

Inspecting the Use of WhatsApp Messaging and its Impact

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Abstract

With the change in Internet technologies we have observed profusion of information flow in the modern society. With the essence of social media networking, an innovative approach has been observed while sharing messages either on public or on private platform amongst its user. Nowadays WhatsApp messenger is a proprietary cross-platform instant messaging client for smart phones that operates under a subscription business model. However the users of WhatsApp are very much concerned with the features and its uses along with its privacy policy while using it. Paper sets out to study the topological characteristics of WhatsApp, its power as an innovative medium of information sharing and social convergence along with several other positive as well as negative dimensions of its usage. Data associated with this paper was collected from the users of this App in the form of questionnaire and on the basis of observed figures; we have inspected the feature and characteristics in association of WhatsApp and its usage.

Key Words: WhatsApp, Social Media, Social Networking, Internet, Smartphones, Messengers

I. Introduction

In a recent study conducted on high school students of age 18 years and younger were examined in an effort to find their preference for receiving news. Based on interviews with 61 teenagers, conducted from December 2007 to February 2011, most of the teen participants reported reading print newspapers only “sometimes,” with fewer than 10% reading them daily. Teenagers instead reported learning about current events from social media sites such as Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, and blogs. Another study showed that social media users read a set of

news that is different from what newspaper editors feature in the print press.

Data suggest that participants use social media to fulfill perceived social needs, but are typically disappointed. Lonely individuals are drawn to the Internet for emotional support. This could interfere with “real life socializing” by reducing face-to-face relationships. Some of these views are summed up in an Atlantic article by Stephen Marche titled, Is Facebook Making Us Lonely? –in which the author argues that social media

provides more breadth, but not the depth of relationships that humans require.

Sherry Turkle explores similar issues in her book 'Alone Together' in which she discusses how people confuse social media usage with authentic communication. She posits that people tend to act differently online and are less afraid to hurt each other's feelings. Some online behaviors can cause stress and anxiety, due to the permanence of online posts, the fear of being hacked, or of colleges and

employers exploring social media pages. Turkle also speculates that people are beginning to prefer texting to face-to-face communication, which can contribute to feelings of loneliness. Some researchers have also found that only exchanges that involved direct communication and reciprocation of messages to each other increased feelings of connectedness. However, passively using social media without sending or receiving messages to individuals does not make people feel less lonely unless they were lonely to begin with.

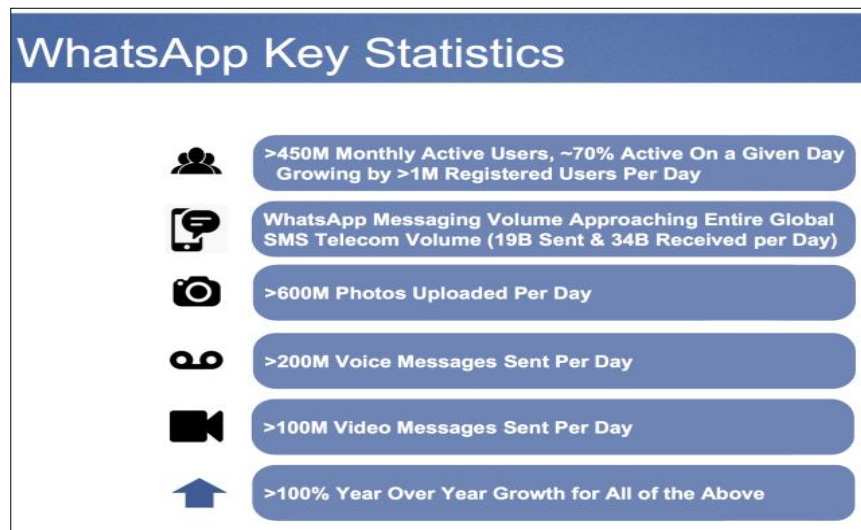


Figure 2: Key Statistics of WhatsApp

Coming directly on WhatsApp, which is a unique social media interface started in the year 2009, with the tag line "simple, personal, real time messaging". It is a mobile messaging app which allows the users to exchange messages without having to pay for SMS. WhatsApp messenger was purposely created by Brian Acton and Jan Koum (2009) to make communication and the

distribution of multimedia messaging more easy and fast. This app works in association with internet and acclaimed operating systems of mobile phones which helps its users to stay in touch with friends and relatives in the contact list. User can also create groups; can send unlimited images, video and audio messages to the group members as well as individuals.

