

The Acceptance of Social Software Applications among Rural Low-Income Jobseekers: A Conceptual Paper

Suraya Ika Tamrin*

Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia
Email: ikatamrin@uitm.edu.my

Muhammad Ridzuan Abdul Aziz

Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

Azlul Kalilah Zaghlol

Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

Abidah Saad

Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

Suriana Ramli

Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

** Corresponding Author*

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to investigate the acceptance of social software applications (SSA) among rural low-income jobseekers by adopting the specific determinants from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which are perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, technology use, and behavioral intention to use.

Design/methodology/approach: In this research, the proposed research design is a quantitative method. A self-administered questionnaire adapted from previous studies will be distributed to respondents, a group of rural low-income jobseekers in selected communities within the Selangor area. A purposive sampling method is a suitable technique to be applied. Then, the data collected will be analyzed through the partial least square (SmartPLS) technique.

Findings: The research findings are expected to highlight the significant emphasis on developing a more compelling online job search platform, especially using SSA. Then, the findings will also provide a model to understand better the rural low-income community in job-seeking activities.

Research limitations/implications: This research is only limited to the variables that will be tested in a quantitative method.

Practical implications: It is foreseen that the findings will help various parties, including the government, to create better models for helping rural low-income jobseekers use SSA in job-seeking for a better opportunity to get hired. It is also considered a long-term strategy to become a high-income nation.

Originality/value: The research on SSA among rural low-income job seekers is fascinating. A practical framework based on social software applications among rural low-income job seekers will be developed as a guideline to support the government's effort to increase awareness among low-income communities on how to use the SSA to seek jobs efficiently.

Keywords: Technology acceptance, social software applications, job seeking, rural low-income, Malaysia

Introduction

Social software application (SSA) is known as social network sites or social media (Tamrin, Norman, & Hamid, 2017), defined as any online resource designed to facilitate individual engagement. Meanwhile, social networking sites (SNS) and social media refer to applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and YouTube, which have been widely used for many years to interact with each user socially. However, inconsistencies in the usage of these terms may confuse. Therefore, it is helpful to apply the term SSA to refer to the complete spectrum of social software that is currently available and accessible across all communication channels, including desktops, laptops, and mobile devices (Tamrin, Norman, & Hamid, 2017). Therefore, in this research, the term SSA refers to any social networking applications that provide social online services, including job seeking activities.

Naeem (2021) highlighted that SSA is important in providing global connectivity to users. Platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook allow professionals, entrepreneurs, and individuals to network, exchange ideas, and form collaborations. Meanwhile, Ansari and Khan (2020) stated that many users engaged in different forms of the SSA for professional purposes, demonstrating its growing importance in facilitating meaningful connections. It has become a hub for knowledge dissemination and collaboration in academic and professional settings (Ansari & Khan, 2020). Boudry & Durand-Barthez (2020) added a surge in using platforms like ResearchGate and Academia.edu for sharing research findings and connecting with academic peers. Collaboration tools embedded in applications like Slack and Microsoft Teams have revolutionized teamwork in professional environments (Breideband, et al., 2022)

Furthermore, SSAs are indispensable marketing tools for businesses and entrepreneurs. The capability to reach a broad audience through platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter has transformed digital marketing strategies. Garg, Gupta, Dzever, Sivarajah, and Kumar (2020) stated that businesses that effectively utilize SSA had seen a significant increase in brand awareness and customer engagement. On the other hand, businesses and researchers leverage SSA for data collection and analysis. These platforms offer valuable insights into consumer behavior, preferences, and trends. Artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms have enhanced the ability to derive actionable insights from social data (Hayes, et al., 2021).

Despite all the advantages, this research overlooked SSA usage for economic-related activities such as job seeking. Thus far, little is known about how this SSA can connect low-income jobseekers to the country's economic activities. It is essential to understand how low-income jobseekers, particularly those in rural areas, use SSA to improve their economic standing. Hence, to address the gap elaborated above, the researchers aim to examine the rural low-income jobseekers' level of acceptance towards job search by using SSA. This research also aligns with the interest of the Twelfth Malaysia Plan (RMK12, 2021), which aims to widen the digital services to the low-income community in Malaysia, known as the Bottom 40 (B40). Conversely, the B40 group represents the bottom-tier households with an income below RM 4,850 (JobStreet, 2023).

