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Exploring the dual outcomes of mobile social networking service enjoyment: The roles of social self-efficacy and habit

Shuiqing Yang^a, Bin Wang^b, Yaobin Lu^{c,*}^a School of Information, Zhejiang University of Finance and Economics, Hangzhou 310018, PR China^b Information Systems, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX 78539, USA^c School of Management, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wuhan 430074, China

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ABSTRACT

Enjoyment experience has been generally regarded as a positive element which can drive various aspects of system usage. Little research has examined its potential adverse outcomes, especially in an emerging mobile services context. This study investigates the dual effects of enjoyment on mobile social networking service (Mobile SNS) usage behaviors by focusing on not only its positive outcomes but also its potential adverse consequences. In addition, this study explores the impacts of social self-efficacy and habit on these dual causal processes. A research model is developed and empirically tested using data collected from 398 mobile SNS users in China. The structural equation modeling analysis results indicate that enjoyment significantly affects both mobile SNS high engagement and mobile SNS addiction behaviors. Mobile SNS habit mediates the associations between mobile SNS enjoyment and mobile SNS addiction behaviors. Social self-efficacy directly affects mobile SNS users' enjoyment experience, and it also has important indirect impacts on the dual processes by effectively enhancing mobile SNS users' high engagement and alleviating their addiction behaviors. The theoretical and practical implications of our findings are also discussed.

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1. Introduction

Mobile social networking services (mobile SNS) have grown rapidly in recent years (Lin & Lu, 2015). For instance, Facebook, the most popular SNS had over 1.3 billion active users in early 2014 (Wilkinson, Basto, Perovic, Lawrentschuk, & Murphy, 2015), and more than 80% of the users access Facebook via their mobile devices (Tsay-Vogel, 2015). According to the statistic report from the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) in February 2015, the number of mobile SNS users in China reached 507 million, representing 87.9 percent of its mobile Internet population (577 million). Unlike traditional PC-based SNS, mobile SNS can provide localized, ubiquitous, and personalized services to users and bring significant values that differentiate it from its predecessor. For instance, mobile SNS enables users to “check in” to a specific location and interact with their friends around the clock – something impossible in the stationary PC-based SNS environment. In

particular, mobile SNS is an inherent interactive hedonic technology that aims to fulfilling users' hedonic social needs therefore users may focus more on its hedonic value (e.g., enjoyment) than its utilitarian value. It is therefore important for researchers to investigate how such hedonic elements may affect mobile SNS usage behavior.

In the literature, enjoyment has been regarded as a positive hedonic experience that can lead to the willingness to accept specific information systems (IS) (Hong & Tam, 2006), user satisfaction (Shiau & Luo, 2012), higher engagement with social network websites (Turel & Serenko, 2012), and continued usage intention (Sun, Liu, Peng, Dong, & Barnes, 2014). Despite researchers' efforts to understand the impacts of enjoyment on IS usage behavior, such research is mainly focused on positive outcomes. Recently, a few studies have discussed IS usage's dark outcomes (Turel & Serenko, 2012). However, the question of why some users' IS enjoyment can develop into positive outcomes while that of others may evolve into negative consequences still remains. This paradox has therefore become an issue that deserves further investigation. Following the spirit of the extant studies, the present research proposes that users' enjoyment in mobile SNS can indeed be a positive force that

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: d200877707@hust.edu.cn (S. Yang), bin.wang@utrgv.edu (B. Wang), luyb@mail.hust.edu.cn (Y. Lu).

drives their high engagement with mobile SNS. Moreover, the present study argues and empirically demonstrates that the effects of enjoyment in mobile SNS usage can be negative as well. That is, indulging in mobile SNS usage can result in mobile SNS addiction, which is a problematic dependency on the service.

The social psychology literature shows that social self-efficacy is positively related to individuals' psychological health and positive emotions (Shim, Wang, & Cassady, 2013) but negatively associated with their depression and maladaptive social behaviors (Wei, Russell, & Zakalik, 2005). In addition, habit is also found to be a potential mediator between enjoyment and IS usage behaviors (Chen, Zhang, & Zhao, 2015; Turel & Serenko, 2012). In response to the call by Turel and Serenko (2012) for further investigation of the underlying mechanisms of various enjoyment outcomes, the present study examines the dual impacts of enjoyment in mobile SNS usage as well as the effects of social self-efficacy and habit on these dual outcomes. Specifically, the present study examines: (1) how mobile SNS users' enjoyment influences their mobile SNS high engagement as well as addiction behavior, and (2) the roles of social self-efficacy and habit in shaping the impacts of enjoyment on mobile SNS high engagement and addiction behavior. This study thus contributes to a better understanding of the dual roles of enjoyment on mobile SNS usage as well as offering practical insights to managers on preventing mobile SNS users' negative addiction behavior.

