



Airline passengers' continuance intention towards online check-in services: The role of personal innovativeness and subjective knowledge



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ABSTRACT

This study integrates the individual psychology constructs (personal innovativeness and subjective knowledge) with the Technology Acceptance Model to develop and test a model of airline passengers' continuance intention towards online flight check-in services. Predictions were tested with data from a sample of airline passengers in China who have experienced the online check-in service. The findings of this study demonstrate that airline passengers' innovativeness and subjective knowledge have a direct effect on continuance intention, and an indirect effect through partial mediation of perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. Theoretical and managerial implications are discussed.

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1. Introduction

There has been a surge of online self-services in the transport industries, including services such as online ticket booking, online check-in services; online live services updates, and the like (Lu et al., 2009). Successful implementation of online self-services helps transport firms to standardize service delivery, reduce labor costs, and expand the options for service delivery. Self-service check-in (including web, kiosk and mobile phone-based) is one of key components of International Air Transport Association (IATA) Fast Travel Program. Online check-in service provides more choice and control for passengers, and lower costs for the industry with annual savings of up to US\$ 2.1 billion (IATA, 2015a). Motivating passengers to use online self-services can be challenging because they require passengers' willingness to learn the new systems and additional resources to use them (Curran and Meuter, 2005).

Lu et al. (2009) investigated airline passenger intention to use airport self-service check-in kiosks and indicated that passenger behavior regarding the use of other self-service check-in options, such as internet-based options, have not been well understood. Moreover, extant research into the diffusion of new technology has mainly focused on the initial adoption, ignoring what happens next (Wang et al., 2013). According to Rogers (1995), the process of innovation diffusion goes through six stages: awareness, investigation, evaluation, trial, *repeated use*, and commitment. As the process of innovation diffusion moves from initial trial, users' perceptions change over time as they gain more experiences of the technology (Karahanna et al., 1999; Lee et al., 2011). However, little is known whether the two key Technology Acceptance Model (TAM, Davis, 1989; Davis et al., 1989) variables, namely perceived ease of use (PEOU) and perceived usefulness (PU) predict

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continuance intention. Additionally, scholars have suggested extending TAM in order to include more possible constructs such as individual psychological factors that could better explain technology use behavior (Lu et al., 2009). However, despite the growing importance of online self-services in the aviation industries, there has been little research on the effect of passengers' psychological factors on continuance intention towards online self-services (e.g. Kokkinou and Cranage, 2013).

The specific purpose of this study is to provide a better explanation of passengers' intention to continue the use of online check-in service. We integrate two psychological constructs, namely personal innovativeness and subjective knowledge with the two TAM factors, i.e. PEOU and PU to develop a conceptual model of passenger continuance intention towards online check-in services. The proposed model was tested by means of a web-based survey questioning members of an online passenger community in China who have experience using online check-in services. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was adopted for data analysis. The remaining sections of paper are organized as follows. In the next section, we discuss the conceptual background for the research. In the subsequent sections, we present the research model and hypotheses, methodology, and results. Finally, the managerial and theoretical implications as well as the limitations and future research suggestions are discussed.

2. Conceptual background and hypotheses

2.1. Theories of personal innovativeness and subjective knowledge

Personal innovativeness is a personality trait that refers to an individual's tendency to willingly embrace change and try new things (Chau and Hui, 1998; Cotte and Wood, 2004; Roehrich, 2004; Thatcher and Perrewe, 2002), which can be further defined at either global trait level, or domain-specific level (Hirunyawipada and Paswan, 2006). Domain specific innovativeness is defined by the virtue of identifiable characteristics and actual acquisition of new information, ideas and products (Hirschman, 1980; Midgley and Dowling, 1978).

Studies of e-commerce and online booking of travel services (e.g. San Martín and Herrero, 2012) usually adopt the definition of innovativeness in the domain of information technology (Agarwal and Prasad, 1998). In contrast, this study adopts the definition at global trait level, because the personal innovativeness is a predisposition towards innovation across different products and services (Goldsmith and Hofacker, 1991), and this global conception has been widely accepted in psychology to identify the innovative characteristics of individuals (Im et al., 2003). As a personality trait, personal innovativeness shapes individuals' perceptions of their capabilities (Thatcher and Perrewe, 2002) to understand and apply complex technical knowledge, and to cope with the uncertainty of new technology (Rogers, 1995). Given its generalized definition, personal innovativeness has also been termed as "innate innovativeness" (Hirschman, 1980), or "innovative predisposition" (Midgley and Dowling, 1978).

An individual's knowledge can be either subjective or objective (Brucks, 1985; Flynn and Goldsmith, 1999), the former pertains to an individual's perception of the amount of information about a product or service stored in his or her memory, while the latter refers to the actual amount of accurate information stored in his or her memory (Packard and Wooten, 2013; Park et al., 1994). Subjective knowledge is a self-concept (Markus and Wurf, 1987). Self-concept refers to *the totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object* (Sirgy, 1982, p. 287). Self-concept is an important contributor to global evaluations of the self (Marsh, 1986; Tafarodi and Swann, 1995), and self-evaluation is an important source of intrinsic motivation (Shamir et al., 1993). People are motivated to perform activities that enhance their self-esteem while they try to maintain a consistent view of their self-concept over time (Gecas, 1982; Packard and Wooten, 2013). Subjective knowledge as a self-concept interprets and organizes self-relevant actions and experiences, therefore it has motivational consequences on behavior (Markus and Wurf, 1987; Myers and Twenge, 2013). Both subjective knowledge (what we think we know) and objective knowledge (what we actually know) are partially the result of experiences, yet they are different constructs (Flynn and Goldsmith, 1999), and have different effects on consumption behavior (Brucks, 1985). Experience is associated more with subjective knowledge than objective knowledge, and subjective knowledge has a stronger influence on consumption behavior than objective knowledge (Packard and Wooten, 2013). By accumulating experiences individuals develop a knowledge base on the new technology and on how to use it. This study thus focuses on airline passenger subjective knowledge, i.e. the perception or belief of one's own level of knowledge on online self-service, how to use it, and their level of expertise.

2.2. Hypothesis development

Individuals who possess the personality trait of innovativeness have greater willingness to experiment with new ideas, they are eager to try new products earlier than their peers, and they tend to seek information before using the service; all of these make these consumers more knowledgeable than others on new technologies (Engel et al., 1969). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H1. Personal innovativeness positively influences subjective knowledge.

In the context of self-services, Meuter et al. (2005) suggested that consumers who view themselves as knowledgeable will be more self-confident of using self-services, will perceive the use of online self-services as easy, and will recognize more of the benefits associated with self-service use. Thus, we hypothesize:

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