


# Antecedent Effects of Info Content on User Attitudes Toward Radical Technology-Brand-Extension: Info Content on User Attitudes of Brand Extensions

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## ABSTRACT

Novel technologies can extend a brand and usher in a new age of digital confluence. The study extends TAM by examining information content as an antecedent to PEOU and PU and the moderating influences of prior knowledge and parent brand memory in early adoption decisions. Potential user attitudes towards novel technological-brand-extensions are captive to the information content that novel technological brand-extensions offer. While information content triggers user awareness, the path from awareness to adoption intention has not received much scrutiny. In surfacing the adoption intention process triggered by information content, we also investigate the roles of prior knowledge of similar products and parent brand memory as moderating influences that guide how information content (as persuasive appeal) is subsequently translated into user adoption behavior.

## KEYWORDS

Attitudes, Beliefs, Brand Extension, Information Content, Innovations, Technology Acceptance

## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

Significant efforts have been made over the past two decades in explaining user behavior surrounding brand extensions (Reast & Brand, 2003; Park, Milberg & Lawson, 1991; Keller & Aaker, 1992). Brand extension is defined as the “use of established brand names to enter new product categories or classes” (Keller & Aaker, 1992; Czellar, 2003). Brand extensions embody innovations and enhancements of the parent brand aimed at catering to a different user segment or market. Technology brand extensions range from incremental extensions such as a code-source viewer for Google Chrome or iPad Pro for Apple to radical brand extensions such as Oculus VR headset for Facebook and Apple Watch for Apple. Given that radical brand extensions increase learning costs, technology designers and business managers need to ensure that potential users have a smoother cognitive transition in adopting the radical technology brand extension.

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This issue is particularly acute for radical technology brand extensions mainly because radical brand extensions in technology introduce products, services, and features that are decidedly novel in orientation and action. In that regard, the user's assessment and attitude of the radically innovative brand extension are captive to the information content within the advertisement of the radical technology-brand-extension. This information content becomes the human immersion elements of detachment, realism, and personification identified as being crucial during e-selling activities (Parvinen, Oinas-Kukkonen & Kaptein, 2015).

With more features and functionalities bundled together, technological complexity is rapidly growing. What must companies do to ensure that they convey the features and functionalities to positively shape user beliefs about their new technology products and services? In a competitive environment, the opportunity costs of failing to deliver the right mix of content about a product can potentially lead to high opportunity costs. Nicolajsen and Scheeper (2008) studied web-based media and communication across geographically dispersed projects members. Their findings highlight how media needs to be configured to deliver and communicate content.

In the past 50 years, user research has focused on understanding the extent to which various aspects of using information content and delivery for persuasively appeal to and influence the formation of favorable attitudes. The question is, to what extent does the information content (as persuasive appeals) convey aspects of convenience and functionality to drive user attitudes toward technology brand extensions? In addition, because of the greater complexity of technology products versus non-technology products, user prior knowledge is a critical parameter in shaping a favorable attitude toward technology products. Furthermore, apart from prior knowledge, Morrin (1999) mentions that parent brand memory retrieval processes influence brand extensions. A negative parent brand memory could harm and weaken the association between the parent brand and the brand extension. Thus, investigating how parent brand memory influences attitudes remains crucial towards understanding the adoption calculus. This research extends our body of knowledge on how potential users, when faced with a radical technology extension, appear to rely on their prior product knowledge and how their beliefs are shaped by the parent brand. This juxtaposition of conceptual perspectives adds to a more theoretically and empirically diverse understanding of technology adoption behavior.

## BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

### Attitude Theory, TRA, and TAM

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) is a well-established model of potential users' attitudes toward technology products are shaped by aspects of convenience (ease of use) and functionality (usefulness). The question is, what antecedent factors influence the degree of perceived EOU and U? TAM refers to these factors as "external variables." Davis, Bagozzi and Warshaw (1989) mention some of the external variables that can directly change the potential user's perception of EOU and U of the product. In TAM, these variables range from objective design characteristics of a system to training and documentation (Davis, 1986; Davis et al., 1989; Szajna, 1996; Venkatesh, Morris, Davis & Davis, 2003; Wu & Wang, 2005). While the research on external variables for TAM is rich, the variables considered are captive to system or user-specific attributes. Yet, in a competitive environment beset with rival and alternative brands, initial belief and attitude formation often hinges on how potential users react to a brand extension before encountering it in person. The most common way potential users are exposed to a brand extension *ex-ante* is through information content. Unfortunately, there is little evidence of research considering the role of information content as an external variable in shaping beliefs and attitudes related to technology products. In that vein, technology brand extensions must use information content effectively to promote persuasive appeal and convey these multifaceted aspects as a mechanism to build positive user attitudes toward the target brand extension.

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