Digital natives' intention to interact with social media: Value systems and gender

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ABSTRACT

Social media research focuses predominantly on the link between attitude, behaviour and intention, and rarely takes value systems into account. Values are expected, through intervening variables, to affect intention directly or indirectly. Starting from the Theory of Trying, the aim of this study is to investigate how value systems affect digital natives' intention to interact with social media. By using Fuzzy Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA), an empirical analysis involving data from 116 social media users is carried out to examine how global and domain-specific values, attitude towards trying and gender affect the intention to interact. The results of a configurational analysis show that gender appears to affect many of the configurations leading to the outcome of interest. There are two configurations in which, regardless of gender, global values, domain-specific values and attitude towards trying cause the outcome. The findings indicate that there is no single condition necessary to ensure the outcome, but there are several different configurations of the conditions lead to outcome of interest.

1. Introduction

For the past three decades, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), developed by Ajzen (1985) as an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1975), has been the dominant theoretical framework to guide research across such diverse disciplines as entrepreneurial intention (Carsrud and Brännback, 2011), acceptance of new technologies (Tang et al., 2015) or social media and networking (Pelling and White, 2009), to study the link between attitude, behaviour and intention. TRA is developed to predict volitional behaviours as it considers that much of human beings' behaviour in everyday life is under volitional control (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). A widely used extension of TRA, the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), recognizes the limitations of TRA by stating that not all behaviours are under volitional control and suggests that behavioural intention is determined by a person's attitude towards the behaviour in question, subjective norms and a person's perceived behavioural control. Although these theories and frameworks contribute substantially to our understanding of the links between attitude-intention-behaviour, there is much still to learn about the range (magnitude) of the perception of value or value systems and attitudes intervening during individual's actual behaviour.

According to Kamakura and Novak (1992), value is defined as a single belief that transcends any particular object. Moreover, Wiener (1982) stated that value is more stable within a person's cognitive system and, once established, may act as built-in normative guides to behaviour, independent from the effect of rewards and punishments as consequences of actions (Wiener, 1982). In this paper, we use the definition provided by Rokeach (1973, p. 9) stating that once a value is learned, it becomes part of a value systems

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in which each value is ordered according to priority relative to the other values. Value system is an important tool, since it is the main tool utilized by individuals for conflict resolution and decision making. Madrigal and Kahle (1994) state that value systems serve to maintain an individual's self-esteem and consistent behaviour in those situations where one or more values may be in conflict. While one might argue that values can be captured through the determinants of TPB, i.e., *the attitude toward behaviour* and *subjective norm*, in this study we are interested in assessing the role of value and how value systems, i.e., personal and social values, direct digital natives' behaviour and play a role in their attitudes towards trying and interacting with social media. Wiener (1988) states that in the literature there are inconsistencies in the distinctions between value and related constructs such as attitude, belief and norm, and argues that social values may be viewed as normative beliefs complementing instrumental belief antecedents of behaviour (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). On that account, Kilman et al., 1985 specify a distinction between the norms and values and view norms as more specific and explicit behavioural expectations that are consistent with value, which are broader.

In addition, another implication of the introduced traditional frameworks conceptualizing behaviour is that they lack comprehensiveness, coherence and flexibility and do not account for nonlinear, dynamic and recursive behaviour (Jacoby, 2002). In essence, literature informs us that the behaviour or decision-making intention of individuals is determined by their attitudes, as a key antecedent of behaviour and behavioural intentions. Furthermore, some authors argue that attitude is a single component or unidimensional concept that is geared towards non-problematic behaviours (Jones et al., 2015). In other words, attitude is conceptualized as a single concept, which implies that individuals develop an overall attitude where the likelihood of success is higher than the likelihood of failure. However, this view has also been criticized by several authors, including Bagozzi and Warshaw (1990), and Xie et al. (2008), stating that attitude is indeed, according to the Theory of Trying (TT), a multidimensional concept (Bagozzi et al., 1992). Multidimensional conceptualizing of attitude in TT helps us understand the appraisal processes underlying the performance of problematic behaviours, such as intention to interact with social media. Problematic behaviour, in the eyes of decision-makers can be defined as behaviours that is hindered by internal shortcomings (like a lack of skills) and environmental contingencies (like a poor Internet connection) (Dey et al., 2016).

