EXPLORING USER'S EXPERIENCE AND FREQUENCY OF USING SOCIAL MESSAGING APPLICATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The study investigates the frequency of user adoption of various types of social media applications and their impact on user experiences. The study looks into the features and frequency of social messaging applications and their affect on usage and user experiences.

Method: A quantitative method is used based on a random questionnaire distribution to 270 participants working in an organizational setting.

Findings: It has been evident WhatsApp has the highest number of users (94.4 percent), while Snap Chat has the second highest (60.4 percent). The best user experience is found in text chatting (87.6 percent) and photo sending (70.4 percent). It is clear that friends have the most contacts with which users communicate, with family coming in second. Results also show that the key features of SMA perceived by users are their ability to interact with groups at the same time, and the second highest feature is that it is free of charge.

Originality: This study adds knowledge to the scarce and limited research on information and communication technology, specifically the use of social messaging applications in the workplace.

Keywords: Social messaging, Social messaging applications (SMA), User Experience, Perceived Features, Frequency of use.

INTRODUCTION

Social messaging (SM) has been recognized to be the preferred method of communication among users due to its widespread use and simplicity (Ali & Alsaad, 2020; Harun, 2021). Although security and privacy issues have been addressed when data exchange occur, studies applied techniques such as detection systems that can lessen threats to user data exchange and provide more security and privacy for users (Ali & Alsaad, 2020; Gaharwar & Gupta, 2020).

Most previous research is focused on social use of IM (Grinter, & Eldridge, 2001; Grinter & Palen, 2002) while other IM research was examined in organizational contexts (Whittaker, Frohlich & Daly-Jones, 1994). It has been evident that workplace IM conversations ranked highest for complex work discussions, and average for scheduling activities and coordination, and lowest for simple work interactions. Two main users were identified, heavy and light users. Heavy users used IM very frequently to work together in groups through discussing several topics through fast passed interactions. While light users used IM for infrequent slower paced interactions that involved routine multitasking activities (Isaacs, Walendowski, Whittaker, Schiano & Kamm, 2002). Important social messaging features include emoji characters that represent emotions in pictographs. Users directly relate their emotions and sentiments towards conversations in simple representations of user-friendly emoji's (Harun, 2021).

Therefore, the aims of this study are to explore three important factors that encourage users to use SMA's, they are users contact list, user experience, and SMA's perceived features in the workplace.

Importance of the Study

The importance of the study lies in two main points.

First, to explore three important constructs identified in literature as major predictors of use, they are user contacts, experiences, and perceived features of SMA and their effect on users in the workplace.

Second, to examine the degree of importance of SMA as one of the main sources of communications technology used in the workplace.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Isaacs, Walendowski, Whittaker, Schiano & Kamm, (2002) highlighted three main dimensions that describe IM usage; they are the properties, functions, and patterns of using IM. In relation to IM properties, the first property has been evident that conversations of IM are brief and short focusing on rapid exchange of information, where discussions are like a collection of short questions and answers. The second property identified that users usually switch to other media such as phone calls when IM conversation gets too complex or long to discuss more detail when required. The third property was that users can multitask when IM, through frequently switching from one application to another when needed. Users are also able to carry on a conversation while undergoing other activities such as browsing the email, or searching a photo or a file (Isaacs, Walendowski, Whittaker, Schiano & Kamm, 2002).

Second, in relation to IM functions Nardi, Whittaker & Bradner (2000) studied 20 users in their workplace to investigate how they used IM functions. Their research identified four major functions that users frequently use. The first function is a quick question and clarification; it is the most commonly used and preferred method of communicating quickly and generating on-the-spot responses from coworkers.The second function is coordination and task scheduling, which is another popular function used by teams to schedule tasks and distribute work activities. The third function was to coordinate impromptu social meetings, and the fourth function was to keep in touch with family and friends. Both focus on social interactions between individuals and groups, which are sometimes referred to as social chatting and, in some organizations, may be regarded as a waste of quality work time that leads to employee productivity loss.

