Chapter 14
Antecedents of Children’s Satisfaction with Company Websites and their Links with Brand Awareness

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ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on children’s satisfaction with the use of commercial websites. The authors address two relevant gaps in extant literature: children as users of Information Technology and the concept of Information System success itself. Children’s use of IT needs focus since this age group has been largely neglected by extant IS research. The concept of success needs further research because the research results on this dependent variable have been controversial, and there is still no full agreement on the antecedents of success. In this chapter, the authors therefore contextualize the classic Information Systems success model of DeLone and McLean to IS success with children. They carried out a survey of a sample of 76 children aged 11 to 14, located in various cities in France. The results show that children get higher brand awareness if they are more satisfied with the kids website of the brand. The chapter finds the satisfaction with the site depends upon the personalization that is possible and the presence of dynamic elements on the site. Characters and animations that help navigating the site are also appreciated. A good presentation of the site’s rules could not be shown to be a significant antecedent of satisfaction. Qualitative data that was gathered suggests that children are not really aware of the link between symbols they see on the site and products that are sold.

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INTRODUCTION

The research presented in this chapter focuses on children’s use of online commercial websites. With the development of the Internet, more and more people, from different backgrounds, age, and gender have access to online websites provided by companies. Companies have to make sure the websites fit the evolution of customers’ needs. Company websites allow people to search for information, which helps them in their purchase decisions, or to directly buy products online. Among the different age groups, children are among the fastest growing user groups and, as technology becomes more and more user friendly, they are increasingly impacted by technological evolutions. For instance, they access the Internet to chat online, to play online games or to make school assignments. Some companies have understood the importance of this market segment as children influence the purchasing behaviour of their parents) and have developed virtual gaming markets. In comparison to classic media such as television, online media have the ‘advantage’ there are no restrictions on advertisements to children. As an example of a successful child website, we note that Disney has launched a specific website (i.e. “club penguin”) allowing children to interact with other children in a virtual world. Given the significance of children’s growing habits on the Internet and the potential business value of this market segment as children influence the purchasing behaviour of their parents) and have developed virtual gaming markets. In comparison to classic media such as television, online media have the ‘advantage’ there are no restrictions on advertisements to children. As an example of a successful child website, we note that Disney has launched a specific website (i.e. “club penguin”) allowing children to interact with other children in a virtual world. Given the significance of children’s growing habits on the Internet and the potential business value of this market segment, understanding the main determinants of children’s satisfaction with websites and evaluating their success is becoming an interesting area of research. This research area has been targeted in marketing research but it is still quite underdeveloped in information systems (IS) research. If we look beyond the effect of children in influencing the buying behaviour of parents and we want to focus on the children’s actual satisfaction with the IT artefact, we find very scant literature.

Not only the specific user group of children has been neglected but the concept of success of IS is still under debate. Despite the ongoing interest in information system implementations and the resulting focus on the assessment of information system success, the question of the evaluation of information systems remains a challenge. Faced with the difficulty of obtaining objective measures for the success of IS, user satisfaction appeared as a substitutive measure of IS success (DeLone & McLean, 1992). The DeLone and McLean information systems success model has served for a long time as the basis for measuring the complex dependent variable in IS research and evaluating a system’s effectiveness. Since its introduction in 1992, the model has been widely used, evaluated and extended. A growing number of studies have measured the success of information systems in different organizations and contexts. Most of these studies have attempted to analyse the role of various factors that influence the information systems’ effectiveness, or explored how to measure information system success. The contributions of these various researches carried out in the last decade have not only applied and validated the original model but have also challenged and proposed enhancements to it. The updated DeLone and McLean IS success model (DeLone & McLean, 2003), which results from these contributions, has refined the initial model and has considerably improved the measurement of IS success. However, the application of this model by prolific IS literature has created little consensus on the assessment of IS success. Additional research about its main constructs and antecedents, as well as applications to the last technological evolutions and users’ habits, along with continued research into organizational effectiveness and user satisfaction are needed. One way to get around this limitation is by contextualizing the IS success model to a specific situation. In this way the model becomes less general but the validity for the specific target group becomes higher. Our study takes the offset in children as user group and investigates the importance of two main constructs of this model, system quality and information quality, and their