Adoption of Mobile Commerce Services by Individuals: A Meta-Analysis of the Literature

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Using mobile commerce services, users can send/receive emails, download music/graphics/animations, play games, trade stocks, book tickets, find friends, conduct financial and banking transactions and so on. A distinguishing factor of m-commerce services is the ability to perform tasks anywhere, anytime. Given such uniqueness, it has been a huge success in terms of adoption by individuals in some markets like Japan, while, surprisingly, not as flourishing in others such as the USA and Australia.

This issue has drawn a lot of attention from researchers to understand the factors that drive individuals’ adoption/rejection of this innovation. Many studies have been conducted using traditional adoption models and theories. However, it has been pointed out that traditional adoption models are insufficient to gain a comprehensive explanation of the factors that affect individuals’ intentions to adopt or reject the use of mobile commerce services.

A major reason for this insufficiency lies in the kind of role(s) that m-commerce users play compared to the ones played by users of traditional technologies (e.g. PCs). Compared to traditional technology users, users of m-commerce services, play a threefold role: as technology users, as network members, and as consumers [1, 2]. Therefore, to fully understand individuals’ adoption of mobile commerce, these three roles or perspectives have to be integrated.

This study aimed at examining existing literature on voluntary adoption of mobile commerce services by individuals to highlight the adequacy/inadequacy of previous studies’ coverage of the three roles mentioned above.

A literature review was conducted to identify and examine published studies relevant to the focus of this paper. For a paper to be included in this review it had to meet the following criteria: 1) the paper focuses on B2C and social contexts (as compared to B2B, business, and work environments) 2) it focuses on mobile commerce adoption (as compared to other branches of the literature such as m-commerce infrastructure, business models, etc) 3) it focuses on adoption of mobile services (as compared to adoption of mobile technologies such as cell phones) 4) it focuses on adoption by individual users as the level of analysis (as compared to adoption by organizations and businesses) and 5) it focuses on voluntary adoption and use (as compared to compulsory or forced adoption). Once relevant studies have been identified, they were thoroughly examined to see the extent to which factors related to each user role was covered by the study.

We observed that, first; the vast majority of studies investigated m-commerce adopters as technology users. Second, a smaller number of studies have focused on factors based on the role of m-commerce adopters as network members. This is not surprising since most m-commerce research used traditional technology adoption theories and concepts that have mostly focused on technology and network member aspects. Third, very few studies have investigated factors related to the role of m-commerce users as consumers. This role seems to have received the least attention (figure 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adopter Role</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technology user</td>
<td>Widely explored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network member</td>
<td>Scarce to explored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer/Customer</td>
<td>Unexplored</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Based on the preceding discussion, it can be seen that there is a lack of a complete understanding of the three roles that mobile commerce adopters play due to the less focus given to their role as consumers. Such understanding will allow researchers and practitioners to gain better insights on the factors that influence m-commerce adopters’ intentions.

While this review is in no way exhaustive, it adds theoretically to the growing body of IS literature in general and to the mobile commerce adoption research in specific. This conceptual examination of various m-commerce adoption studies will help future researchers to observe the trends and design studies that progress the field forward in theory and practice as well. Along with other literature reviews in the area, this review will help make obtaining useful insights from existing literature an easier task for marketers, managers, and other practitioners. As this study have highlighted, there is still a limitation and inadequacy in the way the current literature on m-commerce adoption has investigated the issue. Therefore, this study guides practitioners in the way they should interpret the findings of existing studies. Mobile commerce stakeholders can, therefore, make improved, insightful and better directed decisions and policies.

Main References: