiarity degree of blogging and social networking sites is good, but the familiarity degree of microblogging is lower than blogging and social networking sites. And in students’ group work, using social networking sites for knowledge sharing in group work is more popular than blogging and microblogging. Almost no students use microblogging for knowledge sharing in group work.

The diagram below shows the different reasons for using social media in group. In searching knowledge stage, the students in this study only use blogging. Blogging is used for knowledge sharing; knowledge organizing and recording, and knowledge exchange. Social networking sites are used for establishing discussion group, recording, sharing and exchanging knowledge. Microblogging is only used for knowledge sharing in students’ group work.
Diagram: Different social media applications used in different purpose

- Searching knowledge → Blogging
- Establishing discussion group → Social networking sites
- Organizing and recording knowledge → Blogging, Social networking sites
- Sharing knowledge → Social networking sites, Microblogging
- Exchanging knowledge → Blogging, Social networking sites
5. Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on summarizing the overall research. It will revisit the main point in previous chapters and illustrate to what extent the objectives are met. At the same time, it will provide some recommendation base on this research and conclude some limitation of this research.

5.2 Methods

This research uses interview method to collect the data. Ten Chinese information management students are chosen by snowball sampling for interviewing, and the data is analyzed by template analysis. King (2007) stated that template analysis is a method for analyzing qualitative data by theme; the data is mainly divided into three themes, which are 1. Personal information 2. Users’ familiarity with social media and 3. The extent to use social media for knowledge sharing in group work. Every main theme is divided into several sub-themes (They are shown on table 1). Through template analysis, the background of users and the current situation of using social media for knowledge in group work are demonstrated and discussed in the findings and discussion part. The key findings and the achievement of objectives will be shown in the next sections.
5.3. Summary of findings

5.3.1 Objective 1: To examine the characteristics of blogging, social networking sites and microblogging through reviewing previous literature.

The characteristics of blogging, social networking sites and microblogging is different. The characteristics of blogging are mainly in four aspects:
1. Personalization features. Every people use blogging is due to different reason.
2. Timeliness. People can edit the content, easy to keep up-to-date.
3. Openness. Blogging is open to every public and share with public.
4. Interactive features. Bloggers can easily reproduce and read blogs any time anywhere. The characteristics of social networking sites is a little different from blogging, it is mainly in four areas, first is user-centric, it is aim to meet the customers’ needs (Abram & Pearlman). Second is integration of diverse forms of communication, it combines various functions together (Hay, 2009). Third is entertainment, it provides users an entertainment platform (Cook, 2011). The characteristics of microblogging are simpler than blogging and social networking siate, the key characteristic for microblogging is ‘follow people’ to share information (Allocca, 2001). Second is that it only allows users to send maximum 140 character. Third is convenience, people can use various channels to publish information. Additionally, rapid spread is another one characteristic (Gómez et al., 2010).

5.3.2 Objective 2: To examine what functions of social media such as blogging, social networking sites, and microblogging can be used for knowledge sharing through previous literature.

This objective is met through reviewing the previous literature, many functions of social media that can be used for knowledge sharing are found. In terms of blogging, it can be used to exchange the idea through comment and responds. Furthermore, weblog can be used to share good resources, also can be used to collect valuable
information and knowledge (Ras et al., 2005). It can help readers to identify the resources and make readers convenient to follow new information through RSS function (Efimova, 2005). Social networking sites used for knowledge sharing is mainly focus on interact with group members by notes, links, photos or video, it can be used for publishing various type of knowledge. Additionally, it contains the application of creating group benefit group members to have a good environment to exchange knowledge (Awl, 2011). Thus, social networking sites emphasize knowledge exchanging and sharing and communication. Compared to blogging and social networking sites, microblogging more focused on sharing simple and short information. It can obtain some comments and notes from public as well and also can improve communication and collaboration within teams

5.3.4 Objective 3 to examine the users’ degree of familiarity with using blogging, social networking sites and microblogging.

The users’ degree of familiarity with blogging and social networking sites is good, but the familiarity degree of microblogging is lower than blogging and social networking sites.

The findings show that, all interviewees are in using blogging and social networking sites. At the same time, they use blogging for a long history, and the frequency of their using blogging and social networking sites is high, they can skillfully use the main functions of blogging and social networking sites. But the findings of microblogging shows most users use microblogging only 1-2 years, some interviewees only use it for several months, some even do not use it. In terms of use time and function understanding, they are not familiar with microblogging
5.3.5 Objective 5 to investigate to what extent Chinese students in Information Management use social media such as social networking sites, blogging and microblogging for knowledge sharing in group work.

