

Factors Predicting Intention to Use Social Network among Buddhist Monks in Bangkok

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Abstract

This research study on “Factors Predicting Intention to Use Social Network among Buddhist Monks in Bangkok” has the following objectives: 1. To study correlation between perceived self-efficacy in using technologies, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, subjective norm and intention to use social network sites among Buddhist monks. And 2. To study factors that affect intention of the monks to use social media networks. The sample group of this research consists of 400 monks in Bangkok. The research methodology involves questionnaires used in collecting data, analysis of data through the statistical methods of frequency tabulation, percentage, mean, standard deviation, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, and multiple regression analysis. It was found that the perceived self-efficacy in using technologies, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and subjective norm have positive correlation to the intention to use social network, with statistical significance at the 0.05 level. And all the factors have influence over the intention to use social network, with statistical significance at the 0.05 level. All the four factors jointly explain the variation in the monks’ intention to use social network for 44 per cent.

Keywords: Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, Intention to Use Social Network, TAM

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Introduction

Today, information technology has become part of people's everyday life. This can be seen in the volume of Internet use and online social network use, which has seen an increasing number of users and usage every year. Zocial Inc., a company that analyses data about online social networks, conducted a study in 2015 on 655 Thais regarding the use of social networks in their everyday life since they wake up until going to bed. These important and interesting data were found: As many as 99 per cent of Thais use Facebook, 84 per cent use Line, 56 per cent use Instagram, 41 per cent use Google+, and 30 per cent use Twitter.

The users of online social networks consist of a wide range of people of all ages from both sexes, and also those with different religious beliefs. Among them are many Buddhist monks who use social media networks with different objectives. A substantial number of monks use social networks for communicating and distributing Buddhist religious teachings. These include Venerable V. Vajiramedhi and Phra Paisal Wisalo. Other monks use chat applications to answer questions regarding the religion and to teach worshippers about insight meditation (Vipassana Kammathan). However, a number of monks use online social networks in a way that is inappropriate for priests like them. There have been instances of such inappropriate behaviours from time to time. There were images of monks doing a shopping at the Panthip shopping mall, which has large varieties of electronic goods including computers, hardware and software products. Criticisms ensued and people asked whether it was appropriate for the monks to do so. Also, the Facebook account "Sangha Vijahn" (Criticising Monks) posted screenshots of chats between a monk and a woman. The monk in question sent flirting messages to the woman, who responded that such messages were against the monastic rules and that what he was doing was wrong. The monk claimed that he was going to leave his monkhood soon. He then asked if he could meet the woman after he left his monkhood. He wanted to know if he could date her if she had no boyfriend. The screenshots were released shortly before the end of Buddhist Lent, when many monks having ordained for monastic practice for three months are about to leave their monkhood.

With the social changes, information technology has increasing influence in people's everyday life. Monks who are part of society are also unable to escape from the changes. Several research studies were conducted on people's behaviours regarding the use of online social networks among different groups including children, teenagers, adults, working people, women and the elderly. However, a literature review revealed that there were only a small number of research studies on monks and online social networks. Religion is a major institution in Thai society. So it is necessary for us to study this matter for a better understanding of monks' behaviours in using the online social networks, as well as factors affecting their adoption and use of social networks. As a result, there is this research study on "Factors Predicting Intention to Use Social Network among Buddhist Monks in Bangkok". In conducting this study, the researcher relies on the Technology Acceptance Model, or TAM, which was developed by Fred Davis (1989). A TAM model was used in testing the hypotheses. This theory explains about different factors that affect people's decisions in adopting any particular technology. Important factors that affect people's decision-making are:

1. Perceived usefulness, which refers to the degree to which a person believes that using a particular technology would enhance his or her job performance;

2. Perceived ease of use, which refers to the degree to which a person believes that using a particular technology would be free from effort.

