

## **Evaluation of E-Mail Usage by Extended Technology Acceptance Model**

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**ABSTRACT:** This study is performed to evaluate E-mail usage by Extended Technology Acceptance Model (TAM2) and to test the moderation effects of Espoused National Cultural Values (ENCV) between Subjective Norm (SN) and E-mail usage Behavioral Intention (BI)/Perceived Usefulness (PU). Survey was conducted in Adana Branches of an important Turkish State-Run Bank including 151 participants who have E-mail access for work purposes. As the results of the study; PU and Perceived Ease Of Use (PEOU) have positive effects on BI, PEOU and SN both effect PU, Femininity (F) shows positive moderating effect on the relationship between SN and PU as well as the relation between SN and BI, Collectivism (C) shows positive moderation effect between SN and PU, moderation effect of SN on PU is higher for people who have higher tolerance to uncertainty.

**Keywords:** E-mail Acceptance; Espoused National Cultural Values

**JEL Classifications:** D83; M10

### **1. Introduction**

Communication technologies have been recently developing fast and as a consequence, these technologies have become widespread in organizations. However, these technologies are mostly investigated from the technical aspects and the dimension of organizational behavior is usually ignored. This study is carried out in order to look at these technologies from a different perspective.

The research questions of this study are stated as "How is the usage of E-mail evaluated with Extended Technology Acceptance Model? What are the moderation effects of Espoused National Cultural Values between Subjective Norm (SN) and E-mail (usage) Behavior Intention (BI)/ Perceived Usefulness (PU)?"

In literature research, no study has been found about the usage of E-mail evaluated by the extended technology acceptance model in Turkey. Furthermore, in English literature research, some of the espoused national cultural values are not used as moderating variables on the technology acceptance model (Huang et al., 2003; Huang, 2003, Srite and Karahanna, 2006). It is foreseen that the study will resolve the deficiencies on this issue.

The improvements in communication technology cause important changes in communication behavior (Lo and Lie, 2008). The usage of information technology in organizations has started a new age in organizational communication (Bensghir, 1996). The new communication technology has dramatically changed the communication methods and the ways which employees and the directors are able to use (Hellriegel et al., 2002). The computer media provides independent communication regardless of time, place, and acquaintanceships (Lo, 2008). The usage of computers as a communication tool is called "Computer Mediated Communication" after the internet has started to take place in our lives actively (Altun, 2006). The computer mediated communication is to transfer information via computer system which is carried out by two or more people who are not physically together (Canesa and Riolo, 2003).

E-mail is the most widely used communication tool in computer environment. E-mail is a very important tool for transferring messages between computers in organizations for both communication and collaboration. In addition to the fact that E-mail provides two people to communicate with each other, it also enables people to send E-mail to multiple recipients, forwarding E-mail, and attaching texts and multimedia.

## 2. Extended Technology Acceptance Model (TAM2)

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is adapted from Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). According to the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), behavior for something comprises after the beliefs, attitudes and intentions about it. This conceptual framework was developed and normative beliefs and subjective norms were added before intention (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975).

In consequence of the primary researches in psychology, subjective norm is found to be one of the significant determinants of intention and/or attitude (Venkatesh and Morris, 2000).

In Theory of Reasoned Action, intention is at the centre. Intention is an indicator of how individuals are willing to perform a behavior or of how much effort they plan to spend for it. The individual can only turn intention into behavior if she/he has behavioral control, in other words can decide to perform the behavior or not. Turning intention into behavior depends on possibilities and resources (time, money, skill etc.) (Ajzen, 1991).

TAM is the most adopted model with regards to acceptance and usage of information technologies. It is developed in order to explain and estimate user's acceptance of new technology. According to the TAM, insufficient user acceptance poses an obstacle on adoption of information technologies (Chang and Wang, 2008). TAM is considered to be a strong and parsimonious model (Lee et al, 2003).

