

A STUDY OF ACCEPTANCE ON NEW MEDIA USAGE AMONG CORPORATE COMMUNICATION PRACTITIONERS: THE RISE OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Wardatul Hayat Adnan¹

Mohamad Yaacob²

*Centre of Postgraduate Studies¹
Faculty of Communication and Media Studies
Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)
40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, MALAYSIA*

*Faculty of Communication and Media Studies²
Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)
40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, MALAYSIA
wardatul@uitm.edu.my¹, mohammadyaacob@uitm.edu.my²*

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Abstract

Corporate communication involves managing both internal and external activities related to communication within an organization. The rise of covid-19 pandemic in many of the industries has led corporate communication practitioners to work online. Therefore, in preparing to this situation, the acceptance of online platform is crucial. Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way people communicate in its day-to-day activities. The use of new media tools becoming a must compared to face-to-face conversations. Motivated by the extensive used of new media tools among individuals to communicate, this study investigated the acceptance and usage of new media for communication and collaboration among practitioners in corporate communication. This study employs a quantitative approach that depends on a correlational study. A cross-sectional survey consisting of four sections was conducted to collect data from practitioners within the corporate communication field. There are 248 respondents participated in this study. The present study employed four constructs to describe the expected performance and effort in new media, the influence of social media and its facilitating conditions. The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) was used to examine the relationship of the main constructs and the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) was used to perform data manipulation and analysis. Respondents provided their responses by perceiving the factors that influence the usage of new media amongst them. Results indicated that New Media Performance Expectancy (NMPE) and New Media Facilitating Condition (NMFC) are positively associated with Behavioral Intention in Corporate Communication (BICC) in using new media in corporate communication-related matters.

Keywords: *Corporate Communication; New Media; Behavioral intention; Social Media; Covid-19*

1.0 Introduction

New media is a powerful medium for communication in today’s corporate world. Many previous researchers studied the acceptance of new media among practitioners since the early 2000s [20], [21], [22]. New media includes employing computers and digital technologies in performing media practices [21]. Another scholar referred new media as “websites and other digital communication and information channels in which active consumers engage in behaviors that can be consumed by others both in real time and long afterwards, regardless of their spatial location” [23]. Nowadays, new media technologies are often portable and facilitate mobility in communications [20]. With wireless digital technological improvements to media, there no longer is a need to connect to a static, physical network or machine [20]. There are many scholars who have discussed and discovered the characteristics of new media in a growing body of literature [24], [25]. The characteristics of new media include being digital, pro-active, visible, real-time, ubiquitous and connected to networks as presented and described in Table I.

TABLE 1
The Characteristics of New Media

Characteristic	Description
Digital	Virtually no marginal costs for reproduction and easily distributed to a global audience.
Pro-active	New Media is actively supplying the required information to value chain.
Visible	New media activities can be seen by others.
Real-time and memory	New media can be retrieved at the time they are produced.
Ubiquitous	New media enables consumers to reach and/or be reached by others at any time and anywhere.
Networks	New media allows for an individual’s participation on social networking platforms.

There are many new media channels such as Really Simple Syndication (RSS), Facebook, YouTube, Google, Wordpress, Blogger, and Twitter [20], [23]. With that, the ways one gathers, and exchanges information have changed dramatically. This is supported by other studies that claim the digital innovations have made communication and interaction among audiences effortless [27]. Thus, new media is undoubtedly useful as one of the ways to make contact and to support societies and strong networks. New media facilitates communication in many ways such as through email, multimedia messaging, text messaging, online chat, instant messaging, blogging and forums [20]. Therefore, new media has significantly changed the way we do marketing communications in an organization. It is now more integrated, which includes the use of various channels, tools, and methods in selling ideas, products and services [22]. In general, new media offers companies various ways to perform business activities especially in reaching out to their customers. New media acts as a tool to communicate and measure communication. Additionally, it also changed the way consumers browse product catalogues and purchase-related behaviors. Besides marketing, new media is also important for customer relationship management [23]. Table II summarizes the commonly used new media technologies such as shopping bots, internet auctions, search bots, automated recommendation systems, mobile technologies, as well as peer-to-peer networks and piracy [23], [26], [28], [29]. These technologies have helped to accelerate the efficiency of processing information internally and externally.

