



Understanding post-adoption behaviors of e-service users in the context of online travel services



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ABSTRACT

We developed a model to investigate the factors influencing two different post-adoption behaviors of e-service users based on the Post-Acceptance Model of IS Continuance (IS continuance model): (1) continuance intention to use e-services; and (2) Word of Mouth (WOM) behavior. We tested the research model using a survey of 543 usable responses in China. Our findings show that satisfaction and perceived usefulness positively affect continuance intention, which, together with perceived usefulness, positively influences the WOM behavior. The two different post-adoption behaviors of e-service users, continuance intention and WOM, are closely related. Implications for theory and practice are also discussed.

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1. Introduction

The post-adoption behaviors of information system (IS) users have recently attracted a great deal of attention among both researchers and practitioners. Prior post-adoption research in the IS domain has primarily focused on two post-adoption behaviors, namely, continuance intention and continuance usage. The prior research posits that the continuous use of IS is vital to the success of IS implementation among firms in the competitive marketplace because benefits from organizations' IS investments can only realized through continuous IS usage [1].

In the marketing literature, other behavioral outcomes, such as word of mouth (WOM), are said to be important, particularly in the highly competitive online environment [2]. Prior marketing research on the effect of WOM suggests that it is positively associated with sales [3–5]. Trusov et al. [6] have studied the effect of WOM marketing in attracting new users in the context of an online social network site and compared WOM with traditional marketing vehicles. They have found that WOM can help to attract new users, has longer carryover effects and produces substantially higher response elasticities than traditional marketing actions. The impact of WOM on sales and in

attracting new users has even encouraged some companies to compensate consumers for reviews of their products or services [7]. An apt comment on WOM marketing, which was published in the Wall Street Journal, states that “Instead of tossing away millions of dollars on Superbowl advertisements, fledgling dot-com companies are trying to catch attention through much cheaper marketing strategies such as blogging and [WOM] campaigns” [8, p. B2A].

There are several reasons for the appeal of using the Internet to spread WOM. First, the Internet provides numerous sites where consumers produce user-generated content (UGC) and share their reviews, preferences and experiences with others via chat rooms, discussion forums, bulletin boards, blogs, newsgroups, email, personal Web pages, social networks and virtual community blogs [9,10]. The Internet facilitates the rapid spread of WOM to different users at significantly lower costs [6]. Second, WOM has a significant effect on consumer purchasing behavior because consumers prefer to rely on WOM from experienced consumers instead of advertising, especially when attempting to reduce the perceived risks and uncertainties associated with purchasing decisions [11]. Thus, WOM can be viewed as an efficient method of online marketing. Mangold et al. [11] and Murray [12] both find that the influence of WOM is stronger on those who have purchased services than on those who purchased products because one characteristic of services is that they are experience goods for which quality is easier to ascertain.

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Though WOM has been argued to affect sales and help attract potential users, less research attention has been paid to the drivers of WOM in IS research. Prior IS research on post-adoption behavior has primarily focused on IS continuance and has not explored WOM behavior in the IS domain. Furthermore, the relationship between IS continuance and WOM has received minimal attention from IS researchers. Accordingly, there is a need to study the factors that drive the continuance intention to use an IS, the WOM behavior of individuals during the post-adoption stage and the need to clarify the relationship between the continuous use of an IS and WOM behavior. Thus, this paper addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the factors motivating individuals' IS continuance intention and their WOM with respect to an IS?

RQ2: What is the relationship between IS continuance intention and WOM?

To answer the research questions, this study proposed a post-adoption model that incorporated WOM into Bhattacherjee's [1] IS Continuance Model and then empirically validated the research model in the context of online travel services.

