

Uses and Gratifications (U&G) and UTAUT3: Understanding the use of the Social Networking Site (SNS) - Facebook among Senior Citizens

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Abstract: *The rapid growth of technology and the new way of communication through technology among Malaysians have had an impact on senior citizens to make full use of and accept technology. Somehow, senior citizens do not want to be left out, so they quickly embrace technology as it is considered to be the current trend. This study aims to understand the use of the Social Networking Site (SNS)-Facebook and the acceptance of technology among senior citizens. In-depth interviewing and observation methods were used, with a total of nine informants involved until the data were saturated. Two communication theories have been used: The Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT3) to explore the use of the Social Networking site-Facebook and the acceptance of technology among senior citizens. The study contributes to raising awareness of their well-being and expanding the literature review on the use and acceptance of technology among senior citizens.*

Keywords: U&G Theory, UTAUT3, Senior Citizens, Social Networking site (SNS) – Facebook

1. Introduction

The rapid proliferation of smartphones and the extensive use of WIFI make it easier for Malaysians to have direct communication and knowledge. Adults and young adults do not have trouble adapting to and embracing this phenomenon. To the senior citizens, they have to meet the demands of daily life, break the limits of their social and emotional isolation in order to achieve a better quality of life. In the increasingly ageing population, senior citizens are called upon to respond to emerging technology and the demands of modern society. This information acknowledged that senior citizens, individuals, are under-adapted to the advent of new technology in comparison to later generations (X, Y, and Z), it is either because they do not have the technical skills or because of their current health status. As a result, in their attempts to adopt new technologies, they typically face several difficulties arising from demographic characteristics such as employment, schooling, geographical location, potential handicaps, as well as difficulties related to the complexities of new technologies. Other factors contributing to this low adjustment of new technologies are lack of incentives, economic barriers, digital skills and appropriate training. The prevalent opinion is that the industry does not invest sufficiently in creativity for senior citizens, such as advanced and more user-friendly programs for better living conditions. Nevertheless, many products and services are still inadequate to meet the needs of older customers, exacerbating the sense of alienation and adding to the dependency of others (Roupa, Z. et al., 2010).

2. Literature Review

The World Population Aging Report has shown that the growth rate of senior citizens in developing countries is more extensive than in developed countries. At the same time, the number of senior citizens in Southeast Asia is expected to rise by 430 percent from 2000 to 2050. Malaysia is facing the same scenario in the growth of the elderly population with those aged 65 and over are projected to rise by more than three times from 2010. This will transition Malaysia to an ageing population by 2021 (Kien Sin, A. et al., 2014). From now on, priority should be given to the well-being of the elderly. Technology is one of the ways senior citizens can be helped in their daily lives and can also improve their comfort and protection at home.

According to Eurostat, 87% of the people aged 75 and over have never been online in the European Union. Many communication systems rely on the ability to see, hear and read, causing a large portion of society losing contact opportunities due to health conditions. The senior citizens also struggle with decreased reactivity, making it more challenging to keep up with fast-paced technology, e.g. notification platforms. The nine per cent of older people aged 75 or older have severe visual impairments, and 18 per cent have severe hearing limitations in the European Union (Eurostat, 2018). Besides, U.S. statistics revealed that 23 percent of senior citizens were reported having physical or health problem that makes reading difficult or impossible. There are grounds to believe that those included in these statistics cannot fully participate in mainstream technology. Health aside, technology awareness is also critical to efficiency, and lack of technology is a factor that keeps many seniors from engaging in communication technology. As many as 77% of seniors said that they would need assistance if they tried to learn how to use a mobile (smartphones) phone or computer or laptop. Also, 56 percent of those who are still on the Internet but do not use social networking sites said that they will need help communicating with friends and family (Eurostat, 2017).

Malaysia's Department of Statistics reported 7.9% of senior citizens across the country in 2010, which projected to increase to 9.9% by 2020. This level projected to rise to 15% in 2030 (Riyanti, S and Nur Layali, A.K., 2018).

