



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

The Social Science Journal

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/soscijAddiction to mobile text messaging applications is nothing to “lol” about[☆]Abdullah J. Sultan^{*}

Department of Management and Marketing, Kuwait University, P.O. Box 5486, Safat 13055, Kuwait

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 3 December 2012

Received in revised form 5 September 2013

Accepted 5 September 2013

Available online 2 October 2013

Keywords:

Text messaging

Social communication

Social phobia and anxiety

Addiction

Extraversion

ABSTRACT

The recent use of mobile text messaging applications, such as Blackberry Messenger (BBM) and WhatsApp, has increased greatly throughout the world. Unfortunately, this advanced technology is not without problems. In this study, the researcher argues that BBM and WhatsApp may generate noticeable improvements in consumer's lives but may simultaneously cause serious social and personal problems, including addiction to these applications. Amazingly, this topic has received little if any attention from consumer behaviorists, who need to understand the psychological factors that affect BBM and WhatsApp consumers. Hence, the current research examines two personality traits—extraversion and social anxiety—that influence consumer attitudes toward these applications. The results of a survey from 552 BBM and WhatsApp consumers in Kuwait indicate that the interaction effect of extraversion and social anxiety is significantly related to consumer attitudes toward BBM and WhatsApp. Furthermore, addiction to these applications plays a mediating role in the examined effect.

© 2013 Western Social Science Association. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Social psychologists consistently emphasize the role of good social relationships at home and work (Argyle, 1989, 1996, 2001). The quality and quantity of communications with others appears to be crucial for establishing good relationships that result in both long- and short-term happiness and well-being (Amichai-Hamburger & Furnham, 2007). In general, individuals communicate with one another through various media, including face-to-face, telephone, and Internet communication. Recently, new mobile text message technologies have changed interpersonal interactions drastically by enabling more text-based communication rather than face-to-face encounters and by allowing consumers to feel increasingly knowledgeable

about things related to their friends, family members, social issues, and surrounding news (Harrison & Gilmore, 2012). In particular, the release of Internet-based mobile text message applications, such as Blackberry Messenger (BBM) and WhatsApp, has allowed consumers to socialize and stay connected longer using their smart phones without having to pay for a network operator's short message service (SMS) charges. In October 17, 2012, *Forbes* indicated that there were more than 60 million BBM users and 300 million WhatsApp users worldwide. These numbers are expected to rise given the expectation that more smart phone owners will shift toward Internet-based messaging in upcoming years (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2012).

Despite an explosion in the popularity of BBM and WhatsApp in the marketplace, researchers have not yet investigated the usage behaviors associated with them. In fact, most existing studies have focus on the effects, both positive and negative, of other computer-mediated communication (CMC) technologies, such as text messaging (Byrne & Findlay, 2004; Harrison & Gilmore, 2012; Hosking, Young, & Regan, 2009; Igrarashi, Motoyoshi, Takai, &

[☆] Lol: An abbreviation for “laughing out loud” that is frequently used in text messaging.

^{*} Tel.: +965 9993 9671; fax: +965 2483 8273.

E-mail address: asultan@cba.edu.kw

Yoshida, 2008), email and instant messaging (Chen, Yen, & Huang, 2004; Lancaster & Yen, 2007), and the Internet (Davis, 1989; Huang, Hung, & Yen, 2007). Far less attention has been devoted to newer CMC technologies (Grellhest & Punyanunt-Carter, 2012; Skierkowski & Wood, 2012), such as BBM and WhatsApp text message applications.

Today, it is not uncommon to observe couples or friends eating at restaurants where everyone at a table is using BBM or WhatsApp to text others rather than holding face-to-face conversations. In fact, it is not surprising to observe individuals walking down the street while staring at their smart phone screens to read or send text messages. As the attention of such individuals is focused on the screen, their walking speed slows, disregarding other pedestrians, who may be annoyed. In addition, Harrison and Gilmore (2012) have found that a substantial number of people report texting in seemingly inappropriate situations, such as “while on a date, while socializing in person with others, and to break up with and cheat on a romantic partner” (p. 513). More concerning, text messaging is being banned in cities in the US and other parts of the world as traffic fatalities rise as a result of “distracted” driving. Given these disturbing findings and previous researchers’ warnings regarding the addictive potential of CMC behaviors (Griffiths, 2000, 2010, 2012; Kuss & Griffiths, 2011; Widyanto & Griffiths, 2006), one may speculate that mobile text messaging technologies, such as BBM and WhatsApp applications, have become an essential aspect of the social lives of many people today and hence warrant investigations by consumer behaviorists.