This study is organized as follows. A review of related literature on mobile SNS and other core constructs is presented in Section 2. Next, the research model and hypotheses are discussed in Section 3. Then, the research methodology and data analysis are presented in Sections 4 and 5, respectively. The results are discussed in Section 6. Finally, the conclusions of this study are presented in Section 7 along with the limitations and implications.

2. Literature review

2.1. Mobile SNS

According to social network theory, social network services are web-based platforms enabling users to “construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system; articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection; and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; p. 211). Boyd and Ellison (2007) identified three core features of SNS: (1) users can construct their personal profile; (2) users can articulate their contact list to build or retain relationships; and (3) users can view and interact with other users in the connection network. As SNS allows users to express their individuality and interact with people alike, it has become very popular among Internet users during the past few years (Zhao, Lu, & Gupta, 2012).

With the development of mobile networks and the proliferation of mobile devices, mobile SNS has become the main channel that carries people's social interactions (Lin & Lu, 2015). As an important and prevalent service, mobile SNS-related user behavior has recently received much attention in the IS literature (Lin & Lu, 2015; Zhao et al., 2012; Zhou & Li, 2014). For instance, Zhao et al. (2012) identified the factors that affect user disclosure intention of location-based information in mobile SNS. Zhou and Li (2014) examined the effects of social influence and privacy concern on mobile SNS continuance usage. Recently, Lin and Lu (2015) investigated the impacts of mobile value and social influence on mobile SNS acceptance. Previous studies have also paid attention to the impacts of enjoyment on mobile SNS use. For example, Yu, Zo, Kee Choi, and P. Ciganek (2013) found that enjoyment which represents a kind of hedonic value significantly affects a user's intention to use

location-based mobile SNS.

As a result of these scholars' efforts, we have a much better understanding of the underlying mechanism affecting mobile SNS usage. However, there still lacks a systematic investigation into the dual outcomes of enjoyment on IS usage, especially, in the context of mobile SNS.

2.2. Enjoyment

In recently years, with the surge of mobile applications such as mobile games and mobile SNS, research on the underlying driving forces of system use have shifted from extrinsic motivations (e.g., perceived usefulness) to intrinsic considerations (e.g., perceived enjoyment). According to the motivation theory, intrinsic motivation promotes a voluntary activity for no apparent reason other than the process of performing the activity (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1992). The intrinsic motivation has been used to explain various task enjoyment-related IS usage activities (Davis et al., 1992; Turel & Serenko, 2012; Venkatesh, Thong, & Xu, 2012).

As an important intrinsic motivator, enjoyment is defined as “the extent to which the activity of using the computer is perceived to be enjoyable in its own right, apart from any performance consequences that may be anticipated” (Davis et al., 1992, p. 1113). Given the proliferation of hedonic mobile systems, enjoyment has become an important research subject in the IS literature (Sanakulov & Karjaluoto, 2015; Tojib & Tsarenko, 2012). The key assumption made in these studies is that enjoyment is a desirable phenomenon that can drive the usage of various systems. In other words, the extant literature has primarily focused on the positive outcomes of enjoyment. Nonetheless, the influences of enjoyment in some situations may also result in undesirable behaviors. That is, abusing good things can turn into bad outcomes (Turel & Serenko, 2012). Accordingly, in the present study, we intend to explore both the positive and negative impacts of enjoyment on mobile SNS usage.

2.3. Habit

Habit is commonly defined as “learned sequences of acts that have become automatic responses to specific cues, and are functional in obtaining certain goals or end-states” (Verplanken & Aarts, 1999, p. 104). That is, habit is automatic associations between specific cues and actions in the memory that form through a certain amount of repetition or practice (LaRose, 2010; Soror, Hammer, Steelman, Davis, & Limayem, 2015; Verplanken & Aarts, 1999). Once a habit is formed, an individual's behavior is performed automatically which requires little conscious awareness or cognitive effort (Limayem, Hirt, & Cheung, 2007). People are inherent cognitive misers who tend to reduce cognitive effort in evaluation and decision making whenever they can (Liu & Goodhue, 2012). Therefore, when people are evaluating a specific action or task where familiar situational cues are present, they may not devote their full cognitive capacity to the task. Rather, they usually semi-automatically engage in a habitual behavior without full conscious judgment (Turel & Serenko, 2012; Verplanken & Orbell, 2003).

In the IS literature, based on a review of 43 habit-related studies, Limayem et al. (2007) defined IS habit as “the extent to which people tend to perform behavior (use IS) automatically because of learning”. Previous studies have validated the positive associations between habit and continued IS usage (de Guinea & Markus, 2009; Lee, 2014). For instance, Limayem et al. (2007) found that habit moderates the relationship between intentions and continued IS usage. Lee (2014) reported that habit not only affects proximal IS usage but also distal IS usage behaviors. In recent years, with the growth of

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