Adopting Internal Social Media: An Empirical Study Based on The Technology Acceptance Model

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Abstract

Internal social media offers companies an internal communications channel that incorporates the participatory functionalities inherent to external social networking sites. The tool allows companies to foster social relationships and meet emotional needs in the workplace, while at the same time fulfilling the traditional functions associated with internal communications. This research aims to analyze the acceptance process by assessing an extended model based on the Technology Acceptance Model. The research model incorporates the perception of being surveilled as an inhibitor in the intention to use the application. Structural equation modeling was performed to test the model on the data collected from 360 employees of two companies that have adopted the Happÿdonia application as an internal communications channel. The perceived ease of use and the perceived usefulness of this tool positively influenced the intention to use it, whereas the perceived surveillance had a negative influence. The article makes several proposals for those responsible for internal communications as well as for developers who have to build these platforms.

Keywords: Internal social media, TAM model, Internal communication, Perceived ease of use, Perceived usefulness, Perceived surveillance

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1. Introduction

Internal communications implies managing interdependence between the organization and employees, and among colleagues themselves (Men & Bowen, 2017). This function is more relevant for large companies. Research has linked good internal communications practices to work outcomes, such as employee satisfaction (Men, 2014), employee engagement (Kang & Sung, 2017; Tkalac Verčič & Pološki Vokić, 2017), and life satisfaction (Sinčić Ćorić et al., 2020). One difficulty that communications managers must face is implementing the correct channels and policies that allow the flow of information for performing work tasks while also assuring that the mutual interdependence among all those involved is not harmed (Maarit Lipiäinen et al., 2014; Tkalac et al., 2020). When this obstacle is overcome, internal communications is really useful in strengthening identification with the organization (Men et al., 2020).

In recent years, social networking sites have risen in popularity among internet users. In the US, approximately 70% of adults say they have used a social media site (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). This type of site started by publicly displaying the connections that one user had established with other users of the same site (Donath & Boyd, 2004). It rapidly evolved to provide content creation and sharing, as well as the possibility of having public conversations (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). As this online space attracted the interest of many users (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019), some companies developed internal platforms to emulate the sort of connection, communications, and interaction inherent to this popular online space. As well as the traditional functions of internal communications, internal social media (ISM) provides digital channels, immediate access to information, and most importantly, the social dynamics that help employees fulfill social and emotional needs in the workplace (Chu, 2020; Leonardi et al., 2013; Leonardi & Vaast, 2016). The unexpected appearance of COVID-19 has increased the process of digitalizing internal communications and enhancing interest in ISM (Tkalac Verčič et al., 2024). In fact, the connection between ISM usage and key work-related psychological outcomes has garnered the interest of scholars, as has been the case with employee satisfaction (Chu, 2020; Men, 2014) or work engagement (van Zoonen & Banghart, 2018).

As happens with every innovation, there is resistance to incorporating ISM. The channel could be associated with free time, and consequently its use would blur the boundaries between work and personal interests (Andreassen et al., 2014; van Zoonen et al., 2017). Furthermore, it is crucial that senior management are involved in the more social activities embedded in this tool so that employees also participate in them (Madsen, 2017). Nevertheless, there is a lack of empirical evidence to understand useful ways to facilitate the acceptance of this communications system. The present research addresses this gap by studying the adoption of one ISM application in two companies. The case under study is Happÿdonia, a mobile application that joins internal communications functionalities with a variety of tools and interfaces typical of social media. The theoretical background for this research arises from the technology acceptance model (TAM). This model was introduced by Davis (1989), and it explains acceptance through the perceptions toward the information system and the intention to use it. The main perceptions proposed by the TAM model, which influence the final acceptance, are ease of use and usefulness. The model has been widely used in information systems research due to its assumptions and also the possibility of incorporating other

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psychological factors (Ma, 2021; Rampersad et al., 2012; Yousafzai et al., 2007a, 2007b). The study of digital technology acceptance is more crucial among older adults (Shang et al., 2024). One of the dangers faced by internal communications policies is the fear of being surveilled (Alge et al., 2006). Monitoring performance processes are especially easy to implement in remote work settings and in digital communications. When employees consider themselves under such control, they tend to remain silent and reluctant to use internal digital channels (Madsen, 2018). This sense of threat is included in the TAM model developed in this research as an inhibitor for using ISM.