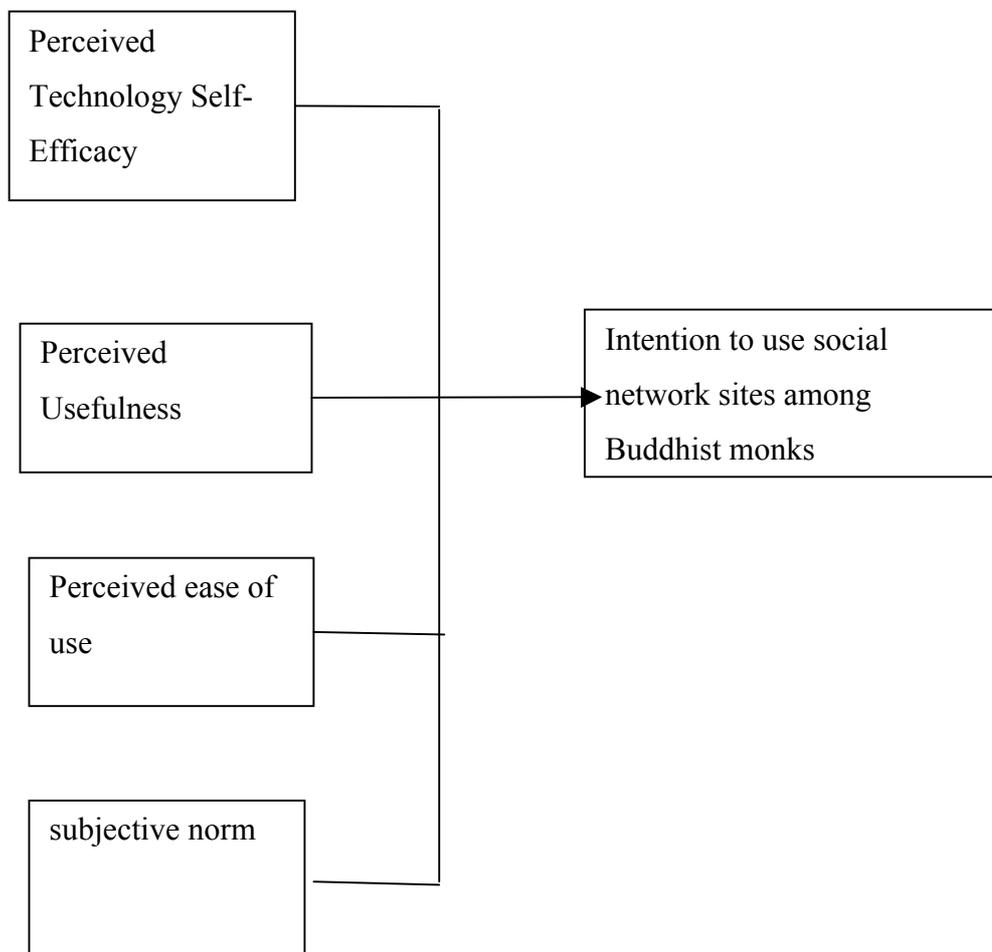
Those factors lead to the intention to use that particular technology, which in turn affects the behaviour of eventual acceptance of the particular technology.

TAM is a theory that is acceptable and widely used in several research studies, particularly regarding information technology and mass communications.

Research objectives

1. To study the degree of perceived ability in using technology, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, subjective norm, and monks' intention to use social networks.

2. To study factors that are able to jointly predict the intention of monks to use social networks.



Research hypothesis

The perceived ability, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and subjective norm are factors capable of predicting monks' intention to use social networks.

Research methodology

This study on "Factors Predicting Intention to Use Social Network among Buddhist Monks in Bangkok" is conducted with the Quantitative Research methodology, through the use of the Survey Research Method.

Population, sample group and sampling method

The population in this study is Buddhist monks in Bangkok who have used social network for at least one year after entering monkhood. The size of samples is determined with the use of Taro Yamane's sampling table, at the 95 per cent confidence level and 5 per cent margin of error. The sample size is 400 and the sample is selected with the Multi-Stage Sampling method.

The tool used in collecting data is questionnaires that are created in accordance with the educational purposes.

After the data are collected and verified, they are encoded and processed with statistical computer software. The statistical methods used in this research study are:

1. Descriptive Statistic Analysis: The researcher uses this method through Frequency Distribution, Percentage, Mean and Standard Deviation.
2. Inferential Statistic Analysis: This is used in analysing data with the goal of testing the hypothesis. The Multiple Regression Analysis method is used to explain the correlation and efficiency in predicting different factors, at the statistical significance level of 0.05.

Research findings and discussion

Regarding the general data involving the sample group, it was found that most of the samples are aged between 20 and 30. They numbered 223, making up 55.8 per cent of all the samples. Most of the samples had been in monkhood for one to three years. This group numbered 146 monks, or 36.5 per cent of all the samples. Regarding layman's education, most of the samples graduated with a bachelor's or comparable degree. This group numbered 147 monks, or 36.8 per cent of the samples. Regarding monastic education, most of the samples completed Pali studies in the third (out of nine) level. They numbered 105, or 23.5 per cent of all samples.

