ABSTRACT

Electronic business, or e-business, is a new business paradigm increasingly being adopted by organizations to capitalize on the potential of the Internet and other web technologies. Studies examining the adoption of e-business practices by traditional, bricks-and-mortar organizations have typically addressed issues related to web-based EDI, valuation of e-business investments, or variety in e-business models. However, the adoption of e-business initiatives by traditional organizations has not been examined from a technology innovation adoption perspective. There is also a lack of studies that take a holistic view of the adoption phenomenon and examine the impact of decisions or actions in one stage on the subsequent stages, so as to develop a more complete understanding of why the process unfolds the way it does. The present study is aimed at addressing these two issues by examining the adoption of e-business initiatives in bricks-and-mortar organizations in a process-oriented manner, from the initial trigger that sets off the adoption process till the implementation is completed and the system is operational.

This study took a technology adoption perspective of the phenomenon, and examined the impact of several environmental, organizational, interorganizational, technological, and project-specific factors on the adoption process. Drawing upon literature from technology adoption and implementation, strategy formulation, interorganizational systems and relationships, and change management, among others, a hybrid conceptual framework combining elements of variance models as well as process models was proposed. The emphasis was on understanding how the adoption process unfolds across three stages – adoption motivation, adoption decision, and adoption implementation – and their impact on the extent of success of the initiative (Figure 3.1). A number of propositions were also generated (Section 3.2) regarding the relationships between the stages as well as the impact of various factors on a stage. A multiple case research strategy was used, with a single e-business project as the unit of analysis , and four such projects across three organizations were studied. In all the case studies, the primary source of data was semi-structured interviews, supplemented by internal documents made available by the organizations, reports in business press and equity research reports from well-known research organizations. The data were analyzed within each case, as well as across the four cases, to detect similarities and compare differences. The propositions made in the conceptual framework were also tested in each case, and some more propositions were generated based on the cross-case analysis, for evaluation in future research.