Internet usage patterns and gender differences: a decision tree approach

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Abstract

the present study deals with a more detailed, and updated, modified model that allows for the identification of internet usage patterns by gender. The model was modified due to the development of the internet and new access models, on the one hand, and to the fact that previous studies mainly focuses on various individual (non-interactive) influences of certain factors, on the other.

The Decision Tree (DT) method, which is used in our study, does not require a pre-defined underlying relationship. In addition, the method allows a great many explanatory variables to be processed and the most important variables are easy to identify.

Obtained results can serve as to web developers and designers, since by indicating the differences between male and female internet users in terms of their behaviour on the internet it can help in deciding when, where and how to address and appeal to which section of the user base. It is especially important to know their online preferences in order to enable the adequate and targeted placement of information, actions or products and services for the intended target groups.

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The aim of this paper is to examine Internet usage patterns by gender differences in relation to the four criteria – demographic profile, internet access, internet usage patterns and internet tasks. We examined the individual and interactive influence of these factors on gender-specific differences. In accordance with this goal, a decision tree (DT) method is used in this paper. An online survey involved 1147 respondents. The obtained results showed that gender differences existed for all observed criteria. Our results indicate that women are generally more frequently messaging oriented; they use mobile platforms more than men, and use the Internet most for communication, travel and education. Men prefer and more frequently engage in download and leisure activities. This study contributes to the better understanding of online behaviour as related to gender differences and confirms that the DT model can be efficiently used to identify these differences.

Keywords gender differences, decision tree, internet access, internet usage, internet tasks

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