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## **How Your Emotions on Facebook Can Drive Your Attitudes and Intentions to Go to the Special Event?**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Developments in social media have guided the world into the Attention Age; an age where instead of information, individuals attention becomes the commodity. Rapid developments in social media threaten to overwhelm individuals, and increasingly types of social media vie for individual's attention. In this new age it is important to understand the uses and applications of different types of social media. Especially, Facebook proves itself to be a popular online social media tool with the potential to reach countless individuals especially with regards to planned social offline events. This study explores the use of Facebook Fan Pages and Events by Special Event organizers to promote events. Using an adapted Technology Acceptance Model, this paper explores how emotional factors influence users' perceived usefulness, ease of use and perceived enjoyment of using social media and whether it can affect their attitude and actual intention to go to an event promoted through Facebook.*

**Keywords:** *social media, local events, extend TAM (Technology Acceptance Model, emotion, Facebook, marketing communication.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Developments in social media have guided the world into the Attention Age; an age where instead of information, individuals attention becomes the commodity. Rapid developments in social media threaten to overwhelm individuals, and increasingly types of social media vie for individual's attention. In this new age it is important to understand the uses and applications of different types of social media.

A cursory review of the literature on social media shows that researchers have explored the construct in terms of social networks, trust, civic engagement, life satisfaction and a variety of other concepts. Social Media has gained substantial popularity in the context of online travelers' use of the Internet, as travelers can share their experiences with friends, family, tourism business, and strangers by posting their stories, comments, photos and videos (Xiang and Gretzel, 2009). Social Media or Web 2.0, also referred to as "Travel 2.0" in tourism has introduced a wide range of new advanced technology applications including media, content syndication, tagging, blogging, web forums, customer ratings and evaluation systems, virtual worlds, podcasting and online videos and so forth (Xiang & Gretzel, 2009; Dippelreiter, *et al*, 2008). The core idea of social media is defined following as;

*“information content created by people using highly accessible and scalable publishing technologies that is intended to facilitate communications, influence and interaction with peers and with public audiences, typically via the Internet and mobile communications networks.”* (Wikipedia, 2009)

Facebook proves itself to be a popular online social media tool with the potential to reach countless individuals especially with regards to planned social offline events. In a recent study Barnes and Mattson (2009) found that 91% of the companies surveyed currently used social media, compared to only 57% in 2007. They also found that the growth curves of each type of social media were different, supporting the argument that the differences in types of social media should be understood.

Facebook is by far the most widely used social media site with over 400 million users, with over 50% of users logging on daily, 3 billion photos uploaded each month, and 5 billion unique pieces of content shared each week (Facebook.com). Along with the increase of traffic to Facebook the site's interactive features have produced individualized “pages” that allow for companies, special interest groups, and even special events and festivals to showcase their products and attract new consumers without having to spend a single penny. There are currently 3 million Facebook Fan Pages, including 1.5 million local businesses, reaching out to 5.6 billion fans (not individuals). There are also 3.5 million events created each month. The Page and Events features alone make Facebook an incredibly important marketing tool for businesses including tourism and special events planners. Facebook Pages are public profiles businesses and special events can create that allow them to interact with their customers. These pages ‘look and behave’ like normal user profiles, allowing for interaction on a more basic interpersonal level. (Facebook Pages, 2010)

This study examines the role Facebook has on actual marketing of special events primarily through the use of Facebook's event features and functionality. This study explores the use of Facebook Fan Pages and Events by Special Event organizers to promote events. Using an adapted Technology Acceptance Model, this paper explores how emotional factors influence users' perceived usefulness, ease of use and perceived enjoyment of using social media and whether it can affect their attitude and actual intention to go to an event promoted through Facebook.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (King & He, 2006) is widely applied information systems theory used to explain individual user's acceptance of new technologies. In this study an adapted TAM is used to model acceptance of Facebook. The TAM's variables include Perceived Usefulness (PU), Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) and Attitude which affects one's Intention to use the technological tool. In this study, instead of Intention to use the technology, the Intention to attend the special event is used. The TAM model assumes that people are likely to adapt a new technology to the extent that they believe it would be helpful for them to perform the job better (Perceived Usefulness). PEOU is the degree to which an individual believes that using a new technology would be free of cognitive effort (Zhang, Zhao & Tan, 2008). According to Davis, Bagozzi and Warshaw (1989) “TAM posits that Perceived Usefulness has a direct effect on BI (Behavioral Intention) over and above Attitude,” and Perceived Ease of Use has “two basic mechanisms by which Perceived Ease of Use influences attitudes and behavior: self efficacy and instrumentality.” The combination of the two supporting basic mechanisms within Perceived Ease of Use are more likely to effect Attitude and