Using social networking sites for knowledge sharing in group work is more popular than blogging and microblogging. The findings show many social media users, especially bloggers, and microblogging users do not used them for knowledge sharing in group work. Only half bloggers use blogging in group work for knowledge sharing. Students mainly use blogging to search knowledge and exchange information with group members. Microblogging is rarely used for knowledge sharing in group work. They seems like more interesting in social networking sites, especially using the create group function of social networking sites. They take social networking sites as group discussion tool, used for knowledge sharing and exchanging opinions.

5.3.6 Objective 5 to identify the characteristics in using social media for knowledge sharing in group work, which emerge from the research

The advantage of blogging in group work is that it benefits to improve users’ knowledge exchange and knowledge search. But it also contain some limitation, its openness feature make blogs lack privacy. Social networking sites contain the large proportion of advantages of blogging. Additionally, the discussion group can resolve the privacy issue, its multiple function make it more competitive. Except the main reason for using social media for knowledge sharing in group work found, some issues that affect users to use social media are found as well. The advantage of microblogging used for knowledge sharing in group work is not mentioned by users, it is due to the privacy issue and word limitation of microblogging, many users reject it to use in group work.
5.3.7 **Objective 6 to provide some recommendation to social media users and researchers.**

This objective is achieved and described in the section 6 Recommendation.
6. Recommendation

6.1 Introduction

Based on the findings of this investigation, some recommendations will be put forward by the researcher. The recommendations are divided into two parts, which are recommendations for users and recommendations for researchers. The detail will be described in the following sections.

6.2 Recommendation for users

6.2.1 Enhance students’ experience of using social media for knowledge sharing in group work

Comparing two usage statuses of social media in daily life and in group work, it can be found that the usage rate of social media in daily life is much higher than social media usage rate in group work, which means the students’ experience of using social media for knowledge sharing in group work is not enough. Social media is a good way for knowledge sharing in organization, the students’ experience of using social media in school group work should be improved (Winkelen & McKenzie, 2011).

Through investigating the main purpose for using social media and the reasons for students not using social media for knowledge sharing (see section 4.3), the students’ familiarity with social media may not be satisfactory. If their familiarity with social media can be improved, it will be helpful for enhance their experience of using social media in their group work. Additionally, many teachers are interesting in allocating group work in teaching. According to Clark et al. (2007), their survey in 2006 showed that, 85% of teachers enjoyed using collaborative approach in teaching, 55%
of teachers believed that students in collaborative work can increase their problem-solving skill in group work. Bingham (2011) identified that social media can be powerful as learning tool in collaborative work. Organizations should encourage people use social media, which can improve communication and knowledge sharing. Teachers should encourage students to use these social media in collaborative learning, which can increase students’ experience. Drawing on the evidence in this research, it is proposed that enhancing students’ experience of using social media for knowledge sharing is important, it may determine the degree of popularity of social media using in group work.

6.2.2 Encourage students to make use of advantages of social media for knowledge sharing

There are some recommendations to students. The first one is to encourage students to make use of advantages of social media for knowledge sharing. Through analyzing the data obtained, students do not have a good use of social media tools for knowledge sharing in group work. Taking blog for example, many students in this study do not use functions of blogs very seriously. They are worried that their jobs will be stolen by the others (see section 4.4.3). However, this problem could be avoided if they paid more attention to privacy setting. In China, many blogging services allow users to set a password to their article or set only allow certain people to read blogs, which can make their works safe. Blogs is a good platform for knowledge sharing, much knowledge can be found through posts can comments, it can be used for supporting communication as well (Minocha, 2009). Not only group members, but also other users who read your production may provide some useful advice to your group, Kobayashi (2008) indicates that comments may be relevant to writing about an issue or discuss issue, achieving collaboration.