This article makes two main contributions to the research literature in information systems. First, the ISM acceptance based on the TAM model has been barely studied. Additionally, there is scant empirical evidence of the acceptance process of this technology. In this regard, the present study will provide some insights in this direction. Second, the extended TAM model proposed in this research includes the perceived surveillance as a critical factor that influences the intention of using ISM. Given the rise of social media and the digital tools in internal communications (Tkalac Verčič et al., 2024), it is reasonably expected that ISM will grow in upcoming years. Therefore, this research will help academics to better understand the process of adopting ISM and will also benefit those implementing it. In this way, the paper will serve to reflect on ISM acceptance so that it might be more useful for employees and organizations.

The rest of the article is structured as follows. The following section revises the research literature and develops the model to be assessed. The third section explains the materials and methodology used in the research, which is based on structural equation analysis. The fourth section describes the sample and the results obtained. The fifth section contains the discussion of the results, the practical implications, the limitations of the study, and some future lines of research. The article ends with a brief concluding section.

2. Literature review

2.1 Internal communications

Communication serves four main functions in a company: it provides employees with information, controls individual behaviors, fosters motivation among employees, and provides a means for emotional expression (Robbins & Judge, 2015). From an operational standpoint, the three first functions directly influence individual performance. Information sharing helps to make the right decisions, control is derived from the company's hierarchical structure, and motivation comes from the clear definition of tasks and expectations. Internal communications also entails an intangible value as it deals with personal interactions and emotional expression, so that employees can find an important way to fulfill their social needs at work (Tkalac Verčič et al., 2024). Both work- and social-related aspects of internal communications reflect the importance of managing interdependence and relationships in the best possible way, not only between the organization and its employees, but also among coworkers (Men & Bowen, 2017).
In the context of managing interdependence, Grunig (1992) proposed conceiving internal communications under the lens of public relations. This approach implies sharing common goals with the internal public. Grunig advocated for building two-way symmetrical communications between the different groups, as opposed to a top-down flow that shapes the interpersonal relationships in a dominant and rigid manner. When symmetrical communications is perceived in a company, it is more likely to have a positive emotional culture and find behaviors that go beyond normative requirements (Men & Yue, 2019); to reduce churn and promote employee engagement (Kang & Sung, 2017), and to stimulate a work environment that is more prone to initiative and competence (Men & Sung, 2022). These positive contributions coming from two-way communications become more evident when serious problems arise in a company. Research has shown the influence of corporate symmetrical communications and supportive peer communications on employees' wellbeing during the circumstances from the COVID-19 pandemic (Qin & Men, 2023).

Nevertheless, it is not easy to balance two-way communications with the hierarchical structure of a company. In this context, ISM has recently emerged as a communications tool that can combine the operational benefits of sharing information with the emotional satisfaction of meeting social needs in the workplace. ISM incorporates the communications dynamics of social networking sites as its distinctive feature. This latter space was intended to build an online personal profile, share content updates, and make the user's list of contacts visible (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). In organizations, ISM provides employees with the tools to communicate messages with coworkers, broadcast content to groups or to the whole company, share content linked to themselves, and inspect the profile of other users (Leonardi et al., 2013). ISM allows different levels of activities; users can consume content posted, converse with other users by commenting or reacting to posts, and contribute by creating content and fostering participation (Men et al., 2020). As ISM influences both operational and social aspects of communications, there has been growing interest in studying its effects on employee outcomes (Chu, 2020). Research has provided evidence of a positive influence between ISM usage and employee satisfaction (Chu, 2020; Men, 2014), work performance (Koo et al., 2011), company advocacy (Ewing et al., 2019), and identification with the organization (Madsen, 2018; Men et al., 2020). These positive outcomes suggest strategic key possibilities for companies that go beyond internal communications. However, there is scant evidence about the way this communications channel is accepted by employees. The present research intends to address this gap by studying the ISM acceptance process through the lens of a model that integrates operational demands with inhibiting perceptions.