This research also adopted the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to determine the acceptance of the SSA for job seeking activities among rural low-income jobseekers. The adoption of TAM also measures how these groups of people perceive the usefulness and ease of use of the SSA as a support in helping them find jobs. Then, the findings are expected to highlight the significant emphasis on developing a more compelling online job search

platform, especially using the SSA. There are four sections in this research, which are generally organized accordingly. Section 2 supplies the related literature to support this research's importance. It is then followed by Section 3, which reports on the methodology that will be used throughout the research. Finally, Section 4 concludes the research.

Literature Review

SSA is a well-known portable, connectable, and affordable platform that is experiencing rapid popularity worldwide, to the extent that they are quickly substituting website job platforms. This trend has made SSA indispensable in revolutionizing how individuals connect, especially job seeking. As a result, SSA is expected to play a more important role in people's lives, especially those in rural low-income populations. This section provides the background to this study, including its research model and related works.

Technology Acceptance and Usage Behavioral Model

Several models have been used to explain users' technology acceptance and usage behavior. They include the theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), the technology acceptance model (TAM) (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, User acceptance of computer technology: A comparison of two theoretical models, 1989), the theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), the diffusion of innovation (Rogers, 1995) and the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003). Among these models, TAM has been asserted to be robust for evaluating technology acceptance and usage. It posits that perceived usefulness and ease of use influence user behavior towards technology. Recent research has further affirmed TAM's relevance. Al-Marouf, Salloum, Hassanien, and Shaalan (2023) found that individuals are more likely to adopt new technologies when they perceive them as beneficial for their tasks. Moreover, a study by (Chang & Chen, 2021) indicated that ease of use significantly impacts users' willingness to embrace and utilize technology. These findings underscore TAM's enduring significance in understanding and predicting user acceptance and usage behavior toward technology across various domains.

Furthermore, there are four vital constructs in TAM as follows:

1. Perceived usefulness (PU) is defined as a measure whereby a prospective user considers that the use of a particular system/technology can enhance their performance in an activity (Davis, 1989)
2. Perceived ease of use (PE) is defined as a measure whereby the prospective user considers that the use of a particular system/technology implies no effort (Davis, 1989)
3. Usage behavior, which is concerned with the prospective user's evaluation of the desirability of employing the system/technology (Davis, 1989)
4. Intention to use components measures the prospective user's likelihood to employ the system/technology (Davis, 1989).

The relationships theorized by TAM follow that PU and PE influence usage behavior accordingly, consequently influencing the intention to use.

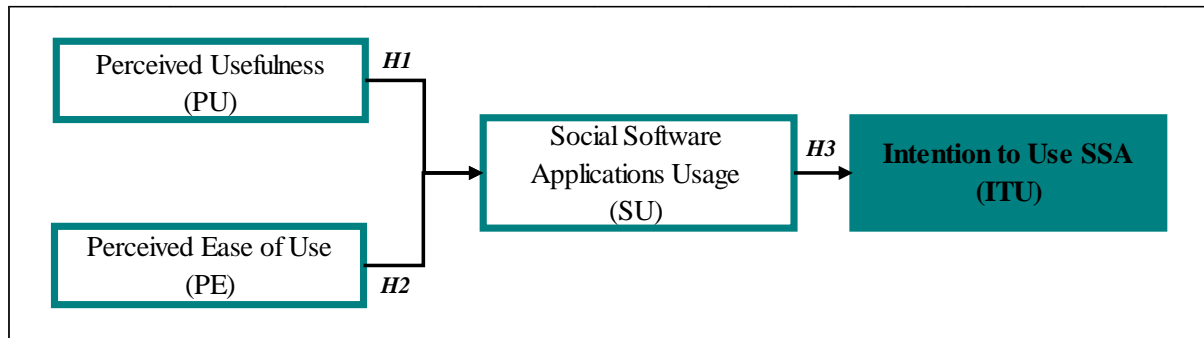


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of The SSA Acceptance among Rural Low-Income Jobseekers

