

Chapter III

Searching for Value in Researching the Adoption and Use of M-Services

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ABSTRACT

Mobile services (m-services) have become an important part of the e-commerce landscape. Although research has been conducted on which services people use and the benefits they attach to those services, the values associated with the adoption and use of m-services at the individual level is still unclear. This article addresses the question of why and how individuals adopt and appropriate m-services with a particular focus on m-communication? In the information systems

field, various technology adoption models have been proposed and validated in relation to technology adoption within an organisational setting, but personal adoption and use of technology is less researched. We propose the use of means-end chains and laddering techniques to determine the basic primitive values that are fulfilled for the individual by using various m-services. The examples presented show that mobile services often fulfill such basic needs as self-esteem, achievement, individuality, belonging, and well-being. Exploring the realization of values

as a theoretical framework offers researchers a way forward in environments characterised by individual technology decisions.

INTRODUCTION

Various theories are used in information systems to determine the patterns of adoption of technologies at an organisational level. However, the reasons for adoption of technologies and services at the individual level are less understood. The aim of this article is to determine the reasons for m-services adoption and usage at the individual level. Means-end chains and laddering are explained and examples are used to show the reasons underpinning different consumer value choice perceptions. Finally, the significance of value based theories, as an explanatory theory at the individual level, is assessed.

Industry analysts have high expectations of the consumers' willingness to adopt mobile services. However, there is still uncertainty in relation to understanding why an individual adopts electronic channels, and the intrinsic influential factors, such as consumers' attitudes and values in relation to electronic channels (Venkatesh & Brown, 2001; Anckar, 2002). Anckar (2002, p. 3) pointed out that "The main reason for value-adding elements in m-commerce, the consumers' actual reasons—the primary drivers for adopting m-commerce remain unclear." The importance of understanding what motivates adoption becomes even more critical for m-services as adoption rates are expected to rapidly increase (Anckar, 2002). Some of the reasons behind this optimistic forecast are the low cost associated with m-commerce hardware (e.g., mobile telephones) and consumers' familiarity with mobile telephones (Ropers, 2001; Anckar, 2002).

DEFINITIONS OF MOBILE COMMERCE

Mobile services embrace terms such as mobile communication, mobile collaboration, and mobile commerce (Sarker & Wells, 2003). Whilst there is some overlap between these terms, it can be argued that mobile communication includes voice, Short Messaging Service (SMS), and Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS), whilst the same services can be used to collaborate on projects and can additionally draw upon information and news from Web sites. Mobile commerce involves information, news, and the purchase of physical goods and services. In this article, the term m-services is used to describe the ability to send and receive communication and purchase goods/services through a wireless public (e.g., Internet) or private network enabled device, like a mobile telephone or a personal digital assistant (Balasubramanian, Peterson, & Jarvenpaa, 2002; Clark, 2001; Han, Harkke, Landor, & Mio, 2002; Junglas, 2002).

It is argued that the main difference between e-commerce and m-commerce is that m-commerce is associated with wireless technologies (Clark, 2001; Anckar & D'Incau, 2002; Han et al., 2002; Turban, McLean, & Wetherbe, 2002). For example, Turban et al. (2002, p. 28) have defined m-commerce as the "Conduct of e-commerce via wireless devices." The basic definition of wireless is: "The absence of a physical link between the sending and receiving devices," (Balasubramanian et al., 2002). It is important to clarify the terminology, since it is easy for the concept of m-commerce to be mistaken for its underlying technologies (applications and devices) (Balasubramanian et al., 2002; Han et al., 2002).

Three key characteristics of m-commerce are portability, ubiquity, and addressability.

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