



The role of context and motivation variables in mobile commerce usage – A further perspective on Chong (2013) [☆]



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ABSTRACT

We comment on a recent article by Chong (2013) on the roles of demographic and motivation variables in mobile commerce usage. Drawing on the recent research on the service-dominant logic, socioemotional selectivity theory, and data from a first empirical study, we argue that a broader discussion on the value relevance of mobile commerce activities for customers and the consideration of consumers' future time perspectives would provide a richer, potentially more appropriate picture of the drivers of mobile commerce usage. Furthermore, using data from a second empirical study, we highlight several validity issues of the used scales. We hope to motivate a replication and extension of Chong's study and also provide recommendations for future research on this area.

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1. Introduction

In his insightful and important article, Chong (2013) shows how demographic and motivational variables influence the adoption of a new technology, in this case, the use of mobile commerce (m-commerce). Focusing on the Chinese market, Chong (2013) proposes a new model of m-commerce usage activities instead of m-commerce adoption, and concludes that younger users usually engage in these activities.

Although we agree with the general substance of his text, the article may cause researchers and practitioners to misinterpret the true value of the results for the following reasons:

- Chronological age is not discriminant when motivations enter the fray.
- Usage activities do not necessarily inherit value.
- The used scales have validity issues.

Drawing on recent research on the service-dominant logic, socioemotional selectivity theory, and data from a two empirical studies, we discuss these three issues separately.

2. Chronological age is not discriminant when motivations enter the fray

"This research specifically examines the relationships between age and m-commerce usage activities," says Chong (2013). The author does indeed find that chronological age impacts the use of m-commerce in China; he states that "the results show that younger users are more likely to use m-commerce for content delivery, transaction-based activities, location-based services and entertainment when compared to older users."

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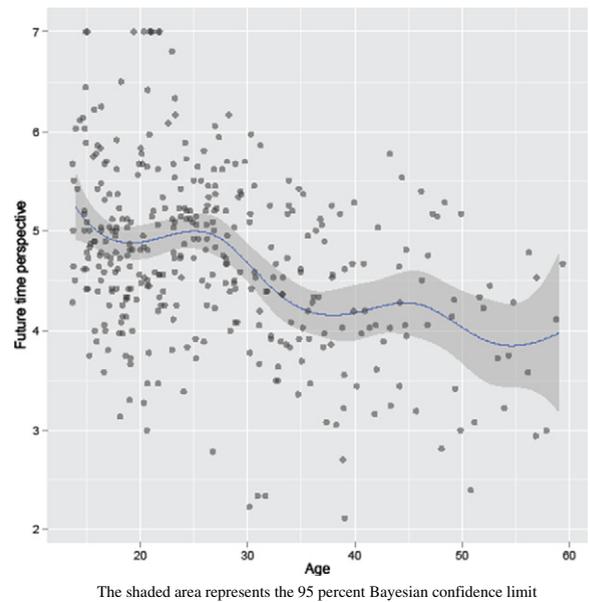
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One of the most controversial notions about age pertains to the popular belief that there is a normative age-related decline in extrinsic and intrinsic motivation and, consequently, in the individual's behavior (e.g., Kooij et al., 2011; Homburg and Giering, 2001; Lambert-Pandraud et al., 2005; Mägi, 2003). While chronological age has been found to explain all possible changes that occur in people's psychological, social, and even societal functioning in their life cycle, Griffiths (1997) notes that "we should stop accepting chronological age as a factor ..." Using the same line of reasoning, several scholars have suggested that chronological age may only serve as a proxy for age-related processes, culminating in Heckhausen et al. (2010), who argue that "chronological age itself does not automatically propel progression through the timetable of development tasks." As such, chronological aging is only a sub-process of the more general process of aging (Carstensen et al., 1999; Cleveland and McFarlane Shore, 1992; Settersten and Mayer, 1997). Individuals with the same chronological age may differ in important dimensions (e.g., health, family status), at least in the subjective meaning that age has for them (Cleveland and McFarlane Shore, 1992; Settersten and Mayer, 1997).