Present, smartphones have become an integral part of personal and business life across all ages. However, the number of senior users were still relatively small compared to the other age groups. This number is expected to grow over the next 10 to 20 years, because of the increased market adoption ages of user's ages between the ages of 40 and 50. The 40s were among those who got early access to mobile communications technologies, such as cell phones and PDAs in Malaysia (Anderson, Monica and Perrin, Andrew (2017). As such, this leads to some degree to the introduction and use of emerging technologies such as smartphones. The senior citizens have also said that they have issues with old cell phone technology. Most issues are related to screens that are too small and difficult to see, buttons and characters that are too small, leading them to click the wrong button continuously. Nowadays, most mobile devices are built based on touch screen technology as a primary input, where the use of the touch screen has proven to encourage user interaction with a computer interface. Often, the same concerns are raised when encouraging the use of larger screen size for the user interface. Previous and ongoing research on these aspects is required to address and encourage the use of smartphones by the seniors, as the existing interface and usability are too complicated. The smartphone is seen as a possible part of supporting seniors in contact and social relations. Smartphones offer not only universal connectivity but also, at any time, access to some of the services that are essential for the protection and security of

the senior citizens, since they can be accessed virtually anytime and everywhere (Vaportzis, E. et al., 2017).

3. Methodology

Qualitative research was applied, and a one-year of non-participants observations were made to clarify the trend and ensure consistency in the use of the SNS-Facebook by senior citizens prior to in-depth interviews. For this study, U&G and UTAUT3 were used to further extend the reasoning for the key U&G and UTAUT3 constructs. Purposive sampling was used because, based on the observations, not all senior citizens were involved in SNS-Facebook.

Non-participating observations

The researcher has conducted the non-participating observations at public places such as restaurants, mosques, shopping malls, sports centres, schools and universities in the Klang Valley. The researcher observed (from the distance) on how the senior citizens conducted their SNS-Facebook. There is no doubt that some of them need help from their fellow friends regardless being old and young, to operate and manage their content posting (from taking pictures, picture's captions and posting it via SNS-Facebook). These activities were only meant to observe the senior citizens on how they conducted their SNS-Facebook from the moment they started using it until they have done with posting or sharing their content.

In-depth interview

The interviews were conducted at various places in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor to understand the reasons they use SNS-Facebook. Before the interviews, the researcher explained to the senior citizens about the study and asked for their permission to open their SNS-Facebook and continued with their daily routine using their SNS-Facebook.

Research Theory

For this study, two research theories were applied - Uses and Gratifications (U&G) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology-3 (UTAUT3) as guidelines to help in collecting interview's data. U&G theory will be explaining the reasons (based on selected U&G themes) senior citizens used SNS-Facebook and UTAUT3 will be explaining on the acceptance and use of SNS-Facebook (based on UTAUT3 key constructs).

The Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G) is an attempt to understand why and how individuals actively seek specific media to fulfil their needs. U&G is an audience-centred approach to understanding mass communication (Severin, Werner J. and Tankard James, 1997). In comparison to other media effect theories that ask, "What do media do to people?" U&G focuses on "What do people do with media?" (Katz, E., 1959). It postulates that media is a readily accessible commodity and that viewers are users of the same commodity. This communication theory is constructive in its approach, based on the tradition of socio-psychological communication, and focuses on mass media communication (West et al., 2007). The central issue of U&G is: why do people use the media, and what do they use it? U&G explores how users actively select media that will fulfil their needs and encourage them to enhance information, relaxation, social interactions/companionship, diversion or escapism (Severin, Werner J. and Tankard James, 2000; McQuail, Denis, 2010; Matei, S.A., 2010). It is believed that audience members are not passive media consumers. Instead, consumers have control over their media consumption and play an active role in understanding and incorporating information into their own lives. By comparison to other theoretical

viewpoints, U&G argues that listeners are responsible for selecting the media to fulfil their expectations and needs to obtain gratification. This hypothesis would suggest that the media compete with other sources of knowledge for the satisfaction of viewers (Katz et al., 2011). Today, U&G has a heuristic value because it gives communication scholars a perspective through which several ideas and theories about media choice, consumption and even impact can be seen (Baran et al., 2009).

