

ADOPTION ATTITUDE AND CONTINUANCE INTENTION TO ONLINE FINFLUENCER VIDEO USAGE: THE ROLE OF TRUST*

Emine Cigdem Canatan¹, Ali Coskun², and Aysegul Toker³

¹*Institute for Graduate Studies in Social Sciences, Management Department, Bogaziçi University, Istanbul, Turkey*

²*Assoc. Dr., Institute for Graduate Studies in Social Sciences, Management Department, Bogaziçi University, Istanbul, Turkey*

³*Prof. Dr., Sabanci Business School, Sabanci University, Istanbul, Turkey*

ABSTRACT

The popularity of online financial videos created by finfluencers (finance influencers) has increased significantly in recent years, with a notable and enduring user preference for financial content encompassing general economic news, cryptocurrencies, stocks, and other investment instruments. This study investigated the antecedents of attitude towards watching online finfluencer videos and the factors influencing viewers' intention to continue watching them. In order to address this issue, a model is developed that examines trust-based determinants, as well as additional antecedents, including perceived usefulness (PU), perceived ease of use (PEU), perceived content quality (PCE), perceived behavioral control (PBC), and subjective norm (SN), perceived enjoyment (PE), and perceived behavioral control (PBC), as factors that impact users' attitude towards watching online finfluencer videos. We also explore financial literacy's role in moderating the relationship between trust-based determinants and other antecedents and attitude toward watching online financial videos created by influencers. This study is intended to provide insights into the antecedents of attitude towards watching online financial videos and continuance intention to use them. Online content creators can use the findings of this study to develop strategies to increase the popularity of their online financial videos.

KEYWORDS

Finfluencer, Online Finance Videos, ECM, Trust

1. INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the antecedents of attitude towards watching online finfluencer videos and the factors that influence viewers' intention to continue watching them. Scholars indicate that finfluencers are currently a niche group, but they are expected to proliferate in the coming years, especially as designated sections for them on social media platforms become more popular (e.g., #FinTok, #FinTwit, #StockTok, #Findependence) (de Regt, 2023) because there is a growing demand for financial videos especially by retail investors. Therefore, understanding the antecedents which create a habit in the user to watch a certain finfluencer will be beneficial to guide the finfluencers and other content creators to create more attractive finance videos.

As of present, the field of finfluencers remains largely under-researched. Notably, extensive research exists on influencers operating within other domains such as beauty and sports. The existing literature clearly favors fashion and beauty sectors according to the metaanalysis of Vrontis on social media influencer marketing (Vrontis et al., 2021). Numerous research on sports social media influencers such as studies of Silva et al. (2021), Peixoto (2022), Malenović (2016) illustrate the body of research on sports domain.

However, the investigation of the influencer phenomenon remains underexplored. Consequently, the purpose of this research is to alleviate the void in the academic literature by providing new insights. It is believed that this inquiry will hold some significant practical implications as well.

This paper is reflecting work-in-progress of the current research. We are reflecting the conceptual model in this theoretical paper. Therefore, this is still a concept paper and data will be fed to test in the future stages of the research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Rise of Social Media Influencers

Over half of the global population, equivalent to 4.76 billion individuals worldwide, utilize social media or social networking sites (SNS). The individuals consuming content in social media are also active in generating and disseminating it, resulting in assuming the role of content creators (Borchers, 2019). Due to the Internet's capacity for scalability and rapid diffusion, specific individuals are able to garner a significant audience and transform into social media influencers, SMI, providing guidance to their followers (Vrontis et al., 2021).

SMI is a "content generator who has a status of expertise in a specific area, who has cultivated a sizable number of captive followers by regularly producing valuable content via social media" (Lou and Yuan, 2019 & Farrell, 2022).

The outbreak of the pandemic has led to a significant expansion in the size of the influencer market. The global market for influencer marketing has exhibited a more than twofold increase in size since 2019 (Statista, 2023).

