Chapter III

Factors Influencing Web Access Behavior in the Workplace: A Structural Equation Approach

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As more and more organizations provide employees access to the Web, the level of abuse is on the rise. Structured equation modeling was used to examine the antecedent and perceptual factors impacting accessing work-related Web sites and personal-related Web sites in the work environment. The results indicate that management support, experience and perceived ethical beliefs have a significant negative influence, while self-training and perceived enjoyment had a positive influence on personal-related Web access. Internet experience, formal training, and all the perceptual factors influenced work-related Web site access. The findings of the study contribute to an expanding understanding of the factors promoting Web usage and have important implications for the management of information systems.
INTRODUCTION

The ubiquitous nature of the Internet is dramatically revolutionizing the manner in which organizations and individuals alike are sharing information. The Internet, designed and developed out of cold war fear in the early 1970s, grew slowly and painstakingly as an electronic forum for academic and scientific researchers. Vast quantities of information were scattered about the network but finding this information taxed even those computer literate devotees. The development that made the Internet a “25 year overnight success” was the creation of HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) and the server/browser software to view the interconnected documents that became the World Wide Web or the Web. It is this layer of the Internet architecture, the Web, which has become synonymous with the Internet.1 Users access information on the Web, simply by pointing and clicking on key words or images that have links to individual or organizational home pages. This simplicity has resulted in the rapid growth of Web users. According to the US Department of Commerce there were over 60 million Web users in 1998, and this number is expected to increase by at least 20% every month.

In addition to being a channel for commercial exchange, the Web also provides access to the world’s biggest playground. For instance, a study conducted in a manufacturing firm found that in a typical 8-hour working day, over 250,000 Web sites were accessed by a workforce of 386 employees. Of particular concern to the organization was the discovery that approximately 90% of the accessed sites were non-work-related (LaPlante, 1997). The cost of ignoring this phenomenon can be enormous. According to the Gartner group, non-work-related Web surfing activities cost organizations approximately $8 million in 1997. In addition to this obvious problem of loss of productivity, Web surfing can also clog networks, resulting in slower access for legitimate business users. Such problems have prompted organizations to show a growing interest in understanding and managing Web access behavior in the workplace (Cronin, 1996; Judge, 1998; McWilliams & Stepanek, 1998).

To date most information systems (IS) research has focused on understanding the factors that promote the use of microcomputer technologies. For instance voice mail and word processing (Adams, Nelson, & Todd, 1992), e-mail and graphics (Davis, 1989; Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989), spreadsheets (Mathieson, 1991), database systems (Szajna, 1996), and group support systems (Chin & Gopal, 1995). However the generalizability of these findings to the Web is questionable. This is because many of these findings
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