Impacts of iPad Attributes, Users’ Lifestyles, and Media Dependency on the Adoption and Intensity of iPad Usage

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this exploratory research is to identify attributes that can distinctly characterize iPads and examine the predictive power of iPad attributes, users’ lifestyles, and media dependency on iPad adoption as well as intensity of iPad use. Data were gathered from a sample of 623 university students via online survey in Mainland China, among whom 217 were iPad users and 406 were non-users. Regression results show that application affordances was one of several important attributes influencing the likelihood of iPad adoption and usage patterns. Regarding lifestyles, strivers were found to have a higher likelihood of buying iPads; experiencers were more engaged and active when using iPads; innovators tended to use iPads for utilities, information-seeking, and interpersonal communication more often than other users. Furthermore, among iPad usage patterns, utilities and information-seeking were found the two most powerful predictors influencing intensity of iPad usage. Implications of the results are discussed.

Keywords: Intensity Of iPad Usage, iPad Adoption, iPad Attributes, Lifestyles, Media Dependency

INTRODUCTION

A tablet computer refers to a computer that is intermediate in size between a laptop computer and a smartphone (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2011). Melhuish and Falloon (2010) suggested that currently tablet devices such as iPads are defined as post-PC devices (PPDs), a recognition that this type of device perhaps does indeed deserve its own category, possessing significant differences over and above existing desk-bound or mobile technologies such as laptop computers and smartphones. The first true tablet computers, Cambridge Research’s Z88 and Linus Technologies’ Write-Top, were introduced in 1987; they used either a key-

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board or a stylus to input information. In April 2010, tablet computers quickly began to gain popularity worldwide when Apple Inc. unveiled the iPad, a touch-screen device with a display that measured 24.6 cm (9.7 inches) diagonally.

An iPad is not simply a larger iPhone, nor is it a smaller computer; it is regarded as a new type of mobile platform that will, at least in theory, offer all the functionality and connectivity of a computer, with the mobility of a mobile phone. Just like software for personal computers, iPads can run applications that are either built in or downloaded from Apple’s iTunes. By October 2012, 100 million iPads had been sold worldwide since its introduction two and a half years prior (Richard, 2012).

In Mainland China, tablet computers have also gained popularity with consumers, as the data released by Analysys International (2013), which is a leading local third party market research in China, 3.58 million units were sold during Q2 2013, among which iPad gained a 65% market share. The second tier of tablet products lagged far behind in terms of sales (7.6% for Lenovo’s IdeaTab and 7.2% for Samsung’s Galaxy Tab). According to iResearch (2011), another Internet consulting company in China, Chinese tablet computer users present with the following characteristics: 1) males account for 64.3% while females account for 35.7%, with an obvious gap of 28.6%; 2) the most often used functions are surfing the Internet, watching videos, and playing games; 3) over 70% of users download entertainment, game, and music applications; and 4) convenience and innovative user experience are thought to be the most significant advantages of tablet computers. Due to iPad’s representativeness and dominance in China market, we select iPad, rather than other tablet products, as the research subject in this study.

As tablet computers have become widely adopted throughout the world in recent years, especially in the field of education and learning, teachers and students are starting to explore their potential. In Apple’s iTunes Store, there is a category of applications called “education,” which aims to provide limitless learning possibilities at users’ fingertips. iPad has equal promise to revolutionize both teaching and learning activities. Teachers can have instructional support while students can also be empowered with individualized instruction.

Melhuish and Falloon (2010) indicated that, as with previous devices such as mobile phones and laptops, iPads offer exciting possibilities for all those who wish to be increasingly connected and active in the online world, for both work and pleasure. Based on the assumption that iPads differ from computers and mobile phones, the purpose of this study is twofold: (1) to identify attributes that can distinctly characterize iPads, and (2) to examine how these attributes, together with users’ lifestyles, media dependency, and demographics can predict the likelihood of iPad adoption and the intensity of iPad usage among university students from Mainland China.

LITERATURE REVIEW

iPad Attributes

Kendrick (2010) discovered from personal experience that he was able to do more with a tablet than with a smartphone and gave us a typical user scenario for iPads. He stressed that the enhanced web browsing experience, far better than on a small screen smartphone, leads to an extended session, which can be either productive or entertaining. Particularly for education and learning, Warschauer (2011) identified the advantages of iPads as follows: First, their lighter weight and flexible orientation makes them far superior for digital reading or accessing content. Second, their instant-on capability and fast switching among applications allows learning activities to proceed with less delay. Third, their touch-screen interface allows a high degree of user interactivity. Fourth, they are much more mobile than laptops, as students can carry them inside or outside a room without having to close and reopen the screen to take notes. Fifth, since it is inexpensive to develop applications for mobile platforms, there is a
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