2.2 Technology acceptance model

Incorporating innovation takes time as it must overcome various difficulties and resistance. In information technologies, Davis (1989) proposed the TAM model to explain the adoption of a particular innovation. This model arises from the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), which suggests that the intention of a particular behavior depends on individual beliefs and personal attitude. The theory establishes that these beliefs are influenced by the context where the behavior takes place (Herrero Crespo et al., 2006). According to this approach, Davis (1989)

identified two major perceptions that determine the acceptance and use of a new technology: the usefulness and the ease of use. Davies et al. (1989) understood perceived usefulness as the degree to which a user thinks that a particular tool will increase their performance. This perception relates to aspects such as saving time, increased job effectiveness, and the specific contribution to the work process. Despite the variable being initially thought for work performance, it has been applied to other settings, such as internet shopping (Pavlou, 2003; Sanz Blas et al., 2008) or gamification (Aguiar-Castillo et al., 2021). On the other hand, perceived ease of use relates to the degree of effort that a user thinks the new tool requires. This effort can imply a physical task or mental activity, and it includes the learning process needed to use the technology. Additionally, both perceptions are interrelated (Davis 1989); the perceived ease of use contributes to increasing the perceived usefulness, as the effort saved from using the technology can be deployed in accomplishing more tasks, with the new tool being seen as more beneficial (Venkatesh, 2000).

The TAM model provides a parsimonious and versatile model to many information technologies (Y. Lee et al., 2003). In fact, it has been applied to a wide range of information technologies with valid results of predicting the acceptance of the innovations (Yousafzai et al., 2007a, 2007b). This has been the case with e-commerce (Fenech & O'Cass, 2001; Herrero Crespo et al., 2006; Pavlou, 2003; Sanz Blas et al., 2008), Facebook commerce (Alonso-Dos-Santos et al., 2020), mobile commerce (Roy, 2017), intranets (Horton et al., 2001), digital healthcare wearable technologies (Zin et al., 2023), gamification-based learning (Aguiar-Castillo et al., 2021), sport consumption (Ha et al., 2017), social networking sites (Aharony, 2014; He & Wang, 2016; Ren & Liu, 2022), tablet apps (J. Kim, 2016), the blockchain (Sciarelli et al., 2022), the metaverse (Toraman & Geçit, 2023), the internet of things (K. J. Kim & Wang, 2021), digital currencies (Roussou et al., 2019), online pharmacies (Ma, 2021), online travel booking services (Li & Zhu, 2023), technology transfer (Rampersad et al., 2012), generative artificial intelligence (Prasad & De, 2024), digital accounting systems (Al-Hattami & Almaqtari, 2023), and especially smartphone applications (Currey & Torous, 2023; Gómez-Ruiz et al., 2022; Jang, 2023; Kholid & Asri, 2021; Lin et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2019; Muñoz-Leiva et al., 2017; Palos-Sanchez et al., 2021; Velicia-Martin et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022; Won et al., 2023).

The TAM model is based on individual factors, but there are contextual aspects that can condition the acceptance of a particular technology. To capture the influence of the context, scholars have incorporated some constructs that influence the main individual variables of the TAM model. Among these constructs, there have been factors to restrain use that have been associated to some sort of risks. Muñoz-Leiva et al. (2017) found that social image operated as an antecedent to perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use in the case of mobile banking apps. The authors postulated that the perceived risk could affect the use of this sort of app given the relevance of these transactions, but the results did not confirm this hypothesis. However, other studies verified the relationship between perceived risk associated to these functions and the intention to use the banking apps. Lee evaluated several risks that affected the attitude toward the use of banking apps at the time when this technology was in its infancy (M.-C. Lee, 2009). The author identified that the more significant perceived risks for using these apps were those related with financial and security issues, and these perceptions affected both the attitude and the intention to use them. These results were confirmed by Liu et al. (2019). In the case of the COVID-19 tracing app, Velicia-Martin et al. (2021) confirmed that the perceived risk of catching COVID-19 as well as the trust inspired by the application positively influenced the intention to use this particular app. Gómez-Ruiz et al. (2022) found that trust and enjoyment affected the use of fitness apps, as well as their attractiveness to users. In the context of buying medicines through Internet pharmacies, Ma (2021) confirmed that perceived risk in the transaction affected negatively to the trustworthiness of the process and in the intention to make this sort of purchases.