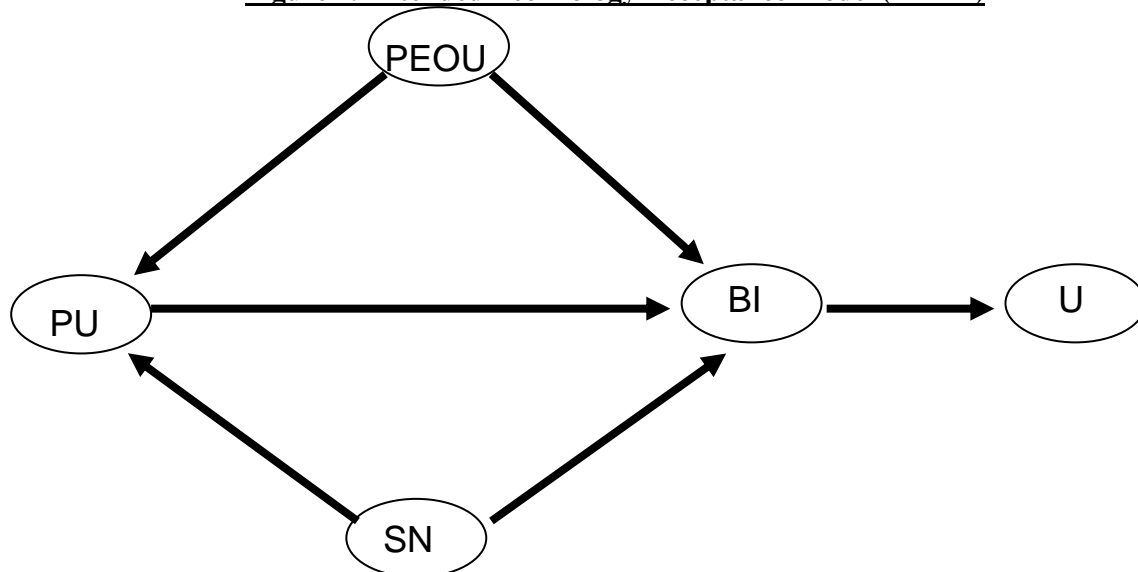
TAM suggests that user acceptance is determined by two main factors, which are Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) (Venkatesh and Morris, 2000).

Perceived Usefulness is "the degree of one's belief that usage of a certain system will improve his/her business performance". Perceived Ease of Use is defined as "the degree of one's belief that there is no need to pay effort for usage of a certain system" (Davis, 1989).

According to technology acceptance model, perceived usefulness is also affected by perceived ease of use. The system, which is easier to use, can be more useful when all other things are equal (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000; Venkatesh and Morris, 2000).

TAM is turned into Extended Technology Acceptance Model (TAM2) with addition of Subjective Norm (SN) (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Extended Technology Acceptance Model is seen in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Extended Technology Acceptance Model (TAM2)**



Source: Adopted from Venkatesh, V., Davis, F.D. (2000). A Theoretical Extension of The Technology Acceptance Model: Four Longitudinal Field Studies. *Management Science*, 46(2), 186-204.

### **3. Espoused National Cultural Values**

In this section, the cultural dimensions indicated by Hofstede (1980) in his well-known study, the contributions by Dorfman and Howell (1988) for measuring them at individual level and Srite and Karahanna's (2006) approaches concerning defining the individual cultural dimensions as Espoused National Cultural Values are handled.

The theory and research developed by Hofstede as a result of his study with IBM comprises of 116.000 questionnaires representing 50 countries, and more than 60.000 of these questionnaires have been answered. The factor analysis of 32 questions asked in the study demonstrates presence of factors reflecting various business purposes and administrative leadership styles. For factor analysis, Hofstede has used average answer for each country and has not taken individual answers as analysis unit. Each country has obtained a score in the study (Dorfman and Howel, 1988).

Dorfman and Howell's (1988) objective in their study is to extend measurement of culture which is generally understood as a characteristic at society level to individual level as power of individual's belief in fundamental cultural values.

According to Srite and Karahanna (2006), culture can be considered as individual difference variable in an analysis at individual level in order to test the impact of national culture on individual behavior without falling into the trap of ecological fallacy. Individuals espouse national cultural values at different levels. Accordingly, the espoused national cultural values are defined as the degree of one's acceptance of national cultural values. In this scope, handling the national cultural values adopted by an individual becomes appropriate and meaningful in estimating the behavior at individual level.

