Chapter 16
Understanding the Effects of University Students’ Interaction on Online Learning Continuance Intention

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ABSTRACT

Despite numerous studies focusing on the association between online learning interaction and satisfaction, few studies has investigated the relationship between learners’ perceived interaction and continuance intention. Although it has been found that learners’ age, gender, and prior experience could play a role in previous educational researches, further inquiries of demographic variables are still relatively rare in online learning studies. The primary purpose of this study was not only to investigate the key role of learners’ age, gender, and prior experience difference in online learning satisfaction and continuance intention but also to understand the effect of the perceived interaction on learners’ continuance intention. 122 online learning students from two universities in the southeastern United States participated in this study. An online survey was utilized to gather the data. The stepwise regression, one-way ANOVA, and Tukey’s Post Hoc Test were conducted to analyze the data. It was found that learners’ perceived usefulness, satisfaction, and learner-learner interaction had a positive effect on their continuance intention. Within four factors, the satisfaction appeared to have the most important influence on continuance intention. The results of one way ANOVA revealed that except for the prior-experience difference existing in the interaction between learners, no age, gender, or prior experience difference existed in the other online learning factors. The Tukey’s Post Hoc Test was performed to determine the differences between different prior-experience groups. It was demonstrated that the learners that had taken more than four online courses appeared to have a higher level of learner-learner interaction. In order to further enhance and maintain online learning effectiveness and efficiency, the institutions of higher education and online learning service providers should first focus on learners’ satisfaction with online

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INTRODUCTION

The continuance intention, which refers to online learners’ continuance intention to take online courses in the future (Cheung & Limayem, 2005; Limayem & Hirt, 2003; Wu, Tsai, Chen, & Wu, 2006), is one of the important indicators to measure whether online learning users and customers would like to continuously participate in online learning programs in the future. It has gradually received more attention in online learning studies (Chen & Jang, 2010; Chiu, Hsu, Sun, Lin, & Sun, 2005; Chiu, Sun, Sun, & Ju, 2007; Lee, 2010; Roca, Chiu, & Martinez, 2006), probably because students’ dropout rate remains one of the critical issues in distance education (Levy, 2007; Rovai & Wighting, 2005). Previous business studies have further suggested that customer continuance usage could play a key role in organizational performance due to the difficulty and heavy price for retaining old customers (Chiu, et al., 2007; Lee, Choi, & Kang, 2010). More importantly, the continuous investment and maintenance in online learning could be costly to the educational institutions and organizations (Lee & Busch, 2005; Zirkle, 2001). It is necessary that researchers and practitioners in online education field should pay more attention to learners’ continuance intention in order to continuously improve the quality of online education. Accordingly, learners’ continuance intention should be one of the focal points in this study.

Although many online learning studies have focused on the association between online learning satisfaction and interaction, few studies have concentrated on the association between learners’ perceived interaction and continuance intention. In view of the key influence of learners’ perceived interaction on learning effectiveness and efficiency, it is necessary that the perceived interaction should be worthy of further investigation and discussion in this study. Besides, although it has been found that learners’ age, gender, and prior experience could play a role in previous educational researches, further inquiries of demographic variables are still relatively rare in online learning studies. That is, the influence of learners’ age, gender, and prior experience difference on online learning effectiveness and efficiency, remaining a perplexity, should merit further discussions and investigations in this study. In order to continuously enhance the quality of online learning, and ensure the feasibility and viability of online learning programs in the future, thus, the primary purpose of this study was not only to investigate the key role of learners’ age, gender, and prior experience difference in online learning satisfaction and continuance intention, but also to understand the effect of the perceived interaction on their continuance intention.

FEATURES OF ONLINE LEARNING

The learning environment of the distance education is different from that of the traditional education. Moore and Kearsley (2004) stated that “Distance education is planned learning that