In this research, empirical data about online travel services were collected via a survey questionnaire and assessed using structural equation modeling. The objective of this study is to develop and assess a model that captures not only the factors that motivate an individual's IS continuance intention and WOM behavior but also the relationship between IS continuance intention and WOM in relation to an IS. In doing so, we offer several contributions. First, we linked IS continuance intention directly to WOM. The investigation of the relationship between the two different post-adoption behaviors should help explain the strategies that IS companies employ to retain IS users while promoting their IS via users' WOM behavior. Individual users are not limited to users of the IS: they can also be recruited as a marketing channel for IS services [7]. Second, this research investigated the WOM behavior of e-service users from IS adoption behavior perspectives. The findings of this study are expected to provide insights into how user satisfaction and cognition influence e-service users' continuance intention and WOM behavior in the post-adoption stage and to show how continuance intention influences WOM behavior in the context of B2C e-services. Third, this research investigated the impact of users' IS usefulness perceptions on different IS post-adoption behaviors.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows: the two post-adoption behaviors of IS users (IS continuance and WOM) and the IS Continuance Model proposed by Bhattacherjee [1] are introduced. Next, the research model and relevant hypotheses are presented, followed by a description of the study design and research methodology. After discussing the research findings, the paper highlights implications for both research and practice. Finally, the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research are presented.

2. Literature review and research background

2.1. Post-adoption behaviors: IS continuance and WOM

IS continuance was suggested as a primary behavioral outcome of the post-adoption stage that includes both the continuance intention and the continuous use of an IS [1,13,14]. According to Bhattacherjee [1], IS continuance refers to an IS user's decision to continue using a particular IS for a long period [1,13,15]. IS continuance is a form of post-adoption behavior, and in IS research, the term "IS continuance" is often used as a synonym for post-adoption behavior [16,17].

WOM is also a form of post-adoption behavior; the term refers to a consumer-dominated channel for broadcasting product, service or company information in which senders are independent of the market [9,18]. Consumers often value WOM information more highly than that provided by a company because WOM information is perceived to be more reliable, credible and trustworthy than firm-provided information [18]. According to Grewal et al. [19], WOM senders have neither an underlying motive nor an incentive for their referral. Thus, WOM is argued to have a powerful influence on consumer behavior, for example, when consumers search for and assess product information and subsequent decision-making and purchasing behavior [18].

In the online environment, users continue or discontinue using online services based on their prior experience of e-service use. In addition, their prior e-service use experience might also result in other post-adoption behavior, such as WOM, complaints, channel switching or willingness to pay. For example, e-service users may continue with previously used e-services and recommend those e-services to others—if their needs were met during the prior use. However, they may discontinue using the e-service, switch to an alternative and spread negative WOM to others. Clearly, both IS continuance and WOM are important when investigating e-service users' post-adoption behaviors.

2.2. IS Continuance Model

Recently, a new school of thought has been used to explore IS continuance, namely, the IS Continuance Model developed by Bhattacherjee [1]. The IS Continuance Model originates from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) [20] and Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) [21] and blends the IS domain and the marketing field. Bhattacherjee [1] integrates perceived usefulness from TAM into ECT, together with user satisfaction, to explain users' IS continuance intentions (see Fig. 1). In the IS Continuance Model, IS continuance intention is expected to depend on three variables: user satisfaction; the confirmation of expectations through prior IS use; and post-adoption expectations, in which perceived usefulness represents post-adoption expectations. Together, user satisfaction and perceived usefulness determine IS continuance intention, whereas the confirmation of expectations exerts a positive influence on perceived usefulness and user satisfaction. User satisfaction was found to be a salient predictor of the IS continuance intention, according to the empirical test results obtained by Bhattacherjee [1].

The IS Continuance Model proposed by Bhattacherjee [1] has a solid theoretical foundation and focuses on the motivations for individual users' IS continuance intentions that emerge in the IS post-adoption stage. It has been widely applied in IS research to examine IS users' post-adoption behavior in different research contexts, such as e-learning [22–24], e-banking [25], e-government [13], e-commerce [26,27], virtual communities [28] and blogs [63]. The IS Continuance Model examines the effect of user cognition (perceived usefulness) and satisfaction on individual users' post-adoption behavior. Prior IS research based on the IS Continuance Model has found that perceived usefulness and user

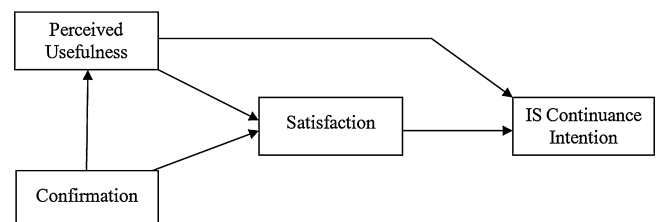


Fig. 1. ECT-based IS Continuance Model.

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