

DOES SOCIAL NETWORKING PROMOTE ADULTS' ADOPTION OF MOBILE LEARNING?

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ABSTRACT

Four factors including relative advantages, innate innovativeness, self-efficacy and attitudes toward social networking with the class were hypothesized to form a path model to investigate the influences on an individual's adoption of mobile devices for educational purposes. The seven causal paths were measured and found very significant to show the picture of how the intention of adopting mobile learning is influenced. In this study, 271 adults responded to the questionnaire of 17 items. The sample's averaged age is 38 and over the half are women. The model fit, the scale validity of consistency and discrimination were well accepted. Unlike the college students mainly connecting to peers and family, working adults are willing to establish a wide range of online social networking in the educational contexts.

INTRODUCTION

Engaging in social networking sites (SNS) becomes an integral means of managing one's lifestyle and social relations. Networking emphasizes both relationships between the strangers [1] and between those who have offline connections such as friends and family members [2]. Recently, SNS incorporate ubiquitous communication, in terms of mobile connectivity to quickly update one's profiles, comment on a page or wall, and share out personal photo/video taken by the mobile devices. Mobile devices lead to the main usage of engaging the SNS. Thus, adopting the mobile devices to go online wirelessly is increasing for the adults across the ages [3]. The prior endeavors of Mobile Learning (ML) applied to education have been limited to the interactions between users and the content, such as the language learning and online quizzes. However, the social natured SNS allows a wide range of interactions with people as well as integrate these activities with daily routines and social networks. The informal learning or continuing education for working adults can be best initiated by these less conscious activities or triggered a reciprocal process involving with others [4]. SNS opens up new research area for applying mobile learning to the adults' continuing learning and professional education.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Relevant research suggests that young adults intend to overlap their online and offline network to solidify their offline identities [5]. The friends in the online social network are more likely found on the FTF social networks. Imaging the educational environments, the faculty is hardly invited by a young student as a friend both online and offline. Nevertheless, it may turn into a different story in the case of continuing education, where the working adults may share personal interests or common practices of a profession with their instructor and classmates. In the eye of the adult learners, the lines between the personal and professional relationships with the participants may be blurred [6]. Thus, one's attitudes towards social networking with the class may or may not affect his or her intention of using the mobile phones for educational usages. To date, the research to investigate the adoption intention of mobile learning as a result of the preferred attitudes towards online social networking is very limited.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND MODEL

The questions of interest were to determine what factors significantly affect the adult students to adopt the mobile uses for educational purposes. In addition to the line of online social networking, this study derives the major theoretical foundations from Rogers' theory (1995) in diffusion of innovations, Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977), and the customer psychology [7]. An individual's intention of adopting the mobile learning was used as the outcome variable, while there were three recurrent factors based on the innovation research served as the predictors. A new construct measuring one's attitude towards socially networking with the class was developed by the researcher. Innate innovativeness is defined as the extent to which one makes innovation decisions independently of communicated experience of others [8]. This study was designed to test an empirically-based path model so that seven hypotheses were formed as follows: H1- one's innate innovativeness is correlated with relative advantages of ML. H2-relative advantages of ML affects one's attitude towards socially interacting with the class. H3- innate innovativeness affects the self-efficacy in using the mobiles. H4-relative advantages of ML affects one's self-efficacy. H5-innate innovativeness affects one's attitude towards socially networking with the class. H6-attitudes towards socially networking with the class affects the intention of adopting ML. H7-self-effecacy affects adoptive intention of ML (see Figure 1). The hypothesized influences are all positive directional.

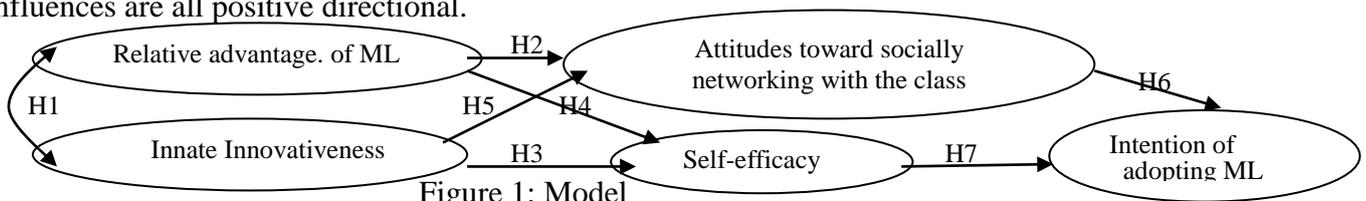


Figure 1: Model

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISSCUSIONS

Approximately 300 adult students who attended a distance university responded to a multi-item questionnaire designed by the researcher. After the invalid responses and the outliers were deleted, the data was analyzed. 90 % was working adults and 60% has owned the smart mobile phones. The average of ages was 38 and 62% were the female. In this study, the scale was consisted of 17 items designed to measure four constructs, which the reliability coefficient of relative advantages is 0.91, innate innovativeness is 0.85, attitudes toward online social networking with the class is 0.89; self-efficacy is 0.88, and the intention to adopt ML is 0.87. The discriminat validity of each construct is greater than 0.50, achieving the acceptable level. Amos 20.0 was used in order to build a structural equation model. It was found that the hypothesized path model has a good model fit (see Table 1). χ^2 / df is 1.973, less than 3.0 and GFI, AGFI, RMSEA, SRMR, and CFI indexes further supported the good fit of the model. All of the hypothesized casual paths were very significantly at the p level less than 0.001 (indicated by ***). The model explains 58% of variances in the intention of adopting mobile learning.

Fit Index	Model Statistic	Hypothesis	Path Coefficient
χ^2 / df	1.973(220.942/112)	H1	0.26***
P value	0.000	H2	0.68***
GFI	0.913	H3	0.34***
AGFI	0.882	H4	0.24***
RMSEA	0.06	H5	0.39***
SRMR	0.057	H6	0.46***
CFI	0.976	H7	0.53***

Table 1: Model fit and path coefficients of hypothesized model

CONCLUSIONS

Like most studies of innovation and diffusion, our measures of relative advantages, innate innovative-ness, self-efficacy are proven to be the important predictors to the intention of technology adoption. In this study, adult learners' positive attitudes toward socially networking with the class fellows and the instructor affects significantly on the intention of using mobile devices to learn. Though most SNS primarily support pre-existing social relations, the social relationships between the teacher and the young student was limited. But the findings of this research show this case can be changed to the continuing educational context, via sharing and socially interactions on SNS among adult learners and the class. This may provide another avenue for working adults to confidently incorporate the mobile learning into their daily routines and relational networking.

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