The Role of Emotional Attachment in IT Continuance Behavior

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Information Technology (IT) continuance specifies long term or sustainable use of IT (Bhattacherjee, 2001). The success of an IT totally depends on the continuance of its usages because users cannot benefit if they do not continue to use it. Because of the importance of continuance behavior of IT, continuance research has been the leading area in information technology discipline for more than one decade. Existing theories and models investigate IT continuance in workplace settings or hedonic motivation and capture satisfaction, attitude or habitual responses. However, existing theories ignore one of the most potent human factors, emotional attachment. Consumer and social psychology suggest that emotional attachment creates long-term relationships which is similar to continuance in the IS domain (Bowlby, 1979; Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005). Understanding IT continuance based on emotional attachment to IT by users is the goal of this study.

According to attachment theory, "attachment" does not mean simply "social bond" and is not exclusively applicable to the aspects of child-parent relationships. Bowlby describes emotional attachment as "an emotion-laden target-specific bond between a person and a specific object" (Thomson et al., 2005, p. 77). Though it looks similar, emotional attachment is different from other emotion-related IS construct such as user attitude and user satisfaction. Users who are emotionally attached to a particular technology are also likely to demonstrate a positive attitude toward it. However, attachment develops over time based on the interaction between individual and attachment object where attitude develop based on the evaluative reactions of the individual to an object and it may develop without any direct contact with the technology (Baldwin, Keelan, Fehr, Enns, & Koh-Rangarajoo, 1996). Similarly, as Satisfaction is a combination of cognitive and emotional components, users might be satisfied with technology, their satisfaction may be evaluative, emotional or mixed, where the emotional attachment is a total reflection of emotional bond.

The purpose of this study is to build an emotional attachment (EA) model to investigate IT continuance behavior. To test our model, we will collect empirical data from college students who are users of intelligent personal assistant (IPA), a class of conversational, where ages limit from 18 to 30. We will also collect data from aged people who use IPA and who more than 70 years old. We will test and compare our model with the data from these two demographic groups because we believe aged people might be more emotional compared to young people. This research will contribute to both theory practice in the IT area. It will provide new guidelines for IT post-adoption behavioral research considering emotional attachment. Managers also consider the emotional aspects of technology while adopting new technology.

Selected References

Bhattacherjee, A. (2001). Understanding information systems continuance: an expectation-confirmation model. MIS quarterly, 351-370.
Bowlby, J. (1979). The Making and Breaking of Affectional Bonds. London (Tavistock) 1979.