


Perceived Usefulness and Ease of Use of Mobile Government Services: The Moderating Impact of Electronic Word of Month (eWOM)

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the moderating effect of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) communications on the relationship between the perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) of mobile government services and the intention to use mobile government services. The Technology Acceptance Model was used as the theoretical framework and the data analysis was done with SPSS. The results have shown that there was a significant moderating impact of eWOM on both the relationship between PU and PEOU and the intention to use mobile government services. In addition, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of mobile government service were significant in determining the intention to use mobile government services. Also, PEOU was found to be a determinant of the PU of mobile government services. The implications of these findings are discussed.

KEYWORDS

e-Government, Electronic Word of Month (eWOM), Mobile Government, Mobile Government Services, Moderating Impact, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of mobile communication technology has provided a strong focus for policymakers, government agencies and development practitioners to offer public services through mobile government services as an alternative better than the classical or traditional e-government services. The enabling environment provided through mobile computing technologies like the availability of mobile end-user devices and communication networks is eventually dominating and seeking to replace the classical computing era which has also influenced the development of e-government (Zefferer, 2015). The adoption of mobile technologies to provide public services to citizens, businesses and the general public is known as mobile government (m-government). Mobile government is defined as the application of wireless and mobile technologies, applications and devices for the purpose of delivering enhanced public services to Diverse actors such as citizens and all government agencies (Abramowicz et al., 2005). On the other hand, the classical or traditional e-government is defined as the

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use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to improve and facilitate the provision of public services both transactional and informational services to government agencies, the public, and citizens (Choudrie, Ghinea, & Weerakkody, 2004; Field, 2003). The shift from e-government to mobile government is due to the added advantages and benefits that mobile government services provide. Some of these benefits are that mobile government services seem to complement and fit the modern lifestyle where information and services are readily required 24/7 and also ensure modern mobile end-user features which the traditional end-user devices cannot (Zefferer, 2015). In addition, mobile government services provide huge opportunities for government agencies to deliver public services to areas that lack or do not have access to wire-based communication infrastructures (Zefferer, 2015).

One of the factors driving consumers to adopt services or new technologies is what is known as Word of Mouth (WOM) communications among and between consumers and would be consumers about a brand, company product, and services (Erkan & Evans, 2018; Jacobsen, 2018; Kala & Chaubey, 2018; Lkhaasuren & Nam, 2018; Wang, Wang, & Wang, 2018). These traditional WOM communications have been applied by marketers, consumers and professionals to influence the purchasing intentions of would-be consumers of products and services. The proliferation of the Internet technology has provided consumers with a unique chance to use the internet to spread and share their views or concerns about products or services. The use of the internet to enable the consumer to express and convey his or her thoughts about a product is known as Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) communications. Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) communication is defined as the expression of any positive or negative statement by would be consumers, actual consumers and past consumers about products or services or new technologies through the internet (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004). Through eWOM communications consumers are able to use online discussion and forums, social networking sites, consumer review sites to share and exchange information about product and services which has great potential to influence the behavioral purchasing decisions of consumers (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Cheung, Luo, Sia, & Chen, 2009; Lee, Park, & Han, 2008; Park & Lee, 2009; Wu & Gaytán, 2013). eWOM of communications has the potential to affect the adoption of mobile government services but the issue of eWOM communications in relation to mobile government adoption is limited in the literature. eWOM in terms of mobile government communication is the sharing of opinions by citizens concerning the delivery of government public services through mobile government services. eWOM mobile government communications also have to do with citizens views; experiences and feelings about the whole Government and its agencies with respect its actions, operations and governance. The discussion on public platforms, social media and networking sites about the nature of government operations and of public services offered on via mobile government services can influence the adoption and use of mobile government services.

The objective of this research is to explore the moderating influence of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) communications in two directions: The first is to examine the moderating impact of eWOM communications on the relationship between the perceived usefulness and intention to use mobile government services and secondly to test the moderating effect of eWOM communications on the relationship between perceived ease of use of mobile government services and the intention to use mobile government services. The direct impact of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use on the intention to use mobile government services have been demonstrated by previous studies (Almarashdeh & Alsmadi, 2017; Alotaibi, Houghton, & Sandhu, 2017a; Aloudat, Michael, Chen, & Al-Debei, 2014; Shareef, Kumar, Dwivedi, & Kumar, 2016). Also, studies have statistically shown that eWOM is a predictor of the intention to use (Mehrad & Mohammadi, 2017; Tien, Rivas, & Liao, 2018). But to the best of our knowledge and as far as the literature is concerned, no study has so far explored the moderating impact of eWOM on the relationship between perceived usefulness and the intention to use and the relationship between perceived ease of use and the intention to use mobile government services. Hence, it is the unique expected contributions of this current study which will enrich the e-government and mobile government services adoption literature. The research question to be investigated is: To what extent does electronic word of mouth (eWOM) communications moderates

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