#### **3.1. Power Distance**

It means that less powerful members among the institutions and organizations expect and accept unequal distribution of the power (Richardson and Smith, 2007). The employees with a high power distance abstain from disagreeing with their superiors. Education level's descending increases the tendency of power distance to grow while education level's ascending increases the tendency of power distance to decrease (Hofstede, 1980).

Selection of communication media is related to power distance and communication media which don't allow face-to-face contact are avoided in cultures with a high power distance (Straub et al, 1997). Richer communication media is preferred in the cultures with a high power distance (Huang., 2003). Moreover, the individuals with high power distance do not prefer the technologies which do not have social representation but have equalization effect.

#### **3.2. Individualism/Collectivism**

Individualist cultures care working and protect innovativeness by encouraging the entrepreneur to take risk. People are given the freedom to focus on their personal objectives, however they are held responsible for their actions. In the collectivist cultures, there is a strong sense of harmony. People work for the community more than their personal objectives and they are held responsible to the group for their actions. Success or failure in collectivist cultures is shared by the group instead of being undertaken by an individual (Wild et al, 2006).

Individualism and collectivism as personal characteristics is defined as the degree of attaching importance to requirements of the individual or group and is related to person's preferring to act individually or as a group member (Srite and Karahanna, 2006). Collectivism establishes a culture against communication in computer media, because computer media eliminates group effect (Straub et al., 1997). The employees in collectivist cultures cannot collect the clues regarding social situation from computer media, therefore they tend to use rich channels like face-to-face communication in all communication.

#### **3.3. Uncertainty Avoidance**

People are more concerned about their futures in the cultures where uncertainty avoidance is high, they are more resistant against change, they avoid making mistake and taking risk, they are not too ambitious for individual successes, they need reconciliation and written rules (Hofstede, 1980).

Uncertainty avoidance is the degree of the risk accepted by the person and is related to how threatened person feels himself/herself in uncertain situations (Srite and Karahanna, 2006). Electronic communication media is used less in the cultures where uncertainty avoidance index is high (Straub et al., 1997). It is believed that this is caused by failing to receive the feedback as desired since richness of the environment is low.

### **3.4. Masculinity/Femininity**

Assertiveness, money making, materialistic tendencies are the dominant values and the emphasis put on the human is in the background, it is defined as a masculine culture. In feminine culture, caring the person and relations between people and putting ahead the quality in life are the dominant factors. Moreover, being sensitive to the others, love and empathy can be added to feminine characteristics. Aggressiveness, ambition to promote at work, self-confidence, independency attitudes become prominent among masculine values (Hofstede, 1980).

The individuals who adopt masculine values pay attention to money-making, progression, competitiveness, performance and assertiveness in their personal works. Those adopting feminine values care friendly environment, comfortable working environment, life quality and warm personal relations (Srite and Karahanna, 2006). An environment which doesn't bear social representation of communicator is not preferred in a masculine culture (Straub et al., 1997).

### **4. Previous Studies in the Literature**

The studies in which E-mail is evaluated using extended technology model and espoused national cultural values take place as moderating variables are summarized below. Two of the said studies examine use of E-mail (Huang, 2003; Huang et al., 2003) and third one examines use of Personal Computer (PC) and Personal Digital Assistance (PDA) (Srite and Karahanna, 2006).

The studies related to E-mail are conducted in People's Republic of China on government employees (Huang et al., 2003) and banking sector (Huang, 2003) while study related to PC and PDA is conducted on university students from different countries in USA (Srite and Karahanna, 2006).

