A Model of Mobile Work Continuance of Knowledge Workers: Evidences from China

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ABSRACT

Mobile work has been found to offer the benefits of flexibility, empowerment and higher quality of life to employees and cost savings, productivity gains, and enhanced employee retention to organizations. Nevertheless, challenges and risks associated with mobile work can erode acceptance and continuance of mobile work among employees. Using data collected from 158 knowledge mobile workers in China, this study develops and validates a model of mobile work continuance. The model suggests that outcome construct and experiential constructs affect a knowledge worker's intention regarding mobile work continuance. The findings' implications to theory and practice are also discussed.

KEYWORDS

Mobile commerce, mobile work, IS continuance, SEM, global IS.

1 INTRODUCTION

Mobile work has gained traction among organizations worldwide in the recent years coinciding with the proliferation of mobile and wireless technologies and devices. As the result, corporations have witnessed unprecedented emancipation of office workers, changing workplace culture, and increased virtual collaboration via Internet technologies [1]. To support mobile workers, who are defined as employees who use ICT to access work-related data and applications remotely from their home base, workplace, in transit, and at destination [2], organizations' mobile work efforts range from narrow and tactical adoption of mobile tools, such as mobile email systems to broader and more strategic implementation of enterprise-wide mobile platforms and policies that were designed to help organizations gain sustainable competitive advantages [3].

Despite the wide adoption of mobile technologies and work practices, few organizations have shown concerted efforts to support and manage mobile work acceptance and continuance. Consequently, many organizations have not been able to reap the full benefits of their mobile technology investments [4, 5, 6]. The number of empirical studies that focus on increasing employee acceptance and continuance of mobile work technologies and practices is especially limited [3, 7]. This study aims to fill this literature void by studying the antecedents of employees' continuance behaviors in the context of mobile work. While a large body of literature on IS acceptance exists (e.g. [8, 9, 10, 11]), significantly fewer number of studies focus on IS continuance behaviors of users. Motivations to continue to use a system are arguably as important as factors that influence the user's initial acceptance of the system [12], if not more so; therefore, understanding employee mobile work continuance is crucial to the adoption and success of mobile commerce business models and practices. By expanding the Expectation-Confirmation Model of IS Continuance, this study examines the impact of work outcome and experiential constructs on employees' decision to continue adopting mobile work technologies and practices.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Mobile Work

Enterprise mobility is believed to have a transformative impact on businesses and their workforces [3]. The early studies on mobile work focused on the emerging, enabling technologies which drove organizational transformation. Research in this area mostly focuses on how technologies are likely to change the ways organizations accomplish work, reduce communications costs and centralize all forms of communications among employees, enterprise, and customers [2, 13, 14]. Mobile and wireless technologies extend work beyond the office, and they provide flexibility with respect to both timing and location of work. Studies suggest that the value of these technologies lies in their ability to relieve humans from spatial and/or temporal constraints of work [15] and is a function of the user's need for information and mobility [16]. Some prior studies focused on technology acceptance and task-technology fit in the context of mobile work and found that traditional adoption theories such as TAM and Diffusion Theory explained and predicted user adoption of mobile systems [17, 18, 19].

Prior research has recognized the benefits of mobile work for both employees and organizations. For the employee, mobile work offers greater flexibility, convenience, increased personal empowerment, and higher quality of work life [20, 21]. For the organization, the benefits of mobile work include real estate savings, productivity gains, enhanced customer services, the ability to blend expertise across space, and employee retention [22, 23]. From the human resources perspective, researchers found mobile work capabilities led to better employee retention, disaster recovery, enhanced creativity, improved corporate image, and increased employee morale [23, 24].

Despite its many benefits, mobile work poses new challenges and risks. One of the key technical threats discussed in the literature is security. Studies revealed that a large percentage of mobile workers have not taken the necessary steps to protect their computers and data [25, 26]. Another key concern with mobile work is the notion of supervision. Studies vary greatly on this point. Whether researchers question employee activities and productivity [27] and enumerate HR challenges due to mobile work [23] or recognize equitable productivity in mobile work despite mobile work's lowered perceived career value [28], it seems clear that new technologies require changes to traditional forms of supervision [29].