In internal communications, one risk faced by employees is the fear of being surveilled through digital media. Surveillance implies collecting personal data with the main purpose of influencing those whose data have been garnered (Lyon, 2001). Digital media facilitate these processes due to the footprints left by users. In this regard, the COVID-19 pandemic had a lasting impact on working practices. It forced remote working during the lockdown, but once the health crisis was over, remote working remained a real option in many jobs (Hafermalz & Riemer, 2021; Matli, 2020). Parallel to this labor trend, the digital monitoring of workers' performance has increased, whether working from home or in the workplace (Ball, 2021; D. E. Thompson & Molnar, 2023; Vitak & Zimmer, 2023). From the employers' perspective, the rationale to support monitoring practices usually deals with issues regarding protecting company information, providing cybersecurity, and assuring efficiency and productivity (D. E. Thompson & Molnar, 2023). However, employee monitoring raises serious concerns as capturing working data at home blurs the boundaries between the public and the private sphere. Problems in individual performance have been documented due to these practices, as the sense of being over controlled can generate negative attitudes (Ravid et al., 2020). Vitak & Zimmer (2023) observed that workers' attitudes toward workplace surveillance becomes more negative when the reasons for collecting sensitive data are not clear. In the case of ISM, Madsen (2018) noted that participation would be constricted if employees assumed they lacked freedom to critique. This negative perception would prevent them from intervening in or promoting any organizational change.

Another set of reasons for monitoring ISM activity by companies relates to its usage during working hours. Employees' self-reported perceptions of decreased productivity (Andreassen et al., 2014) and the exhaustion caused by balancing work responsibilities with social interactions (van Zoonen et al., 2017) provide a solid rationale for companies to be concerned about the potential effects of this communication platform.

Surveillance over employees has extended to monitoring their publications on social media, as well as the relationships they build outside the workplace (Ball, 2021; Ravid et al., 2020). One reason adduced to by companies for this practice is protecting the company's image and reputation. However, employees rationalize negative comments

regarding the workplace posted on social media by claiming that they are voicing authentic experiences and are searching for support from other users (Johnston et al., 2019; P. Thompson et al., 2020). Another reason to monitor employees' activity on social media focuses on productivity, given that they post during the working day (P. Thompson et al., 2020).

The underlying paradigm of the TAM model is that perceptions drive behaviors (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In the case of ISM, the perception of being surveilled by the company becomes critical. Employees with the impression of being tracked or listened to online, with a negative sense of distrust, will be more likely to reject the use of the ISM. Therefore, successful implementation of this internal channel hinges upon this perception. The research model integrates this issue by supposing that the intention to use ISM will be conditioned by a low perception of surveillance. Considering this point, the hypotheses regarding the acceptance of ISM are:

H1. Perceived ease of use of ISM is positively related toward perceived usefulness of ISM.

H2. Perceived ease of use of ISM is positively related toward intention to use ISM.