The following are the results of the studies (Huang, 2003; Huang et al., 2003; Srite and Karahanna, 2006) in summary:

- \* Perceived Ease Of Use (PEOU) and Perceived Usefulness (PU) have positive and direct effect on Behavioral Intention (BI),

- \* Perceived Ease Of Use (PEOU) and Subjective Norm (SN) have positive and direct effect on Perceived Usefulness (PU),

- \* The effect of Subjective Norm (SN) on Behavioral Intention (BI) is not found to be significant,

- \* Power distance (PD) displays negative moderation effect in both three studies between the relation Subjective Norm (SN) and Behavioral Intention (BI) and the relation between Subjective Norm (SN) and Perceived Usefulness (PU),

- \* Uncertainty Avoidance (UA) has positive moderation effect in the relation between Subjective Norm (SN) and Behavioral Intention (BI),

- \* Collectivism (C) doesn't have a statistically significant moderation effect in the relation between Subjective Norm (SN) and Behavioral Intention (BI),

- \* Positive moderation effect of Femininity (F) in the relation between Subjective Norm (SN) and Behavioral Intention (BI) is supported.

### **5. Research Model and Hypotheses**

Research model of the hypotheses are shown in Figure 2. The parenthesis before the variables show the expectation (i.e. +PD means positive moderation).

*H1. Perceived Ease Of Use (PEOU) has positive effect on E-mail usage Behavioral Intention (BI).*

Usage of a system depends on perceived ease of use as well as other factors (Davis, 1989). Perceived ease of use is a potential factor which might increase user acceptance (Venkatesh and Morris, 2000). According to the literature, PEOU is an unstable variable in estimating BI (Lee et al, 2003).

*H2. Perceived Usefulness (PU) has positive effect on E-mail usage Behavioral Intention (BI).*

People display the tendency to use an application to the extent that they believe it will allow them to do their work better (Davis, 1989). A significant part of technology acceptance model researches indicate that perceived usefulness is an important determinant of behavioral intention (Venkatesh and Morris, 2000). People tend to use the technologies which they perceive to be useful. The relation between PU and BI is strongly significant in the literature (Lee et al, 2003).

*H3. Perceived Ease Of Use (PEOU) has positive effect on Perceived Usefulness (PU).*

When other things are equal, ease of use of a technology will make that technology more useful (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000). The relation between PEOU and BI is strongly significant in the literature (Lee et al, 2003).

*H4. Subjective Norm (SN) has positive effect on Perceived Usefulness (PU).*

Subjective norm is a determinant of perceived usefulness. If a superior or a colleague considers a system useful, the person may perceive that system as useful (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000).

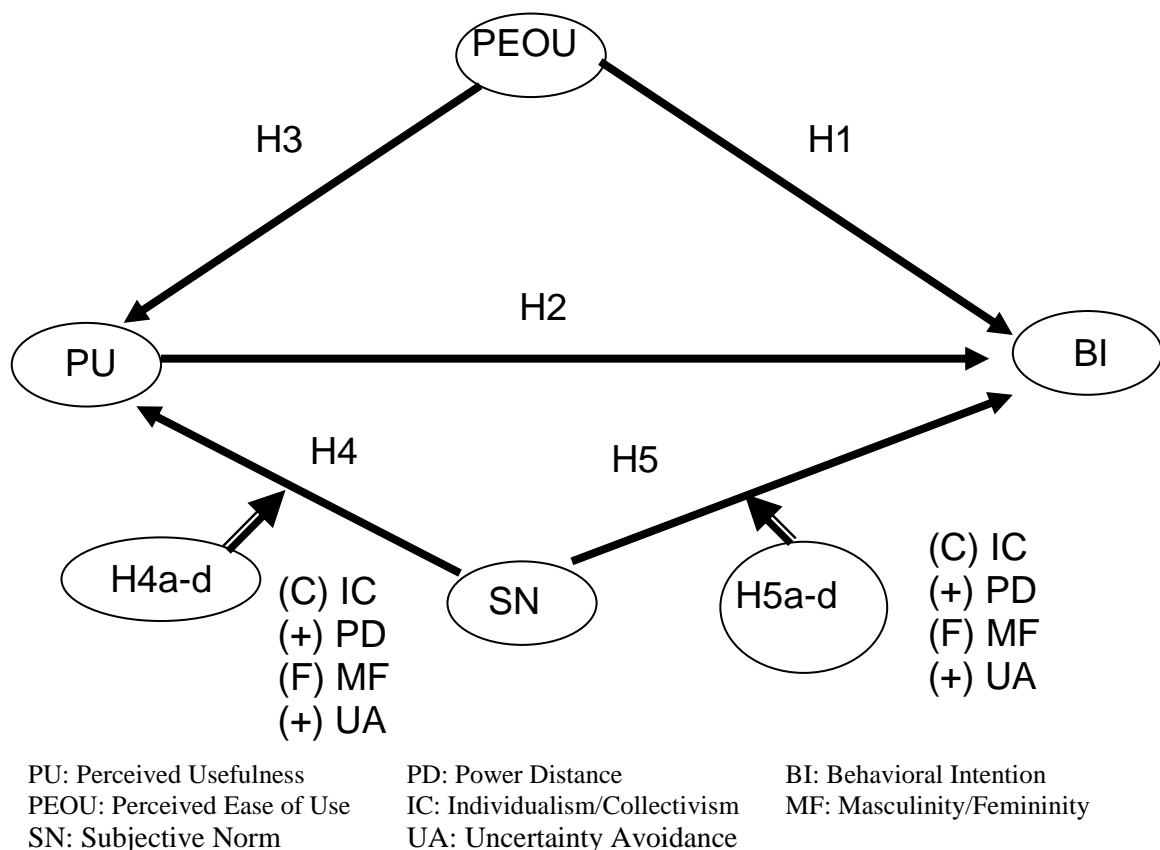
*H4a. Collectivism (C) has positive moderating effect on the relation between Subjective Norm (SN) and Perceived Usefulness (PU).*