For this study, five themes were involved in identifying the reasons senior citizens use SNS-Facebook in their daily life.

- Theme 1 - Cognitive: applies to the development of information to facilitate the learning and comprehension process. People use media such as documentaries and videos to develop their skills or expertise in a specific field.
- Theme 2 - Affective: refers to emotions or feelings. People use the media to evoke certain emotions within themselves, such as happiness, fear, or pleasure.
- Theme 3 - Personal Integrative refers to the promotion of one's identity, credibility or status. Individuals continue to use the Internet, such as Facebook and YouTube, to boost their popularity or social standing, or to show their sense of self.
- Theme 4 - Social integrative: refers to the bond between family and friends. We use the media to communicate with others.
- Theme 5 - Tension Release: Relaxation and tension relief. People are using the media as a catharsis or avoiding reality.

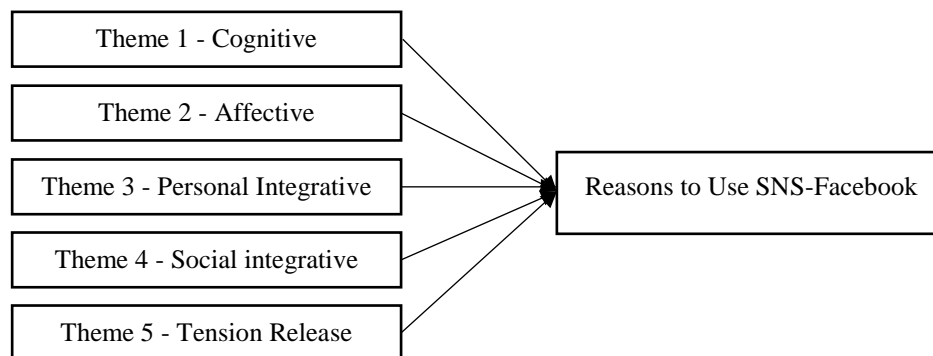


Figure 1: Five themes of U&G

Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology-3 (UTAUT-3)

UTAUT has merged with the information system (IS) continuance Model, and other frameworks (e.g. habit and personal innovation with IT) to explore the drivers of evolutionary IS user adoption. The Extended Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology or UTAUT-3 was used for this analysis. Interview questions were designed based on the UTAUT-3 model, which consists of eight core ideas; performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motives, price value, experience and habit and personal IT innovations that contributed to the use of SNS-Facebook among seniors. UTAUT was developed to focus on a thorough analysis of previous technology recognition. In 2011, the extension of UTAUT known as UTAUT-3 demonstrated a significant change in the definition of behavioural purpose modification (BI). This theory centred on the general acceptance and use of technology by senior citizens. As a result, a new relationship was established - personal innovation in IT that clarified the use of SNS-Facebook identified them as not a laggard group and considered themselves to be an

innovator among their community members (seniors). UTAUT-3 aims to increase comprehension of the actions of senior citizens (Hong et al., 2011).

- 1) Performance Efficacy defined as the degree to which the use of technology can bring benefits to a person in the performance of specific activities.
- 2) Effort Efficacy defined as the degree of ease associated with the use of technology by a person.
- 3) Social Influence characterized as the degree to which a person perceives the value of the opinion of others in believing that they should use the new method.
- 4) Facilitating Conditions characterized as the degree to which a person believes that there is an organizational and technological framework to facilitate the use of the program.
- 5) Hedonic Motivation described as fun or enjoyment derived from the use of technology.
- 6) Experience and Habit described the degree to which people continue to execute behaviors unconsciously as a result of learning.
- 7) Price value described as the perceived advantages of applications and the actual cost of using them.
- 8) Personal Innovative in IT was described as the degree to which a person of adoption is relatively early in the adoption of a new one than other members.