Studies have proved that WhatsApp is the most popular instant messenger service used by youth today. Young people who give more importance to friendship, social lives and family relationships make use of WhatsApp on a large scale. Popularity of WhatsApp among youth has brought a huge profit among service providers since it works on internet data plan. The reason why WhatsApp is so popular among youth is because, it allows them to send unlimited texts to their friends and family members without any cost other than their internet data plan that they already use in their smart phones. The application is so easy to use after downloading. It shows you who all are using WhatsApp in your contacts and also helps to invite their friends who are yet to download and use. Then they can start messaging, sharing audio files, video files, updating status, etc.

II. Literature Review

In as much as the application brings us so many benefits, it has also got its flaws that are currently causing more harm than good among the students today. In cognizance of the rate at which our youth at tertiary institutions are hooking up to social media, there is the need to educate them on its advantages and disadvantages in their academic performance accordingly. Yalcinalp and Gulbahar,(2010) articulate the value of these applications as follows: encourage learners to learn by anticipating needs, make collaborative learning efficient and effective, build a relationship that stimulates learner-to-learner for consistent and progressive learning.

| Advantages of WhatsApp | Disadvantages of WhatsApp |
|--|--|
| <p>WhatsApp is completely free for use.</p> <p>Instantly send message to anywhere in the world.</p> <p>Easy to use, even a novice mobile user can use it.</p> <p>It does not have any advertisements on display screen.</p> <p>It imports the contacts from your phone and tells you that how many of your friends are using WhatsApp.</p> <p>One can share location, photos, status, images, and videos with friends.</p> <p>Need not spend any money for chatting and sharing with your friends (except the internet charges)</p> <p>It shows that receiver has received and/or read message.</p> <p>Free calls to other WhatsApp users are supported.</p> | <p>Only smartphones are supported, many people still don't have them.</p> <p>There is risk; your spouse/girlfriend/boyfriend may read the messages.</p> <p>It shows that receivers have viewed the message to the sender, so you can't say I didn't saw it.</p> <p>You must have access to internet to send and receive messages for free and the messages are also not sent to the phone inbox.</p> <p>It can be annoying sometimes due to constant messages.</p> <p>It saves the files by default, so great privacy threat.</p> <p>Your profile picture is visible to every person having your contact number and using this app, whether known by you or not.</p> |

WhatsApp was widely adopted by individuals as it allows better accessibility and ease of communication offering real-time messaging, empowerment, sense of belongingness and sociability, enjoyment, quick information-sharing and cost benefits (Bere, 2012; Plana, Gimeno, & Appel, 2013; Church & Oliveira, 2013; Yeboah&Ewur, 2014; Soliman& Salem, 2014; Devi &Tevera, 2014; O'Hara, Massimi, Harper, Rubens & Morris, 2014). On the other hand, O'Hara et al. (2014) investigated WhatsApp use among 20 individuals (between 17 and 49 year olds) in United Kingdom (UK). They found that WhatsApp messaging was primarily used to 'dwell' with significant others in the virtual space. They also concluded that the effects of WhatsApp use on social relationships included a sense of belongingness, as well as a secured and committed bond. Bere (2012) also investigated the motivational factors that affected WhatsApp use among 118 undergraduates in South Africa. In his study, it was highlighted that a majority of undergraduates preferred ubiquitous learning via WhatsApp messaging, but this was particularly significant among younger and single (unmarried) undergraduates. Meanwhile, Yeboah and Ewur (2014) conducted a study to find out the impact of WhatsApp use on students' performance in tertiary institutions in Ghana. They concluded that, while the positive impacts included ease of

