

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2, we have presented the build-up to our hypotheses, and explained why we have chosen these specific constructs.

In this chapter, there will be explanations provided for the various steps taken in the research project – including the choice of sampling methodology, methods of data collection and the theoretical concepts behind the research actions. In order to choose the methods for this project, due consideration was given to information gathered from existing research already done in this field obtained from the literature review as seen above, as well as technical and practical constraints such as limited time and manpower.

3.2 Research design

In this study, we have tried to find the determinants of the intention of a user to pay for content online. Our literature review has led us to close in on a few indicators, based on which we have built some hypotheses. Through our quantitative research, we have attempted to see if there indeed is a link between these factors and the intention to pay for content online. In order to establish the presence (or lack) of a relationship between the dependent and independent variables, correlation tests were carried out to determine the presence of a relationship, and then the strength of that relationship if present.

Further, in order to test whether the independent variables actually had a causal effect on the dependent variable, a multiple regression test was carried out to identify the strongest determinants from the ones chosen.

Once the influencing factors were determined, respondents were split into groups based on their past experience with paid online content, and tests were carried out to identify any statistically significant differences in the intention of these groups to pay for online content.

3.3 Sampling

Sampling has been defined as a subgroup or a subset of a population (Sekaran, 2003 p.266). In the case of our study, we are looking at internet users, treating them as current or potential users of online paid content.

Non-probability sampling was utilized for this research project due to the time and resource constraints, and also because of the population in question. As far as this study is concerned, the population extends to anyone using a computer, and it would be beyond the scope of this project to try and ensure that there is some degree of foreseen probability in selecting a sample systematically. As a result, those individuals who are active on the various boards and online services where the survey was promoted had a much higher chance of being included in the survey than those who are not. This constituted a case of convenience sampling.

Recognising that it would be difficult to stop people from other countries taking the survey, a control question was placed in the survey in order to enable us to separate out UK and non-UK respondents. Further, using the geo-tracking mechanism in SurveyGizmo (the online survey tool used in this research), only responses from the US were selected among non-UK respondents and included for analysis as they constituted the only other single country with a substantial number of respondents. US respondents were included as part of our sample only after tests showing that there were no statistically significant differences in the mean values of the constructs between UK and US respondents.

All questions were compulsory and at the end of two weeks there were 216 usable, complete responses. It was also noted that because the researcher works at a publishing company which is currently grappling with the issues of online paid content, there might be some bias from those respondents at the company, and in order to check this, an additional control question was inserted into the survey in order to enable us to separate out those individuals who work in publishing if required. Further, again using the geo-tracking information provided by SurveyGizmo, it was possible to separate out the respondents who worked at the researcher's organisation based on their IP address and other network identification information. However, on analysis, it was found that very few individuals responded from the company, and after further tests on these data

comparing respondents working in publishing companies against those who do not, no statistically significant difference was found either in terms of measure of intention or any of the other constructs. We have chosen to ignore this difference.

3.4 Method and data collection

A review of the existing literature (Choi et al, 2009, Venkatesh and Davis, 2000, Vasquez and Xu, 2009) showed that a quantitative study testing the various constructs is the best way to proceed with gathering data to test our hypotheses. Further, a qualitative study would have proven too time-consuming if we wanted to get a large enough sample even remotely representative of the average internet user.

SPSS was used to carry out statistical tests on the data.

An internet-based survey was published and responses were collected for about two weeks. Invitations to take part in the survey were sent out through email, Twitter, a Facebook application, LinkedIn groups and forums, as well as a number of other online forums (both specialized as well as general) and the researcher's company intranet – in an effort to get as wide a spread of respondents as possible.

3.5 Questionnaire design

Good practices for designing the questionnaire were taken into consideration from the researcher's own practical experience as well as from the literature reviewed. Closed questions were used to help respondents make a choice of answer as soon as possible and also to aid coding at the end of the data collection (Sekaran, 2003).

Because of the convenience sampling utilised, and our inability to control who would take the survey – a number of control questions were asked in Section 1 of the questionnaire in order to allow us to better understand the behaviour of different kinds of respondents. The control questions in Section 1 asked users to answer Yes/No to whether they worked or studied in the UK, whether they had ever paid for any kind of content online and whether they worked in the publishing industry.

The online survey consisted of 20 questions split into two sections, with a further four control questions asked only to those individuals who responded that they had paid for

online content before. The survey took no more than a few minutes to complete and submit. Please see Table (a) in Appendix 1 for details of the constructs and items used.

The questions for the questionnaire were decided upon based again on the literature reviewed; in particular Choi et al's study (Choi et al, 2009, Moore and Benbasat, 1991, Rusbult and Farrell, 1983, Taylor and Todd, 1995, Venkatesh and Davis, 2000). A couple of questions had to be reworded so that the questionnaire sounded better suited to our respondent base i.e. respondents in the UK and the US, the majority of whom we assume have English as their first language. These sources have already shown these items to be valid.

All questions were discussed with peers and compared against existing literature mentioned above to ensure that the original sense of the items was kept intact.

The data analysis was planned was to get a measure of the agreement of the respondent with various concepts such as the availability of free alternatives, or whether they were willing to pay for something that improved the way they worked (for example). For this purpose, a Likert scale was deemed to be most suitable. Multiple items were agreed upon to test each construct, with a scale from 1 to 5 presented to the respondent – (1 equals Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree). The respondent was asked to choose the level which represented their level of agreement with the statement presented. The scores for each item in a construct were then summated to get a total measure of agreement for that construct.

This method is in agreement with Choi et al's study as well as other texts which have guided us on this project such as Sekaran and Saunders et al (Sekaran, 2003, Bryman and Bell, 2007, Saunders et al, 2007).