Attitude Toward E-Commerce and Education: An Empirical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

With the popularity of the Internet, e-commerce has become increasingly appealing to society. In this paper, we study the use of the Internet by students and their attitudes toward e-commerce. Such a study will present a profile of how educated groups use the Internet and for what purposes. Also, this study aims to investigate to what extent students use the Internet for learning and e-commerce education. An empirical analysis with the help of data collected by means of a questionnaire filled in by students in Hong Kong is conducted. The results of the study can be generalized to an extent for the general public where differences in their perceptions do not exist due to their backgrounds and attitudes toward e-commerce and education. Finally, a framework has been presented to improve the application of the Internet and attitudes toward e-commerce and education.

Keywords: e-commerce education; empirical study and framework

INTRODUCTION

The Internet has become a powerful tool in business and education. This technology for the communication and distribution of information and services has transformed the fundamental characteristics of many social and business interactions. The barriers and obstacles that often accompany traditional commerce are giving way to new business approaches (Simeon, 1999). This new virtual marketplace is providing a significant boost to economic activity. Hof and Saveri (1998) estimated that e-business will continue to grow in business sectors such as travel, entertainment, tourism, publishing, sales, etc. Today, this has become a reality. Internet activities are growing in both popularity and in profitability. The Internet has broken all records for the rapid diffusion of a major technology (Marken, 1995; Hof & Saveri, 1998). The Internet-based economy generated an estimated US$830 billion in U.S. revenue in 2000 (Temple-Raston, 2001), and worldwide e-commerce revenue is projected to be US$8.5 trillion by 2005 (Gartner, 2001).
Vedantham and Breeden (1995) described the need for quality educational technology in our schools and noted the contributions of existing technology in improving education. They described the potential that telecommunications network technology holds for revitalizing American education. Rice-Lively (1994) described an ethnography study of the electronic community formed during an intensive summer school seminar on networking. The seminar, conducted in a mostly electronic environment, was comprised of master and doctoral students involved in various fields of the study of e-commerce. Ethnographic research techniques facilitated the observation and description of the actions and events of this networked learning community, where events reflect individual personalities and shared knowledge. This exploration of the cultural meanings of class pedagogical events led to an enhanced understanding of both the nature of the online educational environment and the applicability of ethnographic research techniques to networked communities.

This study draws its topicality and relevance from the fact that not only is the Internet widely publicized in all media, but there are also many stories regarding problems with its security. Forcht and Fore III (1995) identified the most prevalent threats to security posed by using the Internet and discussed some of the traditional and emerging approaches to ensuring the security and integrity of data on the Internet. It is essential to examine the factors that encourage customers to buy and sell goods online and, in general, to identify the critical success factors for e-commerce. However, few studies involve an empirical analysis of e-commerce and customer attitudes, or their connection with e-learning and its significance to the success of e-commerce.

In this paper, an attempt has been made to highlight the importance of an effective education in e-commerce. An empirical study conducted with students in Hong Kong is presented with the objective of highlighting the reasons behind the success of e-commerce education. The organization of the paper is as follows: The background of the research is given in the next section. A conceptual model for effective e-commerce education is presented next, followed by a discussion of the details of an empirical study designed to demonstrate the application of the model developed in the previous section. Then a generic framework for an effective education in e-commerce based on the literature and the empirical study is presented. Conclusions are presented in the last section.

BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

There is much hype concerning the Internet and its potential to provide a virtual experience in a wide range of different areas, such as education, health care, government, and business. The Internet has been widely used for information exchanges and business transactions. The substantive benefits when a broader perspective is taken from authors and readers are significant, including considerably faster publication and much wider dissemination via the Internet. Archival knowledge and current awareness/browsing of the body of knowledge and information require different marketing approaches (Wills & Wills, 1996). This indicates how important it is to focus on customer attitudes regarding the use of e-commerce and not
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