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Assessing the impact of determinants in e-magazines acceptance: An empirical study

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ABSTRACT

The ongoing global trend moving towards digitization and the growing popularity of hand-held devices, such as smartphones and tablet computers, have created an exponential increase in the utilization rates and sales volumes of e-magazines. To understand the perceptions and opinions of e-magazines users, this study integrated the expectation-confirmation model, technology acceptance model and innovation diffusion theory with the factor of habit to investigate and predict users' beliefs in terms of e-magazines, as well as study the major factors contributing to the intended readers' willingness to continuously read e-magazines. The hypothesized model is empirically validated using a sample collected from 370 responses and the structural equation modeling results indicated that the use of e-magazines was mainly determined by the constructs based on the proposed e-magazine adoption integration model. No other considerable correlation was found between the perceived usefulness and e-magazine users' satisfaction and continuance intentions. The empirical results and management implications of this study can be applied to serve as a basis for the future development of marketing strategies in the digital content industries.

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1. Introduction

While paper books continue to be the main medium through which the knowledge and information are disseminated, as well as being the feasible sources for leisure and entertainment. With the advancement of information technologies, users are now provided with a broader choice of reading media [6,49]. Further in recent days, most information has been digitized so that the readers can access it with ease via tablets, personal and notebook computers, and mobile phones. In contrast to traditional reading, e-magazines may offer some rich interactive audio-visual experiences and are thus an improved digital substitute for the print media. As noted, distinguishing features of e-magazines may include timeliness, instantaneity, durability, entertainment, topicality, and the ability to be downloaded from a website and read on mobile devices. Further, E-magazines have retained the advantages of print journals and evolved into a new model of reading which offers a richer content, interactivity, and easy-to-use search, access, and save functions. Readers can easily use the web browsers to read online or download the materials. Nowadays, the publishers of the print media are bound to reproduce their

journals in digital formats so as not to be submerged by a wave of digitization [14].

Due to the global trend towards the digitization and the popularity of mobile devices, users have become more willing and feel comfortable to read, edit and annotate e-books [63]. However, despite the increasing popularity of consumer electronics, people continue to rely on paper books. Even E-reader devices have been continuously improved over recent years, they have not been very successful despite their popularization. Since the advancement of integrated hardware, software, and content and the establishment of an e-reader model by Amazon, there has been a new wave of attention to this scenario in both industrial and research areas [31]. As a result of the continuing development of the Internet, an increasing number of people start to subscribe the e-magazines; that is, publications created in digital formats, distributed by electronic means, and associated with the use of images, characters, video, and audio which include the digital reproductions of print magazines and original digital publications distributed through both virtual and physical channels [86]. In the academic applications of e-books, Clark et al. [26] evaluated the initial individual recognitions of Kindle readers by taking the focus groups interview. Clark [25] also surveyed the perception of e-book loaning application in the Texas A&M University li-

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brary. Unfortunately, current e-magazines lack of anticipated popularity because relatively little is known about which interactive features could make e-magazines more acceptable and successful [65,69,75]. Although lots of discussion of the market potential for e-books have been provided from various industry perspectives, many issues remain unanswered regarding how users feel and experience about in e-book context and aspects that may facilitate the further engagement [79]. According to Rogers [73], innovation diffusion is defined as the process by which an idea or practice is communicated via certain channels over time to members of a social system. According to Agarwal (2000), the innovation diffusion theory from Roger [73] holds that users decide to accept or resist an innovative product or service based on their beliefs about the innovation. Therefore, behind the variation of e-magazines acceptance, we can expect there to be some theoretical framework corresponding to Rogers' theory.

While past studies related to IS/IT acceptance mainly used the TAM, this study created a new research framework to investigate and evaluate the users' justifications towards e-magazines by integrating the ECM and IDT. As suggested by Hong et al. [39], factors believed to be relevant to the acceptance of a IT/IS can be acquired from several theoretical frameworks to understand deeply the user behavior, as attempted in these current studies (e.g. [13,19,51,82]). There have been many studies focused on the satisfaction from using ISs such as Internet banking, web portals, e-Learning, and Web 2.0 (e.g. [20,41,56,57,59,77]). Given that e-book users' continuance intention may play an important role in reuse, understanding how the potential factors that users may affect their continuance behaviors becomes very critical [79]. The ECM model can properly reflect an individual continuance intention from the viewpoint of an information system, since all functionalities of e-magazines are entirely dependent on the facilitations of information technologies.

Therefore, the aim of this research is to evaluate the impact of different theoretical determinants on users' satisfaction and continuance intention toward e-magazines, and identify which processes tend to create these aforementioned influences. While existing studies had evaluated ECM, innovation diffusion theory (IDT), and technology acceptance model (TAM) independently, little research has yet theoretically combined these three models together in understanding the relative information technology usage.