2.2 The Rise of Investing and Finfluencers

The pandemic has significantly impacted investment trends as well, with a rising prevalence of retail investors. In 2020, retail trading hit a 10-year high in the United States, representing 19.5% of all order flow in the equities markets, according to Bloomberg Intelligence (2021) figures, marking a rise of around 4.5% compared to the previous year and nearly twice the number of retail investor trades in 2010.

During the pandemic, more people became interested in investing due to increased savings gained with lockdowns and restrictions on travel. On the other hand, millions of people who faced increased uncertainty regarding their careers started to think more seriously about how to manage their financial resources (de Regt, 2023).

Low-interest rates in response to the pandemic made it less attractive to keep money in savings accounts. As a result, some people turned to investing to earn a higher return on their money (Coban, 2023). Also, the stock market experienced significant volatility during the pandemic, creating opportunities for investors. Furthermore, with more people working from home, retail investors had more time to research investment opportunities, increasing their interest in investing.

This environment created an increasing demand for accessible financial information, which has led to the proliferation of finance influencers, or "Finfluencers". Finfluencers provide advice on various financial topics through short, light-hearted videos posted on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. This trend highlights a shift from traditional financial services towards informal, self-directed financial education, mostly free and easy to access (de Regt, 2023). The term "finfluencer" is also defined as a person or entity with an outsized impact on investor decisions through social media influence (Guan, 2022).

In addition to the increase in the volume of investment and the increasing number of new retail investors, all these factors also contributed to the diversification of types of investments. In the past, most people invested in traditional investments like stocks and bonds. However, in recent years, there has been a growing interest in alternative investments like cryptocurrency or equity crowdfunding (Alzahrani, S. et al, 2019) (Schwienbacher, A., 2019). Diversifying alternative investment types encouraged retail investors to learn and invest more. In parallel with the growing demand for influencer videos, there is increased content production by finfluencers on these diverse investment instruments.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To address the research question, a model was developed to examine the antecedents of finfluencer-watching continuance intention. This was done by exploring relevant theories and the constructs in each theory to determine the independent variables in the model. This study uses the theoretical foundations of the Expectation Confirmation Model (ECM), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), and trust to investigate the factors that influence users' adoption attitude and continuance intention of watching finfluencer videos:

3.1 The Expectation Confirmation Model (ECM) of IT continuance

Bhattacharjee (2001) proposed the ECM of IT continuance based on the congruence between individuals' continued IT usage decisions and consumers' repeat purchase decisions. The ECM posits that an individual's intention to continue using an information technology (IT) system is dependent on three variables: user satisfaction, confirmation of expectations, and perceived usefulness. It applies to studying user behavior in finance video and finfluencer watching as it affects repeat use. The ECM has been used to understand e-learning continuance intention, as consumers watch finfluencers for financial information akin to e-learning via the Internet.

3.2 The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

TAM provides insights into how users will adopt and use a new technology. The model is based on two key constructs: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. TAM posits that perceived usefulness and ease of use directly impact users' attitudes toward using the system. Attitude, in turn, influences users' behavioral intention to use the system. Behavioral intention is the likelihood that users will actually use the system. (Davis, 1989). TAM can assist us in clarifying a crucial aspect of the relationship between the attitude to watch finfluencer videos and the intention to continue using them.

3.3 The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

TPB is an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). It postulates that individuals' behavioral intentions are determinants of their actual behavior. Behavioral intention is a function of three determinants: attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. It has been shown to be a reliable and valid predictor of behavior, also in the IT adoption context (Ajzen, I., 1991).

3.4 Trust

Trust is generally defined as the belief in the other party having a high level of ability, integrity and benevolence (Luhmann, 1979; Mayer et al., 1995). In situations where there is risk, uncertainty, and interdependence, trust plays a central role. By establishing trust, consumers can subjectively eliminate potentially undesirable actions by the trusted party, thereby reducing perceived risks to a manageable level (Mayer et al., 1995). Trusting beliefs in finfluencer videos is particularly important because this content consists of information about financial markets, news, dynamics, and diverse information about financial products. Furthermore, sometimes finfluencers imply or openly share investment advice which involves a great deal of risk, especially for novice and inexperienced investors.