In terms of social networking sites, this research shows that many students only use one or two functions; in particular, creating a group for discussion. More features of
social networking sites can facilitate knowledge sharing. Firstly, knowledge sharing need more people to joint. Considering the participants’ concerns, it appears inadvisable to publish the final results of group work to the website due to the plagiarism issue, but social networking sites still can be used to exchange and collect some idea such as the background of assignment or some specific formulas and so on. For example, such as Facebook, users can use it to ask question, it is a good way to obtain opinion and idea from the other users. When you publish, others will be informed on their pages. According to Zyl (2008), the size of social networking will affect your gains. The large number of friends in social networking, the better you obtain information. Secondly, currently, many academic website and database contain the function of sharing, you just only click sharing button on website, the links or article can be shared through Facebook and Twitter (typically), or the other services. The sharing information through social networking can be easily and quickly obtained by the other users. Overall, social networking sites are good approach for knowledge sharing.

Microblogging is a social media tool which was used less in groups works by participants in this study, however, microblogging contain some features, which can be used for knowledge sharing in group work. According to Zhao & Rosson (2009), microblogging can be used to track the progress of the work. But this is do not be accepted by students in this research. The main purpose of many microblogging users was to use microblogging to let others know what they are doing now. Under the premise of same microblogging provider, it is good use if students can use microblogging to track progress of group works. Under normal circumstances and base on my personal experience, usually groups’ members do not know clearly about the progress of assigned tasks of every group members. As long as each team members can update their individual task progress status on the microblogging, other members can easily see each group members work status, the micro-blogging plays a good role in the transmission of information.
6.3 Recommendation for further research

This dissertation contains some limitation which is discussed in section 3.10, thus the further research should minimize or overcome these limitation. Additionally, this research emphasize the social media using between students in education area, the further research may do an investigation, which focus on communication between teachers and students through social media, identifying the role of social media in classroom. Due to the time and financial constraints, this research only collect small proportion of respondents, I think the further research should collect larger proportion of respondents that cover different subjects and nationality, and use more robust sampling method. Additionally, further research can investigate the relationship between students’ concept of using social media for knowledge sharing and the degree of popularity of social media using in group work, this relationship is still not proved in this research.

Word court: 15923
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8. Appendix

8.1 Appendix (A) Original interview questions

Interview question

1. What is your age group?
   (a) Under 20
   (b) 20-25
   (c) 26-30
   (d) 30+

2. Gender
   (a) Female    (b) Male

3. How would you rate your level of passion for the network?
   (Lowest) 1  2  3  4  5 (Highest)

4. Have you used social media such as blog, Facebook, microblogging before? How often you use these tools? (If not, can you explain the reason? If yes, answer the following questions)

5. When did you know these social media, such as blog, Facebook, microblogging? Can you illustrate some main functions that you used?
   Blog:
   Social networking:
   Microblogging:
6. Comparing blog, Facebook and Microblogging, can you illustrate some difference according to what you know currently? Which application do you prefer? What is the reason?

7. Do you think your classmates around you use these social media tools can promote you to use them to some extent? Or these applications using only depend on your personal interests?

8. Have you used blog, facebook or microblogging for knowledge sharing in your group work? What types of tools are more frequently used for knowledge sharing in your studying?

9. Has your group used microblogging to track your daily activities for your group work? If yes, what is the advantage or disadvantage? If not, do you think it is helpful for your group work? Will you try to use it next time?

10. If you used blog, facebook, microblogging for knowledge sharing in group work, can you describe respectively how you use them?

   Blog:
   Social networking:
   Microblogging:

11. What is the role of Blog, Facebook and Microblogging in your group work for knowledge sharing? What types of information you usually publish or sharing with your group members. (Ask question; publish links; communication; provide some useful resources et al.)

   Blog:
12. What do you think are the main barriers of using these applications such as blog, facebook, microblogging for knowledge sharing?

Blog:
Social networking:
Microblogging:

13. What specific function do you think need to be added to Blog, Facebook and Microblogging. Or you think that the current function is strong enough? Please illustrate it.

Blog:
Social networking:
Microblogging:
8.2 Appendix (B) Revised interview question

1. What is your age group?
   (a) Under 20
   (b) 20-25
   (c) 26-30
   (d) 30+

2. Gender
   (a) Female     (b) Male

3. What is your subject in University of Sheffield?

4. (1)Have you ever used social media such as blog, facebook, microblogging before?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If yes</th>
<th>If not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When did you start using? (Roughly time)</td>
<td>Why did you not use these applications?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2).Are you still using?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If yes</th>
<th>If not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often do you use?</td>
<td>How often did you use?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you use them for?</td>
<td>Why did you stop? Please illustrate the reason.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(The following question is for people who answer YES in question 4)

5. Can you illustrate some main functions that you used?
Blog:
Social networking:
Microblogging:

6. Comparing blog, Facebook and Microblogging, can you illustrate some difference according to what you know currently? Which application do you prefer? What is the reason?