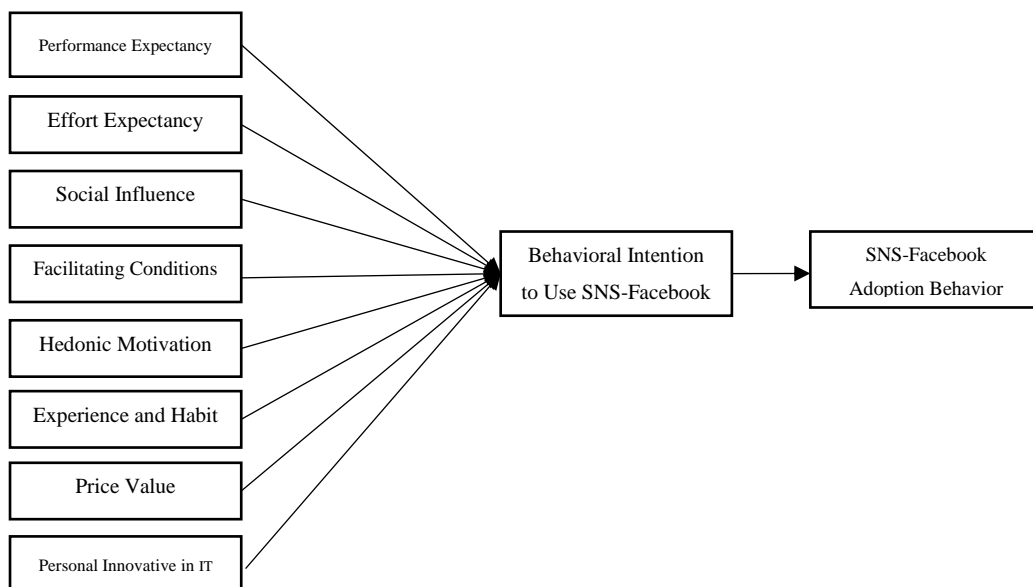


Figure 2: UTAUT-3 Model (Hong et al., 2011)

Sample

A total of nine informants were involved, and their age range was between 70 to 73 years old (based on data-saturated). The interview questions were divided into two parts: Part I: Informant demographic information: age and gender and Part /II: Interview questions based on the U&G themes and UTAUT-3 key constructs that contributed to the reasons of SNS-Facebook use among the senior citizens.

Discussion

U&G Theory

Theme 1 – Cognitive

Informant 1: (...Smile) I use FB for searching new things and update myself with current trends.

Informant 4: (...Smile) FB give me a lot of information, although I understand that most of the content, cannot be trusted, I only focus on the content that I intended to know about.

Informant 7: (...Serious) FB give me new knowledge and give me understanding about what is going on.

Theme 2 - Affective

Informant 2: (...Smile) FB provide me closeness to my loved one – my kids and grandkids. In what way, most probably via their pictures, videos, chatting and live events.

Informant 6: (...Thinking) FB give me the feeling of belonging (...sad) or what should I say happiness because I can see my kids and my grandkids daily activities (...smile).

Informant 3: (...Serious) I think that I can connect my kids and grandkids with FB. How? By watching their videos and leaving comments. It is fun. But I rather meeting with them than use FB as a platform to communicate.

Informant 5: (...Serious) FB give me connection with my kids. It doesn't make sense somehow, but I can feel the relationship with them.

Informant 7: (...Sad) I don't have any feeling or emotions towards using FB directly, but when I slowly watch my kids' videos and photos, it gives me sort of like a sense of pleasure.

Theme 3 - Personal Integrative

Informant 5: (...Surprise) I think that FB for us, old people, do not really care about status or followers tho... We are more focused on how to communicate with our kids and grandkids more.

Informant 8: (...Laugh) Seriously, I do not think of creating as many friends as possible or people liking my comments or whatever, no.

Informant 2: (...Laugh) I think the younger generation focus on followers, likes and comments on their post, as for me I am more focus on my family activities.

Theme 4 - Social integrative

Informant 9: (...Sad) I would like to say that with these digital things going on, a lot of people tend to communicate via WhatsApp and FB. I admitted that I do not really fancy the internet things, but I surrender when it comes to with my grandkids, I really missed them so much. Using FB really helps me to stay close with my loved ones.