The social impacts of mobile work practice and the technologies that support mobile work have also gained much research attention. Some studies have focused mostly on the potential negative effects of technologies on employees' quality of life and job performance, such as danger (competence-incompetence paradox), anti-social behaviors (engagement-disengagement paradox), distraction, and infringement on work-life boundaries (empowerment-enslavement paradox) [30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35]. The ease of access to information and people raises organizations' expectations to receive immediate responses from their employees making anytime, anywhere work "all the time, everywhere work." Researchers predict that the spillover from work to personal life can have long-term negative effects on employees and will eventually lead to a decrease in productivity [30].

Some studies claimed corporate culture to be a deterrent to the acceptance of mobile work [27, 36]. The impact of culture on new forms of work was recognized by the early research of Olson [37, 38] and Gordon [39]. Olson in particular noted that the corporate need for "control" discourages organizations from adopting mobile work technologies. A more recent study by Hoang et al. [27] also found that in most

companies, the culture was incompatible with mobile work due to its emphasis on visibility, face-to-face interaction, and the notion of "visibility is promotability". Studies have proposed the concept of nomadic culture and empirically found that nomadic culture led to higher levels of employee satisfaction in a mobile work environment [29, 40].

The wide range of issues involved and relatively inconsistent results of mobile work from different organizations suggest that organizations require socio-technical understanding of mobile work issues before any effective mobile work implementation can be considered [13, 41]. Adopting the socio-technical perspective, Chen and Nath's [6] study identified seven impediment factors of mobile work using a nation-wide survey of CIOs. The impediment factors include difficulty with mobile work support, behavior issues of mobile workers, data/information/network security concerns, difficulty with mobile connectivity, mobile worker isolation, lack of clarity on mobile-work/worker-technology fit and mobile worker management concerns. In addition, eleven strategies were identified and found to correlate significantly with self-reported mobile work success.

2.2 IS Continuance Model

This project draws upon the theoretical work of Bhattacherjee [12], which was the most widely cited study that conceptualized and tested a model of IS continuance that took into account the distinctions between acceptance and continuance behaviors (see Figure 1). Based on the Expectation-Confirmation Theory, the model suggests that rational users of IS undergo a non-trivial decision process prior to making an informed IS continuance decision choice. Bhattacherjee posits that IS continuance intention is primarily determined by users' satisfaction with their prior IS use. User satisfaction is determined by users' expectation of the IS, which is represented as ex post

perceived usefulness, and confirmation of expectation following actual use. Consistent with TAM, perceived usefulness is also a direct predictor of IS continuance. Finally, users' confirmation of expectation tends to affect usefulness perception in order to keep user expectation consistent with reality.
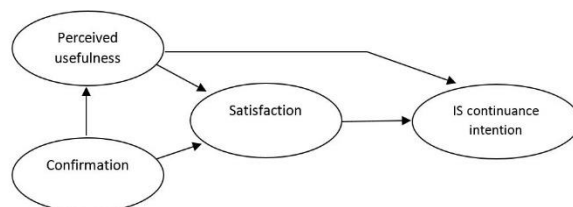

Figure 1. Post-Acceptance Model of IS Continuance [12]

The Model of IS Continuance has been repeatedly confirmed and widely adopted by studies in various IS contexts [42, 43, 44]. The model was also modified for studying IS continuance when usage was mandatory by incorporating ease of use perception [45]. Furthermore, prior studies have repeatedly confirmed the appropriateness of ECT for studying IS continuance in the mobile context (e.g. [19, 42, 46, 47]). Therefore, we expect that the IS continuance model developed by Bhattacheriee [12] will hold true in context of mobile work.

