

Chapter 41

Determinates of Live Support Chat in Organizational Intranets: An Empirical Study in Kuwait

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ABSTRACT

Live support chat (LSC) is a relatively new type of online customer support that is growing significantly in e-commerce websites. LSC bypasses the traditional types of customer support like phone, e-mail and web forms and it provides instant answers to customers' questions and concerns. Few researchers have empirically examined the factors affecting LSC at the individual level, however there is no evidence of research that explored the determinates of LSC in an organizational context and how it affects employees. This study attempts to fill this research gap by empirically examining the factors that affect LSC in the context of the organizational Intranets. Survey data from 389 employees at private and public organizations in Kuwait were collected to test the study hypotheses. The study findings have important implications at both the theoretical and practice levels.

INTRODUCTION

Live Support Chat (LSC) is a relatively new type of online customer support that is growing significantly in E-commerce websites. LSC bypasses the traditional types of customer support like phone, e-mail and web forms and it provides instant answers to customers' questions and concerns. We now live an era where online customers and employees are more demanding and require that their problems, questions and concerns be answered on the spot rather than even to wait for just a few hours to get a response. Few researchers have empirically examined the factors affecting LSC at the individual level (Ilk et al., 2012; Elmorshidy, 2013; Elmorshidy et al., 2015). There is also a limited number of research paper that

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explored the determinates of LSC in an organizational context and how it affects employees as demonstrated in section 2.2 of the paper. This study attempts to fill this research gap by empirically examining the factors that affect LSC in the context of the organizational Intranets.

Online chat may refer to any kind of communication over the Internet which offers an instantaneous transmission of text-based messages from sender to receiver; hence the delay for visual access to the sent message shall not hamper the flow of communications in any of the directions. (Andrews, 2010). Now not just text-based information can be communicated through LSC but also images, sound and videos. Although early attempts to implement LSC existed a few years ago in a limited number of websites, the wide spread and actual use of this technology has grown exceptionally in the past four years to reflect a new paradigm shift in online customer support in e-commerce websites. LSC just recently became a new standard of service that online customers demand and expect while shopping or doing business online. (Elmorshidy et al., 2015).

LSC is viewed as a cost-effective way to reduce purchasing risk through increasing social interaction. It has also been regarded as a good method to respond to consumers' questions, and to personalize the shopping experience. There is also evidence demonstrating that this customer service solution improves the online shopping experience itself and reduces purchase abandonment rates. (Elmorshidy et al., 2015).

In an observation by Shane et al. (2007), service agents could handle at least three chat sessions simultaneously without significant increase in average chat duration. Other studies indicated that commercial live chat systems allow service agents to multi-task ten or more chat sessions. This feature is promoted by LSC vendors as a unique strength of live chat systems to maximize service productivity (Ilk et al., 2012).

This paper starts by reviewing literature that leads to the development of the research hypotheses pertaining to the determinates of LSC in the context of the organizational Intranets. The paper then discusses the research methodology including the research model and sampling. The research results and finding are then provided and analyzed. The conclusion section at the end of the paper discusses theoretical contributions, implication for practice and the limitation of the study as well as recommendations for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Live Support Chat in an Organizational Context

Glass and Li (2010) mentioned that one of the most appealing attributes of Instant Messaging (IM) as a live chat tool for businesses is the fact that unlike the delayed, asynchronous nature of e-mail, the current online status or presence of the intended recipients is displayed and allows for immediate response." They added that Approximately 45 to 50 percent of US firms currently permit their employees to use IM for business purposes and IM will be the de facto tool for voice, video and text chat with 95% of workers in leading global organizations. Glass and Li (2010) empirically investigated factors that influence individuals to adopt IM in the workplace. Findings showed that subjective norm, perceived critical mass, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use were factor in determining IM adoption than the organization.

Ou et al. (2010) mentioned that Instant messaging (IM) technology as a live chat tool is currently growing rapidly in a variety of contexts. An IM has the capability to connect individuals instantly, thus

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