



Research Note

Modeling information and communication technology use continuance behavior: Are there differences between users on basis of their status?



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ABSTRACT

In the global information society, the importance of the Internet cannot be overemphasized. Unfortunately, in 2016, recent statistics of international telecommunications union showed that nearly 15% of people in Africa are Internet users (ITU, 2016). This relative low Internet penetration rate signals a problem. Tremendous efforts have been made to provide Internet to people. Policy makers often make the implicit assumption that the advantaged and disadvantaged people will respond to the same technology in similar ways (Hoffman et al., 2001). The purpose of this study is to propose a model explaining the Internet use continuance and then distinguish internet users' continuance behaviors on the basis of their socio-economic status. Ultimately, we will determine what prevents the socio-economically disadvantaged from sustainably exploring digital opportunities. Data were collected through a survey. As Hsieh et al. (2008), we recommend a group alignment strategy to substitute the typical generic policy that does not distinguish ICT users and treat them as the same and offers a single invariant solution to all populations. The theoretical and practical implications are also described.

1. Introduction

In the global information society, the importance of the Internet cannot be overemphasized. Statistics showed that nearly 15% of people in Africa are Internet users (ITU, 2016) whereas only 2.72% of Ivorian populations had access to the broadband internet (Internetlivestats, 2014). This relatively low Internet penetration rate signals a problem that may threaten the economic development, governmental efficiency, and ultimately the global competitiveness of African countries.

The international agencies, the Governments as well as some private initiatives are trying to close the gap. However, digital inequality between individuals with different backgrounds prevents the socio-economically disadvantaged from exploring digital opportunities (James, 2011; Lenhart, 2002). Studies have indicated that digital inequality exists across a variety of demographic, ethnic, and geographic dimensions (Katz and Aspden, 1997; Lenhart 2002; Venkatesh, Thong, & Xu, 2012). Among these dimensions, income and education represent the most important factors in distinguishing ICT use or non use (James, 2011; Jung, Qiu, & Kim, 2001; Lenhart, 2002).

Digital inequality is one of the most critical issues in the knowledge economy. While it is tempting to believe that digital inequality can be solved purely by providing better access to ICT, prior studies have suggested that providing technology access and creating conditions for its initial usage is only the first step and does not guarantee continued intention to use ICT (Agrifoglio, Black, Concetta, & Ferrara, 2012;

Bhattacharjee, 2001; Bhattacharjee and Premkumar, 2004; Hong, James, Lewis, & Gurpreet, 2011; Hsieh, Rai, & Keil, 2008; Karahanna, Straub, & Chervany, 1999).

Hence, this study attempts to explain users' continuance intention toward Internet use by using the classical theories of information technology adoption and use continuance as the theoretical basis. The specific objective is to understand differences between socio-economically advantaged and socio-economically disadvantaged groups. From that, we will determine what prevents disadvantaged groups from benefiting from continued Internet use. The study is conducted in Ivory Coast, a French speaking country located in West Africa. Although there are number of technology acceptance models designed and empirically tested trying to explain why and how people accept and use a given information technology (IT), most of these models or theories of ICT acceptance and use may not be applicable to under-researched geographical areas such as Africa (Mbarika et al., 2005), which has characteristics that may not fit in the context of developing countries in Africa (Kaba, N'Da, & Meso, 2009). It is therefore important to elaborate a sound theoretical model grounded in the developing world of Africa and empirically validate it in non-western contexts.

2. Research hypothesis

Below we develop the theoretical rationale for the causal relationships of the research model presented in Fig. 1.

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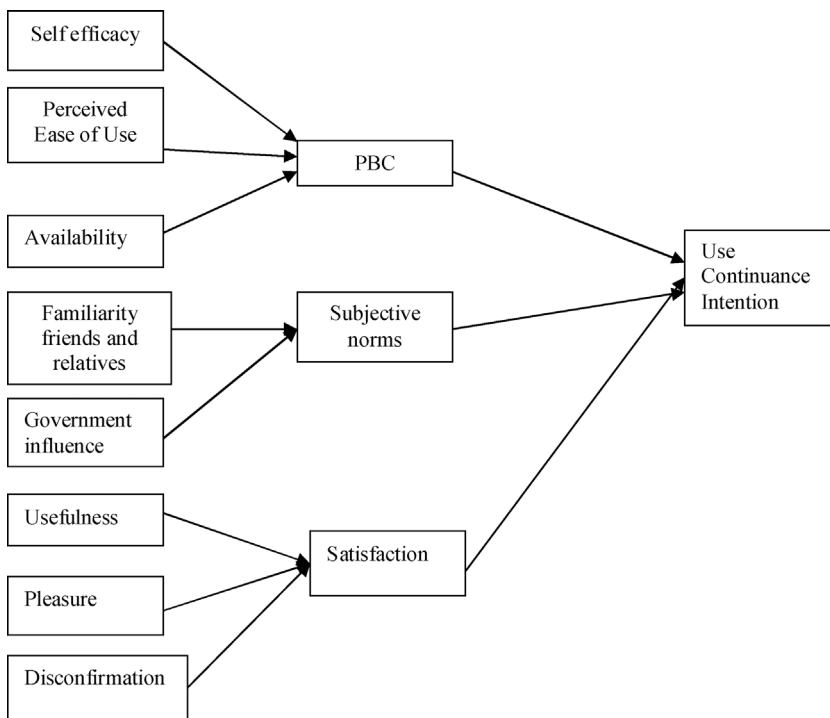