2.3 Proposed Model

The conceptual model underlying the current research is depicted in Figure 2, Expanded Model of IS Continuance for Mobile Work. The model expands the Post-Acceptance Model of IS Continuance by including Work Outcome constructs (i.e. Performance) and Experiential constructs (i.e. Organizational Technology Support, Data Security Concerns, Work-Life Balance Concerns and Mobile Worker Management) that were found to influence mobile work success in prior studies [5, 6]. In the proposed conceptual model, Work outcome constructs are hypothesized to affect Perceived

Usefulness (PU) while experiential constructs are hypothesized to affect Confirmation (C). While both antecedents of Satisfaction (S), C and PU represent different cognitive levels. C refers to the user's realization of the expected experience of IS use. In other words, this construct captures pre-consumption expectations and confirmation of those expectations after system use. Studies have shown that mobile work experience could be most significantly influenced by the following factors: organizational device and technology support (T), data security concerns (S), work-life balance concerns (WL) and mobile worker management (M) [6]. Therefore, we propose that C is affected by the aforementioned experiential constructs in our research model.

PU is a cognitive belief that has been consistently found to influence initial and continued IS use [9, 12, 48]. It represents the user's post-consumption (ex post) expectation of the IS following actual use. In other words, this construct captures the user's expectation of future usefulness after having used the system. Compared to C, PU represents a more holistic perception about IS that embodies both the confirmation of system use experience and the expectation of desired system outcomes. Therefore, we propose that PU is influenced by work outcome construct (i.e. Performance) and C.

Based on the conceptual model, this study will test the following hypothesis:

| H1	Mobile workers' performance positively influences their perceived usefulness of mobile work (P → PU).
H2a	Tech support provided by organizations to mobile workers positively influences mobile workers' confirmation (T → C).
H2b	Mobile workers' data security concerns negatively influence their confirmation (S → C).
H2c	Mobile workers' work-life balance concerns negatively influence their confirmation (LW → C).
H2d	Management of mobile workers positively influences mobile workers' confirmation (M → C).
H3	Confirmation positively influences perceived usefulness (C → PU).
H4	Perceived usefulness positively influences satisfaction (PU → SAT).
H5	Confirmation positively influences satisfaction (C → SAT).
H6	Perceived usefulness positively influences mobile work continuance intention (PU → CI).
H7	Satisfaction positively influences mobile work continuance intention (SAT → CI).
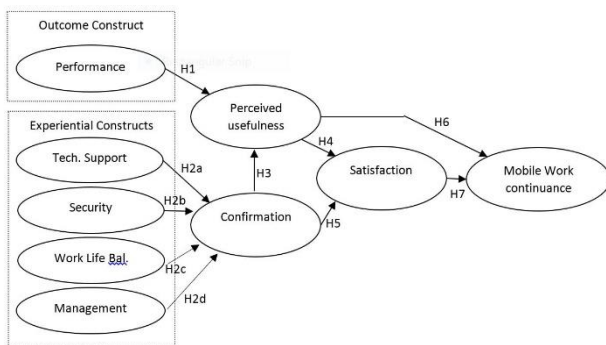
Figure 2. Research Model of Mobile Work Continuance

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary research methodology for the study is survey. The research model constructs are measured using multi-item scales. The items were first generated based on an extensive literature review of how previous studies measured same constructs. The items were then modified to fit the context of mobile work where necessary. In cases where no prior measure was identified, new items were developed. Content validity of the items was established by the critical review of three IS researchers and three

IS practitioners. Feedback from these experts resulted in some revisions to the initial items. As the result of this process, 42 items were retained for the final questionnaire. The items were written in the form of statements and survey participants were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement on a 5-point Likert scale. Appendix 1 displays the items included in the final questionnaire.

The final questionnaire was distributed to 852 employees from 27 organizations in a major metropolitan area in east China that have been identified to have adopted mobile work technologies and practices. A link to the online survey was distributed by the IT managers of the companies to employees who have engaged in mobile work practices in their respective organizations. The respondents were asked to complete the survey online and were assured of their confidentiality. A total of 158 responses were returned and considered complete and usable, rendering a response rate of 18.54%. Table 1 summarizes the respondent demographics data.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Female	92	58.2%
Male	66	41.8%
Age		
below 25	27	17.1%
25 – 34	46	29.1%
35 – 44	39	24.7%
45 – 54	26	16.5%
55 and over	20	12.7%
Years of Mobile Work		
< 1 year	28	17.7%
1 – 3 years	32	20.3%
3 – 5 years	55	34.8%
Over 5 years	43	27.2%

