

# Acceptance Model of Social Media for Informal Learning

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**Abstract.** Social media is growing at an alarming rate and it holds a great potential for our very lives. These potentials can be exploited in improving the acceptance of informal learning. Informal learning have broken the barriers that are inherent in the old order of formal learning. However, there is a paucity of research in the area of social media techniques as it relates to informal learning. Additionally, practitioners are unfamiliar of the factors that influence researchers' acceptance of social media for informal learning. This study aim to develop a conceptual model to investigate the acceptance of social media for informal learning. To achieve this aim, the study integrates several theories as a foundation for its conceptual model: Technology Acceptance Model 3, Constructivism theory and other factors from the some studies related to the context. The findings of this study would improve our understanding of the inter play of social media and informal learning. Additionally, practitioners will become familiar of those factors that inhibit the acceptance of social media for informal learning.

**Keywords:** Social media · Informal learning · Acceptance model · Constructivism · TAM3

## 1 Introduction

Learning is a lifelong process that engages the individuals mind to be worthy of association. But this has been hampered by several challenges such as the lack of willingness to attend classes, and also the domestication of learning activities within the four walls of a classroom. Then comes the era of informal learning where individuals and group can learn anywhere and anytime. Learners at all ages are now embracing informal learning as an important element for education [1]. Technology-based informal learning is getting a wide acceptance form the learners' community [2, 3]. This form of learning can be conducted in several ways especially with the aid of the social media. The informal learning created through social networking helps under-studies turn out to be inside roused learners whose learning and aptitudes are important and applicable to their life and encounters [4].

Malaysia has been hit by the social networking marvel as measurements uncover that it is among the five nations regarding the quantity of records made in Facebook [5]. This motivated the researcher to investigate the use of social media for learning in Malaysia as a result of its enormous usage. Informal learning is facilitated by social

media outside the formal structure imposed by the traditional learning syllabi and curricular. Learners are giving autonomy on the whole learning process. Sharing of content and discussion encouragement is promoted by social networks which transcend the structures imposed by hierarchical relationship [6] which makes it suitable platform for informal learning. Increased flexibility is introduced with the ability to create social communities where learning issues are to be discussed. The ad hoc and spontaneous exchange of ideas can serve as an invaluable source of knowledge. Interactive features such as walls, discussion forums, and chat rooms contribute to learning activities. There is an inherent overlap between content and interaction in the collaboration process [6]. However, there is lack of studies that have researched understanding the use of social media as a technique in informal learning [7–9].

Furthermore, few reviews which researched social networking acceptance and adoption have ignored noteworthy parts in inborn nature of social networking [10, 11].

This paper is structured as follows. The Introduction sets the stage for the discussion of social media for informal learning. Section 2 discusses the theoretical background. Section 3 discusses the development of theoretical model. Finally, Sect. 4 presents the discussion and conclusion of the study.

## 2 Theoretical Background

In this research work we develop a theoretical model derived from different theories.

These theories include TAM3, constructivism and other factors from the extant literature. One of the most frequently used model in Information Systems to explain the acceptance of new technology is the TAM. As we consider social media as a technological system and the consumers as computer users, TAM can be well suited to predict the user's technology usage, that is, social media [12]. TAM is derived from the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) [13] and is proposed by [14], and this model predicts that for an individual to accept an information system, it will be determined by two major factors, and they are: (1) Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) and (2) Perceived Usefulness (PU). TAM3 [15] as a model integrates TAM and TAM2 [16, 17]. TAM3 emphasize the role that relates to PU and PEOU, and theorize that the determinants of PU will not influence PEOU and vice versa [18].

Constructivist theory is about building knowledge based on an individual's experiences. Social constructivism depends on the conviction that learning procurement is found with regards to culture and conditions. Cognitive constructivism hold the view that knowledge is constructed through collaboration and interaction not only within the individual [19, 20]. Several researchers argued that social technologies affirms constructivist strategy to learning with potentials to socialize online learning [21, 22].

## 3 Development of Theoretical Model

The researcher used some theories as a foundation for the conceptual model, in order to develop a better understanding of the problem at hand. The research model developed make use of several factors from different theories. It explains the acceptance of social

media for informal learning giving the inter play of those constructs. It is made up of eleven (11) constructs which are put together to represent the acceptance model. The model is presented in Fig. 1 below.