More recent research has thus focused on aging's effect on motivational processes, which can significantly impact information processing (Williams and Drolet, 2005). In this context, socioemotional selectivity theory (SST) has gained much attention in the psychology (Carstensen, 2006; Drolet et al., 2010; Fung and Carstensen, 2003; Hicks et al., 2012) and marketing fields (Jahn et al., 2012; McKay-Nesbitt et al., 2011; Pyone and Isen, 2011; Wei et al., 2012, 2013; Yoon et al., 2005). According to SST, changes in individuals' motivations and behaviors are not primarily due to their physical age, but rather due to changes in their future time perspective (FTP). FTP focuses on individual, subjective time experiences (Husman and Shell, 2008; Lang and Carstensen, 2002) and refers to how much time individuals believe they have left (Cate and John, 2007). Chronological age is therefore negatively related to FTP, but the relationship between the two concepts is usually not linear (Zacher and Frese, 2009). Specifically, SST suggests that the relative importance of a set of social motives changes as a function of their time perspective (Fung et al., 2005). When time is perceived as a limiting factor, emotionally meaningful motives become more important. Conversely, if time is perceived as extended, functional and instrumental goals are likely to be prioritized. Numerous studies support the central SST tenets and FTP's role in particular (e.g., Lang and Carstensen, 2002; Fredrickson and Carstensen, 1990; Fung et al., 1999, 2001; Kuppelwieser and Sarstedt, 2014, in press). Jointly, these studies clearly show that differences between younger and older consumers' behaviors can be more accurately described by their FTP than by their chronological age.

These findings have important implications for Chong's study: if the relationship between age and FTP is non-linear for Chinese consumers, we can expect different results when FTP is used as a moderator rather than chronological age. Our first empirical study sheds light on this issue. As the relationship between chronological age and FTP has not yet been examined in a Chinese context, we collected data through an intercept study in Nandan Street, Shanghai. A total of 368 respondents fully completed the questionnaire, which used the Lang and Carstensen (Yoon et al., 2005) scale. Fig. 1 shows a scatterplot of the respondents' chronological age and their FTP. To



The shaded area represents the 95 percent Bayesian confidence limit

Fig. 1. Penalized spline function for the relationship between age and FTP.

examine the relationship between chronological age and FTP, we fitted a penalized spline function as proposed by Eilers and Marx (1996); this function type ensures high control over smoothness and fit (Wood, 2004). The shadings represent 95% Bayesian confidence bands. As expected, FTP and chronological age are negatively related. However, this relationship is subject to considerable variability—as evidenced by the high dispersion of the data points and the confidence band of the spline function, which decreases wavelike and increases in width for consumers 30 years and older.

In a further step, we calculated the T-scores¹ and compared them to the reported age as suggested by Lang and Carstensen (2002). While the mean age in this sample was 27.4 years, with the youngest 14 and the oldest 59 years old, 52.4% of the respondents had a T-score below 50 (Lang and Carstensen, 2002). To further assess the distribution of FTP we followed Lang and Carstensen (2002) and conducted a tercile split. This procedure disclosed three groups of participants with limited (lower third, $n = 120$, T-score mean of 39.27), indefinite (middle third, $n = 129$, a mean of 49.84), and open-ended (upper third, $n = 119$, mean of 73.73) time perspectives.²

In light of these results, we would expect differences in the moderating effect between chronological age and the three FTP-groups in Chong's model. Chong recommends that companies should divide their customers into "the young"

¹ T-scores characterize and transform the data on a scale between 0 and 100 with a mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10. They are calculated on the basis of z-scores ($T = z \cdot 10 + 50$) and enhance interpretation and classification of the results (Lang and Carstensen, 2002).

² We also computed T-scores for the data from a second study conducted in France (see Section 4). The mean age of the second study was 22.3 years and 58.8% of the respondents had a T-score below 50, indicating a limited time horizon. Lang and Carstensen's tercile split resulted in groups of participants with limited (lower third, $n = 42$, T-score mean of 39.33), indefinite (middle third, $n = 49$, mean of 49.62), and open-ended (upper third, $n = 40$, mean of 61.67) time perspectives.

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