4 DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Measurement Model

CFA was performed on all the items simultaneously to evaluate the validity of the items and nine underlying constructs in the measurement model. The initial results suggested that some construct revisions were needed to improve the model fit. Items recommended for deletion were evaluated from both a statistical and a substantive point of view before deletion. Seven items were ultimately deleted. The final measurement model was re-specified to include 35 items to measure the nine constructs of the research model (see Appendix 1). All items were found to have relatively high factor loadings (> 0.6) on the constructs they are measuring. The resulting measurement model had a good model-to-data fit (see Table 2).

Table 2. Fit Indices for the Re-Specified Measurement Model

Chi-square	Chi-square/df	NFI	CFI
1032.3	1.97	0.87	0.90
RMSEA	**RMR**		
0.09	0.04		

The internal consistency of the measurement model was assessed by computing the composite reliability. These reliability coefficients are displayed for all the latent variables. All constructs have higher composite reliability coefficients than the benchmark of 0.60 recommended by Bagozzi and Yi [49]. This suggests a high internal reliability of the data exists. Convergent validity is often assessed by evaluating the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) with the expectation that for each construct this measure exceeds 0.50 [50]. The AVEs for all the constructs exceed this recommendation.

4.2 Structural Model

Using the SEM technique, the structural model demonstrated good model fit (see Table 3). Figure 3 displays a schematic representation of the resulting model. The estimation of the model yielded a Chi-square of 1111.4 with 550 degrees of freedom. The Chi-square/df ratio was 2.02, with a CFI of 0.91 and NFI of 0.90. Both RMSEA (0.08) and RMR (0.05) are within the range of acceptability. Figure 3 displays the structural coefficients and standard errors of the structural paths. All of the structure paths were statistically significant at the 0.01 or 0.001 level (two-tailed). The hypotheses about the relationships between the constructs in the model were tested through the significance of the structural coefficients, and all hypotheses were supported.

Table 3 Fit Indices for the Structural Model

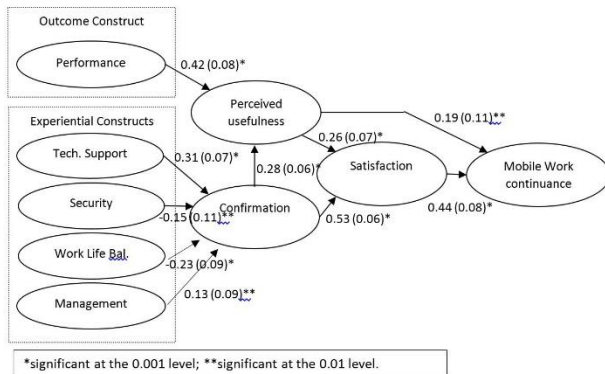| Chi-square	Chi-square/df	NFI	CFI
1111.4	2.02	0.90	0.91
RMSEA	**RMR**		
0.08	0.05		

Figure 3. SEM Results of the Research Model

5 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

By expanding the basic IS Continuance Model from the theoretical work of Bhattacherjee [12], this study examined the impact of the antecedents of mobile work continuance including performance, organizational device and technology support, data security concerns, work-life balance concerns and mobile worker management on mobile work continuance intention. All hypotheses in the study were empirically supported. The study found that performance enhancement resulted from mobile work positively impacts the perceived usefulness. Experiential constructs including organizational device and technology support and mobile worker management were found to lead to positive realization of the expected experience of mobile work, while other experiential constructs including data security concerns and work-life balance concerns negatively impact the confirmation construct. The research findings have implications for both theory and practice.