Subjective norm is the degree of person's being affected by his/her surrounding with respect to using a system. The people with dominant collectivist characteristics are more sensitive to suggestions of their surrounding with respect to the fact that E-mail is useful as compared to the people with high individualism due to their strong sense of harmony with the group (Wild et al, 2006). Therefore, Collectivism has moderating effect on the relation between SN and PU. That is to say, the effect of SN on PU is stronger in Collectivism.

*H4b. Power Distance (PD) has positive moderating effect on the relation between Subjective Norm (SN) and Perceived Usefulness (PU).*

If a person's power distance is high, the impact of the other people taken as role-model on this person will be higher. The people with high power distance avoid from disagreeing with their superiors (Hofstede, 1980). This will ensure that SN has a bigger role on PU. In other words, ascend of PD increases the effect of SN on PU.

**Figure 2. Research Model**



*H4c. Feminism (F) has positive moderating effect on the relation between Subjective Norm (SN) and Perceived Usefulness (PU).*

It is highly important to be in harmony with the environment in people bearing feminine cultural characteristics (Hofstede, 1980). Therefore, the suggestions from their environments that, E-mail is useful influence the people bearing feminine individual characteristics more. In other words, the impact of SN on PU increases with Femininity.

*H4d. Uncertainty Avoidance (UA) has positive moderation effect on the relation between Subjective Norm (SN) And Perceived Usefulness (PU).*

In people with high uncertainty avoidance, the suggestions from their surrounding that, E-mail is useful will be important in decreasing their uncertainties concerning usefulness of E-mail. The impact of SN on PU will be higher for the people with high uncertainty avoidance.

*H5. Subjective Norm (SN) has positive effect on E-mail Behavioral Intention (BI).*

Subjective norm is a determinant of behavioral intention. Even if people do not have intention for a behavior, they are willing to do a certain behavior when they think that the people important to them want them to do that behavior (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000)

*H5a. Collectivism (C) has positive moderation effect on the relation between Subjective Norm (SN) and E-mail Behavioral Intention (BI).*

The people who adopt individualist cultural values are less interested in others' opinions in their social surroundings. On the contrary, those adopting collectivist cultural values follow the opinions of their reference groups (Srite and Karahanna, 2006). Since the harmony with others' opinions will be an important determinant for behavioral intention in the collectivist individuals, collectivism is expected to increase the impact of subjective norm on behavioral intention. That is to say, effect of SN on BI is stronger in Collectivism.