In recent years, trust in technology has become a key factor in research on technology adoption in Information Systems research. Due to the interdependent relationship between trust in technology, video content, and content creators, our study incorporates trust models from both the Information Systems literature (McKnight et al., 2002, 2001, 2005) and the trust construct in Influencer Marketing and Celebrity literature (Vrontis et al., 2021) (Ohanian, R., 1990). Trust in technology use is important for initial and continued use (Thatcher et al., 2011, McKnight et al., 2011).

Scholars have concluded that social media influencers are more influential, credible, and relatable than traditional celebrity endorsers (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Influencers are found to be trusted because they specialize in a category, like fashion or gaming. This trust is akin to the trust a person has in their friends (Swant, 2016, Campbell, 2022). Empirical evidence reveals that consumers are likely to invest in blind faith in the content shared on social media groups (Shareef et al., 2020; Vrontis et al., 2021). Studies have shown that trust in influencers leads to increased sales and stronger relationships (Vrontis et al., 2021).

In addition to trust, we incorporated two additional independent variables in the antecedents and explored their effect on attitude toward watching finfluencer videos. We hypothesize that perceived content quality and perceived enjoyment were significant predictors of attitude. These constructs are consistent with the influencer adoption literature (Vrontis et al., 2021).

Regarding perceived content quality, people are more likely to watch videos that they perceive to be high quality.

For the perceived enjoyment factor, people are more likely to watch videos that they find enjoyable. When individuals are in the playfulness state, they will find the interaction intrinsically interesting (Moon and Kim, 2001).

Lastly, we explore financial literacy's role in moderating the relationship between trust-based determinants and other antecedents and attitude towards watching online financial videos created by finfluencers. Financial literacy is defined as the ability to read, analyze, manage, and communicate about the personal financial conditions that affect material well-being (Anderson et al., 2000, Allgood et al, 2016).

4. RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

The research model in Figure 1 is based on the trust models, ECM, TAM, and TPB.