Third, is the pattern of use in relation to how frequent and with whom people use IM. Previous studies indicate on average users usually use IM through building a contact list through which communication ranges from 7 to 30 contacts (Grinter & Palen, 2002; Mahowald & Levitt, 2000; Rhinelander, 2000). Another study tested the frequency of use that resulted in two kinds of users, daily users, and weekly users, where daily users reported more than 80% (Radicati Group, 2001). While another study labeled two types of users, the first is intense users, and they are users that are busy in sending many messages per day and the second is mainstream users, and they are users that send few messages per day (Rhinelander, 2000).

As evident from previous literature that most studies are focused on European and international regions. For that reason, the purpose of this study is to explore the growing use SMA in Kuwait, as research is scarce and limited in the field of technology adoption. This study

aims to test the relationship of three important supporting variables: first, user's contact kinds (friends, family, work colleagues, and businesses) when using SMA. Previous research has proven users contacts lists or buddy lists are important predictors of SMA use (Grinter & Palen, 2002). Second, kind of SMA experience (text chat, voice chat, group chat, voice call, video call, photo sending, video sending, location sending) when using SMA. Previous studies ranging varying Western countries have examined users contacts lists and past experiences and its effect on using SMA. However, to date no studies throughout the Gulf countries have examined the effect of users contact kinds, user experiences, and the most important features that are perceived by users and that drive user acceptance of SMA's.

This paper aims at filling the gap in literature by examining the relationship of user's contacts kinds, kinds of experiences when using SMA's, and the most important features of SMA's that are driving its use in relation to user's frequency and duration of use. In terms of contact kinds, the study aims at understanding the most accessed category of contacts that users communicate with using SMA's, where four important categories of contacts are examined, they are friends, family, work colleagues, and business. In relation to kinds of experiences with SMA's, the study aims at exploring the highest user experiences of using SMA's, where eight important categories of the technology are accessed by users, they are text chat, photo sending, group chat, voice call, video sending, voice chat, location sending, and video call.

In terms of perceived features of using SMA's, the study aims at examining the most important features of using SMA's by user's, where eight important categories are examined, they are the ability to interact with groups, free of charge, simplicity, personal, shows when the other person is reply, shows the delivery of the message, shows when the message is read, amount of people that use SMA's. Therefore, this research aims to understand six main points in suing SMA's in the workplace by exploring the following research questions:

Research Questions

Q1: What is the main kind of SMA used by employees in the workplace?
Q2: What SMA users mostly have experience in using?
Q3: What kind of contact users communicate with using SMA's?
Q4: What are the main features users have experience with when using SMA's?
Q5: What is the most important feature for user's when using SMA's in the workplace?
Q6: How frequent do users use SMA in the workplace?

METHDOLOGY

This study investigates user's intention and frequency to use mobile SMA's in Kuwait. The basic objective of the research was to explore the various kinds of social messaging applications people are using and the frequency of use. The various functions and features of SMA's have been investigated. SMA's allow users to exchange messages without having to pay, they free of charge mobile communication services that people use through accessing the Internet. A preliminary pilot study was performed with some university students to understand their point of view about social media usage in terms of important and frequency of usage. Accordingly, the questionnaire was designed.

Sample Design

To test user's frequency of using SMA's a questionnaire was designed and randomly distributed to participants. It included various kinds of SMA's communication functions that were mentioned by participants in the exploratory study, such as text/voice/group chat; voice/video call; photo/video/location sending. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire was measured. The questionnaire was circulated to about 270 participants, to which a final sample of 250 questionnaires were valid. Thirteen dependent variables were measured using the five level 'Likert Scales', where 1 represents 'never', 2 represents 'rarely', 3 represents 'sometimes' 4 represents 'most of the times' and 5 represents 'always' and eight dependent variables were measured using the other five level 'Likert Scales', where 1 represents 'strongly disagree', 2 represents 'disagree', 3 represents 'undecided' 4 represents 'agree' and 5 represents 'strongly agree'.

Data Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha of the SPSS-20 software program was used to assess the questionnaire's reliability. The reliability of all twenty dependent variables was measured and found to be 0.889, indicating very strong reliability. The hypotheses were tested using percentages, mean values, standard deviation, and the t-test.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study yielded some interesting findings, including the fact that all of the participants (100%) indicated that they are already using SMA. This finding indicates that social messaging apps are used and understood by 100 percent of the population.