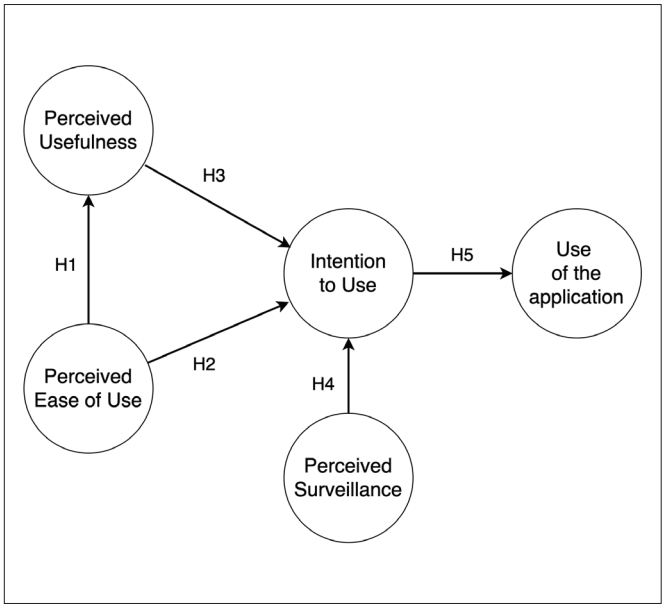
H3. Perceived usefulness of ISM is positively related toward intention to use ISM.

H4. Perceived surveillance by ISM is negatively related toward intention to use ISM.

H5. Intention to use ISM is positively related toward the use of ISM.

Figure 1. shows the research model.

Figure 1. Research model.



Source: own elaboration.

3. Methodology

3.1 ISM application

The ISM application employed for this research was Happÿdonia. This communications platform was developed by the Spanish company Nunsys in 2018. Nowadays it operates in companies in various sectors. The application provides a unique communications channel to all employees. It allows them to access Human Resources Management services, to build company identity, and to participate in specific groups. The platform also assesses the level of happiness in the work environment. Happÿdonia blends traditional internal communications media with instant messaging and interactive dynamics based on social networking sites. It aims to provide internal communications services but also to motivate employees and promote a sense of belonging in the company (Happÿdonia, 2022).

The Happÿdonia application allows the company to customize the name and colors based on its corporate image. It offers an up/down, and sideways communications service, as well as the possibility of creating groups among employees. The tool has a work component (e.g. to clock in and out of work, receive payroll and personal income tax certificates, process leave, call meetings, or share documents) and also a recreational component (e.g. to organize internal events, participate in contests, or create groups to play sports). Happÿdonia facilitates the channeling of ideas and suggestions (with the option of anonymity), which can be voted on by users. In addition, it is possible to enable a reporting channel, which can also be anonymous. In the case of an anonymous report, the application directs this information to a single person in the company.

Every user has a public wall where they publish personal information and can indicate their skills and competencies. They also have the option of following the updates of other colleagues and validate their skills publicly. The application also offers users a storage space for personal documents with the possibility of encrypting their content.

3.2 Measurements

The scales to measure perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, intention to use, and use of ISM were adopted from previous research (Ghozali et al., 2021; Kholid & Asri, 2021; Roy, 2017). One of the authors translated the items into Spanish, and the texts were contrasted with two other people to check the questions reflected the original sense. The item to assess the perceived surveillance—"The use of Happÿdonia makes me feel surveilled by the company"— was prepared by the authors. All the measures used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"), except for the use of ISM and perceived surveillance variables, which ranged from 1 to 7. The adapted measurement scales were pre-tested in a review conducted with two experts in the study context to ensure content validity and text clarity before distributing the survey.

The questionnaire and the management of the data collected in the survey were approved by the ethics committee of the university of one of the authors. Covariance-based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) was applied. The calculations were carried out with the R lavaan library (Rosseel, 2012).

4. Results

4.1 Sample description

The survey was distributed among the employees of two Spanish companies that used Happÿdonia, one in October 2023 and the other in April 2023. Both companies work in the food industry. Two weeks after the initial invitation was sent, a follow-up reminder was issued to employees who had not yet participated. The response rate from the first survey was 18.5% and the second was 20%. The total sample consisted of 360 employees. There were 61% women and 39% men. The average age was 41.41 years (sd = 10.03). Thirty-seven percent of the sample held, at least, high-school diplomas, 36% had done vocational training, and 27% had some college education. The average length of service was 7.64 years (sd = 7.33). There were 108 respondents with responsibility over other employees (30%). The departments with more presence in the sample were production (35%), stores (30%), and logistics (8%). The sample size of N=360 is considered adequate for CB-SEM analysis, exceeding common guidelines that suggest a minimum of 200 observations for models of moderate complexity (Hair et al., 2009; Kline, 2016).