7. Have you used the function you mentioned of blog, Facebook or microblogging for knowledge sharing in your group work?
If yes answer question 8

8. Can you describe respectively how you use them for knowledge sharing in group work and why you used them?
Blog:
Social networking:
Microblogging:

If not, answer question 9: Can you illustrate some reasons for you do not use these function for knowledge sharing in group work?

10. What is the role of Blog, Facebook and Microblogging in your group work for knowledge sharing?
Blog:
Social networking:
Microblogging:

11. What do you think are the main barriers of using these applications such as blog, facebook, microblogging for knowledge sharing?

Blog:

Social networking:

Microblogging:

12. Do you think that the current function is strong enough? Please illustrate it.

If NO

What specific function do you think need to be added to Blog, Facebook and Microblogging.

Blog:

Social networking:

Microblogging:
8.3 Appendix (C) An example of interview transcript

Interview 4 transcript:

ME: Hi, Meng, thank you for taking parting in this interview. I think you have read the Participant Information Sheet and consent form that I sent to you yesterday; you must clear about my investigation now.

Interviewee 4: Yes, I have read it

Me: Well, can we start now?

Interviewee 4: Yes

ME: what’s your age group?

Interviewee 4: My age group is 20-25.

ME: What’s your subject?

Interviewee 4: Information management

ME: Have you ever used social media such as blogging, SNS, microblogging before?

Interviewee 4: Yes, I have used them before

Me: Can you tell me when you used them, respectively?

Interviewee 4: Blogging is used by me at about 2005; Started to used SNS at about 2006, microblogging is used this year, 2011.
Me: Well, are you still in using them?

Interviewee 4: Yes, of course.

ME: How often you use them?

Interviewee 4: I think I used them almost every day except I cannot connect to Internet.

Me: You mean you use blogging, microblogging, SNS everyday?

Interviewee 4: Yes, it is right.

ME: What do you used for?

Interviewee 4: Contacting with friends, showing my status and knowing where are they and how are they doing.

ME: Can you tell me the specific function for blogging, SNS and microblogging, respectively?

Interview 4: OK. First, Blog is used for sharing something big and interesting with friends; usually I used to writing down some interesting thing and share it. Social networking is used for sharing ideas and resources together such as some useful links; information etc. and microblogging always used for letting your friend know what are you doing and share your feelings anytime anywhere. For example, I am in trip, I always update my status or feeling to share to my friends and make my friends know what I am doing now.
Me: Which application do you prefer to use?

Interview 4: For my personal idea, I prefer social networking community like Facebook. It integrates some interesting applications together, and the functionality of social networking is much more powerful than blogs and microblogging. The most attractive thing of social networking communities to me is that I can play small flash games with my friends, which is a combination of communication and having fun.

Me: Have you used the function you mentioned of blogging, SNS or microblogging for knowledge sharing in your group work?

Interviewee 4: Definitely yes

Me: Well, can you tell me how you use them for knowledge sharing in group work?

Interviewee 4:
Blog: We can publish our ideas on blogs to let more people exchange the idea. Or sometime publish some organized resources to show to group members.
Social networking: Actually, this is the most common place we use in group work, we can establish discussion groups and use network database to record our data.
Microblogging: normally, this is not used in group works

Me: Do you think microblogging is hard to use for knowledge sharing in group work?

Interviewee 4: I think few classmates used it in group work. And a main reason is there are many microblogging services, such as Twitter, Sina (Chinese most popular microblogging services) and QQ. It is difficult to use it in group works.
Me: What is the role of Blog, Facebook and Microblogging in your group work for knowledge sharing?

Interviewee 4:
Blog: it is like a publishing platform, sharing individual knowledge.
Social networking: we can take full advantage of the interactive nature of it and more important, it provides us a room for us communicating freely regardless of location and time issues.
Microblogging: this is the place we publish our new ideas in the first place, however, it does not take much work in group working.

Me: So, you think microblogging is less important as blogging and SNS in your study?

Interviewee 4: Yes, I think so; I seldom used it in study. And almost no friends around me used it in group work?
Me: Do you think the friends around you can affect you to use it?

Interviewee 4: Yes, the environment can affect me.

Me: What do you think are the main barriers of using these applications such as blogging, SNS, microblogging for knowledge sharing in group work?