Informant 1: (...Serious) I use FB because of my grandkids suggested to me. They said that I chat and even communicate with them easily, so I use it.

Informant 3: (...Sad) I would rather communicate with my kids and grandkids via face to face. I really missed talking to them, hug them and kisses them so much, so I use FB to get too close to them.

Informant 5: (...Sad) It is not the same as when you meet your kids and grandkids physically. You feel belonging and bonding with one another. Using FB although, the feeling is not the same, somehow, it helps me to stay in touch with them.

Informant 7: (...Sad) Using FB, I feel that I am close to my loved ones and although the feeling is not the same but I will try my best to accept the fact that this is the new way of communication and I have to adopt it as soon as possible.

Informant 2: (...Sad) I don't like to use FB because it doesn't feel the same as you meet up with your family, I guess I don't have much of a choice but to use FB to communicate with my kids and grandchildren.

Informant 6: (...Serious) FB provide me with the latest news about my kids and their kids (grandchildren). I enjoyed myself watching their videos, their news, pictures and messages, although I have problems sometimes to use FB, but yeah I'm getting better and better.

Informant 4: (...Serious) I disagree with the fact that FB can give you sense of bonding, seriously, I don't feel it, zero, but, when I started to use it, watching their videos and I can leave my comments and my kids like/love my comments, I feel that yeah close to them.

Informant 8: (...Sad) I don't think that using FB created bonding between family and friends, but I am sure that by using FB, you can communicate with them /timeliness and ubiquitous.

Theme 5 - Tension Release:

Informant 3: (...Serious) When I use FB, I don't find myself as tension release because I enjoy myself every minute using it.

Informant 7: (...Smile) Using FB provide me pleasure and fun or yeah relaxation, rather than release tension.

Informant 8: (...Smile) FB is very entertaining with lots of videos, pictures and messages from my kids and grandkids, so there is less tension release going, what can I say, more excitement.

Results

Interview questions are based on Theme 1 to 5, yet only two themes significantly getting more reactions or feedbacks. The themes were Affective and Social Integrative. The senior citizens agreed that the use of SNS-Facebook in daily life is good, very useful and interactive, because they can interact or communicate with their loved once, and they felt happy about it. Even so, at the same time, there is a feeling of loneliness, emotional and stress, because they missed the old way of communication. They also agreed that they felt overwhelmed with the fast-moving technology and always come across with brand new steps whenever they use SNS-Facebook, which they considered annoying and frustrated. These situations created the reactions of angry and dislike to SNS-Facebook, and they even decided not to use SNS-Facebook for several days or even up till a week because of it. They do have the intention to deactivate their SNS-Facebook due to this feeling.

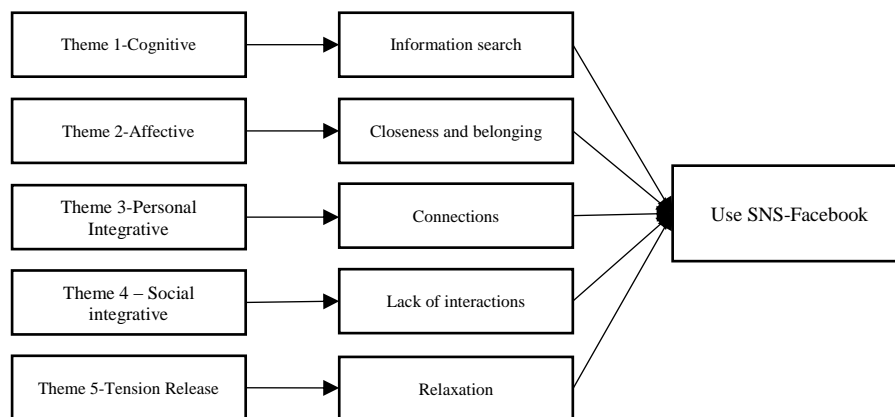


Figure 3: Five themes with reasons they use SNS-Facebook

UTAUT-3 Model

Performance Efficacy:

Informant 3: (...Smile) I agreed that SNS-Facebook provided benefits to me such as updates me new content about things that happen around us and most importantly new updates from my kids and family. I guess I am becoming pretty good with technology.

