Frequency of Usage: The Impact of Technology Acceptance Factors Versus Social Factors

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ABSTRACT

The social networking population continues to expand at a phenomenal pace. Nevertheless, the question of how an organization gets people to spend long periods on a particular social networking website as well as return to the website is becoming increasingly important. Is the technological sophistication of the website or the social aspect most important? This study addresses technological and social factors. The authors examine social network use by employing a survey instrument to gather data about technological factors based on the technology acceptance model and social factors collecting data on constructs representing social involvement and the sheer enjoyment of using the social networking website. Results of the study suggest that users of social networks are more apt to frequently use a site based upon social/enjoyment factors as opposed to technology-related factors.

Keywords: Enjoyment, Social Involvement, Social Networking, Social Networks, Technology Acceptance

INTRODUCTION

The technology acceptance model (TAM) suggests that two key factors, ease of use and usefulness, can predict technology usage (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989). In accordance with this argument, we suggest that in addition to TAM-related factors, the social capital dimension of websites is important to consider. Therefore, we argue that social relationship–based factors as well as technology-based factors may work hand-in-hand to contribute to social network usage. We believe examining both dimensions will provide a richer understanding of social network usage. After examining previous research, we did not find evidence of the TAM and social capital evaluated together in one study. Therefore, in this research we examine social network usage by proposing and testing a conceptual model based upon technological and social factors.

This research is valuable to people interested in getting people to not only come to their website but also return. This research can be useful to businesses, researchers, website designers, analysts, and others interested in how humans interact with computers. This research helps by providing insight into factors that may impact the use of a social networking site. Rosen (2001) states that social network
designers need to think about how to build relationships with customers and about methods to help build loyalty.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Behavior and intent to engage in a social relationship online are different from traditional face-to-face networking. Online behavior involves a more integrated approach focused on interactions with information, people, and technology. Interaction takes place among a community of online users who develop relationships based on common interests and/or goals in which the users exchange information and knowledge. Many factors may lead to an individual visiting a social networking website. We suggest that an individual’s behavior or intent to use a social networking site that he or she feels is useful and usable may be related to perceptions associated with technological and social factors. The following literature review provides support for our model by giving an overview of previous literature relating to the theory of reasoned action (TRA), the technology acceptance model, social capital, and sociotechnical theory. Previous research supports the argument that the usability of technology can affect an individual’s attitude, behavioral intentions, and use of technology.

Theory of Reasoned Action

The TRA provides support in explaining the social-psychological factors that may influence perceived interactivity and the use of a social networking website in terms of actual behavior and behavioral intentions. The TRA is based on research and principles inherent in social psychology (Fishbein, 1975) that help make sense of and predict individual behavior in social settings. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) state that individual beliefs affect actual behavior or behavioral perceptions (Fishbein, 1975). Furthermore, the TRA suggests that actual behavior relates to an individual’s behavioral intentions (BIs). Behavioral intentions are influenced by the following: (a) individual attitude regarding the behavior, and (b) social norms, which are defined as individual perceptions of social demands or pressures. The TRA has been used to help understand shopping behavior (Yu, 2007), consumer complaints and purchasing behavior (Oliver, 1985; Sheppard, 1988), and information systems (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989; Hansen, 2004; Venkatesh & Davis, 1996; Venkatesh, Speier, & Morris, 2002; Venkatesh & Davis, 2000).

Technology Acceptance Model

The technology acceptance model (TAM), based in part on the theory of reasoned action, provides support in explaining the technological factors that may affect the use of a social networking website. The TAM was developed (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989) to help explain why people accept or reject computer technology. The TAM is based upon the argument that the individual impact of perceived usefulness and ease of use of technology will influence the attitude of an individual when using a particular technology, and will have an impact on his or her behavioral intent to use computer technology. Previous researchers have conducted studies that support TAM and the argument that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness help predict use of information technologies (Davis, 1989; Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989).

TAM is well known and well respected as a “powerful and robust predictive model” (King, 2006). TAM has been widely used and modified in several different ways in an effort to examine and predict technology usage and acceptance. For one, there are studies where the TAM model was modified to include prior factors such as previous usage of the Internet (Oh, 2003), previous situational involvement (Jackson, 1997) and self-efficacy (Davis, 1996). Other studies have included other theory-based factors in assessing the predictability of TAM. For example, subjective norm was included in a study relating to software developer methodology (Hardgrave, 2003). Another study included factors relating to task-technology fit as part of
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