*H5b. Power Distance (PD) has positive moderation effect on the relation between Subjective Norm (SN) and E-mail Behavioral Intention (BI).*

The individuals with high power distances are more attentive to comply with their superiors' opinions and they fear disagreeing with them. Social norms are one of the most important determinants of behavioral intention in individuals with high power distance. The individuals with high power distance feel more social pressure on them with respect to using technology (Srite and Karahanna, 2006). In other words, the effect of SN on BI will increase in those with high PD.

*H5c. Femininity (F) has positive moderation effect on the relation between Subjective Norm (SN) and E-mail Behavioral Intention (BI).*

The people adopting feminine cultural values are more interested in developing interpersonal relations, cooperation and interpersonal harmony. Moreover, it was put forward in the empirical studies that behavioral intentions of the individuals bearing feminine cultural characteristics are affected by subjective norms (Srite and Karahanna, 2006). Considering the contributions of using E-mail with respect to developing personal relations, cooperation and harmony, it is seen that the individuals who have feminine cultural characteristics will be more affected in terms of E-mail behavioral intention. That is to say, impact of subjective norm on behavioral intention is stronger with femininity.

*H5d. Uncertainty Avoidance (UA) has moderating effect on the relation between Subjective Norm (SN) and E-mail Behavioral Intention (BI).*

In the cultures where uncertainty avoidance is high, individuals feel themselves threatened in unknown and uncertain situations. When their colleagues tell their experiences and perceptions regarding the system or when they see them using the system, uncertainty decreases with the impact of knowledge. Moreover, the pressure of the superiors and colleagues with respect to use of system will decrease the uncertainty. Social norms are more effective in behaviors of the individuals with high uncertainty avoidance culture (Srite and Karahanna, 2006). In other words, the effect of SN on BI will increase as UA increases.

## **6. Research Methodology**

Field survey is used in the study as research strategy. This field survey is conducted using "questionnaire" as it is widely applied (Saunders et al, 2003). Survey is conducted on 321 people who have access to E-mail for business purposes in Adana branches of one of Turkey's important state banks. 155 questionnaires returned (%48), and 151 are usable.

The scales used in the research measure Extended Technology Acceptance Model (TAM2) and Espoused National Cultural Values. The scale developed by Davis (1989) and extended by Venkatesh and Davis (2000) is used for Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease Of Use (PEOU) in the scope of Extended Technology Acceptance Model.

The scale developed by Dorfman and Howell (1988) is used to measure espoused national cultural values. This scale was formed by adapting Hofstede's ecological (macro) level scale to individual level. Age is measured by ratio scale, gender and education are measured by nominal scale, espoused

national values and extended technology acceptance model questions are measured using 5 points Likert-type scale. Demographic characteristics of participants are given in Table 1.

**Table 1. Participants' Demographic Characteristics**

Gender	Female	53
	Male	98
Educational background	Primary School	3
	High school	20
	Vocational School	13
	Bachelor's degree	82
	Postgraduate and above	33
Age	Average	33
	Minimum	19
	Maximum	57

**7. Results**

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is used for the analysis of data. SEM is a multivariate statistical method in which observable and unobservable variables are defined within a causal and relational model (Byrne, 2010). The relation of a variable which is present in a model both as a dependent and independent variable cannot be measured simultaneously out of SEM (Hair et al., 2005) Perceived Usefulness (PU) is both dependent and independent variable in research model. Therefore, use of SEM is deemed fit in testing this model. First two separate confirmatory factor analysis performed for TAM2 and Espoused National Cultural Value (ENCV) models. As the results of CFA analyses performed, proper values are found by discarding three items from Technology Acceptance Model scale and eight items from Espoused National Cultural Values scale.

**Reliability Analysis and Correlation Values**

After CFA analyses, correlation coefficients, reliability analysis (Cronbach Alpha), average and standard deviation values are seen at the Table 2 below.