4.2 Measurement model

The measurement model's fit was assessed through several indicators. The $\chi 2/df$ ratio was 5, which is over the threshold recommended (Wheaton et al., 1977). The Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) was .924 and the Comparative Fit Index was .939. As both values are over .9, they were considered acceptable (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was .106, which is a bad fit indicator (Browne & Cudeck, 1992). A Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) of .046 was obtained, which is lower than .08 and, consequently, this fit measurement was positive (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Taking together all these indicators, the overall fit of the model was considered adequate.

The standard loadings ranged from .819 to .940, and all were significant ($p < .001$). All the factors met the recommendations of having Cronbach's α and composite reliability over .7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), and the Average Extracted Variance (AVE) over .5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 1 shows these data. Overall, the results suggest an adequate level of reliability and convergent validity.

Table 1. Convergent validity and reliability of the measurement model.

Construct	Item	Std. loading	t-value	CA	CR	AVE
Perceived Ease of Use (PEU)	PEU1	0.869***	61.1	0.951	0.951	0.797
	PEU2	0.881***	66.8			
	PEU3	0.844***	51.2			
	PEU4	0.926***	100.1			
	PEU5	0.940***	117.3			
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	PU1	0.897***	78.6	0.955	0.956	0.785
	PU 2	0.938***	121.6			
	PU 3	0.909***	87.8			
	PU 4	0.922***	100.3			
	PU 5	0.823***	45.6			
	PU 6	0.819***	44.5			
Intention to Use (IU)	IU1	0.930***	96.9	0.930	0.932	0.821
	IU2	0.907***	79.3			
	IU3	0.881***	64.5			
Use of the application (USE)	USE1	1.000		n/a	n/a	n/a
Perceived Surveillance (PS)	PS1	1.000		n/a	n/a	n/a

Note: N=360; CA=Cronbach's alpha; CR=Composite reliability; AVE=Average Variance Extracted.

***p<0.001.

Discriminant validity was assessed using two criteria. First, the correlations between factors were all less than the square root of the corresponding AVEs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Second, the 99% confidence interval around the estimated correlation between factors did not include the value of 1 (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Table 2 shows these values. Since both criteria are met, the discriminant validity of the measurement model was accepted.

Table 2. Discriminant validity tests.

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
F1, Perceived Ease of Use	**0,893**	0,683	0,656	0,665	-0,001
F2, Perceived Usefulness	0,612	**0,886**	0,882	0,738	-0,151
F3, Intention to Use	0,580	0,845	**0,906**	0,854	-0,198
F4, Use of the application	0,595	0,679	0,815	**1,000**	-0,038
F5, Perceived Surveillance	-0,107	-0,252	-0,298	-0,141	1,000

Note: N=360. Diagonal shows AVE squared root; low triangle values are latent variables correlations; high triangle values are the top values of the confidence interval for the estimated correlation.

4.3 Structural model

The majority of the structural model fit indicators met the recommendations. This was the case of TLI = .918, CFI = .932, and SRMR = .064. The other values were the $\chi 2/df$ ratio = 5.323 and RMSEA = .11. The perceived ease of use positively influenced perceived usefulness (H1: $\beta = .613$, $p < .001$), and intention to use (H2: $\beta = .139$, $p < .01$). Perceived usefulness had a positive impact on intention to use (H3: $\beta = .745$, $p < .001$). Perceived surveillance negatively influenced intention to use (H4: $\beta = -.091$, $p < .01$). Finally, the results confirmed the positive relationship between intention to use and use of the application (H5: $\beta = .813$, $p < .001$). The endogenous variables' coefficients of determinations were .376 for perceived usefulness, .722 for intention to use, and .660 for use of application. Table 3 presents the results after evaluating the structural model.

