Governance | Individual communication

IC - (21019) - SMART HOMES FOR ALL? A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF SMART HOME LIVING IN THE UK

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Background and objectives

The construction industry is experiencing considerable pressure to provide homes which are affordable, adaptable, and supportive of occupants' needs. The University of Surrey is working in partnership with MyGlobalHome to build a state-of-the-art modular, 'smart home' concept on the University campus. Smart homes are digitally-connected homes equipped with lighting, heating, and electronic devices that that are automatically regulated or can be remotely controlled by users (e.g. via smartphone). Developing a fuller understanding the factors shaping end-user acceptance of smart homes (incl. a willingness to live in one) will be essential for their longer-term commercial viability.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

We report on the findings of an online Citizens' Jury held with 20 members of the general UK public, across 2-days in Summer 2021. Questioning within the CJ focused on exploring participants' opinions on issues of data security, and accessibility to and control over the use of devices and technological appliances associated with smart homes. Participants were selected to fall into one of four groups, determined by their age (younger vs. older) and techno-scepticism (sceptic vs. enthusiast). Four expert witnesses provided short presentations to the participants about the core issues of data-security and control before these topics were debated through facilitated discussion.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

Thematic analysis (using NVivo 12) was conducted to code the themes arising from participant discussions. Key themes related to the benefits of smart home living (e.g., enhanced QoL), sense of control (e.g., feelings about automation), ensuring design meets with user needs (e.g., designing for diversity), general perceptions of smart home living, accessibility (e.g., affordability), and data-sharing governance and management.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

The findings confirm the importance of developers acting transparently and providing assurances over matters of consent, data sharing, privacy and security; and highlight the desire for both the regulation of the sector, and the increased affordability and accessibility of smart homes for wider user-groups.

Palavras-chave : Smart home, Public perceptions, Technology acceptance