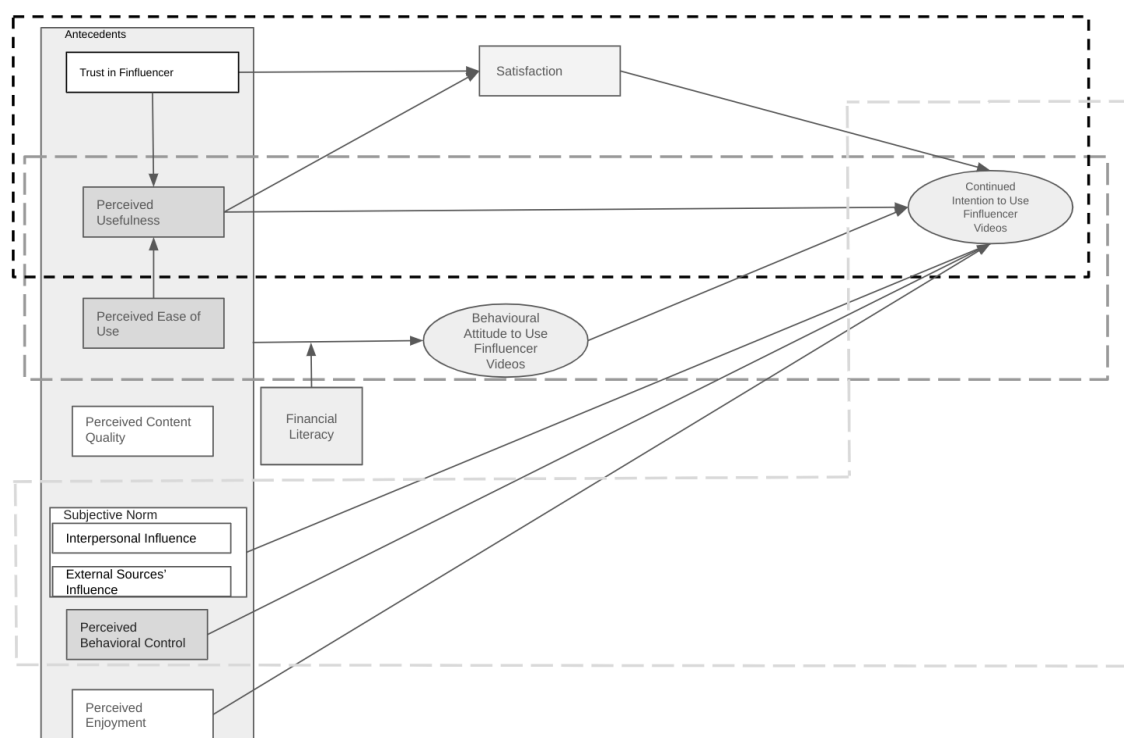


Figure 1. Research Model

H1. Users' satisfaction with Finfluencer Videos (FV) is positively related to their Continued FV Usage intention.

H2. Users' Trust is positively related to their Satisfaction with FV.

H3. Users' Perceived Usefulness of FV is positively related to their Satisfaction with FV. H4. Users' Perceived Usefulness of FV is positively related to their Continued FV Usage Intention. H5. Users' Trust is positively related to their Perceived Usefulness of FV.

H6. Perceived Usefulness is positively related to Behavioral Attitude toward FV.

H7. Perceived Ease of Use is positively related to Behavioral Attitude toward FV.

H8. Perceived Ease of Use is positively related to Perceived Usefulness of FV.

H9. Behavioral Attitude toward FV is positively related to the Continued Intention to use FV.

H10. Subjective Norm is positively related to the Continued Intention to use FV.

H11. Perceived Behavioral Control is positively related to the Continued Intention to use FV.

H12. Perceived Enjoyment is positively related to the Attitude toward FV.

H13. Perceived Enjoyment is positively related to the Continued Intention to use FV.

H14. Perceived Content Quality is positively related to the Behavioral Attitude toward FV.

H15. Perceived Financial Literacy is a moderator between the antecedents and the Behavioral Attitude toward FV; the higher the Perceived Financial Literacy, the stronger the relation between Antecedents of Attitude to Use FV and Attitude toward FV.

H16. Subjective Norm is positively related to the Attitude toward FV.

5. METHODOLOGY

The theoretical research model was constructed utilizing the previously mentioned Information Systems and Influencer Marketing constructs. This paper is yet still a concept paper and data will feed to test in the future stages of the research. In order to examine the proposed theoretical research model, a scale was developed and is intended to be distributed as an online survey. The objective is to gather feedback from a minimum sample size of 300 in order to evaluate the 16 hypotheses. We aim for 18-65 age and an equal representation of female and male. Data for this study will be collected from a convenience sampling and snowball sampling of internet users, who will participate in the research voluntarily via an online questionnaire

6. CONCLUSION

We think that trust plays a crucial role in watching a finfluencer and also in the continued watching behavior. Because relying on a finfluencer video involves uncertainty and risk, developing trusting beliefs in them is critical for the users. In the present study, we position trust in finfluencer videos as an immediate antecedent of perceived usefulness and satisfaction. Our trust conceptualizations are based on McKnight et al.'s trust models (2002) and Xiao's (2018) influencer marketing and Ohanian's (1990) celebrity trust aspect. Both trust and satisfaction have been shown to have a positive influence over the continuance intention to use an IT platform (Lee, 2010). Therefore, we propose that trust will positively moderate the relationship between users' satisfaction and continuance intention.

We hypothesize that high perceived financial literacy will strengthen the positive relationship between antecedents and attitude to watch finfluencer videos. This is because individuals with a higher level of financial literacy are more likely to recognize the value of financial information presented in these videos. Individuals with high perceived financial literacy may be more likely to be receptive to finfluencers' messages and engage with financial content.

By gaining insight into the antecedents of watching attitude, financial content creators on social media can enhance the quality and relevance of finance video content to cater better to viewers' requirements. The rise of individual investors has led to a correlation between finfluencer viewing habits and the demand for financial guidance. Investigating the factors that influence attitudes towards finfluencer videos can offer valuable insights to engage and educate individual investors on financial matters, leading to the development of more effective financial education programs and a more informed investor community.

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