

Chapter 13

Factors Affecting Mobile Phone Use Among Undergraduate Students in Turkey: An Exploratory Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Mobile phones are one of the fastest-adopted innovations in history. Globally, mobile phones have rapidly become widespread in most parts of the world, especially among the young generation. Young people constitute an important and significant part of mobile phone users. In this study, the author examined the factors affecting mobile phone use among undergraduate students in a developing country. The research data was collected through a convenience sample of undergraduate students in a public university in Turkey. Exploratory factor analysis was used to examine the underlying factors in mobile phone use. Nine factors are identified from the results of factor analysis such as “Information,” “Attitude,” “Mobility,” “Functional service,” “Entertainment/Relaxation,” “Convenience,” “Fashion,” “Sense of security,” and “Multimedia service”.

INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have been rapidly developed in the recent decades. Today’s ICTs play a significant role by providing information, matching with customers/businesses, and building relationships (Cho,

2009). These technologies have significantly affected almost all parts of the societies around the world. Today, computers, Internet and mobile devices have become an important part of daily life. In the last decades, mobile phones and other handheld devices have become one of the fastest growing communication devices (Economides & Grousopoulou, 2009).

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The mobile phones have become an integral part of everyday life in many countries all over the world. Mobile phone is accepted as one of the most widely spread technologies of today. Since the first commercial mobile phone service was launched in 1978 in Japan, the total number of mobile phone subscribers in the world was estimated to have reached 5.2 billion by 2010 (ITU, 2011). ITU estimated that while in the developed countries mobile phone subscriptions had reached 1.4 billion, there were 3.97 billion mobile phone subscribers in developing countries. Mobile phone penetration rates vary by country to country, with some countries having a penetration rate of less than fifty percent and with some countries having a penetration rate of more than 100 percent. For example while Argentina, Italy, Germany, Korea (Rep. of) and Russia have a penetration rate of more than 100 percent, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Nepal and Sudan have a penetration rate of less than fifty percent in 2010 (UNdata, 2011). Even though there are significant differences between developed and developing countries in terms of accessing and using computers and the Internet, mobile phone acceptance rates are higher in some developing countries than developed countries. For example, while mobile cellular subscriptions per 100 inhabitants were 163.62 in Russia, 94.83% of the population was mobile cellular phone subscriber in the United States (U.S.) in 2009 (UNdata, 2011).

While people of various ages find mobile phones convenient and useful, younger generations tend to appreciate mobile phones more and be more dependent on them (Hakoama & Hakoyama, 2011). Mobile phones have become a pervasive communication device, especially among college students (Aoki & Downes, 2003). Waldman et al. (2005) surveyed over 560 university students in three U.S. states and found that over 70 percent of the participants of their study felt that owning a mobile phone was a necessity. Students use mobile phones for a variety of purposes: to help them feel safe, for financial benefits, to manage

time efficiently, to keep in touch with friends and family members, etc. (Aoki & Downes, 2003).

Mobile phone functions are no longer limited to voice communications (Jun & Lee, 2007). Today the growing number of mobile phone functions includes telephone, diary, game box, web connector, and even as a full substitute for a personal computer (Jun & Lee, 2007). Wide range of functionalities makes mobile phones one of the most important communication devices in society (Jun & Lee, 2007). Mobile phones offer much more than simply a means of voice communication; they can provide entertainment, convey social status, and express one's individuality (ComScore, 2007). According to the results of ComScore 2006 Survey, while consumers in the cellular generation, 18-24 year olds, are likely to view their mobile phones as multi-dimensional devices, adult adopters tend to have a more functional view. Approximately one-quarter of both the cellular generation (26 percent) and transitioners (25 percent) reported that "trendiness" was of high importance when selecting a mobile phone, as compared to just 10 percent of adult adopters in their study and the cellular generation clearly places the greatest value on additional features such as text messaging, camera and MP3 player (ComScore, 2007). Mobile phone can be a highly personalized object (Tian, Shi & Yang, 2009). Its appearance and the way it is used, particularly in public, may reflect mobile phone user's personal preferences and identity (Tian, Shi & Yang, 2009). The consumption of mobile phones by college students is not only determined by rational analysis and comparison (Li & Li, 2010). Li and Li (2010) found that the psychological factors influencing college students' purchase of mobile phone in west China include the social attribute, the reliability, the coherence, and the novelty. Li and Li (2010) reported that college students' individuality influences the mobile phone purchase to some extent.

Mobile phone technology was adopted in Turkey in 1994 (Özcan & Koçak, 2003). Since then, Turkey has experienced a rampant increase in the

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