Intention. On the other hand, Moon and Kim (2001) found that Perceived Ease of Use and Perceived Usefulness do not fully determine the acceptance of the World Wide Web usage. Moreover, Venkatesh (2000) states that there is “a weak direct link between perceived usefulness and attitude” which led to the omission of Attitude in some TAM models.

The current research investigates that how enjoyment affects our extended TAM model. It was indicated that many prior studies used enjoyment as the variable for intrinsic motivation and explored how this intrinsic motivation influenced individuals’ technology acceptance behavior (Zhang, Zhao & Tan, 2008). In this study, perceived enjoyment is used to conceptualize the extent to which the activity of using Facebook is inherently enjoyable to individuals. It was found by Liu and Arnett (2000) that enjoyment/ playfulness was one of the most important aspects contributing on Web site success.

This paper combines the psychological aspects of affective responses to a more outside field of technology acceptance concepts. By examining the levels of arousal during the individual’s use of social media tools the study is then able to see patterns in their affective responses to event requests. Eysenck (1964, 1985) studies even show that a researcher may be able to predict to an accurate point of whether an individual is an introvert or extrovert based on the level of arousal needed.

Additionally, this paper argues that Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use is influenced by an individual’s emotional response to using social media tools. Previous studies have examined the effect of individual’s emotional responses on the Perceived Use and Perceived Ease of Use in the context of the individual’s job environment, educational endeavors and using World Wide Web by indicating that positive and/or negative emotions such as; anxiety, joy, distaste and pleasure could predict overall technology acceptance (Saade & Kira, 2006; Venkatesh, 2000; Wu & Lee, 2006). This study assumed that Facebook may provide emotional support and mood regulation, or in other words, people use Facebook to engage in private communication with people they are familiar with and can find emotional support from (Sas, Dix, Hart & Su, 2009).

This study examines the affect of emotional facets on users’ Perceived Usefulness, Ease of Use and Perceived Enjoyment when using Facebook. The model also proposes that these constructs influence users’ attitudes towards Facebook and their intentions to actually attend an event they are invited to.. Accordingly, the extended TAM model proposed by this study includes two new antecedents – Affective Response and Arousal.

## **METHOD**

Data for the study was collected using a web-based survey that was administered during a 4-week period during and after each special event, and all events were held in Phoenix in spring 2009. An online survey was sent to 800 randomly selected persons who were invited on the events through the Facebook. More specifically, surveys were sent out through Facebook to fans of two different special event Fan Pages. The Fan Pages consisted of Phoenix Metro area special events; The Great Arizona Beer festival, Phoenix Pride celebration, and an undergraduate students at Arizona State University, who had been to events using Facebook. The response rate was about 20 percent, which resulted in 155 usable responses. Those who were invited by Facebook promoting events in Phoenix were asked to indicate whether they have been invited to an event using Facebook, and how Facebook was useful, ease of use and enjoyable in terms of sharing and finding out events. Furthermore, they were asked to indicate how their feeling was when they were on Facebook and finally were asked to show their attitude and intention to go to

