

Explaining B2C e-commerce acceptance: An integrative model based on the framework by Gatignon and Robertson

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Abstract

This study attempts to analyze e-commerce adoption, proposing a global model that integrates the most relevant approaches in the literature. Gatignon and Robertson's Adoption Model is taken as a reference framework because of its overall nature and its agreement with the main theories used to explain e-commerce acceptance. Thus, the model proposed to explain e-commerce adoption by consumers includes the simultaneous influence of attitudes, social norms, perceived risk, personal innovativeness in the field of new technologies and attributes perceived in the technology. The results obtained show that attitudes toward the system and Subjective Norm are the main determinants of the intention to shop on the Net. On the contrary, perceived risk has no significant effect on adoption process, while the influence of personal innovativeness is only relevant in the first purchase on the Internet.

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1. Introduction

The Internet's capacity to access, organize and communicate information in a more efficient way enables new formulas for the relationship between consumers and firms. New economic agents and new business models have emerged linked to them. This way, the development of e-commerce offers great opportunities for both manufacturers and retailers, but it also presents important challenges for organizations, demanding an in-depth review of marketing strategies and consumer knowledge (Jones and Vijayasathy, 1998; Goldsmith and Bridges, 2000; Rowley and Slack, 2001).

In this context, the present study attempts to analyze which are the factors that determine consumers' intention to shop online, and that lead Internet users to become buy-

ers on the Net. In particular, an overall adoption model of Internet shopping is proposed, which, with an integrative perspective, includes the most relevant approaches in the literature about e-commerce. In this sense, given that the Internet represents an innovation as a purchase channel (Jones and Vijayasathy, 1998; Dahlén, 1999; Vijayasathy and Jones, 2000; Miyazaki and Fernández, 2001; Fenech and O'Cass, 2001), Gatignon and Robertson's (1985) Adoption Model is taken as a reference framework. Although this model was enunciated more than 20 years ago, it is still highly relevant. The selection of this model is justified by its overall nature and by its agreement with the general approaches of the main theories used to explain e-commerce acceptance and, in particular, with the Theory of Planned Behavior (Schifter and Ajzen, 1985; Ajzen, 1991) and the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989; Davis et al., 1989).

The first part of the study includes a review of relevant literature in reference to the Internet and e-commerce acceptance, taking the theoretical framework proposed by Gatignon and Robertson (1985) as a reference. Likewise,

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the corresponding research hypotheses are propounded, which together, give place to an overall adoption model of online shopping by consumers. Subsequently, the methodology used in this study is described and the results obtained from a sample of regular users of Internet that have never made transactions on the Net are presented. To finish, the most relevant conclusions of the study are detailed.

2. Literature review and research hypotheses

The main characteristics and contributions of the model proposed by Gatignon and Robertson (1985) are summarized next, giving special attention to the explicative variables of a new product or behavior adoption. Subsequently, the relevant literature review that examines the influence of each one of these variables on the acceptance of purchasing on the Internet is tackled. The corresponding research hypotheses are enunciated for every case.

2.1. Gatignon and Robertson’s (1985) Innovation Adoption Model

Gatignon and Robertson (1985) attempt to integrate the different research perspectives of the innovation diffusion process into a general model, which is the base for the development of further research on the subject. Thus, on the basis of an extensive review of relevant literature, these authors postulate that the acceptance or non-acceptance of a novel product or behavior is the consequence of an adoption process followed by a diffusion one. Given that the aim of this research is to analyze the adoption process, our study will be focused on it.

According to Gatignon and Robertson (1985), the decision to adopt an innovation, captured through the intention to purchase, is influenced by three variables: (1) the attitudes toward it and the cognitive process by which they are constituted (Eastlick and Lotz, 1999); (2) the uncertainty or perceived risk in the new product or behavior; and (3) the consumers’ purchase patterns. Likewise, on

the basis of the literature on innovation diffusion, the model incorporates as indirect determinants of adoption the individuals’ perceptions with respect to the attributes of innovation, other people’s influence and the individuals’ personal characteristics (Fig. 1).

According to the model, the formation of attitudes toward a new behavior or product is determined by four factors: (1) individuals’ personal characteristics and, in particular, personal innovativeness; (2) characteristics perceived in the innovation; (3) the uncertainty or risk associated with it; and (4) the influence of the people or groups of reference.

Although it was enunciated more than 20 years ago, Gatignon and Robertson’s (1985) model remains highly relevant, as the review of the recent literature on innovation adoption evidences. In this sense, it is worth mentioning the similarity between this theoretical framework and other models that, with a more specific approach, have been extensively used to study the acceptance of new products and behaviors: the theories of Reasoned Action (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980), and Planned Behavior (Schifter and Ajzen, 1985; Ajzen, 1991), the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989; Davis et al., 1989) and the Decomposed Theory of Planned Behavior (Taylor and Todd, 1995) (see Table 1 for a resume of this theoretical models). Thus, these theories include the attitude toward an innovation as one of the most important antecedents of its adoption. In addition, other people’s influence on the acceptance process is explicitly included in both the Theories of Reasoned Action and Planned Behavior, and implicitly in the TAM (Davis et al., 1989; Mathieson, 1991). Finally, the TAM includes the characteristics perceived in the innovation as direct antecedents of the attitude and even of the effective adoption.

Moreover, in the specific context of research on e-commerce, much empirical evidence has shown the importance of previous behavior patterns, the perceived risk in the system and personal innovativeness in the adoption of Internet as a purchase means. Therefore, the literature on e-commerce has come to support – although partially

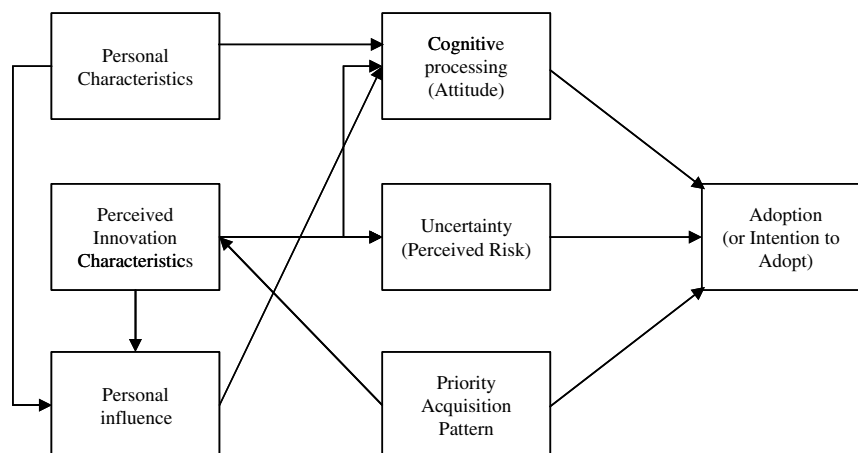


Fig. 1. Innovations Adoption Model by Gatignon and Robertson (1985).

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