**Table 2. Correlations, Reliability, Average and Standard Deviation Values**

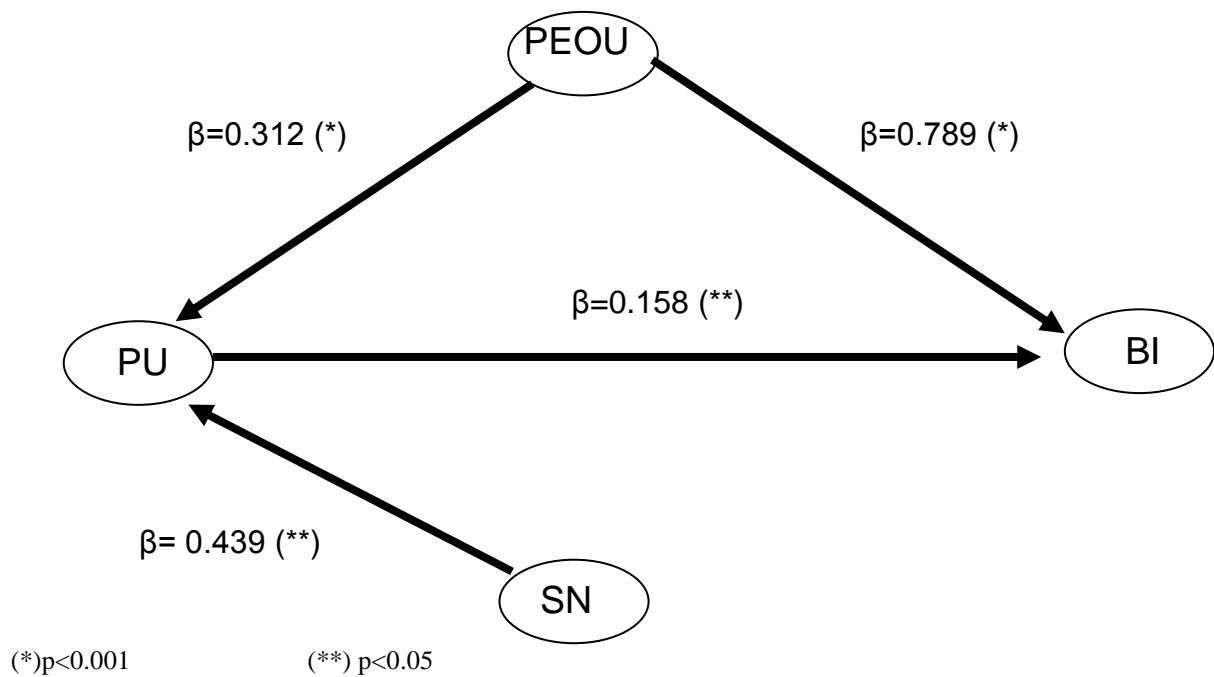
Var. Name	Ave. /5.00	Std. Dev.	1 IC	2 PD	3 UA	4 MF	5 PEOU	6 PU	7 SN	8 UI
1.IC	3.81	0.89	(0.90)							
2.PD	2.42	0.97	0.089	(0.81)						
3.UA	3.87	0.85	0.519**	0.228**	(0.87)					
4.MF	2.75	1.06	0.140	0.592**	0.252**	(0.91)				
5.PEOU	3.95	0.89	0.524**	-0.104	0.398**	-0.09	(0.90)			
6.PU	3.55	1.07	0.336**	-0.051	0.293**	-0.06	0.612**	(0.93)		
7.SN	3.48	0.85	0.404**	0.053	0.435**	0.101	0.637**	0.58**	(0.77)	
8.UI	3.73	0.89	0.444**	0.064	0.370**	-0.16*	0.805**	0.644**	0.64**	(0.93)

\* Significant at the 0.01 level

\*\* Significant at the 0.05 level

As the result of structural regression analysis, Beta coefficients are seen in Figure 3 below. By the model, 81.2% of Behavioral Intention (R<sup>2</sup>) and 50.6% of Perceived Usefulness are explained. The hypotheses results are summarized in Table 3.