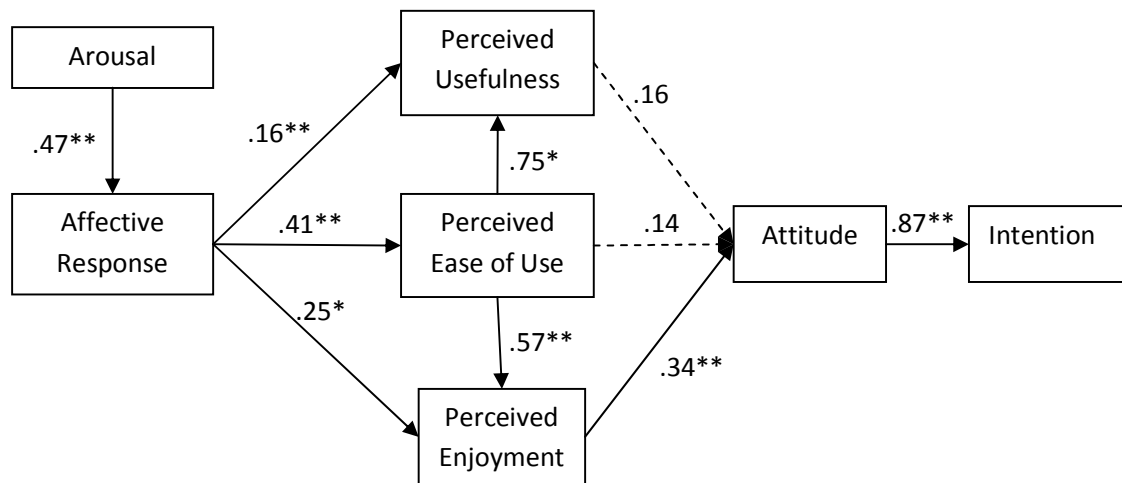
the events listed on Facebook. Descriptive analyses, Discriminant Validity, Reliability and Path analyses were used to test the proposed relationships of the extended TAM model including arousal and affective response variables.

### **Measurement development**

All the items used to measure the constructs were adapted from prior studies. Those who were invited to the local events in Phoenix promoted through Facebook were asked to indicate whether they have been invited to an event through Facebook fan page before, also were asked to present the usefulness of Facebook, the ease of use and enjoyment of Facebook for sharing and finding out about events. Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use were operationalized with three items respectively, which were derived from previous research (Lai & Li, 2005; Shih, 2004). Additionally, perceived enjoyment was also measured using three items from Venkatesh, Speier & Morris (2002). All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7). Respondents were also asked to indicate how their level of arousal and emotion was when they were surfing on the event Webpage on Facebook. The scale items for arousal and emotion were adapted and modified from Bigne, Andreu and Gnoth (2005) using five items respectively. These items were measured with 7-point semantic differential scale, using the following items: five items for arousal: cheerful-depressed; quiet-anxious; enthusiastic-calm; active-passive; surprised-indifferent. Analogously, another five items for general emotion: unhappy-happy; dissatisfied-very pleased; disappointed-delighted; sad-joyful; bored-entertained. Finally, respondents needed to indicate the intention to attend the events that they were invited to through Facebook. Users’ attitudes toward using Facebook to get the information of events were measured with three items adapted from Hsu & Lin (2008), and the scale items for the participants’ intentions to go to the event were adapted and modified from Morosan & Jeong (2008). Intention and attitude scales were measured on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7).

## **RESULTS**

Discriminant validity is examined in order to define the relationships between a measure of one theoretical construct and measures of different theoretical constructs that fall within the nomological network of the construct (Chronbach & Meehl, 1955). Discriminant validity can be confirmed when the estimated correlations of the constructs are not excessively high ( $> .85$ ) or excessively low ( $< .10$ ) (Kline, 1998). Based on the value of all the correlation estimates between the associated constructs, all values fell in the acceptable range, which indicated that the discriminant validity of the constructs was supported. At the same time, Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were calculated. The Cronbach’s alpha score that is derived from the reliability test is used to determine whether its attributes constitute a reliable measurement. Thus, regarding construct reliability, the seven factors including Arousal, Affective response, Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, Perceived Enjoyment, Attitude and Intention presented in this study indicated satisfactory Cronbach’s alpha scores (Nunnally, 1978), ranging from .80 to .95.



