Chapter 12

A Longitudinal Study to Investigate Consumer/User Adoption and Use of Broadband in the Netherlands

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Abstract

The Netherlands has experienced a high uptake of broadband Internet amongst its population. However, the question remains whether there are any differences between people with a broadband connection to people with a narrowband connection. The central research question in this chapter is therefore: how do Dutch internet users with a broadband connection differ from people with a narrowband connection in terms of demographics (age, gender, education), internet experience (experience, frequency, intensity of use), expectations (of narrowband users), experiences (of broadband users), annoyances, and patterns of internet usage? Secondly, this chapter addresses the question of whether and how these differences change over time. The chapter uses a model of technology adoption and use that is built...
upon different theories such as diffusion of innovations, uses and gratifications, and media choice theory. The results are based on two online questionnaires, in 2003 and 2004/2005 (N = 2404 and N = 1102) with regard to current Internet behaviour in the Netherlands. Results show that broadband users are heavier Internet users and that broadband technology is mostly a matter of comfort, not of complete new ways of using the Internet.

Introduction

In December, 2005, the Netherlands was indicated as one of the four leading countries with regard to broadband penetration, with more than 25 subscribers per 100 inhabitants (OECD Broadband Statistics, December 2005). That is why the Netherlands form a good starting point for investigating the usage of broadband and how it differs from the use of narrowband Internet. Other (EU) countries can anticipate future developments based on the Dutch experiences.

Broadband has potentially many advantages for Internet users. The particular aspects of broadband, such as always-on and the ability to send and receive large amounts of data, may provide the user with more convenience compared to people who have used traditional telephone lines. Broadband users could save a considerable amount of time (Pociask, 2002) compared to narrowband users. According to Anderson et al., (2002), broadband users make more frequent use of a wider range of applications. In research conducted by Wales, Sacks and Firth (2003), respondents universally said that they were not driven to adopt broadband by a specific application. Rather, they found that broadband enabled them to use standard Internet applications (email, chat, browsing) more efficiently. Wales et al., (2003) speak of killer attributes instead of killer applications and these include reliability of service, speed of downloads, networking of home computers, and the convenience of always-on connectivity.

Contrary to Wales et al. (2003), there are researchers that do consider specific broadband applications, including games, swapping of large files, and pornography to be the killer applications for broadband to the home (Anderson et al., 2003; Firth & Kelly, 2001; Thierer, 2002; Wales, 2002). Another possible reason for people to switch from a narrowband connection to broadband may be due to its flat fee. Especially for heavy users, a flat fee may help to reduce their internet costs (Wales et al., 2003). The study of Wales et al. (2003) also observed some discrepancies between the perceived benefits in households that had adopted broadband and those that had not. Furthermore, there are researchers that suggest that Internet and particularly broadband enhances the quality of life by increasing contact between parties. Internet users in fact have more face to face and phone contact with friends and family than do non-users. Those with good conventional friendship links extend those to the
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www.igi-global.com/article/query-processing-strategies-location-dependent/1403?camid=4v1a