The main objectives of the current research are threefold: (1) to describe BBM and WhatsApp usage behaviors, (2) to examine personality traits that may have an influence on consumer attitudes toward BBM and WhatsApp, and (3) to identify a potential driver of the excessive use of these applications. The current study is probably the first of this type to be undertaken within the BBM and WhatsApp context and thus offers significant contributions to the CMC literature. Furthermore, it is important to note that few studies have focused on the effects of CMC technology on consumers in the Middle East region (Rouibah & Hamdy, 2009); hence, this research paves the way for future researchers to expand their knowledge of CMC usage behaviors in this part of the developing world. The next section introduces literature related to the examined concept and establishes the framework for study to test the research hypotheses.

2. Literature overview

2.1. *BBM and WhatsApp as new forms of mobile text message applications*

In general, text messaging has become a necessary form of communication throughout the world, and its adoption is increasing at a rapid rate (Global Mobile Statistics, 2012). For some individuals, text messaging is the most popular means of communicating with people in their social networks, with its use exceeding the use of face-to-face communications, emails, and voice calls (Lu et al., 2011; Skierkowski & Wood, 2012). Young adults send an

average of 109.5 text messages per day or approximately 3200 texts each month (Brenner, 2012). Young adults receive an additional 113 text messages and check their cell 60 times in a typical day (Harman & Sato, 2011). The introduction of smart phones, such as the Blackberry, iPhone, and Samsung Galaxy devices, has further expanded the tasks that can be performed on this newest generation of cell phones. It is expected that smart phone users will increasingly abandon traditional SMS technologies in favor of more convenient Internet-based mobile text messaging technologies (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2012), such as BBM and WhatsApp applications. BBM is an instant messenger application that is included only on Blackberry devices, whereas WhatsApp is a cross-platform mobile messaging application available on several smart phone devices. Both applications allow users to exchange messages without paying service charges. Although BBM, WhatsApp, and SMS share the ability to send text messages via mobile devices, the first two have far more convenient functions that SMS does not support, such as sending unlimited photo, video, and audio messages enriched with emoticons without additional service charges. Therefore, these advanced Internet-based mobile text message applications have become a widely accepted phenomenon as a result of their affordability and convenience and the ability to send unlimited messages compared with that available through SMS technology.

The next sections describe the personality characteristics of consumers who are more likely to use BBM or WhatsApp and determine why these consumers develop excessive usage behaviors.

2.2. *The personality characteristics of BBM and WhatsApp consumers*

In the absence of any previous research in this area, the literature relating to CMC, particularly Internet and text messaging, is used as a basis from which to extrapolate the effects of personality traits on consumer attitudes toward BBM and WhatsApp. In general, researchers have examined various effects of personality traits on consumer behaviors for different forms of CMC technology (e.g., Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Joinson, 2003; Kraut et al., 1998, 2002; Walther, 1996; Valkenburg, Schouten, & Peter, 2005; Valkenburg & Peter, 2007). Of significant importance to the current research is a stream of research that defines the personality characteristics of CMC users along the introversion/extraversion and social anxiety continuums. Introverts are defined as a quiet, reflective people who prefer their own company and do not enjoy large social events that drain their energy, whereas extraverts are friendly people who gain energy from face-to-face interactions at social events (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975). John, Naumann, and Soto (2008) claim that introverts tend to be withdrawn from others, are less active, and express fewer positive emotions; by contrast, extraverts adopt an energetic approach toward the outside world and can be generally described as sociable, active, assertive, and predisposed to expressing positive emotions. Some believe that extraverts are more likely to turn to a form of CMC technology to interact with others to fulfill their unmet,

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/140179>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/140179>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)