communications and effective information-sharing, the negative impacts were distraction from studies and completing assignments, damaging language spellings and grammars and lack of focus in lectures. Like Yeboah and Ewur (2014), Plana, Gimeno and Appel (2013) were interested in exploring the benefits and drawbacks of using WhatsApp messaging on reading skills in English as a foreign language (EFL). Their study found that a majority of students reported a high level of confidence and interest in reading English via WhatsApp messages. Devi and Tevera (2014) found that both Facebook and WhatsApp were commonly used for academic communication and information sharing. Overall, however, most studies did not investigate the challenges involved with the ease of use and communication via WhatsApp messaging. Thus, drawing on the above studies, this study aimed to investigate not only: (1) the use and effects of WhatsApp messaging among university students; but also; (2) the extent to which WhatsApp messaging is used to disseminate information or media content, regardless of its regulated or unregulated nature.

An article "Indian Youth prefers WhatsApp, Facebook over SMS" published on June 16, 2013, in The Times of India Online newspaper. The survey was conducted by Tata Consultancy Services in the year 2012- 2013. Study was

conducted on 17,500 high school students across 14 Indian cities. Study revealed that today's youth are collaborating through social networking tools and building virtual communities aided by affordable bandwidth and smart devices. The survey proved that almost 70% of the students possess smart phones and have started utilizing the full potential of smart phones.

Gross (2004) explained various psychological and physical problems (sleep deprivation, excessive fatigue, decreased immune system, lack of proper exercise, poor personal hygiene and back or eye strain), social isolation and lack of real-life social relationships, familial (relationship problems with family, neglect of daily chores and increased family conflicts), academic problems (drop in grades, missed classes, decline in study habits) and other problems such as cyber bullying, sexual predators and exposure to pornographic materials have all been identified as consequences of excessive smart phone use. It has been alleged by some academicians that excessive Internet use can be pathological and addictive and that it comes under the more generic label of technological addiction.

Kim et al. (2008) identified that the characteristics of well-adjusted individuals make them not seek social contacts on the Internet. The results of the present research are explainable in terms of

extraversion and the individual's tendency to invest time in social relationship, to experience positive emotions and community participation, extravert individuals as web users do not consider online or cyber-relationships as social support.

III. Research Objective

Main objective of this study is to identify the major factors related to WhatsApp usage and identify reasons for youngsters using this app so frequently. Paper identifies various attributes associated with popularity of WhatsApp.

IV. Research Methodology

Scope of the research is comprised of users of smart phone who have this app installed in their devices. Questionnaire prepared for gathering data was distributed from January 2016 to February 2016 to the respondents. Respondents were of metropolitan cities of our country and were chosen randomly satisfying the above stated condition.

Research Sample

Total number of respondents fulfilling the condition was chosen and questionnaire was administered to 202 respondents across the country.

Data Collection

First part of questionnaire consists of the questions which are related to demographic information,

willingness to pay for the service as WhatsApp was charging subscription fee after one year of free service. Respondents were also asked if they are comfortable in sharing private information like their pictures or videos to others. In the second part, Likert Scale containing five items is used (1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly agree).

