Executive Summary

The Role of Self-Determination Theory in Explaining Patients’ Motivation to Continue Using Telemedicine in a Post-Pandemic World
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Because telemedicine reduces the risk of infection through personal contact, the COVID-19 pandemic pressured policymakers to repeal telemedicine regulations for service providers, physicians, and patients. These activities helped to increase the number of first-time users among patients and physicians. However, as for other information and communication systems, the number of first-time users is less important than the number of repeat users. Due to so-called network effects or demand-side economies of scale, benefits depend on use continuation, an up-to-now under-researched topic in telemedicine.

To fill this gap, this paper focuses on patients’ telemedicine use continuance intention (i.e., their post-adoption behavior) and its antecedents. Our research combines the well-known Expectation-Confirmation Model (ECM) from satisfaction research with motivation antecedents and outcomes according to Self-Determination Theory (SDT).

We developed and shared a self-administered questionnaire in online health communities. A patient sample \( n = 464 \) participated in the survey. A subsample \( n = 151 \) had experiences with medical teleconsultation or similar medical applications, whereas other patients \( n = 313 \) with teleconsultations in administration, business, or education only. Overall, both subsamples reveal almost the same results. Perceived usefulness (e.g., time saving and quick access to healthcare treatment) is the most important continuance intention predictor. However, psychological needs from SDT (e.g., perceived competence and perceived relatedness) also determine motivation, satisfaction, and continuance intention.

The combination of ECM and SDT appears to lay the foundation for improved research for digitalized healthcare delivery. Further, both subsamples demonstrate high satisfaction with telemedicine. Nevertheless, telemedicine providers and marketers should carefully optimize
the patient journey while minimizing patient waiting time and focus on understanding users’ health needs to differentiate their services in the market.