Informant 6: (...Smile) Yes, I agreed that SNS-Facebook provides me current issues. Hi! Now I know how to operate my FB.

Informant 9: (...Serious) Yeah, SNS-Facebook is very beneficial because it keeps informing you about things. I guess I might be addicted to this, just kidding (...laugh).

Effort Efficacy:

Informant 1: (...Smile) Well, everyone can operate SNS-Facebook easily.

Informant 2: (...Smile) It is easy to use and interactive.

Informant 4: (...Smile) Yeah, I think it is easy to manage

Social Influence:

Informant 8: (...Smile) It is good to have someone like close friends to suggest to you about this, sort of give you motivation to try new things, I consider myself not interested or necessary to have one.

Informant 7 (...Smile) My friends suggested to me long time ago, then my son talk about it and he helped me to create FB account and teach me a few steps to operate it.

Informant 5: (...Smile) My grandkids who persuade me to create FB account so that I can update myself with their activities.

Facilitating Conditions:

Informant 1: (...Mmm) With affordable package of Internet/data, I guess that triggered me to use Internet every day, or FB.

Informant 2: (...Smile) I think telecommunication promote the internet package that pretty much cheaper than last time. Maybe only for us seniors, I think.

Informant 3: (...Serious) Well, perhaps the free Wi-Fi and waived internet plan, family plan something that motivated me to use Internet and to have FB.

Hedonic Motivation:

Informant 4: (...Smile) Frankly speaking, FB is fun and interesting.

Informant 5: (...Smile and laugh) It is interactive with videos and live events.

Informant 6: (...Smile) FB brought happiness to me tho...

Experience and Habit:

Informant 7: (...Laugh) What can I say, I think I am addicted to FB coz every minute I will check my FB. It is fun to see new info and new live events.

Informant 8: (...Smile) I will open my FB in the morning after breakfast, lunch and dinner. I even watch online movies, yeah (...small laugh).

Informant 9: (...Smile) My routine activity is to refresh my FB every morning and night. Why? Coz this is the time that I considered myself not busy. In the evening, meet up with friends, gardening and exercising.

Price value:

Informant 2: (...Serious) I don't mind spending a few RM to pay for the Internet coz I think connecting with my kids and others using FB is considered important to me.

Informant 4: (...Serious) Why not to spend money for this tho, very beneficial.

Informant 6: (...Smile) No problem to spend a bit as long as you can communicate with your loved once and their family.

Personal Innovative:

Informant 8: (...Smile) Well, this is a bit awkward to say, but I think that I am pretty good to use FB and pretty much no problem whatsoever in managing my FB. I might say that I am an IT savvy person compared to my fellow friends.

Informant 1: (...Smile) To be honest, I think I am good using FB as to compare to other seniors, (...small laugh). I can accept and adopt technology very well.

Informant 3 (...Smile) I am the first to accept and adopt technology or FB among my friends.

Informant 5 (...Small laugh) Hi this is a good question. Well I guess, I am okay with operating FB on my own and I am the one who taught my fellow friends how to create account and managed their FB.

