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Investigating motivational factors influencing broadband adoption and usage in South African low-income households

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Abstract

Broadband technology has been identified as a vital contributor to socio-economic development in South Africa. Hoverer, the rate of broadband adoption and usage in low-income households is lower as compared to middle and high-income households. Although there are studies that have presented motivational factors for broadband adoption in South Africa, there is little knowledge about how these motivational factors collectively influence the adoption and usage of broadband in low-income households and how they use the technology. To address this gap, this study investigated motivational factors that influence low-income households in South Africa to adopt and use broadband. An extended Model for Broadband Adoption (MBA) was derived from literature and used to provide the basis for the theoretical and conceptual framework for this study. The researcher then followed a phenomenological approach to collect qualitative data that was analysed using a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). The findings of this study show that the participants from low-income households used broadband everyday but only for basic applications and the high cost of data hindered increased usage. The findings further suggest that attitude, normative beliefs and control factors can have both positive and negative influence on the adoption and usage of broadband by low-income households. In addition, low-income households regarded broadband as a key element towards improving their livelihood and confirmed the lack of local content in most broadband platforms. The study recommends that policy makers, regulatory authorities and broadband service providers should consider adopting models such as the MBA to advance their understanding on the interactions between low-income households and broadband, in order to develop policy interventions and products that are relevant to the lived experience of low-income households. The study emphases further the importance of expediting policies and regulations that are meant to address the high cost of data to ensure that broadband adoption and usage is inclusive of all income groups in South Africa.

Keywords: Broadband, South Africa, Broadband Adoption, Broadband Usage