Chapter 14

Utilitarian and Hedonic Motivations in the Acceptance of Web Casts in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Today, many universities offer e-learning programs to reach new student markets and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of learning. A key component in e-learning programs are webcasts: condensed, live- and studio-recorded lectures made available, by streaming video technology, via the Web as multimedia presentations that combine videos, audio, lecture slides, and a table of contents (Day, 2008). Web lectures have the potential to become a vital technology in higher education as they enable students to take courses in a convenient and flexible way, at a time and place they prefer. The success of Web lectures in higher education depends to a large extent on the acceptance of the technology by students. To investigate these influencing factors we use the technology acceptance model (TAM), which has originally been developed by Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw (1992) and Davis and Venkatesh (1996) to explain the intention to make use of Information Technology. In this study, we are interested in the question what motivates students to use webcast? Most technology acceptance studies have focused on extrinsic (utilitarian) motives (increase in efficiency, ease of use and effectiveness, etc.) to explain the use of e-learning systems. However, recent research suggests that intrinsic (hedonic) motivations, like attractiveness and enjoyment play an important role as well.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reports on a study of the intended use of web lectures by students of the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University. Web lectures have been introduced in 2004 and have been progressively used by students, mostly in addition to the regular lectures. The aim is to deepen our understanding of the factors that influence the use of web lectures by students.

2 NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE?

The role, the use, and the impact of educational technologies have been discussed in educational research for a long time. In his book Teachers and Machines, Cuban (1986) reviews the use of educational technologies since the 1920s. Typically, the rise of any new technology (motion pictures, radio, TV, computer) was accompanied with high expectations about the potential of improving the effectiveness of learning. However, in all cases the great promises of the new technologies were followed by disappointments and unmet expectations (Mayer, 2003).

The well-known quote of Cisco Systems’ CEO John Chambers in 1999 is only a recent illustration of the high expectations about e-learning technologies: “The next big killer application for the Internet is going to be education. Education over the Internet is going to be so big, it is going to make e-mail look like a rounding error”. On the wave of these high promises the interest in e-learning grew exponentially during the late 1990s, but it imploded with the internet bubble in the early 2000s. The widely cited report Thwarted Innovation (Zemsky & Massy, 2004) reports on the causes of the unrealized promises of e-learning technologies during the internet bubble.

There is a multitude of factors that potentially determines the success of e-learning initiatives. The most fundamental question in the debate on e-learning technologies is whether technology and media can influence learning outcomes. The debate about the influence of modern media on learning effectiveness was initiated by Clark (1983) who reviewed the results of comparative research on educational media and claimed that there are “no learning benefits to be gained from employing any specific medium to deliver instruction” (p. 445). In Clark’s view media are “mere vehicles that deliver instruction but do not influence student achievement any more than the truck that delivers our groceries causes changes in nutrition” (p. 445). His main argument is that it is not possible to isolate the effects of a medium from the effects of the instructional design. In like spirit, other researchers argued that technology alone does not ’cause’ learning to occur (Piccoli, Ahmad, & Ives, 2001, Mayer, 2003). It is the instructional method embedded in the media presentation that causes learning to take place (Jonassen, Davidson, Collins, Campbell, & Haag, 1995).

Kozma (1994) criticized Clark’s claim for not considering the relationship between media and learning. Learning! is not just a receptive response to instruction’s delivery, but an active, constructive, cognitive and social process. He therefore rephrased Clark’s original question whether media influence learning into “in what ways can we use the capabilities of media to influence learning for particular students, tasks, and situations?” (Kozma, 1994, p. 7). It should be possible to identify clusters of attributes of technologies, e.g. customization, hyperlinking, for different instructional design. Jonassen, Campbell, and Davidson (1994) critiqued Clark for focusing on media attributes and less on the attributes of the learner in constructing knowledge. According to Jonassen et al. (1994) learning is a holistic, constructive process which cannot be understood by studying responses to attributes of media. Media are part of the learning context which functions within a larger context in which the interaction between problems, relevance and meaning determine the direction and effect of learning.
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