Older Adults’ Use of New Media

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The purpose of this research is to investigate which variables determine older adults’ intentions to use new media (internet and digital TV). Individual differences (risk aversion, innovativeness) and social influences (internalization, identification and compliance) were included in TAM (Davis, 1986) as key determinants that influence use of new media. Our study confirms the importance of perceived ease of use, and demonstrates that (1) other beliefs (i.e. internalization, identification, compliance) and (2) individual characteristics (innovativeness, risk aversion) can significantly influence older adults’ intentions to use new media. Perception of usefulness did not influence older adults’ intention to use new media.

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Conclusion and further research

This paper provides a conceptual framework for the study of the influence of spirituality on consumer behaviour. It identifies seniors as consumers with salient spiritual characteristics, including spiritual maturity or intensive spiritual growth, and potentially strong spiritual motivations for consumption. Further research is necessary to examine our research propositions. Given the importance of these growing demographics in most developed economies and the size of certain age-related sectors, including tourism, a better understanding of the influence of spirituality on consumption would appear essential and long overdue.

References


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The study of older adults’ use of technology has mainly focused on barriers like learning new skills, sensory or cognitive abilities that keep older adults from adopting technological innovations. However, research has shown that some older adults are looking for creative and challenging offers and are active, innovative customers (Szmigin & Carrigan, 2001). The purpose of this research is to investigate which variables determine negative or positive intentions to use new media like the internet and digital TV. The central question
is: what are the underlying factors causing different levels of utilization of new technologies? We want to extend previous research on older adults’ use of new media technology by combining cognitive, motivational, individual differences and social factors. We use the technology acceptance model (TAM) (Davis, 1986) as a basic framework to test our hypotheses. TAM includes both cognitive factors and motivational factors to investigate technology acceptance and has been successfully used in a wide spectrum of studies (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). Two important aspects of TAM are perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness which in turn influence –through intentions- acceptance and use of the new technology. Despite vast support for the TAM, additional external variables could influence technology acceptance (Venkatesh, 2000). For example, the impact of user characteristics like individual variables (personality) on perceived ease of use and usefulness as the main factors that influence the behavioral intention to use the system and on behavioral intention as well, is not adequately regarded yet. Previous research already suggested that individual differences are significant factors in explaining both, technology acceptance and user behavior (Arning & Ziefle, 2006).

We extended the TAM in several ways. We included individual differences (risk aversion, innovativeness) and social influences (internalization, identification and compliance) as key determinants that influence new technology’s use. Moreover, we investigated the acceptance of new technologies by older adults. Practitioners and researchers need a better understanding of why older people resist or embrace new technologies. Insights in older adults’ motivations to accept new technologies could help attune communications to this elderly segment, ultimately leading to higher acceptance of new, helpful technologies. In addition, encouraging older consumers to use the Internet could be valuable for firms, as the sheer number of older consumers gradually increases and they tend to have greater wealth and spending power.

Several hypotheses are postulated. Following Arning and Ziefle (2006), we argue that especially for older adults, ease of use is an important determinant of perceived usefulness of new technologies. We also expect that a higher level of internalization (i.e. the process by which, when one perceives that an important referent thinks one should use a system, one incorporates the referent’s belief into one’s own belief structure, Malholtra & Galetta, 1999), identification (occurs when system users adopt attitudes and behaviors to achieve a satisfying, self-defining relationship with another person or group, Malholtra & Galetta, 1999) and innovativeness are positively related to perception of usefulness, ease of use and use of new technologies. We expect that compliance (occurs when the user adopts particular behaviors to obtain rewards or avoid punishments, Malholtra & Galetta, 1999) and risk aversion are negatively related to perception of usefulness, ease of use and the use of new technologies.

Survey data were collected through self-administered anonymous questionnaires filled in by 179 older adults. Structural equation modeling was performed to analyze the relationships proposed in the hypotheses. Two full structural measurement models (internet/digital TV) were estimated with each scale items used as an indicator of its associated latent variable. The final measurement models had good fit. Next, two structural models were estimated. Results showed adequate model fit for both models. We found no large differences for determinants of intentions to use internet and digital TV. Results show that positive intentions to use both new media are determined by ease of use, identification, compliance and innovativeness. Compliance positively influenced the perceived usefulness and the intention to use internet and digital TV. Ease of use of internet was negatively influenced by compliance. Internalization directly influenced intentions to use digital TV but not Internet. Internalization had an indirect influence on internet use through ease of use and usefulness. Risk aversion did not directly influence use of new media. However, older adults who had higher risk aversion had a lower ease of use perception of internet, indirectly influencing their intention to use the internet. Perception of usefulness did not influence use of new media. Older adults do not need to perceive new media as useful in order to use it. Usefulness was influenced by perceptions of ease of use. Usefulness was also influenced by compliance, internalization and identification (for internet).

In sum, our study not only confirms the importance of perceived ease of use in the basic TAM, but also demonstrates that, in the context of new media use (1) other beliefs (i.e. internalization, identification, and compliance) and (2) individual characteristics (innovativeness, risk aversion) can significantly influence consumer intentions and perceptions of usefulness and ease of use.

Key References