Interviewee 4:
Blog: lack of interaction, we can only publish our ideas on it; however, others can only put comments on them, lack interaction.
Social networking: very useful tools, we can publish scripts, images, even videos on it; however, the main barrier is that it has restrictions on instrument logging onto.
Microblogging: it is the short version of blog, so the barrier is pretty much the same. It lacks privacy as well.
ME: Do you think the current function of social media is strong enough?

Interviewee 4: I have mentioned some barriers for social media, if they can be improved; I think I will be better.

ME: Thank you, that’s my entire question, if you have any question, just contacts me.

Interviewee 4: Ok
Title of Research Project:

Use of blogging, social networking sites and microblogging for knowledge sharing, focusing on Information management students in group work.

Name of Researcher: Jianfeng Wang

Participant Identification Number for this project: 

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated ____ explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.

Contact the email wjf99000@163.com if there are problems.
3. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential.

   I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my
   anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with
   the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the
   report or reports that result from the research.

4. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research

5. I agree to take part in the above research project.

________________________  _____________  _______________
Name of Participant       Date              Signature
(or legal representative)

________________________  _____________  _______________
Lead Researcher          Date              Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Copies:

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and
dated participant consent form, the letter/pre-written script/information sheet and any other written
information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed
in the project’s main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.
8.5 Appendix (E) Information Sheet

Information Sheet

1. Research Project Title:

Use of blogging, social networking sites and microblogging for knowledge sharing, focusing on Information management students in group work.

2. Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

3. What is the project’s purpose?

Blogs, facebook, twitter etc. are web 2.0 applications produced in recent ten years. More and more people use these tools for knowledge sharing especially students. Students use these tools for discussion, studying and searching information they need. They are no longer confined to traditional material. They do not need to discuss face to face; they can use web 2.0 tools for discussion and knowledge sharing. The information behaviour has changed a lot in recent society, using the web 2.0 tools for knowledge sharing reflects this trend. The objective for this dissertation is to show a detail description of using blogs, facebook, twitter etc. for knowledge sharing, especially for Sheffield university information school students who use these tools for group work. I also aim to find out to what extent are information school students
useing web 2.0 tools for knowledge sharing. Additionally, I aim to find out characteristic emerging in using web 2.0 tools for knowledge sharing. This research will be done during June, July and August

4. Why have I been chosen?
Because you are a students in the Information Management.

5. Do I have to take part?
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form) and you can still withdraw at any time without it affecting any benefits that you are entitled to in any way. You do not have to give a reason.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?
This interview will last for about 10-15 minutes and will only take place once. I will be responsible for Costs incurred during this period. During interviewing, you will be asked some questions about your experience on using social media for knowledge sharing in group work. All of the questions are open ended questions, you should be able to discuss in-depth about your experience on using social media for knowledge sharing in your group work. All of the data collect from you will be analysed by content analysis approach.

7. What do I have to do?
Your responsibility is to answer the question honestly.

8. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
Because this research is low risk research, there are almost no disadvantages and risk of taking part. All the data will be destroyed after research. During the research, all data will be stored in my computer secretly.

9. What are the possible benefits of taking part?
Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will find out the current using situation of social media of students for knowledge sharing and find out the characteristic of social media emerging in knowledge sharing. Through this participation, you may have deeper understanding on these applications.

10. What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected?

The interview will be stopped as well.

11. What if something goes wrong?

If you have any complaints, you should contact me, my Email address is wjf99000@163.com. I will handle your complains seriously. If you are still not satisfied, you may contact my supervisor Sheila Webber, and if you wish to take the matter further, contact the University Secretary.

12. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications.

13. What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research project’s objectives?

The information about he experience of using social media such as blogging, social networking site and Microblogging for knowledge sharing in group work will be sought from you.
14. Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?

The audio and/or video recordings of your activities made during this research will be used only for analysis and for illustration in my dissertation. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

15. What will happen to the results of the research project?

The final results of the research project will be submitted to my department which is Information School and stored in the school database.

16. Who is organising and funding the research?

This is individual dissertation, no organization supports this project.

17. Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via Information School ethics review procedure The University’s Research Ethics Committee monitors the application and delivery of the University’s Ethics Review Procedure across the University.

18. Contact for further information:

Researcher: Jianfeng Wang  Contact number: 07402485896
Email: wjf99000@163.com

Supervisor: Sheila Webber
Email: S.webber@sheffield.ac.uk