**Figure 3. Beta Coefficients**



**Table 3. Hypotheses Results**

Number of Hypothesis	Explanation	Result
H1	PEOU-BI	Supported
H2	PU-BI	Supported
H3	PEOU-PU	Supported
H4	SN-PU	Supported
H4a	SN X IC (C)-PU	Supported
H4b	SN X PD (+)-PU	Unsupported
H4c	SN X MF (F)-PU	Supported
H4d	SN X UA (+)-PU	Reverse Supported
H5	SN-BI	Unsupported
H5a	SN X IC (C)-BI	Unsupported
H5b	SN X PD (+)-BI	Unsupported
H5c	SN X MF (F)-BI	Supported
H5d	SN X UA (+)-BI	Unsupported

**8. Conclusion**

This study is performed to evaluate E-mail usage by Extended Technology Acceptance Model (TAM2) and to test the moderation effects of Espoused National Cultural Values between Subjective Norm (SN) and E-mail usage Behavioral Intention (BI)/ Perceived Usefulness (PU). Study briefly indicates that:



In accordance with the previous studies (Huang, 2003; Huang et al., 2003) Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease Of Use (PEOU) have positive effects on E-mail usage Behavioral Intention (BI). And it is discovered that the effect of Perceived Ease Of Use (PEOU) is much higher than the effect of Perceived Usefulness (PU) (i.e.  $\beta=0.789/\beta=0.158$ ). It means that people put much more emphasis on the easy use of E-mail, rather than usefulness of E-mail.

Perceived Ease Of Use (PEOU) and Subjective Norm (SN) both have important positive effect on Perceived Usefulness (PU) as in previous studies (Huang et al., 2003). People perceive technology that is easy to use also useful when everything else is equal. But, Subjective Norm (SN) effects Perceived Usefulness (PU) stronger than Perceived Ease Of Use (PEOU) do.(i.e. $\beta=0.439/\beta=0.312$ ). It might stem from that, people take what their superiors and colleagues think about the usefulness of E-mail into account more seriously.

As in previous studies (Huang, 2003; Huang et al., 2003) the effect of Subjective Norm (SN) on Behavioral Intention (BI) to use E-mail is not significant.

Femininity (F) shows positive moderating effect on the relationship between Subjective Norm (SN) and Perceived Usefulness (PU) as well as the relation between Subjective Norm (SN) and Behavioral Intention (BI) to use E-mails. Positive moderating effect of femininity between Subjective Norm and Behavioral Intention is consistent with a previous study (Srite and Karahanna, 2006). It is considered that feminine cultural values impacts personal relationships and it is important for such people to be agree with the others.

Collectivism (C) shows positive moderation effect between Subjective Norm (SN) and Perceived Usefulness (PU). Individuals whose collectivist features are dominant show more consistency about the usefulness of e-mail according to the opinions of their groups.

The fact that E-mail can not provide a rich communication environment (due to the lack of verbal communication and feedback, etc.) it causes uncertainty. That's why, contrary to the hypothesis, the effect of Subjective Norm (SN) on Perceived Usefulness (PU) is higher for people who have higher tolerance to uncertainty.

## **9. Limitations and Recommendations**

The limitations of this study and some recommendations for directors and future researchers are summarized below:

This study is conducted to only one organization in order to keep variables like organizational culture and E-mail basis stable. Consequently, heterogeneity between samples who are all Turks and co-workers cannot be seen.

Due to limited sampling, it is not possible for the study to conclude universal findings. These findings have qualification only to exemplify the universe of this study. That's why; it is assumed that studies that might be conducted in different national cultures, in different sectors and organizations will increase the possibility of obtaining general conclusions.

Because of the fact that E-mail is the most preferred tool in computer mediated communication, the subject of the research is only E-mail for the sake of easy data collection. For the future studies, it is considered that the means of communication in more than one computer media should be investigated and compared from organizational behavioral perspectives.

According to the findings of this research, there is huge impact of using a communication tool from their superiors and colleagues especially in societies like Turkey where social influences are strong. That's why; it is predicted that the most authorized director should believe and make people believe the technology that is going to be used and should use it by herself/ himself.

Due to the fact that the easy usage of communication technology affects both Perceived Usefulness (PU) and behavioral intention to use the technology positively, it is considered that the user friendly technologies which are easy to use should be prioritized.

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