Age in the Acceptance of Mobile Social Media:

A Comparison of Generation Y and Baby Boomers Using UTAUT2 Model

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on determining the age-based differences among consumers in terms of the acceptance of mobile social media. In doing so, the younger age group is represented by Generation Y and the elderly by Baby Boomers. Further, the famous UTAUT2 model is applied, and relationships mentioned in it are evaluated for the two age groups. For this purpose, a sample of 249 respondents was obtained from the online survey conducted in the state of Punjab in India. The statistical technique of multi-group path analysis using structural equation modelling (SEM) is applied to the generated data. The findings of the study reveal that the young age and elderly groups differ significantly in terms of the impact of effort expectancy, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation on behavioral intention, and facilitating conditions on use behavior. It may provide important implications for future research related to internet marketing and mobile social media.

KEYWORDS

Age, Baby Boomers, Generation Y, Internet Marketing, Mobile Social Media, Multi-Group Path Analysis, Social Media Acceptance, Social Media Adoption, UTAUT2

INTRODUCTION

In the digital world, the arrival of smartphones has expanded the scope of social media to mobile social media. Mobile devices and social media together present a lot of opportunities for mobile business and online marketing (Pelet & Papadopoulou, 2015). Nowadays, social media is predominantly accessed from a mobile phone (Mehra et al., 2020) rather than desktops or computers. It may be due to some additional advantages gained through increased personalization (Cloarec, 2020) and the ability to communicate during transit (Yang et al., 2021) specifically offered by mobile social media. It is considered the channel by which different social media applications could be accessed through smartphones or handheld devices for the sole purpose of the interaction, exchange, and development of user-generated content (Ju et al., 2021). Mobile social media is a software-based service that could be accessed through a mobile phone or any other handheld device for sharing news or some other

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relevant information (Humphreys, 2013) via an app or a mobile browser. It has also emerged as a vital source to generate customer value (Ju et al., 2021) and is considered an important medium for information retrieval, interaction, and fun (Zhao, 2021). Mobile phones have emerged as an integral part of the social life of individuals (Chua et al., 2018). Consequently, several mobile social media applications have emerged with time and have become an important part of the day to day life. These applications such as Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, Whatsapp, etc. have changed the way people communicate and spend their time. There may be different motivations among individuals to use these applications.

Variable age is considered an important factor affecting the online behavior of an individual (Rialti et al., 2019; Sheldon et al., 2021). Marketing studies highlight the importance of age in technology acceptance and reveal that younger generations mostly have a positive attitude toward the adoption of new technology (Nash, 2019; Vasudeva & Chawla, 2019) and this may also be true in the case of mobile social media. There is a digital divide in technology usage among the generations in terms of age (Berezan et al., 2018; Friemel, 2016). It is observed that the younger generations i.e. generation X and generation Y have sought greater research attention in terms of their preference and use of technology than the elderly generation baby boomers (Heaney, 2007; Muslim et al., 2019; Nash, 2019). So, it becomes imperative to conduct some research on the technology adoption of the elderly vis-à-vis the young consumers.

It is observed that the majority of studies in the field of social media are focused on the young generation. But there has been lesser concern about how social media is utilized among the elderly cohort (Sheldon et al., 2021) and this may also apply to its latest channel i.e. mobile social media. There is a dearth of research focused on examining the differences between the young and elderly generations in terms of mobile social media acceptance. In past, comparatively lesser research is available on how the elderly group differs from the younger cohort in terms of their acceptance of mobile social media. So, the goal of this study is to make some meaningful contributions to the field of mobile social media and provide insights into the issue of its adoption among young and elderly people. In doing so, the young age group is represented by generation Y (Gen Y) and old age by baby boomers (BB). The study addresses this issue by making use of the determinants of technology acceptance available in the UTAUT2 model proposed by Venkatesh et al. (2012). This model has great relevance for social media-based research (Shoheib & Abu-Shanab, 2022). Further, the multi-group path analysis using structural equation modeling is utilized to understand the differences between two groups of generations. Based on the previous discussion, this study addresses the research question that whether the young age and old age consumers represented by two generations differ significantly from each other in terms of acceptance of mobile social media based on the UTAUT2 determinants. The study also helps to determine whether the UTAUT2 model is a proper fit to test the relationships in the case of mobile social media. Next, the relevant review of literature, methodology, analysis, and findings depicting the flow of research are presented in the subsequent sections.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There may be a difference in online behavior among the younger and old age groups (Confente & Vigolo, 2018). Previous studies suggest an inverse relationship between age and social media usage (Henderson, 2020; Hruska & Maresova, 2020). Young age people possess more appropriate social media behavior and accept social applications more quickly than the elderly (Leist, 2013; Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2021). Whereas, elderly people may find it more difficult to adopt new internet-based applications than younger ones (Obal & Kunz, 2013; Thanasrivanitchai et al., 2017) and young age consumers have more social orientation than the elderly (Yuksel et al., 2016). Previous research reveals that in comparison to a young age group the usage of social media is lower among the old (Meiler-Rodríguez et al., 2012; Quinn, 2018; Waycott et al., 2016). The reason may be the lack of digital skills among the older cohort for using social media applications (Chang et al., 2019; Chen &

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