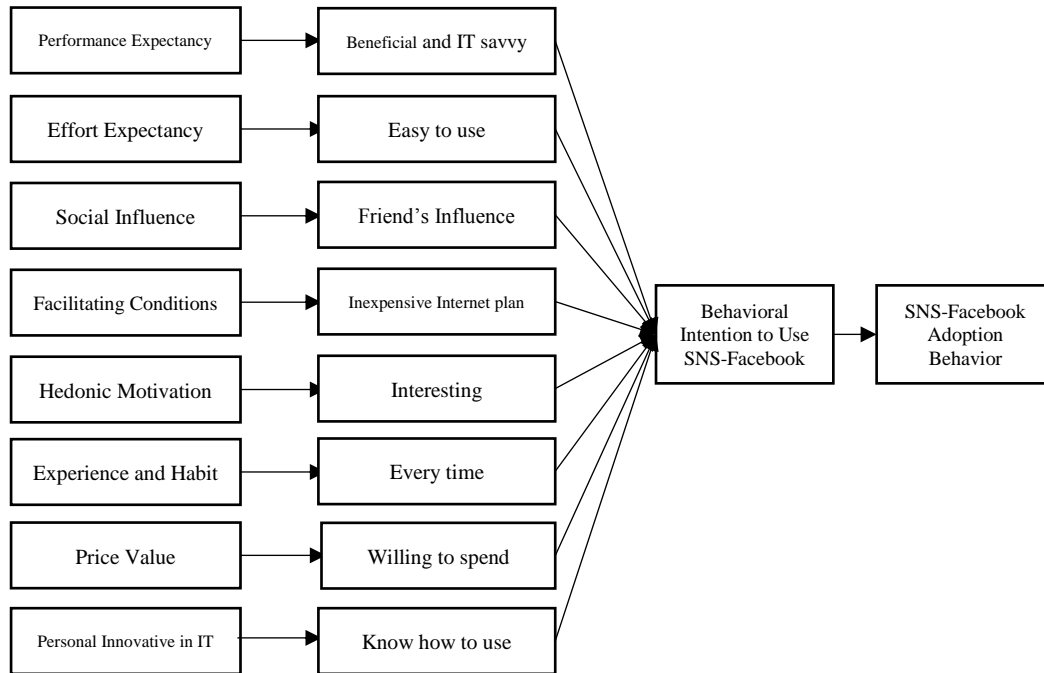


Figure 4: UTAUT-3 with reasons to accept technology

Results

The senior citizens agreed that:

- 1) For Performance efficacy (PE)
The use of SNS-Facebook brought many advantages to them, such as they know how to register, to create an email account, to post something and to use SNS-Facebook.
- 2) For Effort Efficacy (EE)
The use of SNS-Facebook is difficult at first, but a while after, it is easy to use.
- 3) Social Influence (SI)
The use of SNS-Facebook received good reactions from friends and loved once, and they valued these experiences and believed that it contributed to a better-quality of life.
- 4) Facilitating conditions (FI)
The use of SNS-Facebook can be accessed ubiquitously due to the availability of free WIFI and affordable mobile data package.
- 5) Hedonic motivation (HM)
- 6) The use of SNS-Facebook is described as fun and entertaining because they can chat, watch videos, leave comments and gain new information/knowledge.
- 7) Experience and Habit (E&H)
With SNS-Facebook, they tend to perform SNS-Facebook automatically after breakfast, lunch and even dinner because they want to make sure they are familiar and know how to use it thoroughly.
- 8) Price value (PV)

The use of SNS-Facebook brought many benefits. Therefore, they are willing to spend on mobile data to use it.

9) Personal innovative in IT (PI in IT)

The users of SNS-Facebook have described themselves as non-laggard community and also considered themselves as innovators among their community members (the senior citizens).

4. Conclusion

We are so used to today's fast-moving technology, and social networking sites that we tend to forget that there are others for whom keeping up is a more formidable challenge. Senior citizens face challenges when they learn and use technology. This research has helped to raise awareness and understanding of young generations about the senior's well-being in the field of technology. Many of the senior citizens claimed that technology has more to do with the younger generations and has nothing to do with them. They still feel they have not benefited from technology. Most of the technology products are aiming at the younger generations, and therefore the digital products are not appealing to them. The designs of most digital product are complicated for seniors to use. Seniors have always been worried about the machines being broken. Besides, they thought that all digital devices were expensive, even though the price is getting lower from year to year. Therefore, they feel anxious when using a digital product. The use of technology and the availability of information make it easier for senior citizens to meet the demands of daily life, to break the constraints of their social and emotional isolation and thus enjoy a better quality of life. There is still a shortage of seniors in digital technology, and these connectivity technology opportunities will leave the elderly disconnected and lonely. Getting an SNS-Facebook will relieve the feeling of isolation, a feeling that is perceived to be bad for their well-being. In order to ensure that the seniors live a healthy life, there is a need for more workshops/classes to help them familiarize with technology.

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