Table 3. Structural model results and hypothesis contrast.

Hypothesis	Path	Std. β	t value	Conclusion
H1	Perceived Ease of Use → Perceived Usefulness	0.613***	17.48	Supported
H2	Perceived Ease of Use → Intention to Use	0.139**	3.30	Supported
H3	Perceived Usefulness → Intention to Use	0.748***	21.43	Supported
H4	Perceived Surveillance → Intention to Use	-0.091**	-2.83	Supported
H5	Intention to Use → Use of the application	0.813***	41.56	Supported

Note: $\chi^2(df=100)=532.263$***; CFI=0.932; TLI=0.918; RMSEA=0.11; SRMR=0.064.
R^2(Perceived Usefulness)=0.376; R^2(Intention to Use)=0.722; R^2(Use of the application)=0.660.
**: p<0.01; ***: p<0.001.

5. Discussion

5.1 Theoretical implications

This research assesses an ISM acceptance model. The study is based on the TAM model (Davis, 1989), a conceptual framework widely used in information technology research (Yousafzai et al., 2007a, 2007b). The model assumes that usage is preceded by perceptions and intentions. Two major perceptions influence intention to use: ease of use and usefulness associated with the new tool. As far as we know, there has been no research that had investigated the application of TAM to ISM, although the model has served to study the acceptance of many other digital tools (Currey & Torous, 2023; Fenech & O'Cass, 2001; Kholid & Asri, 2021; Lin et al., 2020). This study, at least, tries to fill this gap. It also aims to look into a particular aspect of internal communications that plays a critical role in any tool in this field being adopted: the perception of being surveilled.

Regarding the basic relationships drawn from the TAM model, the results confirm the structure proposed by the model. Perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness were found to be antecedents to the intention to use ISM. In information technologies, the perception of being easy to use lowers barriers for employing them (Y. Lee et al., 2003). This effect has been argued to be stronger in the early stages of adopting the technology given the challenge of learning how to use the digital tool (Davis, 1989). On the other hand, Gefen & Straub (2000) have claimed that new information technologies were adopted by their extrinsic aspect reflected on the usefulness associated with the tool. In the case of ISM, the TAM model approach provides a solid explanation in explaining the obtained results. ISM incorporates many functionalities from external social media. As social media usage is becoming widespread in society (Auxier & Anderson, 2021; Ortiz-Ospina, 2019), it is not difficult to emulate a means of internal communications that is familiar to many social media users. This perspective underlines the subjective aspect of the digital tool, especially in the case of the perceived ease of use. The utility of the ISM can be enhanced by the same way in which it implements the communication. Assuming that internal communications implies an operational and social dimension (Welch, 2011), maybe the main utility of ISM relies on the capacity to connect to all employees and establish communications with specific groups (Leonardi et al., 2013). ISM does not necessarily inhibit other communications channels, but they provide immediacy, horizontality, and interactivity (Men et al., 2020). When this tool is framed into a two-way symmetrical approach (Grunig, 1992), the usefulness expands beyond the usual contributions

of internal communications. ISM will serve to share information, coordinate meetings, and clarify tasks, as traditional functions of internal communications. But the usefulness associated in this case will include social factors more akin to informal and in-person interactions.

In this regard, the TAM model's basic tenets of joining the perceptions of usefulness and ease to use to the intention of using the new tool aid in understanding the acceptance of this technology (Davis, 1989). Therefore, it can be reasonably expected that those employees familiar with social media will find ISM as an opportunity to cultivate relationships with co-workers in similar ways as they do online. This perception of social utility cannot be underestimated, especially in times when there are increasing cases of mental health issues in the workplace (Lamontagne et al., 2014; Petrie et al., 2018). Additionally, given the positive influence of ISM on work outcomes such as job performance, job satisfaction, and job engagement (Chu, 2020), ISM adoption will be associated to psychological wellbeing at the workplace to the extent that it also fosters this social dimension.

