Editorial Preface

Special Issue - Electronic Communication Adoption and Service Provider Strategy

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INTRODUCTION

The motivation for this special issue comes from the continued worldwide growth in the use of electronic mail, instant messaging, and related electronic communication/coordination technologies. Watch television or read a magazine, and you will see news and advertising related to these technologies and offers to provide a wide range of services. Individuals and companies have recognized that there are numerous benefits to using these technologies, including cost reduction compared to alternative communication technologies, ease of use, effective communication and collaboration with geographically dispersed users, communication with family and friends, and the list goes on. But there also is a number of threats that have arisen because of these same technologies. Spam and its instant messaging counterpart, spim, continues to grow at a healthy rate, which has forced users to deal with more and more unwanted messages through anti-spam software and other non-technical measures, such as being aware of the likelihood that an individual message is spam. E-mail addresses wind up on lists that are sold, leading to annoyance and privacy issues for individual users. Tricking individuals into providing private information (phishing) is a growing problem. New viruses are transmitted through this common communication infrastructure, which potentially damages software and data worldwide. These issues make electronic communication adoption and service provider strategy an important area for research. The following four articles provide an interesting cross-section of studies that address research and managerial issues in this area.

SUMMARY OF ARTICLES

In the first article, “Predicting the Initial Adoption or Upgrading of Electronic Communication Systems,” Hunter and Taylor examine the factors that affect a firm’s decision to adopt or to upgrade an electronic communications system. Specifically, they focus on customer relationship management (CRM) software. The study is based on the Gatignon and Robertson model of diffusion and the Rogers’ behavioral delineation of continuous and discontinuous innovations. Three hundred and one individuals involved in or influencing these decisions completed an electronic survey. The results support the basic premise that different diffusion factors predict adoption for continuous vs. discontinuous innovations.
The second article, “Monitoring and Controlling E-Mail Systems: A Cross Case Analysis,” by Duane and Finnegan, addresses issues related to organizational use of electronic mail, including policies to reduce potential negative effects of electronic mail use. The study examines the role of controls during various implementation phases using a multiple case study methodology. The four firms that are the basis for this study are in the manufacturing, financial services, and telecommunications industries. Overall, the authors find that e-mail management committees, training, and related policies can be effective when combined with e-mail monitoring.

In the third article, “Computer Self-Efficacy as an Antecedent to the Acceptance of Instant Messenger Technology,” Stafford investigates the acceptance of instant messaging technology, specifically AOL Instant Messenger, within the widely used Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Computer self-efficacy is considered as a potential antecedent in the model. The study is based on responses from 1,006 users recruited by AOL through their Opinion Place research Web site. The study resulted in a counterintuitive result—computer self-efficacy did not have the expected effect on instant messenger use or perceived ease of use. Managerial implications as well as future research ideas are discussed, based on these findings.

In the final article, “Spam, Spim, and User Perceptions of E-Mail and Instant Messaging Usefulness,” Strader, Houle, and Ramaswami investigate the effect of unsolicited electronic mail and instant messaging messages, also known as spam and spim, on perceptions of e-mail and instant messaging usefulness. The study is based on a survey of 188 young adults, individuals who are likely to use, or consider using both electronic mail and instant messaging. These issues are addressed in three ways: (1) impact of spam on perceived e-mail usefulness; (2) impact of spim on perceived instant messaging usefulness; and (3) gender differences related to spim and perceived instant messaging usefulness. The expected finding was that spam and spim would have a negative effect on users’ perceptions of system usefulness, but the survey findings do not support this. Users seem to have coped with spam and spim through a combination of technical and non-technical solutions. The implications of these findings are discussed from the perspective of researchers, marketers, electronic communication service providers, and public policy.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I would like to thank the authors and reviewers for their contribution to this issue of the International Journal of E-Business Research. I also would like to thank the editor-in-chief, Dr. In Lee, for the opportunity to edit this issue. It is my hope that this issue is interesting and relevant to practitioners and researchers interested in electronic communication’s present and future.