TABLE 2
New Media Technologies

Technology	Description
Shopping bot	A service to do price comparison. It enables consumers to compare prices for a product from many retailers.
Internet auction	An online auction platform that enables consumers to bid for the cost or value of a product or service.
Search bot	An online service to seek information about people, firms, products or services.
Automated recommendation system	A system that is equipped with collaborative filtering and techniques that help to provide personalized services and products based on the historical data of that customer.
Mobile technologies	Portable and wireless mobile devices.
Peer-to-peer networks and piracy	A technology that allows for the distribution of various products such as software, music, video and movis to consumers via the Internet.

Social media in particular has revolutionized corporate communications especially on social media marketing [30]. This allows companies to communicate with their stakeholders instantly as compared to the traditional way of corporate communications [30] specifically during the occurrence of covid-19 pandemic. The advantages of using social media for corporate communications include obtaining more exposure for the company, increasing traffic, increasing the formation of new business relationships, ease of reaching out to prospective customers, as an avenue to strengthen media relations allowing them to reach broader audiences, promoting openness and interactivity with stakeholders, expediting the circulation of information, as well as generating quality leads and reducing marketing expenses [8], [31], [32].

Authors found that some of the commonly used platforms for corporate communications include LinkedIn, Buffer, Facebook, Sprout Social, Twitter, MeetEdgar and YouTube. It is evident that corporate communication practitioners accept the usage of new media in dealing with their daily tasks [8], [12], [33]. However, there is a limited empirical research study on new media and corporate communication in Malaysia, especially in examining the acceptance of the new media among practitioners. This study is motivated by the limitation; hence, this study investigated the acceptance and usage of new media for communication and collaboration among practitioners in corporate communication.

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) was used by many scholars to study the acceptance and use of technology in many industries such as education and businesses [7], [34], [4], [19]. Due to its popularity latest model of UTAUT were used [16] and [17]. There were studies conducted in China [6] and western countries [34], [4] which include students and corporate communication practitioners as respondents.

It is observed that there is a lack of studies relating to the use of social media among local corporate communication practitioners pertaining to current situation of covid-19 pandemic. This makes the present study relevant. Therefore, the present study includes the involvement of corporate communication practitioners in Malaysia. Their inputs and feedback were collected and analysed in order to measure the acceptance and usage of new media using UTAUT. This paper is organized as follows. The

second section provides a discussion on the material and method used in this study. Additionally, the section reviews the literatures related to new media and UTAUT constructs used in the study, followed by the description of methodology used and study's hypotheses. The third section presents the results, data analysis and discussion for this study. The final section presents a conclusion offering a future research agenda and the limitations.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Covid-19 and the changes towards industrial practitioners

Studies shows a drastic change on the impact towards many of the industrial practices. For instance, with the limitation of movement among many Malaysian due to the pandemic it has caused of slowing down in terms of people movement to have their vacation. Due to this, many of the marketing personnel has taken an initiative to push out as many promotions to increase economic sector in tourism [38]. Moreover, other than tourism, COVID-19 pandemic has broken the most of transportation links or logistics and distribution mechanisms between suppliers, production facilities and customers. Further discussions relating on its sustainability and disruptions in the future has been started to be analysed [39]. During this, COVID-19 pandemic era the impact towards the industrial sectors has worried many of the industry on the readiness of its personnel in facing the next challenge that has caused from the pandemic. Meanwhile, study conducted through sports sectors also presenting the adaptation of a new norm on to sustain the sports sector due to the limitation of physical activities [40]. New media technologies, such as social media platforms, have provided an avenue for sport organisations and athletes to continue to engage with their consumers and promote physical activity during the absence of live sport. Besides, it also supporting in terms of creating interactive communication to continuously inspire physical activity and sport participation. Equal scenarios towards all the activities relating to corporate communication practitioner's activities such as Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) initiatives [41]. The adaptation with the new norm is crucial at the present stage to ensure its sustainability.

