

Editorial Preface

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Welcome to the latest issue of the *International Journal of Mobile Human Computer Interaction* (IJMHCI). In this issue we are taken from an exploration of the impact of geography on subjective usability assessment of mobile apps, through a study on determinants of behavioral intention to adopt tablet computers in a collectivist culture, to an evaluation study of mobile technology designed to support coproduction. With varied methodological approaches and topics of investigation, these articles represent a rich and interesting spectrum of scientific endeavor and outcome.

In the first article – “Usability Assessments of Mobile Applications as a Function of Geographic Location” by Philip Kortum and Claudia Ziegler Acemyan – the authors note that although recent research has demonstrated that subjective usability assessments of ‘common’ products are not impacted by geography (including finding no distinction in perceived usability across users in urban and rural areas), such research did not specifically examine the most geographically diverse and ubiquitous systems of today, namely mobile apps. In an attempt to address this, the authors replicated (using the same methods) and expanded on the existing research to specifically examine differences in subjective usability assessment of mobile applications according to geographic region of the USA and according to rural v. urban designation. The goal of the authors was to help determine whether the geographic location of users is important when recruiting participants to assess mobile product usability – currently a debate largely fueled by marketing and anecdotal evidence rather than rigorously acquired empirical evidence. Utilizing a retrospective assessment approach, the authors asked 2,590 users across the USA (recruited using Amazon Mechanical Turk) to rate several popular mobile applications using the System Usability Scale (SUS), modified to replace ‘cumbersome’ with ‘awkward’ in light of research which showed the former to be difficult to understand. Between-subject conditions for the study were computing platform, geographic region, and population density; within-subject conditions were the 10 most popular apps for the participants’ mobile platform (with the result that the rated apps did vary by device). The popularity of apps (according to platform) was determined via a review of internet resources and popular press, resulting in a variety of commonly used applications by platform, with some expected overlap. Based on their findings, the authors concluded that system usability assessments for mobile products do not differ across US locations – geographic or urban v. rural. The authors assert that these findings are significant for usability practitioners as it means that studies can take place with local participants, provided all other critical demographic criteria are met, thus significantly reducing the costs associated with sampling at a national level.

In “Determinants of the Behavioural Intention to Adopt Tablet Computers in an Arabian Milieu” by Hasan A. Abbas, Omar E.M. Khalil and Hosny I. Hamdy we are encouraged to acknowledge that studies into determinants of IT adoption are typically workplace- or organizational-focused and that,

as such, little has been done to investigate motives for IT adoption for personal use, especially within an Arabian culture. The authors assert that by being interwoven into daily life, tablets have significant capacity to redefine elements of daily living for users; as such, they argue that understanding the motivation to adopt tablets, in particular, for personal use is critical to effective introduction of such technologies to societies and to improve their design. They argue that, although studies have investigated the hedonic attributes of mobile adoption, the generalizability of their findings is limited and research has typically focused on appreciation of the tablet as part of the process rather than individuals' motivations to adopt tablets for person use. Furthermore, the authors assert that the Arabian culture is collectivist, rendering motivation to use technology as socially or group oriented. The authors argue that knowing what motivates users to adopt and use tablets is critical to the delivery of effective IT-based services and sustainable social and economic growth in the case study of Kuwait reported in this article. Seeking empirical evidence regarding what motivates young (college student) Kuwaitis to adopt tablets, the authors extended the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) to include external determinants of attachment motivation, personal innovativeness, and perceived enjoyment in order to explore and explain behavioral intention to adopt tablets. The authors found that perceived enjoyment was the strongest determinant of intention to adopt with, unexpectedly, social norms having little influence on such behavioral intentions despite the collectivist nature of the Kuwaiti society.

The final article – “WithShare – A Mobile Application to Support Community Coproduction Activities” by Jiawei Chen, Benjamin V. Hanrahan, and John M. Carroll – introduces us to and reminds us of the benefits of coproduction activities. Coproduction is defined as reciprocal activities where the distinction between provider and recipient becomes blurred and where all parties are actively and directly engaged; it is argued that the interactions inherent in coproduction create synergies that are unattainable by a single party. As posited by the authors, such activities are critical for community building as they lead to development of social ties, trust and reciprocal recognition. The authors suggest that mobile technologies offer novel opportunity for supporting reciprocal activities on a small scale, with a focus on time and location sensitivity given the lightweight, opportunistic and often unplanned reciprocal activities that form much of our daily lives. They introduce us to *WithShare* – an app designed to facilitate coproduction activities of this nature. They conducted a 3-week study in which college students used *WithShare* to coordinate opportunistic and lightweight reciprocal daily life activities. The results of the study showed the potential for such activities to further strengthen existing social ties as well as to start establishing new (but initially weak) ties within the community. The authors identify different ways that their observed participants coordinated coproduction opportunities and the factors deemed important for successful coordination. From their work, the authors highlight design implications, challenges and opportunities for other mobile technologies intended to support coproduction activities.

I trust that you find all the articles stimulating and useful – enjoy!

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