The theory of trying, developed by Bagozzi and Warshaw (1990) is a conceptualization of goal-oriented behaviour (non-volitional behaviour), as opposed to volitional control behaviour, which reformulates the focal behaviour to include the inability of the decision maker to control outcomes, and adds new formulations of the predictor variables (Bay and Daniel, 2003). The theory of trying further aims to predict the consumer intention to adopt because of the uncertainty of adoption. By using the theory of trying as the backbone of this research, we aim at augmenting this theoretical framework by exploring the role of attitude in explaining digital natives' intention to interact with social media. In this study, digital natives refer to a group within the millennial generation, born after 1990, who have recently entered university and joined the workforce (Williams et al., 2012).

While the insights provided by conventional theoretical frameworks are impressive and the alleged benefits have been extolled, we argue that, to gain new insights into how digital natives behave towards interacting with social media, new theories and methods should be employed. In fact, several factors, including personal characteristics (e.g., digital literacy capabilities), attitudes towards technology and behavioural intentions affect the process of interacting with social media. Literature informs us that behavioural intention can be conceptualized with a series of interrelated factors. However, in existing literature has yet to model the interrelationships among these factors and explore their combined effects on digital natives' intention to interact with social media. To address the above-mentioned motivations and fill the gap identified in literature, we use a theory that has rarely been applied in IS research (i.e., Theory of Trying), in combination with a configurational thinking that allows for a more causal understanding than statistical methods. On this basis, the aim of this study is to address the following research question: *what configurations of value systems (i.e., global and domain-specific) and attitude towards trying lead to digital natives' intention to interact with social media.*

Understanding the behaviour of social media users has been an important research direction in recent years, relying on various theoretical foundations and using different research methodologies (Benevenuto et al., 2009; Idemudia et al., 2016). From the perspective of the data utilized, while one can observe an increasing trend of collecting and analysing actual usage and click-stream data (Xie and Lee, 2015), questionnaire-based studies continue to dominate the literature (Bernardo et al., 2012; French et al., 2016). The most common approach is to use traditional statistical methods, such as structural equation modelling (SEM) (e.g., Brännback et al., 2017). As an alternative and complement to statistical thinking, mainly in general business and management literature, recent years have seen a growing interest in the use of configurational methods, in large part motivated by the increasing popularity of Quantitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) (Kourouthanassis et al., 2017; Roig-Tierno et al., 2016). Fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA), as a generalization of QCA, was introduced by Ragin (1987) and, since its conception, has been widely used to offer a methodological alternative and complement, among other things, conventional regression analysis. Therefore, the aim of this paper, while using the antecedent factors assuming to derive intention, is to employ fsQCA to provide new insights as to how configurations of factors lead to the outcome of interest.

We contribute to the literature by: (i) providing new insights into how value systems affect intention to interact; (ii) identifying the level of agreement between several antecedents' factors and intention to interact, allowing social media managers to develop a better understanding of digital natives' intention; (iii) contributing to IS literature by showing how gender modifies the influence of value perceptions on intention. To the best of our knowledge this is the first study that examines this particular subject within the context of social media and value systems research.

In the next section, we draw on the mainstream behavioural intention antecedent variables from existing attitude-intention-behaviour theories and value systems literature, to build the research model. In section three, the research methodology, data collection and discussion on fsQCA are presented. In section four, descriptive statistics and results of fsQCA analysis are explored and discussed, while section five contains the discussion on the main research findings and, finally, in section six, the theoretical contributions, practical implications, conclusions, limitations and avenues for future research are presented.