2.2 New Media and Corporate Communication Practitioners

In the early days, not many practitioners in corporate communication utilized new media. A study conducted in 2006 shows that practitioners were not fully embracing new media as they were ill-equipped and have a fear of the technology [18] and [1]. The use of new media in corporate communication has now changed. Practitioners are now starting to use the medium for a variety of activities such as opinion sharing, responding to current issues, as well as seeking and gathering information aggressively [11]. They also use the medium to perform tasks such as addressing issues related to the corporation as well as increasing the brand image [15].

Acceptance of any new media is always an issue among the adopters of these technologies. This is critical because it dictates the success of the technologies [9]. The usage and adoption of new media will lead to a change in social community [3]. From the perspective of an organization, new media can assist both communication and collaboration among various stakeholders [11]. Thus, new media enables greater communication between stakeholders in the organization if it is accepted and use among corporate communication practitioners. Delivering information via new media makes it be within reach to the audience at almost real time. It is also believed that the acceptance of these technologies helps to improve job performance and leads to job satisfaction in organization [2]. This applied not only to the organisation as a whole, but also appeared to education institution [36].

2.3 Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)

Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) is the technology acceptance model that was developed by [16] and [17] and has been used extensively in information systems (IS) and other

fields. The present theory adapted meant to identify the intention of using social media platforms during Covid-19 pandemic among corporate communication practitioners. In addition, the ability of testing the behavioural intention and the use of the medium has made the theory suit the present study well. Figure 1 below shows the original UTAUT model.

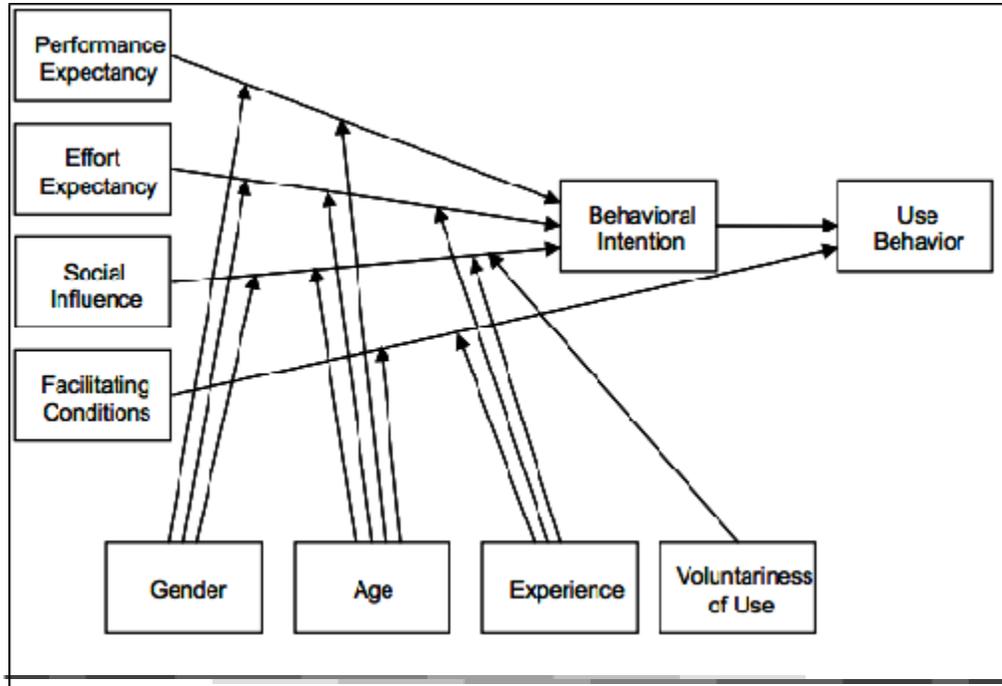


Figure 1. The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology model (UTAUT)

UTAUT constructs include (i) Performance Expectancy, (ii) Effort Expectancy, (iii) Social Influence, (iv) Facilitating Conditions, (v) Behavioural Intention, and (vi) Use Behaviour. Numerous scholars have theorized the significant role of these four constructs relating to user acceptance and usage behaviour. The behavioural intention and facilitating conditions indicate the use of technology. The rest of the constructs such as gender, age, experience, and voluntariness of use were theorized to play a moderating role. Table III provides the definition for each main construct.

