

An investigation of the relevancy of UTAUT2 in the context of online dating APP use among young adults in Taiwan

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Purpose

The event of COVID-19 pandemic in the past two years had somehow transformed how people find, meet, interact and maintain relationship with their potential short-term romantic and/or long-term committed partners. Driven by the movement restriction order and social-distancing measures issued by the government, many people are forced to stay at home and/or work from home. This had created a lot of barriers to social interactions and loneliness to many young adults. To counteract this negative effect, many young adults started to use various online dating apps; and online dating apps started to gain more popularity in our current society. In light of this new phenomenon in dating, this study intended to examine the factors affecting the use of online dating app. In order to achieve this, this study adopted the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT2), using six constructs and two moderator effects. Specifically, the study seeks to discover whether performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, hedonic motivation, price value, and habit influence users' decision to accept and use a dating app. This study is relevant to the researchers and practitioners as no prior study has examined the phenomenon of online dating apps using UTAUT2; this allows us to provide insights from a completely new angle, based on the model and helpful implications for future research. The factors that influence users to use dating apps have been studied in several studies, including trust [1] [2], perceived norm [1], and hedonic motivation [1] [2] [3]; however, no comprehensive study has been conducted on user acceptance and participation of online dating app, using the UTAUT2. A better understanding of user participation in online dating app is considered necessary [1] to determine the success of online dating apps, and to benefit online dating app developers and providers to improve their services to attract and provide better services to more users.

The basis of the study

Online survey, using Google Form and the service of drsurveydone.com [4], was conducted in Taiwan. A total of 437 valid respondents were obtained in this study. This data was analysed using SmartPLS 3 [5]. Among the total respondents, 60.6% are female, while 39.4% are male. Most of the respondents (45.8%) in this study were aged below 20 years old, followed by 42.6% of the respondents with the age range of 25-40, and 11.7% over 40 years old. About 77.3% of the respondents have prior experience with online dating app. Fifty-one percent of them use at least one online dating app; 23.6% of them use at least two online dating apps. Findings from our data analysis showed that both hedonic motivation, and habit significantly affect the user intentions to use online dating apps. In contrast, other factors such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and price value provided no supporting evidence for the hypotheses tested in this study. Furthermore, multi-group analyses were also conducted to determine if the moderator variables (i.e., gender and experience) had the potential to influence the model's relationships [6]. We found that most of the moderator effect of gender were insignificant except for the relationship between habit and behavioural intention. Similarly, most of the moderator effect of experience were insignificant except for the relationship between habit and the number of apps used.

Implications

Habit and hedonic motivation were found to be important factors in explaining online dating app use; thus, app developers shall plan for more customer loyalty programs for their apps so that their users will get entertained, committed, and attached to their apps. The gender moderator was largely insignificant for most relationships. This implied that gender is less relevant as a differentiating factor. This could be due to gender equality access to IT technology, in our society and education settings since the past few decades. Similarly, experience as a moderator was also found insignificant for most relationships, which make the experience less important as a differentiating factor. This could be attributed to IT technologies pervasiveness, and users' familiarity with IT technologies usage in our modern society. Lastly, habit was found to influence the number of apps used, which was in turn found to influence the usage behaviour—this could imply that the more habits were formed from the use of the online dating app, the more dating apps the users were using.

Conclusions

Our findings in this study suggested that many of the UTAUT2 constructs tested were not found to be significant based on our sample data. This indicated that the relevancy and validity of UTAUT2 in explaining the behavioral intention in our current settings of young adults in Taiwan, in the context of online dating app, is not evident. This suggests that more explorative studies are required in the future studies, to determine the dominant factors affecting the use of online dating app. On the hand, it is also important to investigate whether the introvert and conservative culture of the Taiwanese plays a role in undermining the significance of the factors in the UTAUT2. Thus, more cross-cultural studies are required in the future to confirm the findings here.

References

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