



## Full length article

## Investigating user switching intention for mobile instant messaging application: Taking WeChat as an example

Xixian Peng<sup>a</sup>, Yuxiang (Chris) Zhao<sup>b,\*</sup>, Qinghua Zhu<sup>c</sup><sup>a</sup> Department of Information Systems, National University of Singapore, Singapore, Singapore<sup>b</sup> School of Economics and Management, Nanjing University of Science and Technology, Nanjing, China<sup>c</sup> School of Information Management, Nanjing University, Nanjing, China

## ARTICLE INFO

## Article history:

Received 1 November 2015

Received in revised form

25 June 2016

Accepted 27 June 2016

## Keywords:

Post adoptive IT use

User switching intention

Migration theory

Mobile instant messaging

WeChat

## ABSTRACT

Post adoptive IT use is an important research topic in information systems field, mainly including sustained behaviours and switching behaviours. While there are a great number of studies on users' continuance intentions for diversified IT, users' IT switching behaviours are less studied. This research attempts to identify the features of users' IT switching behaviours. We introduce a migration theory from social network perspective to explore the intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing users' switching intention in the context of mobile instant messaging (MIM) application. In particular, we develop a model that examines the role of networks, deprivations and trusts on MIM users' switching intentions to WeChat in China. A survey research method is utilized to test this model and hypotheses. We found that functional deprivation, monetary deprivation and personal innovativeness could positively influence users' switching intentions. Networks of obligation was found to have no significantly direct influence on switching intentions, but fully mediated by functional and monetary deprivations. However, trust transferred from MIMs provider has no significant effect on switching intentions. The findings are believed to theoretically contribute to further understand users' IT switching behaviours and yield some practical implications for designers and managers in MIM providers and their products propaganda.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, Internet and information technologies develop rapidly. Computers and mobile phones now are not luxuries any more, but necessities which are almost afforded for most people. Faced with the huge market demand and economic benefits, different IT companies are scrambling to roll out various IT products with similar main functions. IT innovations have proliferated which brings users opportunities to switch from one IT to that of a competitor. This switching phenomenon has been documented in various IT products, such as web browsers (e.g. Internet Explorer, Chrome), office software (e.g. Microsoft office, WPS), social network sites (e.g. MySpace, FaceBook), and IT services, such as broadband Internet access (Bhattacharjee, Limayem, & Cheung, 2012). Switching behaviour is believed to have important influence on companies' success in marketplace. For example, customers' switching behaviours pose a great threat to long-term customer-

firm relationships from relationship marketing perspective (Ganesh, Arnold, & Reynolds, 2000). IT switching can bring new challenges to IT vendors, which even can knock down their business. For instance, [Kaixin.com](http://Kaixin.com), a social network site which has been popular for some time in China, has totally been replaced by other online social networks, such as Weibo. Given the huge impact of IT switching behaviour, more and more information systems scholars pay attentions on this subject. IS studies have investigated the users switching behaviours in computer-based IT products, such as Blogs, social networks sites and online auction (Chang, Liu, & Chen, 2014; Lin, Cheng, Wang, & Chang, 2012; Zhang, Cheung, Lee, & Chen, 2008). However, there seem to be two research gaps in this area.

First, previous studies mainly investigate switching behaviour through the lens of IT acceptance and diffusion. Related constructs, including satisfaction, relative advantages, habit, and switching costs, etc., are used to explain IT switching intention (Bhattacharjee et al., 2012; Hsieh, Hsieh, Chiu, & Feng, 2012; Ye & Potter, 2011). Most of these factors are individual-based, while switching is a collective movement that may need to explore some factors from the community perspective. It is interesting to note that user's switching behaviour in online context might have some similarities

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [yxzhao@vip.163.com](mailto:yxzhao@vip.163.com) (Y. Zhao).