The sample group has average perceived ability to use technology at the 3.50 level, average perceived usefulness in using social network at 3.78, average perceived ease of use in using social network at 3.69, average subjective norm at 3.33, and average intention to use social network at 3.52.

Table 1 Multiple Linear Regression analysis the factors to predict Intention to Use Social Network

Factors to Predict Intention to Use Social Network	b	Beta	t	Sig.
Technology Self-Efficacy	.112	.108	2.004	.046
Perceived Usefulness	.150	.123	2.082	.038
Perceived Ease of Use	.272	.235	4.104	.000
Subjective Norms	.315	.322	6.597	.000
R ² = 0.446, Adjusted R ² = 0.440 , Sig = .000*				

* Significant at the 0.05 level

Tests with multiple regression analysis showed that the factors perceived Technology Self-Efficacy, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and subjective norm affected the intention to use social network, with statistical significance at the 0.05 level. The four factors jointly explained the variation of monks' intention to use social network for 44 per cent. The factor subjective norm had the standard regression coefficient of 0.322, the highest among all the factors. So, subjective norm has the most influence on the intention to use social network. That means the reference group has high influence on people's intention to use social network, particularly regarding the need to use social network in communicating and keeping in touch with friends, relatives and family members. Although monks are supposed to keep a distance from worldly desires, they still need to communicate with other people in their everyday life. Those people are an important reference group that can influence monks to use social network. This is in line with the Theory of Reasoned Action suggested by Ajzen and Fishbein (1970). The theory suggests that an important factor to influence people's behaviours is their reference group, such as people close to them including parents and siblings. People's attitudes result from their beliefs. We all are conditioned by society, a place where we live. And we also are influenced by our friends. Those beliefs are collected in our attitudes and this is called "subjective norm".

The research findings also are consistent with many Thai studies, such as that conducted by Natthanan Promma (2015) on factors affecting health of consumers in Bangkok. The study found that the factor of perceived ability in controlling behaviours and the factor of subjective norm affected people's intention to buy healthy foods. Another study was conducted by Puangphet Siriod (2015) on factors affecting consumers' behaviours in buying second-hand goods at weekend markets. The study, on the levels of opinion involving the intention to buy, found that consumers placed much importance on the factor of general attitude ($\bar{X} = 4.98$). This was followed by the factor of perceived control of behaviour ($\bar{X} = 4.69$), and the factor of subjective norm ($\bar{X} = 3.79$).

Less influential factors affecting the intention to use social network are perceived ease of use, which got the standard regression coefficient of 0.235, and perceived usefulness, which had the standard regression coefficient of 0.123. The finding was in line with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which was suggested by Davis (1989). The theory states that two important factors that influence people's intention and behaviour in accepting technology are: 1. Perceived usefulness, which refers to

the degree of an individual's confidence in using that particular technology to help them increase the efficiency of their work, which in turn affects their use of technology (Agarwa and Prasad, 1997; Chau, 1996; Igbaria et al, 1995); and 2. Perceived ease of use, a factor that involves the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free from effort. That means only little effort is used in using technology, as it is easy for learning and using. This affects the factor of perceived usefulness and intention of the users of that particular technology.

Also, it was found that the factor of perceived ability to use technology had influence on the intention to use social network at the least, with the standard regression coefficient of 0.108.

Conclusion

This research study on "Factors Predicting Intention to Use Social Network among Buddhist Monks in Bangkok" aims at studying factors that can be used to predict the intention of monks in using social network sites. The study found that subjective norm is the most influential factor affecting the intention of monks in using the social network. This is followed by perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and perceived ability to use technology, which is the least influential factor.

Post-research suggestions

1. The reference group has a high degree of influence over the intention of monks in using social networks. So, monks should be encouraged to use the service within their circles in order to help strengthen their groups, which could lead to further development of the monastic institution and Buddhism as a whole.

2. The perceived usefulness of using social networks is among the least influential factors affecting the intention of monks in using social networks. This may be because monks generally are unaware of the benefit or need to use the online social network. In fact, the monastic rules encourage Buddhist monks to avoid entertainment media that may arouse worldly desires. However, there should be efforts to point out the benefits of using social networks among Thai monks as a way of communication. This constructive use of the social network certainly will benefit the spread of Lord Buddha teachings about "dharma" (universal truth), in a way that is consistent with today's social condition and communication behaviour of the lay people.

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