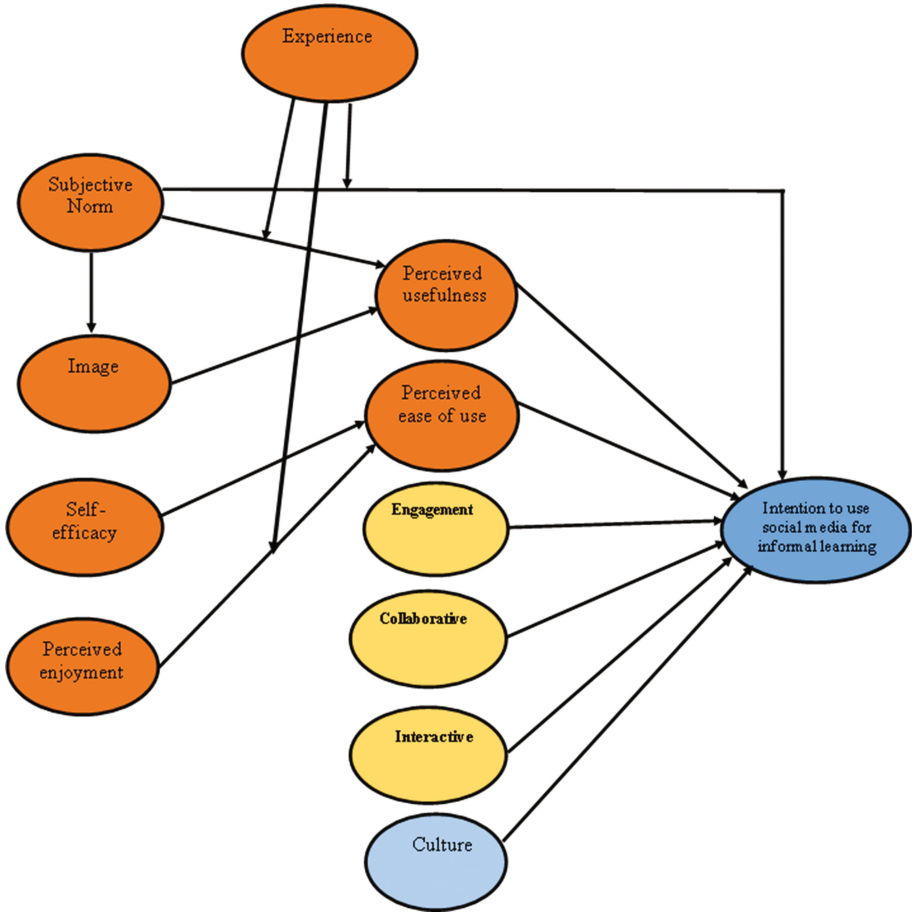


Fig. 1. Informal Learning Model (IFLM)

### 3.1 Perceived Usefulness (PU)

PU is the leading factor that predicts behavioral intention in the entire process of technology usage and is confirmed to be the predictor of social media adoption in learning environment [23]. Several studies have used PU in studying teaching and learning [24, 25]. Also, subjective norm and image were discussed in this sections as the influence PU. Therefore this study assumes that perceived usefulness is positively related to the willingness to use social media for informal learning.

### 3.2 Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)

The willingness to use information technology can mostly be determined by perceived ease of use. According to TAM3, as regards information technology adoption in informal learning, PEOU is an important factor especially in the initial adoption stage [15]. It has a great positive influence on the intention to adopt social media [26]. Additionally, it positively impacts social media acceptance in learning environments [23]. Also, there are studies that looked into the effectiveness of PEOU in collaborative learning [25]. Self-efficacy and perceived enjoyment also influence PEOU. Therefore this study assuming that perceived ease of use is positively related to intention to use social media for informal learning.

### 3.3 Students Engagement

A few reviews that have investigated utilizing social media has uncovered a positive learning result and experience for student engagement [27, 28]. Support for interaction between student engagement and achievement as it relates to social media is provided by [29] when she expresses that among the positive qualities of social media apparatuses are the effect on emotional parts of the learning environment, and the effect on inspiration and student engagement for active collaboration to enhance informal learning. Social media and ubiquitous technologies that led to the realization of just-in-time learning, anytime, anywhere [30, 31], hence it promote efficient and engaging informal learning. Interestingly, with the participation on some of the tools on web 2.0 technologies, student learning experience is enhanced [32]. Therefore this study assuming that Students Engagement is positively related to intention to use social media for informal learning.

### 3.4 Collaborative Learning

Informal learning in the Web 2.0 environment is inseparable from communication and collaboration. In the learning process, learners need not only to pay attention to improving their own self-learning ability, they also need to communicate and collaborate with peers in order to make meaningful contributions and solve problems in real life. The use of social media that provide new ways of communication and collaboration affects the way of learning as well [33, 34] especially in an informal settings. Informal learning in the Web 2.0 environment has features of individualized learning, but at the same time, this kind of learning needs the support of communication and negotiation so as to gather the wisdom of peer learners. Therefore this study assuming that Collaborative Learning is positively related to intention to use social media for informal learning.