From the theoretical perspective, this study makes a significant contribution to the understanding of mobile work continuance as there is currently a shortage of published research that addresses the continuance behaviors in the mobile work context. This study confirms the validity of the general model of IS continuance in a new domain and, more importantly, enhances our understanding by adding meaningful antecedents that help provide explanation about what makes mobile workers continue to use mobile work technologies and engage in mobile work practice. The work outcome and experiential constructs identified by this study as antecedents help to capture important areas of mobile work that warrant future research efforts. Through empirical validation, the research model of this study offers a sound theoretical foundation on which future studies on mobile work can be built.

From the practical perspective, organizations' understanding of employees' continuance behaviors in the mobile work context are crucial to the achievement of a desirable return on investment in mobile work technologies and practices. It is critical that organizations' IT and management understand the impact that work outcome and experiential constructs have on perceived usefulness, confirmation, and

ultimately the impact that these constructs have on the intention to continue to use mobile work technologies and engage in mobile work. It is recommended that organizations focus their efforts on providing comprehensive and timely technology support to mobile workers, enhancing data security measures to ease the concerns of mobile workers, being sensitive to mobile workers' work-life balance needs, and developing effective, humanistic and fair mobile worker management policies. Organizations are urged to redefine social boundaries, social norms, supervision and performance evaluation practices in this technology-rich work environment. In addition, the measurement model employed and validated in this study can help organizations assess the continuance intention of their mobile workforce and identify areas for improvement in organizations' efforts to further diffuse mobile work technologies and practices.

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Appendix 1. Survey Items

Continuance Intention (CI)	
CI1	I intend to continue performing mobile work.
CI2	I intend to continue performing mobile work rather than using any alternative work practices.
Satisfaction (SAT)	
SAT1	I am pleased with my overall mobile work experience.
SAT2	Overall, I am satisfied with mobile work.
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	

PU1	Mobile work increases the productivity of my work.
PU2	Mobile work improves the performance of my work.
PU3	I find mobile work useful for my work.
Confirmation (C)	
C1	My mobile work experience was better than what I expected.
C2	The benefits provided by mobile work exceeded what I expected.
C3	Overall, my mobile work experience met my expectation.
Performance (P)	
P1	Mobile work helps to improve the quality of my work.
P2	Mobile work helps to improve my productivity.
P3	Mobile work helps me to accomplish more work than would otherwise be possible.
P4*	Mobile work helps to make my job easier.
P5	Mobile work helps to save me time.
P6	Mobile work helps me to perform my job better.
Organizational Mobile Work Technology Support (T)	
T1*	My organization allows me to choose my own devices for mobile work.
T2*	My organization allows me to use the same mobile devices I use at home for mobile work.
T3	My organization does a good job meeting my mobile work technology needs.
T4	The mobile work technologies provided by my organization empower me to work effectively.
T5	My organization does a good job providing technical support to mobile workers.
T6	Any technical issues I experience as a mobile worker are resolved quickly and satisfactorily.
T7	I have reliable Internet access for my work at any time.
T8	I have sufficient network bandwidth for my work at any time.
T9	I am satisfied with the technology support for my mobile work from my organization.
Data Security Concerns (S)	
S1	I am concerned about data/information security when I am working remotely.
S2	I am not comfortable handling data/information security problems work I am working remotely.
S3*	I have not received sufficient training on data/information security.
S4	I am not familiar with the security issues that I may encounter while working remotely.
Work-Life Balance Concerns (WL)	

WL1	As a mobile worker, I find it hard to maintain work-life balance.
WL2	I feel that I am working all the time.
WL3	I feel that I am expected to respond to work-related issues at any time.
WL4	I find myself working during my personal and/or family time.
WL5	I have not received any training from my organization on work-life balance skills.
WL6*	My supervisor/organization is sensitive to the work-life balance issues of mobile workers.
Mobile Worker Management (M)	
M1	The management at my organization is supportive of mobile work practices.

M2	My supervisor is effective in managing mobile workers.
M3	Mobile work practices fit the culture of my organization.
M4*	My organization measures the effectiveness of mobile work regularly.
M5*	My organization uses a methodology that is specially designed for evaluating mobile worker performance.
M6	My performance as a mobile worker is evaluated fairly.
M7	I do not feel that being a mobile worker limits my opportunities for promotion.
* Excluded from the model due to low loadings.	