

Chapter 86

Employee Acceptance and Use of Unified Communications and Collaboration in a Cross-Cultural Environment

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ABSTRACT

At the tip of the iceberg of the global financial crisis organizations are looking for economies of scale to survive in these challenging times. The Unified Communications and Collaboration (UC&C) platform is the perfect answer to support an organization's new strategies, aiming to increase employee productivity while decreasing costs. Our study combines recent collaboration research theories with the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT). The authors aim to close the existing research gap by extending previous research with a cross-cultural dimension. They conducted an international field study in 34 countries involving 120 employees who were users of UC&C technology. The authors found that the UTAUT constructs are mainly validated in areas in which results suggest that performance expectancy and social influence are the most influential drivers in employee acceptance and use of UC&C in organizations.

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INTRODUCTION

The use of Unified Communications and Collaboration (UC&C) has become an integral part of one's professional life. According to the 2012 survey that was conducted by IDG Enterprise, the increase in the adoption of, and investment in, UC&C technology is becoming more observed; specifically in enterprise organizations, in which the biggest trigger is the explosion of consumer devices. The ability to communicate and collaborate faster, and from virtually any point, brings an unprecedented value to the corporation's goals: flexibility, interoperability, efficiency and productivity. The UC&C can be defined as a joint venture between the communication process with collaboration tools that utilize real-time information access: instant messaging (IM), presence information (user online status), video and audio conferencing, telephony, data sharing, call control and speech recognition; and non-real time information sources such as: email, fax, SMS, etc.

Different components of UC&C, such as instant messaging (IM), have already been studied from an individual perspective (Baškarada & Koronios, 2012; Zhang, Köbler, Tremaine, & Milewski, 2010; Lou, Chau & Li, 2005; Anderson, Schwager & Kerns, 2006). The adoption and utilization of collaboration technologies in large organizations that support task-oriented collaboration has been widely explored by Pervan, Bajwa and Lewis (2005). Other research has also pointed to the influence of organizational factors on the technology adoption of UC&C (McAvoy & Butler, 2006; Bajwa, Lewis, Pervan & Lai, 2005; Bajwa et al., 2008; Straub, Loch, Evaristo, Karahanna & Srite, 2002).

However, current studies of UC&C adoption in enterprise in cross-cultural environments are still rare. On one hand, the focus has mainly been on the organizational factors, which correlate to the culture. Several studies analyzed factors either from an individual or national perspective, without putting the spotlight on other aspects, such as culture. On the other hand, a current research gap exists in the understanding of drivers that lead to employees' acceptance of UC&C technology.

This research aims to fill the current knowledge gap by answering three important questions regarding employee acceptance and use of UC&C in enterprise in cross-cultural environments:

RQ1: What are the drivers of employee acceptance of UC&C in enterprise?

RQ2: What other factors influence employee acceptance of UC&C in enterprise?

RQ3: Will the adoption of the UC&C technology drive employee productivity?

This research aims to analyze employees' acceptance and use of UC&C in their professional environment by taking into account their cultural background. This study builds on the model proposed by Brown, Dennis, and Venkatesh (2010). This model has been used by Brown et al. (2010) and it presents integrated theories from the collaboration research with the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model that was developed by Venkatesh, Morris, Davis and Davis (2003). To the best of our knowledge, this is the first empirical study that has extended the previous work done by Brown et al. (2010). We have added cross-cultural constructs into the context of an organization. After synthesizing with the previous research and theory, we propose a research model that will help us explain the adoption of technology by employees; we will also discuss the use and analysis of the cross-cultural construct that investigates relationships across different countries.

Firstly, we will analyze the existing research theory on collaboration and the UTAUT model and précis the research model with the hypotheses. Secondly, we will focus on the research methodology, followed by the data analysis and its results. Finally, we will discuss the findings and make conclusions.

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