Results have corroborated the link between ISM usage and the perception of being surveilled. Intending to use this channel is preceded by the belief that one's activity is not going to be monitored to get information that could be used to by the company's staff to negatively influence them (Lyon, 2001). This risk perception is rightly integrated into the TAM model, as other extended models have done when they incorporated the perception of risk associated with online transactions in e-Commerce (Pavlou, 2003) and banks (M.-C. Lee, 2009). In the case of ISM, the risk is less associated with the uncertainty of the result of using the system but in the belief of a paying a price to participate. The risks are higher than in the cases of banking payments, as they could affect the working relationship with the own company. These results suggest the importance of adequately managing the impressions of surveillance when promoting ISM in a company.

5.2 Practical implications

This research provides useful insights to those companies that are trying to introduce ISM as well as to developers of this service. The input variables of the model suggest the importance of a good interface and the appropriateness of taking care of the user experience. The perception of the ease of using ISM should be present when designing the user journey through the platform, as it influences both its intention to use and perceived usefulness. Issues regarding user interaction, content creation, and information sharing should be monitored to ensure they are easy to perform in the platform.

The usefulness of ISM also plays a critical role in consolidating its use in a company. The main traditional uses of internal communications must be integrated into the tool. But usefulness in social media mainly enhances social relationships (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). In this sense, appropriate ISM content programming should foster informal and social relationships among employees. It could be done by encouraging employees to build their user profiles by creating content, or by participating in communal activities. The more social value the platform provides, the easier it will be to overcome the reluctance to use ISM.

Probably the most critical perception for using ISM is related to the fear of being surveilled, and companies have to be very careful with this issue. They should know how to manage an eventual negative impression about it, as here the perception is most important than the actual case. This aspect goes beyond organizational transparency. It implies trust building with employees and disclosing the appropriate messages to state there is no surveillance activity.

5.3 Limitations of the research

The study has some limitations that condition the scope of its findings and conclusions. The sample was confined to two companies in the same sector. One was a producer and the other carried out distribution activities directly to consumers. Additionally, the response rate in both companies was acceptable but lower than 25%. These circumstances limit the generalization of the results, although they point to significant relationships in the sample. Furthermore, the research was based on a self-administered cross-sectional survey. This captures the perceptions, the intention, and the use of ISM at a given moment. Lastly, testing the technology acceptance has been considered as the self-perceived usage. This variable can introduce bias in the interpretation, as there could be differences between what one thinks they are doing and what they are really doing (Yousafzai et al., 2007b). In this sense, the conclusions are restricted to the users' impressions of using ISM.

5.4 Future research lines

This research can be extended in several areas. To overcome the research limitations, it would be interesting to test the model's variables in more companies and organizations. As there is growing interest in ISM (Ewing et al., 2019), conducting more surveys to test the acceptance model will provide a more consolidated understanding of the ways this channel is accepted. Another way of furthering this research could be contrasting self-perception of ISM usage with objective performance measures. This would allow for more accurate results with the factors that lead to ISM acceptance.

This research has been based on Happÿdonia, an ISM app with a specific focus on employee satisfaction and corporate culture building. As this product has a strong personality, it is possible that the results were influenced by the approach and structure of this platform. It would be of great interest to comprehend the acceptance of ISM by assessing other services, so that a better generalization could be fathomed regarding this internal communications channel. All these future lines of work would contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which ISM are implemented in companies.

6. Conclusion

Interest in ISM is growing due to its potential to improve internal communications and enhance positive psychological outcomes in the workplace (Chu, 2020; Ewing et al., 2019; Tkalac Verčič et al., 2024). This research tests an extended version of the TAM model to evaluate the adoption of a particular ISM platform, Happÿdonia. In addition to the usual TAM factors—perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness—this study incorporates the perception of surveillance as a

variable influencing the intention to use ISM. The findings confirmed these relationships, thereby contributing to a better understanding of the factors influencing the integration of this communication channel within companies. Given ISM's positive impact on employees, understanding the factors that facilitate or hinder its adoption will assist in the design of more effective ISM platforms and guide organizations in deploying this technology to optimize their outcomes.

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