Figure 1 illustrates the adaption of TAM into this research, which employed the PU and PE factors to determine the acceptance of rural low-income job seekers towards SSA usage. Both factors will then influence the users' behavior in using SSA (SU), which will then influence the users' intention to use SSA for job seeking purposes. Based on TAM, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1: *There is a significant relationship between the perceived usefulness and the SSA usage among rural low-income jobseekers (PU → SU)*

H2: *There is a significant relationship between perceived ease of use and SSA usage among rural low-income jobseekers (PE → SU)*

H3: *There is a significant relationship between SSA usage and the intention to use SSA for job seeking among rural low-income jobseekers (SU → ITU).*

Online Job Seeking

Technology has undoubtedly changed the world's landscape. For example, the accessibility of the Internet has changed the way people look for jobs. Previously, job seekers had to rely on newspaper postings and mouth-to-mouth information to look for an open vacancy. Today, job seekers can cast a broader net to apply to more job openings online, at an instant, at any time, and in any place. There are seemingly endless online options for job applications. Several job vacancy websites have served Malaysia, such as JobStreet, JobsCentral Malaysia, Indeed, MauKerja, JobsMalaysia, and many more appropriate places to look for various jobs. Apart from these, the SSA platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn, allow job seekers to reach out to potential employers easily and vice versa. Wise (2023) stated that there are 58 million companies listed on the SSA, and 87% of recruiters use LinkedIn to recruit new employees. With more than 930 million LinkedIn users in 2023 (Apfelbaum, 2023), SSA is an essential tool for companies searching to expand their talent pool. This pool of individuals is extended, as the nature of SSA also allows recruiters to identify and target, apart from active users, talented candidates who are passive or semi-passive and lure them to prospective job positions. In fact, through SSA platforms, recruiters can post job advertisements to attract potential applicants who are not actively looking for a job. Rather than the costly and time-consuming traditional ways of staffing with interviews and tests, hiring through SSA offers recruiters free access to prospects' profiles and an instant means of communication. LinkedIn profiles allow users to create an idealized portrait by displaying their skills to recruiters and peers. Indeed, LinkedIn asks members to highlight their relevant skills, promoting their abilities and strengths and urging them to complete their

profiles through getting recommendations and praise from peers/colleagues and clients for their performance or skills.

Social Software Applications among Rural Low-Income Group

In the past decade, the rapid advancement of SSA has transformed the global digital landscape. While urban populations have readily embraced these technologies, their adoption and impact on rural low-income groups have garnered increasing attention. This research examines recent studies to provide a comprehensive overview of the utilization and effects of SSA within rural low-income communities. Access to reliable internet connectivity remains a critical factor influencing the adoption of SSA among rural low-income people (Wanof, 2023). Recent studies by Ndulu, Ngwenya, and Setlhalogile (2022) highlight the persistence of the digital divide, with limited infrastructure and affordability as primary barriers. Initiatives such as community-based Wi-Fi networks and mobile internet schemes have shown promise in narrowing this gap, yet challenges persist.

Recent research reveals that social software applications hold substantial promise for enhancing the lives of individuals in rural, low-income communities. By addressing access issues, promoting community building, and leveraging the potential for empowerment, these platforms can serve as catalysts for positive socio-economic change. However, it is essential to acknowledge and navigate the challenges and ethical considerations inherent to this integration, ensuring that the benefits of technology are equitably distributed across all segments of society.

Social Software Applications among Rural Low-income Jobseekers

Traditionally, rural areas faced challenges accessing job fairs, workshops, and networking events held predominantly in urban centers. However, with the advent of SSA, these barriers are mitigated. Digital platforms facilitate virtual participation in webinars, workshops, and networking groups, offering rural jobseekers a level playing field. For low-income individuals in rural areas, SSA allows them to present themselves professionally without the immediate burden of socio-economic status. Wang, Scott, Artemenko, Miceli, and Berendt (2023) highlight that virtual interactions can diminish initial biases, enabling jobseekers to be evaluated based on their skills and experience rather than preconceived notions.

Despite the evident advantages, challenges persist. Limited digital literacy and access to technology continue to be significant barriers for some rural low-income jobseekers. (Amoah & Jibril, 2020) identified that rural low-income individuals faced difficulties navigating and effectively utilizing SSA. Furthermore, concerns regarding privacy and security may hinder full adoption. Rural jobseekers may be more cautious about sharing personal information online, potentially limiting their engagement on social platforms. Falloon (2020) added that targeted education and awareness campaigns are crucial in addressing these concerns.