TABLE 3
UTAUT construct and its definition

Construct	Definition
Performance Expectancy	The degree to which an individual believes that using the system will help him or her to attain gains in job performance.
Effort Expectancy	The degree of ease associated with the use of the system.
Social Influence	The degree to which an individual perceives that others believe he or she should use the new system.
Facilitating Conditions	The degree to which an individual believes that the organizational and technical infrastructure exists to support use of the system.

A study has reviewed and synthesized related IS literatures on UTAUT. The related literatures were written in the period between 2003 until 2014. A theoretical analysis of UTAUT was performed. The study identified and classified the related papers into three categories: UTAUT Application, UTAUT Integration, and UTAUT Extension. Additionally, this study charted an agenda for research going forward [33]. The authors also found besides applying and integrating the model, many researchers have extended UTAUT to study individual technology acceptance [33]. It is evident that UTAUT has been used by many scholars in studying user acceptance towards technology [7], [4]. Previous studies conducted in western countries [35], [4] have tested corporate communication practitioners as respondents in measuring acceptance and the usage of new media. However, the present study will focus on its acceptance among corporate communication practitioners in Malaysia as there are minimal studies relating to the acceptance of new media among practitioners who work in corporate communication industry.

2.4 Performance Expectancy on New Media Acceptance

New media performance expectancy can be defined in several ways. First, it can be defined as “the degree which a technology will benefit its users while involving in the usage of new media activities on the internet” [33]. Other scholars defined NMPE as “the extent to which a person believes that using particular technology will enhance her or his job performance” [8]. Other scholars claimed that this scenario will also affect the outcome of various motivations especially extrinsic expectations and instrumentality among users who use the technology. NMPE can be categorized into four groups; (i) useful in work, (ii) quality of work, (iii) quick accomplishment of task and (iv) hassle free to do work [5], [33].

2.5 Effort Expectancy on New Media Acceptance

New media effort expectancy can be defined as “the degree of ease of use associated with a consumer’s use of technology or easiness of the medium to be used by its user” [5], [33]. The main concentration of this construct is the easiness of using new media in performing tasks and activities. NMEE can be categorized into four groups; (i) ease of use, (ii) ease of learning on how to use, (iii) easy to become skilful, and (iv) easy to use for working purposes [5], [10].

2.6 Social Influence on New Media Acceptance

New media social influence is another construct related to social influence. It can be described as a situation where a practitioner is influenced to use new media because most of the community in a particular area is also using it. This shows that one can be influenced to use new media through the people around them including families, relatives, friends, colleagues and acquaintances [10]. NMSI can be categorized into five groups in term of influence: (i) family members, (ii) peers, (iii) friends, (iv) the public, and (v) management [10].

2.7 Facilitating Conditions on New Media Acceptance

New media facilitating conditions can be described as consumers perceptions of the readily available support and resources for using and utilizing new media [10], [16], [17]. For instance, the existence of the internet and its easy access promote users to use new media or other internet services. NMFC can be categorized into four groups; (i) the availability of required resources, (ii) internet accessibility in an organisation, (iii) the availability of guidance, and (iv) the availability of assistance [10], [16], [17].

2.8 Behavioural Intention among Corporate Communication Practitioners

It is evident that there are positive behaviours concomitant with the use of new media among corporate communication practitioners, especially social media. Users find social media as easy to use and useful [13]. Hence, this supports the intention to use or adopt new media is depending on the ease of use and usefulness. BICC can be categorized into five groups; (i) the use of new media at work, (ii) facilitation of corporate communication related work, (iii) the use of new media for communicating with public, (iv) preparation of corporate communication related materials, and (v) enhancement of corporate communication related knowledge.

