

Assessment of A Mobile Educational Coaching App: Exploring Adoption Patterns and Barriers in France

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ABSTRACT

This article explores which antecedents explain intentions to adopt a mobile coaching app. To that end, this study describes a coaching service designed to guide/encourage students throughout their studies in order to validate a new model of planned behavior based on the Technology Acceptance Model and the Goal-Directed Behavioral theory. The methodology included a short qualitative study and an online survey to examine the theoretical model which is based on scales tested in previous studies. The convenience sample is composed of students (Bachelor and Master/MBA) with the results analyzed using structural equation modelling to test the proposed model's causal structure. The results show different adoption patterns by gender and type of school.

KEYWORDS

Coaching App, Desires, e-Coaching, Emotions, Goal Directed Behavior, Mobile Coaching Services, TAM, Technology Based Self-Services

INTRODUCTION

Mobile app use has increased significantly (Chen, Meserv & Gillenson, 2012) since the introduction of the Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) in Europe and iMode in Japan at the end of the 20th century, and the release of the BlackBerry smartphone in the US in 2002. These apps allow users to trade stocks, obtain paperless store coupons, receive reminders for to do lists, and use GPS to find arrival and departure times for public transportation (Chen et al., 2012).

Information-Oriented Mobile Applications (IOMA) are programs offering users timely, personalized, and/or localized information on mobile devices (Chen et al., 2012). Consumer adoption of these mobile apps is forecast to grow significantly as mobile providers open their platforms to third-party applications (Malhotra & Segars, 2005; Chen et al., 2012). IOMAs require a smartphone connected to mobile Internet or local area wireless (Wi-Fi).

There is a large body of research on innovation acceptance patterns (Davis, 1989; Davis, Bagozzi & Warshaw, 1989; Venkatesh & Morris, 2000; Venkatesh et al., 2003), though there is little knowledge of how consumers adopt technology-based self-services (TBSSs) (Reinders, Dabholkar & Frambach, 2008; Claudy, Garcia & O'Driscoll, 2015). Reinders, Dabholkar and Frambach (2008) show that offering interaction with an employee as a fall back option offsets the negative consequences of forced use of a TBSS. Claudy, Garcia, and O'Driscoll (2015) confirm that reasons for and against adoption are not just opposites of each other but they are qualitatively distinct constructs which

DOI: 10.4018/IJTHI.2018010102

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influence consumers' adoption decisions in different ways. The marketing field investigates the factors behind consumer intentions to use TBSSs. These services and factors are likely to grow as technology advances (Taylor & Strutton, 2010; Shuster, Drennan & Lings, 2013), especially since the traditional attitudinal models (Dabholkar & Bagozzi, 2002; Curan & Meuter, 2005) fail to recognize that most high-involvement behaviors, such as using a credence service, are means to achieve goals (Schuster et al., 2013).

Credence services are professional services requiring specialized knowledge to produce and are difficult for consumers to evaluate, even after trial (Ostrom & Iacobucci, 1995; Schuster et al., 2013). These models also fail to account for the impact of pre-factual appraisals of outcomes, which are less concrete in credence services (Ostrom & Iacobucci, 1995; Schuster et al., 2013). This study addresses these gaps using a model inspired by the model of goal-directed behavior (MGB) (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001), to overcome these shortcomings (Schuster et al., 2013), and the technology acceptance model (TAM) (Davis, 1989), to examine consumer acceptance of a particular TBSS – a coaching app to help students succeed in their studies.

Success in higher education is important for getting a good first job, for evolving in or keeping one's job. Undergraduate or graduate participation in education programs is highly competitive (Davidenkoff, 2014). Therefore, coaching from professors and pedagogical directors is quite necessary, and the development of TBSS enables a potentially useful app-based coaching system designed especially for students. Academic institutions have widely adopted e-learning. Blended learning combines web-based e-learning platforms with classroom teaching (Koutsabasis, Stavrakis, Spyrou & Darzentas, 2011). However, there are no existing coaching apps for students. Asynchronous e-learning increases communication between students and instructors, but this is not exactly coaching.

This study contributes to the literature by building on existing knowledge of consumer decision making. It also broadens the current understanding of consumer acceptance of emerging TBSS using a model based on the TAM and the MGB to overcome the limitations of current attitudinal approaches, in addition to providing evidence for emotions' usefulness in TBSS acceptance. The principal objective of this study is to identify drivers fostering the intention to adopt such a coaching app in France. The article is structured as follows. Firstly, the context of the specific French higher education ecosystem and theoretical framework are presented and after that the model of the intention to adopt the mobile coaching service is introduced. The methodology is then described along with the operationalization of the underlying hypotheses. After reporting the main findings, theoretical and managerial implications, the paper concludes by considering limitations and avenues for future research.

CONTEXT AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Context

The French Higher Education Ecosystem

France's higher education system has two main types of institutions: Universities and Grandes Ecoles (mainly Business and Engineering Schools). Universities are public and very inexpensive, with open admissions that require a *baccalauréat*. Most Business Schools require *baccalauréat* too, plus a contest, are expensive and provide students with coaching from faculty and staff.

Twenty percent of students are currently in a private Higher Education organization in France and private superior education accounts for 80% of the increase in the number of students over the last ten years (Davidenkoff, 2014).

Many organizations in the French High Education system currently use e-learning tools, blended learning, and massively open online courses (MOOCs). In this context, collaborative learning, an active process where learners enter a joint activity and adopt common goals to perform tasks or solve problems emerges naturally. A meta-analysis showed that collaborative learning effectively increases

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