Methodology

This research investigates the degree of SSA usage acceptance among rural low-income jobseekers. The TAM model will examine the relationship between SSA usage and job seeking among the participants.

Questionnaire Construction

A set of survey questionnaires will be used in this research, which will be segmented into three sections. Section A focuses on the demographic background. Meanwhile, Section B hinges on job seeking via SSA. Lastly, Section C examines the relationship between SSA

usage and job seeking. Furthermore, the researchers will develop Sections A and B based on the suitability of the research.

Meanwhile, Section C will be adapted from previous research by Davis (1989). Then, the selected experts will validate the questionnaire's accuracy and validity. Besides that, the questionnaire will be developed in Malay (the official language of Malaysia) to ensure that all the participants can understand the intention of the questionnaire well. The questionnaire also consists of informed consent that mainly explains the purpose of the study, voluntary participation in the survey, and assurance that their response/data will only be used in this study and will be strictly treated as confidential. Hence, only those who agreed to participate in the research will continue to respond to the survey.

Section A: Demographic Information

Section A includes participants' demographic information, including gender, age, marital status, education, race, employment status, and monthly income.

Section B: Job Seeking via Social Software Applications

Section B consists of a more extensive study. The questions are designed to capture participants' feedback regarding accessing and using SSA in job seeking.

Section C: Acceptance of SSA Usage in Job Seeking

Section C consists of the four components of TAM, which are perceived usefulness (PU), perceived ease of use (PE), SSA Usage (SU), and intention to use (ITU). All the components will measure the rural low-income jobseekers' acceptance of SSA usage in seeking jobs. Then, all the questionnaire items will use a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 5, indicating strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Table 1 summarizes the construction of the questionnaire.

Table 1: Questionnaire Construction

Section	Items
Section A: Demographic background	Gender Age Marital status Education Race Employment status Monthly income
Section B: Job Seeking via Social Software Applications	It consists of questions that capture participants' feedback regarding accessing and using SSA in job-seeking
Section C: Acceptance of SSA Usage in Job-Seeking	Perceived Usefulness Perceived Ease of Use SSA Usage Intention to Use SSA

Sampling and Data Collection

The target population of this research will comprise rural low-income Malaysians with a monthly income of below RM4,850 and who are currently and actively seeking jobs. The Inland Revenue Board of Malaysia (IRBM) will provide the respondent list. Then, the survey will be conducted by hired enumerators who will guide the individual participants one by one in answering the survey to ensure a high rate of returned surveys with high validity.

Data Analysis

Once data is collected, it will be analyzed by employing the Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) tool. It is often used by many researchers today and is asserted to be a dynamic method for analyzing research data (Ali, Amin, & Cobanoglu, 2016). It is shown to be suitable for use in the analysis of abnormally distributed data. Meanwhile, Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2013) reported that using PLS-SEM yields more robust results, especially when skewed data. PLS-SEM requires a sample size of 10 times the number of indicators of the construct with the most significant number of indicators in the model (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). In this study, the PLS-SEM is a powerful tool in providing evidence of the reliability and validity of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM).

Discussion and Conclusion

How Malaysia's low-income population (B40) benefits from SSA is little known. As noted earlier, this research focuses on the acceptance of Social Software Applications (SSA) usage among rural low-income jobseekers in seeking jobs. Using the respondents in rural low-income areas, the researchers will apply the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) for the analysis. To date, there is a lack of innovative methods to measure SSA usage among rural low-income jobseekers, which might be one of the reasons for the existing theoretical gap. This research, then, offers several valuable contributions to the information systems (IS) literature by exploring the components of SSA in the context of job seeking among rural low-income jobseekers.

The results of this research also will implicate in multiple ways: 1) to broaden the understanding of SSA usage in job seeking among the rural low-income population; (2) to identify the factors of intention to use SSA in job seeking, and finally (3) to propose a

conceptual framework of the SSA acceptance among rural low-income jobseekers that can be used as a guideline for practitioners to design policies and procedures that can help to promote the usage of SSA among those in the low-income population. It is hoped that the government, communities, and technologists can use the findings to create future economic, societal, and technological impacts.

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