2.9 New Media and Multinational Corporations (MNC)

New media is crucial especially for multinational corporations (MNCs) due to the wide public access that new media provides at any one time. There are reports that large corporations are inclined towards brand reputation management. Hence, companies have started to use available new media tools and platforms for their online reputation. This serves as an asset to expand investment, gain customers, fuel market share and reputation management to influence and control reputation. Overall, new media has changed the practices of many MNCs. They are now able to conduct their reputation management via new media platforms and tools including websites, blogs, and social media accounts to name but a few.

In the Malaysian context, a study has been conducted pertaining to security issues [14]. The security issues for instance focus on issues including health, crime, terrorism, food safety and natural disaster. Since the 9/11 tragedy, both academicians and practitioners started to investigate and study the best solutions to mitigate such negative impacts [14]. Therefore, new media usage among MNCs in Malaysia do not only focus on the positive side, but also the negative side as well.

2.10 Research Framework

This study investigates the acceptance of new media among practitioners who work in the corporate communication industry in Malaysia. This study examines the relationship among the main constructs of UTAUT model with behavioural intention. It is expected that it contributes an extension of knowledge pertaining the relationship amongst them. Figure 2 shows the research framework that consists of links between the constructs of UTAUT and the behavioural intention.

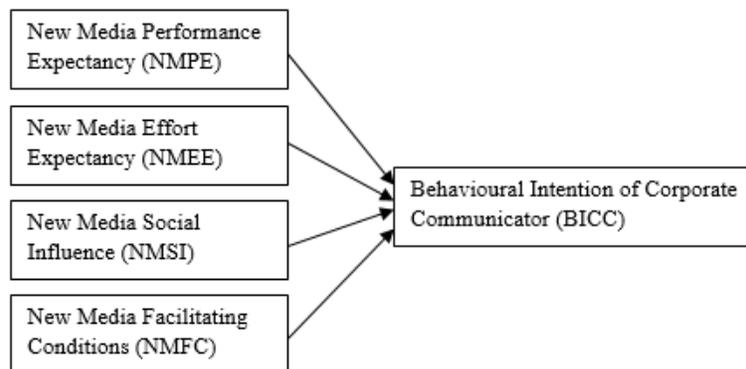


Figure 2. The research framework adapted from UTAUT [16]

Given the research framework in Figure 2, the hypotheses were formulated as follows:

H1: New Media Performance Expectancy (NMPE) will positively influence the Behavioural Intention in Corporate Communication (BICC) towards using new media.

H2: New Media Effort Expectancy (NMEE) will positively influence the Behavioural Intention in Corporate Communication (BICC) towards using new media.

H3: New Media Social Influence (NMSI) will positively influence the Behavioural Intention in Corporate Communication (BICC) towards using new media.

H4: New Media Facilitating Conditions (NMFC) will positively influence Behavioural Intention in Corporate Communication (BICC) towards using new media.

3.0 Methodology

The research model and hypotheses were tested among the corporate communication practitioners in Malaysia by employing a self-administered questionnaire. All questions were written in English as targeted corporate communication practitioners understands the language. Probability sampling method was used in the present study. Sample were later drawn from stratified random sampling in each of the organisation listed in among Multinational Corporation (MNC) Malaysia that based in Klang Valley. Questionnaire developed adapting from UTAUT questionnaire with the insertion of situation during the rise of pandemic Covid-19. It was later distributed through google form link, due to the limitation in access physical approach that caused from the pandemic. It has been forwarded to corporate communication department targeting to practitioners from executive level and above. The total response drawn from purposive sampling technique employed was 300 responses, however after reviewing all submissions, there were on 248 complete submissions can be further analysed. This represents a response rate of 82.7 per cent which acceptable to further continue with the analysis without replacing incomplete forms. Table IV shows the demographic profile of the respondent.

TABLE 4
Demographic Profile

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	148	59.7
Female	100	40.3
Age		
25-30	25	10.1
30-35	84	33.9
35-40	79	31.9
40 and Above	60	24.2

Education Background		
Diploma	30	12.1
Degree	153	61.7
Postgraduate	65	26.2
Position Group		
Executive	163	65.7
Manager and Above	85	34.3

Respondents are mainly held good education background with a minimum of Diploma and First Degree. On top of that, majority of the practitioners in MNC’s Malaysia aged ranging between 30 – 40 years with 65% of them whose participate in the present study. Practitioners involved were also in Executive level (65%) and Managerial level (34%).