The rest of this research is organized as follows. Section 2 presents a review of the literature which served as a theoretical foundation for this study's research framework and hypotheses. Section 3 describes the questionnaire design and its distribution, the sampling procedure, and the statistical analysis of the collected data. The analysis results are summarized in Section 4, followed by the research conclusions, practical recommendations, and management implications presented in Section 5.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Expectation-confirmation model

The expectation disconfirmation theory was first applied by Oliver (1980) in a cognitive model of satisfaction for the marketing domain. The basic concept of expectation disconfirmation theory is that consumers' (users') expectations prior to the consumption of a specific product or service may determine their attitude toward that product or service, which, in turn, may determine their intentions. By comparing their expectations before the actual purchase with the post-purchase experiences, consumers' expectations are positively or negatively confirmed, which tend to influence their satisfaction. Along with satisfaction, the pre-purchase attitude toward a product or service may develop into a unique post-purchase attitude; and finally, post-purchase attitude and pre-purchase intentions are modified into the post-purchase intentions. When the performance of a product or service exceeds the expectations, a positive confirmation occurs. In contrast, when the expectations are higher than the actual outcomes, a negative confirmation occurs. The

results of such a comparison tend to influence consumers' and users' satisfaction and, consequently, their repurchase or reuse intentions could be improved [8].

The possible issues associated with application of the original expectation disconfirmation theory in different areas may arise from its limited and insufficient interpretations; that is why many scholars have proposed the revised models of expectation disconfirmation theory. Bhattacharjee [8] stated that the expectation disconfirmation theory neglected the fact that ideal and realistic expectations can change over time and customers can in fact assess their realistic expectations during the confirmation stage. Furthermore, it can be illustrated by the example of information system (IS) users, whose continuance intentions of using certain IS are comparable to the repurchase intentions of consumers of other kinds. The continued IS use decision process consists of the following three stages, including: (1) the first use of IS, (2) the first experience and impression from using IS, and (3) making a final decision which may differ from the initial one. Seeking for a more effective evaluation and explanation of IS users' continuance intentions, Bhattacharjee [8] revised the expectation disconfirmation theory and proposed the ECM subsequently. The main focus of the latter one was placed on post-acceptance IS usage behavior and the influence of pre-acceptance behavior was only included as a latent variable for confirmation and satisfaction. While the expectation disconfirmation theory focused only on pre-consumption expectations, Bhattacharjee emphasized the importance of post-consumption expectations by explaining that the user expectations could change over time. Ultimately, post-consumption expectations were interpreted as the perceived usefulness, which corresponds to the original definition of expectations in the expectation disconfirmation theory as the individual beliefs.

It was not until recently that the expectation-confirmation model (ECM) has been growingly applied to model the consumer behavior and information technology users' continuance intentions and hence it has been developed into a solid theory (e.g. [20,41,56,57,59,77,79,82]). However, user's acceptance of the e-magazines may be considered to have a strong relationship with the communication channels and hence possess the necessity of delivering a well-designed interface to users. Furthermore, few empirical results are available to address the application of ECM and IDT regarding e-magazines. To bridge this gap, this study integrated IDT and TAM into ECM to assess and predict the factors associated with the use of e-magazines with an attempt to provide more insight and contribution to this subject area.

2.2. Technology acceptance model

The TAM was developed by Davis et al. [27] based on the theory of reasoned action by simplifying the factors influencing attitude to perceived usefulness & the perceived ease-of-use and excluding subjective norms. The main purpose of the TAM was to provide a model to explain the determining factors in end users' adoption of computer technologies. According to the model, perceived usefulness and perceived ease-of-use can influence the technology acceptance and adoption by users. Perceived ease-of-use refers to users' beliefs regarding the physical and mental effort required for IS usage and, in this study, it may refer to users' perceptions of the extent to which the e-magazine platform and operating process are easy to learn and use. Further, perceived usefulness refers to users' beliefs about the ability of IS usage to improve performances in work and everyday lives. For e-magazine readers, perceived usefulness may consist of the effectiveness of services provided by e-magazines in terms of fulfilling reader's requirements.

Since TAM proposed by Davis et al. [27], it has been widely applied in business and academic area and led to a growing number of related studies for different users, ISs, and workplaces (e.g. [19,21,38,67,68,70]). However, some research excluded attitude from their proposed model in order to help understand the explanatory power of determinants on behavioral intention (e.g. [33,42,46,84,90]). The above literature indicated that the simplified TAM has consistently

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