



Chapter VII

Motivations and Perceptions Related to the Acceptance of Convergent Media Delivered Through the World Wide Web

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The convergence of entertainment and communications media in broadband World Wide Web delivery channels promises to provide modern consumers with a wealth of information and data utilities in the home. Best evidenced by the impending synthesis of media content and media delivery in the form of the AOL/Time Warner merger, this developing innovation of a single-channel rich content information utility in the household suggests the need for understanding the complex and diverse motivations attendant to the adoption of new media and new technology merged into a single commercial entity. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the well-understood technology adoption precepts of the technology acceptance model (cf., Davis, 1989; Venkatesh & Davis, 1996; 2000) in concert with the media-use motivation theories arising from adaptation of the uses and Gratifications (U&G) perspective, with particular emphasis on the emerging effects of social gratifications for Internet use.

INTRODUCTION

Modern society is structured based on information and communication (Ball-Rokeach & Reardon, 1988; Rogers, 1986), and as society evolves in its use of information resources, recent mergers of media and communications interests herald a new stage in the evolution of the information utility we know as the Internet. As society evolves, media will also evolve from mass exposure to interactive communications, and this interactive model leads futurists to predict that the Internet will become the primary delivery medium for society's combined entertainment, communication and information needs (Stafford & Stafford, 1998). These futuristic predictions did not seem particularly imminent until the recent business revolution represented by the AOL/Time Warner merger.

What was once a strictly academic information utility is now a powerful commercial and consumer venue. Businesses are exploring the potential of the Internet for promoting and consummating business transactions, but the multifaceted nature of the Internet also raises questions about how commercial information, communication and entertainment services can be delivered in new ways (Peterson, Balasubramanian, & Bronnenberg, 1997). Technology gives us the capability to converge media channels and content on the Internet, but do we really appreciate the implication that convergence provides for the ways in which business may or even should change as a result?

INTERCONNECTED NETWORK OR META-MEDIUM?

The Internet evolved as an "international interconnection of computers" (Simon, 2001). In that role, it certainly functions as a computer network should, providing information-based services to connected users. But it has also been used as a platform for experimentation with broadband communication channels and streaming technology for delivery of the rich media files, and in this sense, the Internet goes beyond a computer network and becomes an entertainment channel. However, with the capability to deliver rich media entertainment services such as audio, video, and integrated telephony also under investigation by industry, the Internet can also be thought of as possessing the characteristics of a commercial medium. Indeed, the modern Internet at once subsumes the characteristics of a telecommunications transmission medium with the multifaceted aspects of the rich media channels and content delivered over the transmission medium (Stafford & Stafford, 1998, 2001).

The Internet has always been a medium for communication; its culturally understood role in the past has generally been that of a computer network that facilitates the sorts of information exchanges that academic computer users wish to engage in. The emerging Internet, though, is more than a global information utility for scientists. As consumers adopt Internet technology for their own purposes and

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