ABSTRACT

Groupware technologies have become an important part of the business computing and communicating infrastructure in many organizations. However, literature suggests that many groupware applications, especially those requiring significant collaboration and cooperation among users, are still not adequately used (Nunamaker, 1997; Orlikowski, 1993). Their potential benefits are far from being fully realized due to the lack of user acceptance. While there are studies that show the relevance and positive impact of group support systems on group work, very few have looked into users’ perception of the groupware technologies and their motivation to participate (Nunamaker, 1997). Expectancy theory is considered one of the most promising models of individual motivation. This study examines the use of expectancy theory in explaining the behavioral intention (motivation) to use a groupware application. Data gathered from 86 student users in a judgment modeling exercise suggest that the model is a significant predictor of users’ motivation. The successful use of expectancy theory also suggests that it is appropriate for assessing and understanding users’ motivation to use a groupware application and, subsequently, its acceptance and success. Since user acceptance is an essential antecedent of a successful groupware application, the results of this study should be considered thoughtfully when a groupware application is designed, implemented, and operated.

Keywords: groupware application, expectancy theory, user acceptance

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, groupware technologies, such as e-mail, electronic bulletin boards, and group support systems, have become an important part of the business-computing infrastructure in many organizations. This evolving software category has captured the attention and imagination of information technology professionals, line of business managers and end users, not to mention software suppliers. Organizations adopt groupware applications to enhance communication, collaboration, and coordination among group members and thus improve group performance (Lotus Development, 1995). While some groupware applications, e.g., e-mail, have...
been commonly accepted, many other applications, especially those that require significant collaboration and cooperation among users, are not widely used in organizations and their potential benefits are far from being fully realized (Orlikowski, 1993). Although many laboratory and field studies have consistently shown the relevance and positive impact of group support systems on group work, more research is needed in understanding how to increase the rate of diffusion and adoption of the technology (Nunamaker, 1997).

Behavioral-related elements (e.g., an individual’s normative beliefs, attitude, and motivation), recognized by many, are the primary causes of users’ resistance toward a newly implemented system or technology. Information technology (IT) research, however, tends to under-utilize existing knowledge in the behavioral science (Burton, Chen, Grover, & Stewart, 1993; Melone, 1990; DeSanctis, 1983; Turner, 1982). Expectancy theory has been recognized as one of the most promising conceptualizations of individual motivation (Snead & Harrell, 1995; Melone, 1990). Many researchers have proposed that expectancy theory can provide an appropriate theoretical framework for research that examines a user’s acceptance of and intent to use a system (Melone, 1990; DeSanctis, 1983). This study uses expectancy theory as part of a student-based experiment to examine users’ behavioral intention (motivation) to utilize a groupware application. The following section provides a review of prior research on groupware technology and a discussion of expectancy theory. The third section explains the research methodology and the fourth section presents the results of the experiment. Finally, limitations and implications are discussed.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND SUPPORTING LITERATURE

Groupware Acceptance and the Critical Mass Effect

Groupware refers to a class of computer technologies designed to support communication, collaboration, and cooperation among a group of knowledge workers. It

Figure 1: Groupware Definition

Source: Lotus Development Corporation, 1995
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