



Paradoxes perception and smartphone use by Brazilian executives: Is this genderless?



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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the influence of gender in the perception of paradoxes accrued from smartphone use by Brazilian executives. From the extant scientific literature, this work identified fourteen technological paradoxes that might be associated with smartphone use by executives. By applying questionnaires and conducting in-depth interviews, data was collected and analyzed via non-parametric statistics and content analysis. The study shows that the gender variable actually influences the way executives in Brazil perceive the paradoxes accrued from the use of smartphones. From the fourteen paradoxes set forth, six are perceived by female executives, whereas only four are perceived by male executives. The article concludes that although female executives experience a higher level of ambiguities arising from the use of smartphones than male executives, the former perceive more positive than negative effects from the use of smartphones, as this device allows them to play their different roles in society better, namely as executives, mothers, wives, to name just a few.

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1. Introduction

The increasing penetration of smartphones around the world shows the importance of the technology and the concept of being connected as a way of implementing the idea of belonging to contemporary humankind. Thus, this new order represented by the growing importance of access to information and the possibility of being permanently connected is significantly changing social dynamics, permitting new forms of collaboration and interaction (Li, Gupta, Lou, & Warkentin, 2011; Chae & Yeum, 2010; Oulasvirta & Sumari, 2010; Yuan, Archer, Connelly, & Zheng, 2010; Pica & Kakihara, 2003; Saha & Mukherjee, 2003; Lytinen & Yoo, 2002).

In Brazil, the sales of smartphones in 2013 increased by 123% in relation to the previous year totaling 35.6 million devices (IDC, 2014). Moreover, in 2013 in Brazil, 67.8 million mobile phones were sold, 32.2 million of which were ordinary devices without data applications. According to IDC, in 2013, for the first time in Brazil more smartphones were sold than feature phones and the stake of smartphones in the total of mobile phones sold will continue to increase in Brazil. The country was the fourth largest smartphone market in the world at the end of 2014, just behind China, the United States, and India (IDC, 2014). Thus, faced with the exponential growth of smartphone use in Brazil and aware of the strong relationship of this device with executive life (Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014), the intention is for smartphone use by male and female Brazilian executives to be the focus of this research.

While the subject of technology and organizations has been widely addressed in Academia, little research has investigated the consequences (positive and negative) accrued from wireless mobile technology adoption by executives. In other words, although

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most researchers have investigated the relationship between technology and society, in what is called the information society (Barjis, Gupta, & Sharda, 2010), few studies have tackled the professional and personal micro implications of smartphone adoption by “corporate professionals” (e.g., Borges & Joia, 2011, 2013 and Sandi & Saccol, 2010). In addition to this, most studies about smartphone use by executives have their focus on the benefits and gains to executives arising from the adoption of this device (e.g., Chen, Yen, & Chen, 2009). Moreover, the smartphone vendors also proclaim the advantages of this device to users, associating the smartphone with mobility and freedom. However, studies about technological paradoxes have claimed that information and communication technology adoption has generated both positive and negative consequences associated with its use by executives, who are unaware of them most of the time (Boorstin, 1978; Borges & Joia, 2011, 2013; Goodman, 1988; Winner, 1994). According to Lyytinen and Yoo (2002), Pica and Kakiyama (2003) and Barjis et al. (2010), mobile wireless technologies, such as smartphones, have redefined the social dynamic via new modus-operandi. Thus, at the same time as smartphones are used in the daily lives of individuals, contributing to more agile communications, they can also provoke addiction, anxiety, and encroachment on the free time of these individuals (Borges & Joia, 2011, 2013).

Furthermore, the influence of gender on the emergence of paradoxes accrued from smartphone use is something new in the Information Systems realm (see, for instance, the literature review developed by Trauth, 2013). The extant literature mainly analyzes the underrepresentation of women in the IS professions (Clayton, Beekhuizen, & Nielsen, 2012; Joshi & Schmidt, 2006), the gender influence in the implementation of Information Systems and Technology (Baker, Al-Gahtani, & Hubona, 2007), as well as the role of gender in the perception and use of these systems and technologies (Ilie, Van Slyke, Green, & Lou, 2005; Venkatesh & Morris, 2000).

