Abstract

A herding cue is a lean information signal that an individual receives about the aggregate number of others who have engaged in a behavior that may result in herd behavior. Given the ease with which they can be leveraged as implementation interventions or design features on online sites, herding cues hold the promise to provide a means to influence adoption behaviors. Yet, little attention has been devoted in the IS adoption literature to understanding the effects of herding cues. Given that herding cues are just one of several forms of social influence on adoption behaviors and are relatively lean in nature, understanding their viability as an implementation intervention necessitates understanding their effects in the presence of (1) other forms of social influence, which also serve to reduce uncertainty and signal the appropriateness of technology adoption, and (2) an individual’s own beliefs about adopting. In this vein, we conducted a randomized field experiment to examine the use of a herding cue as an implementation intervention to hasten adoption behaviors. The research model was evaluated using survival analysis by combining the data from the field experiment with two waves of surveys, and archival logs of adoption. Our results show that a herding cue (1) directly impacts the time it takes an individual to adopt a technology, (2) amplifies the effects of peer behaviors (another type of informative social influence), but has no impact on the effect of subjective norm (a form of normative social influence), and (3) dampens the effects of an individual’s private beliefs about the usefulness of a technology. Our paper disentangles herding information signals to define a herding cue as distinct from other herd behavior triggers, explores how it may interact with other forms of social influences and private beliefs to influence adoption behaviors, and, on a practical level, provides evidence of how a herding cue can be a tangible intervention to accelerate technology adoption.

Keywords: Herding cue, herd behavior, social influence, time of adoption, randomized field experiment