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Introduction to the Minitrack on Age and Generational Aspects in Technology Acceptance and Use

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Today, information technologies are being used by individuals belonging to a broad range of age groups and generational cohorts. Despite this, the potential age and generational aspects in technology acceptance and use have been studied in a very superficial manner in prior information systems research. For example, in many prior studies, the role of age has been reduced to that of a mere control variable, and the studied samples have typically been fairly limited in terms of their age range, most often focusing on working-age individuals. Similarly, when potential age effects have been found, few studies have provided more in-depth explanations for why these effects exist in the first place, what are their broader implications for research and practice, and whether they are indeed age effects that apply to all individuals of a certain age independent of their time of birth or whether they are actually generational effects that only apply to individuals who were born in a certain time period. Moreover, age and generational aspects might play out very differently in different cultural contexts, further complicating this area of study. Because of this, our current understanding of the potential age and generational aspects in technology acceptance and use remains limited, resulting in age and generational stereotypes (or even age and generational discrimination), potential deepening of the digital divide between individuals of different ages and generations, and numerous other issues in technology acceptance and use. The importance of these considerations grows since the aging of populations has already started in most economies and is predicted to also start in the rest.

Age and generational stereotypes are a particularly urgent issue in today's rapidly evolving technological landscape. As AI becomes increasingly integrated into everyday life, the risk of these systems perpetuating age and generational stereotypes becomes a pressing concern. The widespread adoption of AI tools, from healthcare to social media, means that biases in the training data can have far-reaching consequences, influencing how individuals of different ages are perceived and treated.

It is equally important for researchers to critically examine their own biases when studying any age group and their technology use. For example, older individuals are frequently viewed as passive recipients of technology, rather than as active agents, who use these tools for self-expression, autonomy, and influence. Older generations are not merely adapting to technology—they are also using it to assert agency, build communities, and contribute to digital culture. By broadening their perspective, researchers can foster a more nuanced understanding of elderly adults as dynamic participants in the digital age.

In this minitrack, we called for multidisciplinary and multimethodological studies that dive deeper into the potential age and generational aspects of technology acceptance and use in order to advance our understanding of these phenomena. This includes studies that focus on the differences and similarities between multiple age groups and generational cohorts, studies that focus more specifically on the distinctive features of a single age group or generational cohort, and other kinds of studies in which age and/or generation acts as a central research construct in a research model and a research setting. We also warmly welcomed more critical and controversial studies that aim at challenging the prevailing age and generational stereotypes related to technology acceptance and use in our society. Although many of such stereotypes may not be completely without merit, the increasing exposure to various technological innovations and the fading differences in factors like technology readiness in most modern societies may have rendered many of them invalid, thus making them a dangerous foundation to build any future research on and a potential source of many business failures and missed business opportunities. We were pleased to receive several high-quality submissions to the minitrack, of which we accepted two papers to be presented at the conference.

The first paper by Sophie Kniepkamp, Theresa Wortmann, and Julia Kroenung (“Selection, Optimization and Compensation: Analyzing Older Adults’ Use Intention of AI-Based Devices”) focuses on older adults and their use intention of AI-based devices by using the

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selective optimisation with compensation (SOC) theory and the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) as the theoretical lenses. Based on an online survey of 210 German older adults aged 60 years or older and analysis of the collected data with partial least squares structural equation modelling, the paper finds that several established UTAUT constructs, such as effort expectancy and social influence, have limited applicability for older adults, suggesting that the age-related adaptation strategies of older adults considerably influence their intention to use AI-based devices.

The second paper by Matilda Holkkola, Julianna Welling, and Lauri Frank ("How Are Digital Coaches' Anthropomorphic Features Experienced by Young Men? Adopting a Digital Coach to Increase Exercise and Reduce Sitting") focuses on the potential of digital coaches to increase the physical activity and decrease the sedentary behaviour of young men as well as on the influence of anthropomorphism (i.e., the attribution of human-like features, characteristics, and behaviours onto non-human actors or inanimate objects) on the adoption of digital coaches among young sedentary men. Based on semi-structured thematic interviews of nine Finnish men aged between 20 and 31 years and analysis of the collected data with phenomenography, the paper identifies several mental and visual features of digital coaches that either foster or prevent their perceived anthropomorphism experienced by young sedentary men and, thus, also affect their overall adoption among this target population.