**Figure 1 Extended TAM Model**

A path analysis was conducted to validate the extend Technology Acceptance Model adding the arousal and affective response (Figure 1). The basic assumption of this study is that users' emotion influences on their perceived usefulness, ease of use, and enjoyment of using the social media (Facebook), which can lead to their favorable attitude and intention to go to the event promoted by this social media. Amos 6.0 using the ML estimation method (Arbuckle, 2005) was used to perform the path analysis with all the casual relationships being tested simultaneously. The results of the path model for this study showed an excellent fit to the data, with scaled  $X^2/df=1.6$ ,  $CFI=.99$ ,  $GFI=.97$ ,  $NFI=.98$ ;  $RMSEA=.06$ . As shown, all fit indices meet the recommended fit criteria, which demonstrate the proposed conceptual framework has provided an excellent fit to the empirical data. Furthermore, regression coefficient of each proposed path is positive and significant. Therefore it indicated that all hypotheses are supported in this study. However, it needs to be noted that within the proposed extended TAM model, the regression coefficients between Perceived Usefulness and attitude, and between Perceived Ease of Use and attitude indicate that it is not significant ( $p < .08$ ,  $p < .09$ ). This result is consistent with research by Moon and Kim (2001), which found that Perceived Ease of Use and Perceived Usefulness do not always fully determine the acceptance of the World Wide Web usage. In other words, it can be interpreted from the results of the analysis that attitude towards using Facebook may be more strongly influenced by users' emotion status rather than their perceived usefulness and ease of use. In addition, 54% of the variance of the Intention to go to the event after having seen the event on Facebook is explained by the specified explanatory constructs. Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and perceived enjoyment together explained 63% of variance in attitude towards using Facebook to share and view the events. Also arousal explained 22% of the variance in affective response, which in turn explained 68% of perceived usefulness, 17% of perceived ease of use and 50% of perceived enjoyment.

Consequently, as expected, TAM variables were consistent with previous studies, and more interestingly, this study found that users' emotion status had a significant effect on users' acceptance of social media especially Facebook.

## IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study attempted to explore how the users' emotional factors affect usage behavior and their intention to go to the actual event promoted through Facebook. The research model was established based on an extension of the technology acceptance model with incorporating constructs of arousal and affective response. As the results of the path analysis, which aimed to test for the relationship among the constructs hypothesized in the research model, it provided the predictors of user attitude and intention in terms of using Facebook to share and get to know about the events.

The results from this study are two fold, first that an individual with a high arousal will almost always see Facebook as easy to use and as a very useful tool. Secondly, individual's intention and attitude toward a special event that receive invitation to or were made aware of through the use of Facebook is influenced by that individual's affective response to interacting with the company/special event through Facebook. Further, the perceived enjoyment of the interaction with the special event in this study through Facebook mediates the individual's affective response and their attitude toward and intention to go to the special event. When these two effects are combined by the use of Facebook, marketing special events become incredibly successful. This can be understood since individuals that have a high arousal level are able to navigate Facebook with great ease and are more open to suggestions as well as exploring the different functionality of the social networking site and because of this openness when the individual comes across a scheduled special event they are more inclined to attend the event.

Through this study's process the creation of two special events fan pages were created for each festival being study. While the fan pages were only up and running a few months before the event, both showed an increase in the number of attendees by 200 that found out about the events through Facebook. Showing real world application of the extended technology acceptance model presented in this paper as well as actual social media marketing result.

While the findings of this study do provide some interesting insights into the use of Facebook pages and events for special events and tourism marketing, the generalizability of the study is limited because of the narrow and small sample. Further, the findings of this study could be strengthened if it is replicated using a more experimental research design involving pre-post event surveys and a control group to examine the actual effect of the Facebook Pages and events on individuals attendance of the event. The model presented in this study should also be replicated in a larger population, for different scaled events, for destination decision making, tourism product marketing, and for other types of social media. It could provide a useful tool for tourism marketers in understanding how each of type of social media can be used effectively and to what types of people they prefer to use which kinds of social media to achieve their goals.

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