Understanding that organizations and humankind adopt technologies such as smartphones because they believe they contribute to increasing their performance (Jewell, 2011; John, Weiss, & Dutta, 1999; Melville, Kraemer, & Gurbaxin, 2004), it is relevant to understand the effective role of the smartphone in the day-to-day reality of male and female professionals. Possible ambiguities or anomalies arising from this use by male and female executives need to be studied and analyzed, in order to understand how they differ, so as to seek for solutions that can minimize the conflicting aspects associated with the use of smartphones by them.

In this manner, the research question of this study is: What is the role of gender in the emergence of paradoxes with positive and negative impacts associated with smartphone use by Brazilian executives?

In order to answer this question, this article is structured as follows: after this introduction, the literature review related to the emergence of paradoxes of positive and negative impacts associated with smartphone use is set forth. After that, the methodological procedures are presented and the results obtained are then set forth. Then, these aforementioned results are discussed in order to clarify the implications accrued from this work, as well as its limitations. Lastly, some concluding remarks are made regarding recommendations for further research in this knowledge field.

2. Literature review

2.1. Technological paradoxes

The concept of paradox is far from new, having been developed by philosophers in Antiquity. Since then, several researchers have studied this concept and applied it to the management studies realm, such as Eisenhardt and Westcoot (1988), Hatch and Ehrlich (1993), Handy (1994), Kets de Vries (1995), Vince and Broussine (1996), Eisenhardt (2000) and Lüscher and Lewis (2008), to name just a few. From the logical point of view, a paradox is a statement that is in itself a contradiction, albeit possibly well grounded and valid (Lewis, 2000). The contradiction is presented based on the opposition between two propositions in which the truth of one necessarily implies the falsity of the other and vice versa (Adekola & Sergi, 2007).

Besides that, paradoxes produce tension among organizational managers, who due to lack of options are expected to recognize the paradoxes and develop coping strategies to live with them in their daily lives (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005; Chae & Yeum, 2010; Clegg, Cunha, & Cunha, 2002).

According to several authors, wireless cell phone technologies such as smartphones are conceptually riddled with paradoxes that seem to increase as new technological devices are launched on the market. This is because they incorporate new dimensions, possibilities of use and features, rendering the relationship of users with these technologies more complex (Balasubramanian, Peterson, & Jarvenpaa, 2002; Dekleva, 2004; Seongil, 2009; Urbaczewski, Valacich, & Jessup, 2003). Thus, as technology leads to a more integrated and complex reality, several studies have sought to identify and categorize technological paradoxes, including those itemized below.

Mick and Fournier (1998) made their contribution to the discussion, when they decided to assess the technological paradoxes employing a qualitative approach based on content analysis of interviews, a study that had not previously been conducted in the academic field. The research conducted in the U.S. assessed the sentiments and behaviors of consumers of technological products like computers, printers, DVDs and televisions, by means of interviews, group discussions, and questionnaires. The scope of that research was to synthesize the concepts of paradoxes, emotions and behavioral strategies within the field of applied technology in consumer products. During that research, eight paradoxes (P1 to P8) were revealed, as shown in Fig. 1.

Jarvenpaa and Lang (2005) also studied the concept of technological paradoxes, more specifically in the universe of cell phone technology. In 2001, the authors conducted a survey with 33 discussion groups composed of 222 users recruited in Finland, Japan, China, and the U.S. At the end of the study, they identified 23 paradoxes that after methodological revalidation were reduced to eight, which can be specifically applied to cell phone technology tools. In addition to four paradoxes revealed in the study of Mick and Fournier (1998) – P2, P4, P6, and P8 – Jarvenpaa and Lang (2005) pinpointed four more technological paradoxes (P9 to P12), as shown in Fig. 1.

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