

Chapter 1

Predicting Multi-Generational Technology Adoption Practices in a South African Context: Millennials vs. Generation X

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ABSTRACT

Due to rapid technology advancements, people can now communicate easier, improve their quality of life, and expand the learning opportunities. Initial theorization of digital gaps was founded on the diffusion theory, which describes how and at what pace new ideas and technology have and will spread. Further argument was made on the attainment of and access to computer and Internet tools, which is a fundamental criterion for overcoming these gaps and inequalities. The perceptions related to ease of use and usability has had a major impact on acceptance of technology by Generation X, which leads to the widening of the digital gap. This chapter explores the generational digital gap, related to both Millennials and Generation X's perspective on the impact and use of technology as everyday technologies. The factors affecting the digital gap, factors affecting the generational digital gap, and possible means of bridging the gap are explored. The empirical results reveal a significant relationship between attitude towards technology and age for each generation, among others.

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INTRODUCTION

Rapidly evolving Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has significantly changed peoples' lifestyle, leisure, and in particular communication and information resources (Fietkiewicz et al., 2016). Not only has technology changed in recent decades, but also its users' attitude, motivation, and the way they process and view information readily available (Fietkiewicz et al., 2016). Modern technology has made it possible for the discovery of many functional and utility devices, like smartwatches, smartphones and smart gadgets to name a few. These technological opportunities have brought about several advantages, however it similarly formed gaps among divisions of society with diverse levels of technology usage mainly in relation to age (Hwang & Nam, 2017). The opportunities for both social and economic growth are represented by ICT. However, imbalances in the accessibility and application of ICT create a new disadvantaged group that is unable to benefit from such opportunities and participate fully in the community (Zhang, 2017).

This imbalance or inequality is called the 'digital gap'. Goncalves et al. (2018, p. 3) defines the digital gap as the "the gap between individuals, households, business and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels with regard to both their opportunities to access information and communication technologies and their use of the Internet for a wide variety of activities". The digital gap is a phenomenon that may be due to the uneven diffusion of technology across countries, regions, people, and operation of these technologies require skills that some individuals do not possess (Goncalves et al., 2018). However, various socio-economic, demographic and local variables may influence the magnitude of the digital gap, including age, gender, employment, education, location and income (Friemel, 2016). Research shows that lower socio-economic citizens, females and African Americans displayed lower levels of Internet and computer skills. Consequently, the digital skills gap points to the use, expertise and ownership of devices (Goncalves et al., 2018).

Van Deursen and Helsper (2015) explain that the digital gap is often divided into the following three levels. The first-level digital gap can be described as the inequality in infrastructural access, in other words those who have Internet access and those who do not have access to the Internet are perceived to be on the preferred side of the gap. Digital gaps at the second level have to do with differing skills/expertise and patterns of use. The digital gap related to the third level is linked to issues of digital literacy and where inequalities are produced by the different levels of skill-sets that exist. Generational cohorts are factions of people born in a particular timeframe, which is believed to result in large similarities in their motivations, beliefs, behaviours and values, thereby presenting a generational uniqueness that may be influence technology engagement, usage patterns and behaviour (Calvo-Porrall & Pesqueira-Sanchez, 2019). In addition, there are significant discrepancies in the manner that

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