Fig. 1. Research Model.

2.1. Behavioral intention

Behavioral Intention is a measure of the strength of one's intention to perform a specified behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). According to the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), behavior or action of individuals is determined by intention (behavioral intention: BI). Previous studies have established that "intention" is a good proxy variable for future "use" (Liao, Palvia, & Chen, 2009; Venkatesh et al., 2012).

Anandarajan, Igbaria et, and Anakwe (2002) and Kaba et al. (2009) have shown that social pressures are among the dominant factors explaining the use intention of an ICT in the African context. Subjective norm or social influence emerge as significant predictors of intention to engage in high-level Internet use, suggesting that socio-economically disadvantaged people who feel more pressure from others are more likely to intend to engage in high-level Internet use. The Internet is an extremely social medium. It has been demonstrated in many studies that persons adopt and use new technology because of social pressure. When it comes to social media, we can believe that socio-economic disadvantage people are more sensitive to social pressure than socio-economic advantaged people particularly in the African context.

Besides, the Internet is a relatively recent innovation in the Ivory Coast and the subscription fees are relatively high especially for socio-economically disadvantaged people. In the context of this study, we may think that the socio-economically advantaged groups appear to be more sensitive to the resources issues in adopting and using the Internet. The influence of perceived behavioral control or facilitating conditions upon the use of ICTs has been widely discussed in the literature through various studies (Ajzen, 1991; Karahanna et al., 1999; Mathieson et al., 2001; Taylor and Todd, 1995; Thompson et al., 1991; Venkatesh et al., 2012).

Contrary to their opponent groups, socio-economically advantaged groups being in a position to take full advantage of the Internet will be more satisfied and continue using the medium. Assuming that the Internet is providing them what they value, we may suppose that satisfaction will have a significant influence on behavioral intention of socio-economically advantaged groups than socio-economically disadvantaged groups. Based on the above, we can state the following hypotheses:

H1a. Socio-economic status will moderate the positive influence of PBC on continued use intention such that the influence is stronger for the socioeconomically disadvantaged group than for the socioeconomically advantaged group

H1b. Socio-economic status will moderate the positive influence of Social Norms on continued use intention such that the influence is stronger for the socioeconomically disadvantaged group than for the socioeconomically advantaged group

H1c. Socio-economic status will moderate the positive influence of satisfaction on continued use intention such that the influence is stronger for the socioeconomically advantaged group than for the socioeconomically disadvantaged group

2.2. Facilitating conditions

The influence of facilitating conditions, in this paper, is similar to perceived behavioral control (PBC) of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). PBC upon the use of ICTs has been widely discussed in the literature through various studies (Ajzen, 1991; Karahanna et al., 1999; Mathieson et al., 2001; Taylor and Todd, 1995; Thompson et al., 1991). Perceived behavioral control refers to the perceptions of an individual on the presence or absence of resources, skills and opportunities required to perform a given behavior. According to Triandis (1980) a behavior is a function partly of situational constraints and conditions. These conditions which encourage or discourage the continued behavioral intention are called facilitating conditions.

According to Ajzen (1985), PBC refers to both the internal and external factors. Internal factors are under individual control and refer to skills, power, etc., while external factors are not controlled by the individual and they include opportunities, cooperation of others etc. TRA considers that behavior is explained only by intention and attitude while TPB opposes that an individual may well have positive attitudes toward an object and intend to use it but the unfavorable circumstances could change the behavioral intention. That uncertainty is captured by PBC.

Hsieh et al. (2008) claimed, after an exhaustive literature review, that PBC is decomposed into three (3) important behavioral control

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