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Internet-based e-Media and Consumer Attitudes: An empirical Research

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INTERNET-BASED E-MEDIA AND CONSUMER ATTITUDES:
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ABSTRACT

This paper empirically explores the attributes associated with Internet-based e-media using the survey data collected from the consumers in Hong Kong. It has been found that perceived convenience, user-friendly interface, contents, efficiency and image significantly influence perceived usefulness of Internet-based e-media. In addition, self-efficacy and design characteristics are positively associated with perceived ease of use of Internet-based e-media. Moreover, these attributes together with subjective norms considerably explain consumer attitudes and intentions to use Internet-based e-media. The findings have practically useful implications for managing Internet-based e-media and developing new media in different contexts.

Keywords: Internet, e-media, attributes, consumer attitudes and empirical research

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The adoption of Internet-based e-media is an important research area, because Internet-based e-media plays an influential role in mass communications in the world. This paper aims to identify the major variables that might significantly influence the acceptance and adoption of e-media. Firstly, it constructs a research model based on the theory of reasoned action (TRA) [2], the technology acceptance model (TAM) [1], and the theoretical extension of the technology acceptance model (TAM2) [4]. Secondly, it illustrates several research hypotheses, followed by research methods. Furthermore, it presents empirical results and discusses the findings. Lastly, it is concluded by highlighting the direction for future research.

The TRA, the TAM and the TAM2 have been extensively used to examine user behaviors in relation to computer-based information systems. They especially highlight the importance of perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and the relevant attributes of computer-based information systems [3]. Therefore, this paper applies these theories to construct a conceptual model to evaluate consumer acceptance and adoption of Internet-based e-media. The present research model inherits the main concepts of the TRA, the TAM and the TAM2. In particular, it examines consumer perceptions of several variables such as system features, design characteristics, self-efficacy, ease of learning, efficiency and convenience.

The research methods associated with the present research include literature review, design of questionnaire, distribution of questionnaire and statistical data analysis. The questionnaire consisted of a number of questions in relation to efficiency, convenience, system features, design characteristics, self-efficacy, ease of learn, and perceived image. It also consisted of several items in relation to subjective norms, attitudes and intentions to use. Moreover, it included the enquiry of demographic data. The questionnaire was circulated to individual consumers. As a result, two hundred and twenty useful responses were collected for data analysis. The respondents were Internet users with experience in e-media. Several procedures associated with the Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) were used to test the survey data.

The data analysis results in meaningful findings. Firstly, several features associated with perceived ease of use are found important. For instance, design characteristics, self-efficacy and ease of learn positively affect perceived ease of use of Internet-based e-media, although some other factors may be related to perceived ease of use. Some respondents suggest that it would be desirable if e-media could possess special effects. Special effects mainly include the use of multimedia technology, which may not be available in some e-media at this stage. Although users may not look for special effects due to the constraints of bandwidth, e-media service providers should consider these features when designing an e-media website. Secondly, information contents, efficiency, convenience and perceived ease of use are factors significantly influencing perceived usefulness of e-media. In particular, the provision of the latest e-news is important, because many want to know the news through e-media. Moreover, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and subjective norms positively affect individual attitudes towards e-media, which in turn influence individual intentions to use. Consumers may tend to use e-media, though it may not be perceived a privilege of status.

This project examines a number of variables in relation to Internet-based e-media and identifies the major concerns about the use of e-media from consumer perspective. The empirical results suggest that perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and subjective norms significantly affect consumer intentions to use e-media. The findings should have practical implications for managing Internet-based e-media. The e-media service providers are suggested to improve these aspects in order to attract more people to use the services. Future research can be carried out to explore consumer perceptions of various types of e-media in different contexts. It would be meaningful to identify specific variables associated with e-media in different cultural environments, because the information will be useful for the improvement of existing e-media and the development of new

media services.

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