Work, Leisure and Social Participation

Exploring integration and use of voice assistants with older adults over time A. Grigorovich (Brock University, Canada), M. T. Harris, M. Badger, M. George, AM. Levy, K. M. Kokorelias, J. M. McMurray. *Gerontechnology* 25(s*)*

Purpose Voice-activated technologies have been identified as having the potential to bridge the digital divide and facilitate older adults' wellbeing by enhancing offline leisure, enabling their access to new kinds of digital experiences and providing an opportunity for lifelong learning [1, 2]. Despite growing interest in increasing older adults' adoption of these technologies, the processes by which they select and integrate these technologies into their daily lives and the impacts that this has on them are poorly understood [3]. To address this gap, a 6-month longitudinal study was conducted with older adults living in the community who were provided with a Google Nest Hub and training on how to use the built-in voice assistant. **Method** Twenty participants completed surveys and interviews, and device usage data were collected. This presentation reports on data collected from the first month, including before installation and training, immediately post-training, and after one month of use. All data were analyzed using content analysis [4]. **Results and Discussion** Participants were primarily retired, White women with post-secondary education and all lived in their own home in the community. Prior to installation, all had positive attitudes toward use and stated that the voice assistant would be easy to use and could have multiple benefits for their everyday life (e.g., leisure, task management, home automation). After one month of use, participants primarily used it for reminders/timers (*M* = 21.5, *SD* = 47.2), entertainment (e.g. music; *M* = 50, *SD* = 100.5) and weather forecasts (*M* = 18.7, *SD* = 56.4), all of which were perceived as useful and as pleasurable. In the first month of using the voice assistant, the total unique queries ranged from 14-277 times (M = 187.8, SD = 324.1) or 2-37 queries/day (M=6.3, SD = 10.8). Common challenges included difficulties with speech recognition (e.g., not understanding commands or words), not responding as expected (e.g., not reading search results out loud) and being too busy to use as much as planned (e.g., not being home). Participants actively adapted by focusing on preferred features (e.g., music) and learning through selective trial-and-error (e.g., one feature at a time). Our findings deepen understanding of the complex process of learning and integration of voice technologies and suggest opportunities for enhancing use among older adults with targeted strategies that emphasize feature selection, gradual learning, and adaptive management of device limitations.

References

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