V. Findings and Results

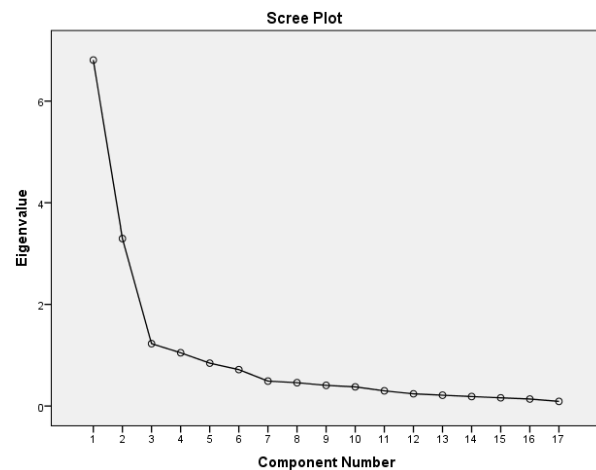
In order to assist understanding and clarification of the association between a wide variety of factors stated in the questionnaire that are believed to have associations, and in order to decrease the amount to a more basic dimensional aspect (Altunisik et al. 2005,212) a factor analysis has been used.

For factor analysis feasibility test of data, Kaiser – Meyer - Olkin(KMO) test and Bartlet test (Altunisik et al. 2005, 220) have been applied. In factor analysis, Varimax method has been applied and four factors were found to be more relating that explained the characteristics and popularity of WhatsApp usage among youngsters.

KMO and Bartlett's Test

| | | |
|--|--------------------|----------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. | | 0.831 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 2432.201 |

| | | |
|--|-------------------|-------|
| | Degree of Freedom | 136 |
| | Significant value | 0.000 |



Of the total 17 variables considered for factor analysis the researchers were able to extract four factors and all the variables were included. Scree plot confirms the extraction and hence we can see four factors being extracted from the factor analysis.

These four factors explain 72.812 percent of the total variance. Factors explaining the characteristics of WhatsApp and its popularity can be seen in table1. First of the factors can be called “WhatsApp Profile” and it consists of seven parameters. It explains 27.677 percentage of total variance. Second factor is “WhatsApp for Communication” and it includes four parameters and it explains 27.677 percent of total variance. Third factor is “Groups in WhatsApp” and it explains 14.947 percent of the total variance. It has three variables. Factor four is “Ease of

WhatsAppUsage” having two parameters and it explains 11.348 percent of total variance.

Table 1: Factors Explaining the Characteristics of WhatsApp making it more Popular Among Youngsters

| Rotated Component Matrix* | | | | |
|---|------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Component | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| WhatsApp Profile | 0.874 | | | |
| I feel relieved after I vent out my frustration through status | | | | |
| I change my status very frequently | 0.870 | | | |
| I enjoy when friends read my status and comment on it | 0.814 | | | |
| My status depicts my current state of mind | 0.797 | | | |
| I prefer to change my display picture very often | 0.732 | | | |
| I feel satisfied if people appreciate my display picture | 0.720 | | | |
| My display picture depict my latest look | 0.645 | | | |
| My character is portrayed by the kind of display pic I upload | . | | | |
| WhatsApp for Communication | | 0.825 | | |
| They are useful interacting with friends | | | | |
| I feel emoticons and smilies are very important part in my conversation | | 0.786 | | |
| I use them frequently during interaction | | 0.772 | | |
| Emoticons and smilies are best way to express | | 0.719 | | |
| Groups in WhatsApp | | | 0.874 | |
| Sense of belonging to the group | | | | |
| Contact with graduates/alumni | | | 0.791 | |
| builds new friendships through groups | | | 0.736 | |
| Ease of WhatsApp Usage | | | | |
| Adding and removing members to a group is easy | | | | 0.801 |
| Forming group is easy on WhatsApp | | | | 0.709 |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

VI. Conclusion

Most of the users feel relieved after they went out with their frustration through status. They change their status very frequently as they sense pleasure when their friends read their status and comments. Status of the users depicts their state of mind and therefore they change their display picture very often and wait for comments of their friends on

display pictures as they reveal their latest information.

Most of the users find emoticons and avatars as an important tool for effective conversation and they use them frequently during interaction so as to express sense of belongingness to the group. Most of the users use their contact for interaction with graduates or alumni so that they can build new friends through different groups. Users find easy

to create groups or add or remove members from the group. Overall its a pleasant and must app on users smart phones who are fond of social networking on cross platform applications.

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