### 3.5 Interactivity

In [35] interaction is characterized as “an exchange between at least two members and items which happens synchronously or asynchronously interceded by reaction or

criticism and interfaced by technology”. In the learning process interaction provide several functions such as: advancing active learning, empowering powerful assistance, permitting learner contribution to the learning procedure, empowering the advancement of higher request information and capacities, and improving the quality and standard of the learning experiences. Learners cooperate as associates, applying their joined knowledge to solve a problem. Therefore this study assuming that Interactivity is positively related to intention to use social media for informal learning.

### 3.6 Experience

Experience is defined as displaying a relatively high degree of familiarity with a service, which is obtained through some type of exposure [36] as in the case of social media. Interestingly, [37] found that majority of students were interested in using social media in educational settings, but that the students with most experience of social media were more interested in using it to support their studies. There is theory and evidence to suggest that the direct effect of subjective norm on intentions may subside over time with increased social media experience. Therefore this study assuming that Experience is positively related to intention to use social media for informal learning. The effect of subjective norm on intention to use subsides over time with increased social media experience [38]. Similarly, it is expected that the effect of subjective norm on perceived usefulness to weaken over time [39], supplanting reliance on social cues as a basis for usefulness perceptions. Also, experienced students will be less likely to be affected by consideration on enjoyment as it relates to technology ease of use.

### 3.7 Culture

The study in [19] looked at the effects of social interaction, culture on learning and language [40, 41]. Culture plays an important role as one of the primary factors determining knowledge construction, using collaborative learning, group work and discussion based learning [42]. The interaction of learners around certain articles can foster a culture of learning and enhance engagement [19]. Considering growing social media use [43, 44], people are taking part in digital cultures [20], thereby developing new skills in the collaborative learning process. With this development, participatory digital culture shows how the thin demarcation between self-directed, purposeful learning and unconstrained, incidental and experiential learning are vanishing, positively to “informal” setting [18]. Therefore this study assuming that Culture is positively related to intention to use social media for informal learning.

### 3.8 Subjective Norm

Subjective norms are the perceived social pressures an individual faces when deciding whether to behave in a certain way. [14] Conclude that people are influenced the most by significant others in their life. Subjective norm is included as a direct determinant of behavioral intention in TRA [13] and in subsequent theory of planned behavior

(TBP) [46]. Subjective norm has also been found to have a positive link with perceived usefulness [16]. Therefore this study assuming that subjective norm is positively related to intention to use social media for informal learning.

### **3.9 Image**

Image is the degree to which an individual perceives the use of an innovation will enhance his or her status in his or her social system [47]. In TAM2, image is one of the determinants of perceived usefulness. By performing behaviors that are consistent with group norms, an individual get an elevated status. The increased power and influence resulting from elevated status provides a general basis for greater productivity. An individual may thus perceive that using a system will lead to improvements in his or her job performance which is referred to as perceived usefulness [16]. Therefore this study assuming that image is positively related to intention to use social media for informal learning.

### **3.10 Self-efficacy**

Self-efficacy can be defined as individual judgments of a person's capabilities to perform a behavior. Self-efficacy does not refer to the skills one has and it refers to the judgments of an individual for the ability to do something [48]. Some researchers have viewed self-efficacy as the most useful element in determining outcomes of technology influence [49]. Applied to using social media, self-efficacy refers to consumers' judgments of their own capabilities to participate in social media and will impact their perceived ease of use. Previous research has indicated the relationship between self-efficacy and PEOU to be positive [16, 17]. Therefore this study assuming that self-efficacy is positively related to intention to use social media for informal learning.

### **3.11 Perceived Enjoyment**

The extent to which "the activity of using a specific system is perceived to be enjoyable in its own right, aside from any performance consequences resulting from system use" [17]. The hedonic nature of social media is confirmed through literature [26–48] which reports positive influences of perceived enjoyment and perceived ease of use on social media adoption behavior. Users' attitude and intention of using social media are mainly determined by the level of enjoyment they experience while using social media [51]. Therefore this study assuming that perceived enjoyment is positively related to intention to use social media for informal learning.

### **3.12 Intention**

Intention is the willingness to perform a certain behavior. It is assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence a behavior [46]. As in the present study, intention

captures the willingness of individuals to use social media for informal learning. All the factors in this study either influence intention to use social media directly or indirectly. Several studies have considered the influence of some constructors on intention [52].

## 4 Discussion and Conclusion

The first phase of this research is the development of a conceptual model for the use of social media for informal learning. The conceptual model contains factors like subjective norm, perceived usefulness, ease of use, and others as presented in the research model. The relationship between the factors as shown in Fig. 1 has been discussed in the above sections. The model would provide a vivid picture of the drivers of social media usage for informal learning and those factors mediating against their influence. Understanding the interplay of several constructs can lead to an improved informal learning scenario with social media. Additionally, the proposed model can be extended using other constructs like relationship factors such as tie strength, homophily etc. Also an analysis of the model should be conducted to ascertain the most influential construct.

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