Chapter 7
E-Learning and Information Communications Technologies (ICT) in Saudi Arabia: An Overview

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ABSTRACT
This chapter argues that increasing the rate of e-learning technological adoption will provide educational affordances related to access to courses and better course delivery for Saudi citizens. Specifically, issues related to gender-related staffing issues and access to education courses. This is primarily because the e-learning technology has the capacity to adapt to dominant features in Saudi society and culture, as well as its potential to be efficiently applied in Saudi higher education settings. However, despite the widespread adoption of information communication technology (ICT) in society, Saudi Arabians have yet to fully experience the transformative effects of this medium, particularly in relation to e-learning. This is evidenced in a lack of deep understanding on how best to implement e-learning and distance learning applications.

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a model for initial acceptance and adoption of E-Learning in the Saudi Arabian education sector. Furthermore, this chapter broadens the contextual focus of information technology uptake and the contribution of E-Learning and Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the Saudi Arabian higher education sector. This chapter has two main sections. First, an examination of the contribution of E-Learning and ICTs in the Saudi Arabian context begins with a discussion of E-Learning systems. Further, an overview of the increasingly integral role of E-Learning systems to academia and corporate training, and the characteristics and functions of the different systems available to educational institutions is presented. Second, an examination of the relationship between social networking sites and developments in E-Learning platforms, particularly the ways in which these sites can encourage student learning will be undertaken. The main points to emerge from these two sections are then positioned within the Saudi Arabian context. Specifically, the initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Education in recent years to upgrade ICTs are discussed and the implications are explored. This chapter then concludes with an examination of the adoption rates of E-Learning in Saudi Arabia. Particular focus is given to the increasing rate of adoption and the implications this holds for significant changes to the way higher education services are provided to different gendered students in Saudi Arabia.

In the context of Information Technology (IT) usage, the user experience of IT is considered to be of paramount importance for technology adoption and success. Users draw on their direct experiences with IT to develop their future behavioural intentions. However, despite the important role of user experience in technology usage, few studies have investigated the implication of this construct for continued IT usage in Saudi Arabia (Deng et al., 2010) in general and E-Learning tools in particular. To address these issues, this research will seek to explore the factors of the acceptance and the continuance usage intention of E-Learning recommender systems in Saudi universities. The model developed in this chapter will help to investigate the relationships between the different experiences of students and instructors filling the knowledge gap between service quality and user experience of E-Learning recommender systems. Thus, the factors of acceptance (such as service quality and user experience) should be considered in the E-Learning system because these factors are viewed as a determinant of student/instructor/university satisfaction. Consequently, a number of dimensions have been taken into account for facilitating the relationship between the student and instructor, and the university via electronic means such as electronic services.
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