

Chapter XVIII

Society and World Wide Web in Developing Countries: The Case of Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become ever more prevalent in the last decade. ICTs profoundly affect both global and national economies. Nevertheless, the common view in the literature is that the development of ICTs has been mostly limited to developed countries and has been relatively slower in the rest of the world. There are many factors affecting the acceptance and use of ICTs in developing countries. Although one of the most appealing research areas in recent years is the technology acceptance of consumers, there is a little evidence that the findings of the majority of the technology acceptance studies carried out in developed countries could be generalized to developing countries. In this study, it is aimed to investigate why Turkish people use the Internet. After summarizing the recent household ICT usage statistics, the most popular online activities offered by the top 100 Turkish Web sites are analyzed.

INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technologies have become ever more prevalent in the last

decade. The Internet and e-commerce have especially received great interest from researchers. Nowadays, studies on ICTs are no longer limited to the understanding of the development of digital

economies. While scholars from different disciplines investigate various perspectives of the digital economy, practitioners and commercial research companies also work heavily on the strategies to successfully integrate the virtual and physical environments.

One of the most appealing research areas in recent years is the technology acceptance of consumers. Not only scholars in marketing and management fields work on this area, but also others in psychology and sociology disciplines make important contributions to the literature. However, academic research on this area is fragmented and narrowly focused on the characteristics of online consumers, and lacks a global structured framework.

Although dramatically increasing access to ICTs would provide several benefits to developing countries, in reality, there are many factors affecting the acceptance and use of information and communication technologies. First of all, there is an obvious digital divide between upper and lower income groups, and urban and rural areas. Secondly, the diffusion of ICTs primarily depends on the existence of necessary logistics, financial, and communication infrastructures, which are not entirely established in developing countries. Third, the SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) in developing nations lag far behind developed-country markets in the availability of the technical prerequisites for conducting electronic commerce. Finally, in addition to the difficulties with communicating in English, which is the common language of the Internet, some countries such as Saudi Arabia and China also come upon the problem of adopting the use of Latin letters. Hence, there is a little evidence that the findings of the majority of the technology acceptance studies that are carried out in developed countries could be generalized to developing countries.

In this chapter, it is aimed to investigate the existing status of e-commerce and the factors affecting online shopping in Turkey. This investi-

gation is very important to clarify why electronic commerce is still not considered a significant market driving force in developing countries. In the following sections, after a brief introduction to the ICTs in developing countries, statistics about the present use of ICTs in Turkey is given. Then, using the Web statistics of the top 100 Turkish Web sites, a detailed investigation of Internet usage is presented. Finally, implications of the findings and the future expectations are discussed.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The importance of ICTs has been widely documented in the literature. Various studies have been conducted to identify the global use of ICTs (Efendioglu & Yip, 2004). The common belief is ICTs profoundly affect both global and national economies (Ho, Kauffman, & Liang, in press). The Economist Intelligence Unit (2003) highlighted that ICTs had changed the nature of global relationships, sources of competitive advantage, and opportunities for economic and social development.

In recent years, the concept of e-readiness is widely investigated by development agencies, research organizations, academia, and business enterprises as a result of the rapid Internet penetration rate all over the world and the remarkable advances in uses of ICTs in business and industry (Mutula & van Brakel, 2006). A country's e-readiness is a measure of its e-business environment, a collection of factors that indicate how amenable a market is to Internet-based opportunities (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2003). E-readiness assessment tools attempt to measure IT use and its impact on developed and developing countries (Indjikian & Siegel, 2005). For instance, The Economist Intelligence Unit (2005) has been publishing an annual e-readiness ranking of the world's 65 largest economies to assess their ability

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