4.0 Results and Discussions

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to manipulate and analyse the collected data from respondents. NMPE, NMEE, NMSI and NMFC were regressed against behavioural intention to use new media. To confirm the significance of both independent and dependent variables, regression analysis was employed.

4.1 Independent and Dependent Variables’ Result

Table V shows the reliability coefficients for each of the dimensions. The result shows the value for NMPE (.86), NMEE (.91), NMSI (.78), NMFC (.78), and BICC (.84). The result of reliability coefficients has met the standards for similar research [37]. According to the descriptive statistical analysis, perceived behavioural intention (M = 4.57, SD =.37) is the most influential dimension in the new media acceptance model. New Media Performance Expectancy (NMPE) (M = 4.41, SD = .39).

TABLE 5
Reliability of NMPE, NMEE, NMSI, NMFC and BICC

Dimension	N	Final Number of Items	Reliability	Mean	SD
NMPE	248	4	.86	4.41	.39
NMEE	248	4	.91	4.42	.40
NMSI	248	4	.78	4.49	.38
NMFC	248	4	.78	4.52	.37
BICC	248	5	.84	4.57	.37

4.2 Simple Regression Analysis

This study used a simple regression analysis. It analyses the relationships among the constructs of corporate communication acceptance of new media model. As shown in Table VI, the dimensions of NMPE, NMEE, NMFC and NMSI accounted for .39. F, resulting in 38.81 in behavioural intention at a 95% confidence level. In summary, this result shows that H1 and H4 are supported while H2 and H3 are not. H1 and H4 hypothesized a positive underlying relationship (H1: $\beta = .81$, $p < .001$; H4: β , $p < .001$). The results show that NMEE and NMSI are not significant towards behavioural intention.

TABLE 6
Results of Regression Analysis

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	13.26	4	3.31	38.81	.000*
5.0 RESIDUAL	20.84	244	.09		
Total	34.10	248			
R Square= .39; adjusted = .38					
Independent Variables	Standardized Coefficients	t			Sig.
NMPE	.81	3.2			.002*
NMEE	-.17	-.27			.785
NMSI	.11	1.62			.106
NMFC	.51	9.18			.000*

5.0 Conclusion

The aim of this study is to explore new media acceptance among corporate communication practitioners and their relationship with behavioral intention in using new media in Malaysia during Covid-19 pandemic. The findings show that New Media Performance Expectancy (NMPE) and New Media Social Influence (NMSI) positively influence behavioral intention. Hence, the two dimensions may be able to predict the acceptance of new media among practitioners who work in corporate communication industry in Malaysia. The results of this study suggest that the performance of new media-related tools is important. In addition, complete facilitating conditions so play an important role in ensuring acceptance among the practitioners. This study has some limitations, all of which present avenues for future research. First, one of the limitations of this study is the sample size. It is relatively small (N = 248) and cannot be generalized. However, the result presented in the earlier section provides some insight into the practice among practitioners in Malaysia. Future studies may consider collecting more responses from various individuals who work in the corporate communication industry. Additionally, there is a need to approach various companies of different sizes and cultures.

Second, the findings are based on the use of a cross-sectional survey where many respondents tend to answer by giving moderate results rather than either “agree” or “disagree.” Third, it can be argued that a cross-sectional analysis may not be able to confirm the causality implied in this study. Thus, making a conclusion regarding the independent and dependent variables must be done carefully. One of the potential areas of future research includes employing the same methodology and variables and determine the relationship between New Media performance Expectancy (NMPE), New Media Effort Expectancy (NMEE), New Media Social Influence (NMSI) and New Media Facilitating Condition (NMFC) towards the usage of new media. It can also be extended to other target populations such as other corporate communication practitioners specifically in the public or private sector as well as in different industries in Malaysia. Since the measure of behavioural intention has minimal number of items, the result may be biased. Future studies may consider adding relevant items and measures vis-à-vis behavioural intention in addressing the limitations of the current study.

6.0 References

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