In terms of participants' experience with 'Social messaging applications,' text chat is the most common; 'photo sending' is the second most common; and 'group chat' is the third most common. The participants use 'video call' the fewest number of'social messaging applications experience'.

Concerning the number of contacts, 119 (47.6%) participants have number of contacts that use 'Social messaging applications' as 'less than 60 contacts' and 132 (52.4%) participants have number of contacts that use 'Social messaging applications' as '60 contacts and more'.

Concerning the most important features of SMA among users, the ability to interact with groups at the same time is the most important feature of social messaging applications that participants use. The second most important feature of the social messaging apps used by the participants is that they are free. 'It is simple,' is the third most important feature of the social messaging apps that the participants use. 'The number of people in users contacts' is the least important features of social messaging apps that participants use.

The following table (1) shows the main kinds of 'Social messaging applications' used by participants, specifically answering Q1: What is the main kind of social messaging application that is used by employees in the workplace? It is a multiple question i.e. participants can choose more than one applications. The table (1) shows the results of the number of participants and their percentage of using these applications in the descending order.

The table (1) shows that the highest number of participants 236 (94.4%) use WhatsApp. The second highest number of participants 151 (60.4%) use Snap Chat and third highest number of participants 76 (30.4%) use Viber. The lowest number of participants 23 (9.2%) use Line.

Table 1
THE MAIN KINDS OF SMA USE
THE TABLE IS SORTED IN THE DESCENDING ORDER AS PER THEIR USE

Variables	The number of participants and their use of SMA
WhatsApp	236 (94.4%)
Snap Chat	151 (60.4)
Viber	76 (30.4%)
Facebook Messenger	52 (20.8%)
Skype	52 (20.8%)
Kik	36 (14.4%)
Tango	28 (11.2%)
Line	23 (9.2%)

The following table (2) shows the frequency of participants experience in using 'Social messaging applications', specifically answering Q2: What are users mostly experienced in when using social messaging application? It is a multiple question i.e. participants can choose more than one applications. The table (2) shows the results of the number of participants and their percentage showing their experience in using Instant Message Application in the descending order.

The table (2) shows that the highest number of participants 219 (87.6%) experience in using 'Social messaging applications' is in text Chat. The second highest number of participants **176 (70.4%) experience** in using 'Social messaging applications' is in Photo Sending and the third highest number of participants **169 (67.6%) experience** in using 'Social messaging applications' is in Group Chat. The lowest number of participants **107 (42.8%) experience** in using 'Social messaging applications' is in Video Call.

Table 2
PARTICIPANTS EXPERIENCE IN USING SMA
THE TABLE IS SORTED IN THE DESCENDING ORDER AS PER THEIR USE

Variables	The number of participants and their percentage showing their experience in using Instant Message Application
Text chat	219 (87.6%)
Photo sending	176 (70.4%)
Group chat	169 (67.6%)
Voice call	167 (66.8%)
Video sending	159 (63.6%)
Voice chat	157 (62.8%)
Location sending	138 (55.2%)
Video call	107 (42.8%)

Contacts (kinds) that Users communicate with using SMA

The following table (3) shows the number of contacts that the respondents communicate with using the social messaging applications, specifically answering Q3: what contact kind's users communicate with using social messaging applications? Table (3) also shows the number of contacts, percentages along with their mean values, that they communicate with, in various degrees (never, rarely, sometimes, most of the times & always), in using Instant Message Applications, in the descending order.

The table (3) shows that the highest number of contacts with whom the participants communicate is "friends" (Mean = 4.2), and the lowest number of contacts with whom the participants communicate is "Businesses / shops" (Mean = 2.56).

Table 3
CONTACTS (KINDS) THAT USERS COMMUNICATE WITH USING SMA
THE COLUMN VALUES SHOW THE COUNT AND THEIR PERCENTAGES

Contacts (kinds) that users communicate with using social messaging applications	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always	Mean
Friends	5 2.0%	7 2.8%	34 13.6%	90 36.0%	114 45.6%	4.20
Family	5 2.0%	9 3.6%	49 19.6%	80 32.0%	107 42.8%	4.10
Work Colleagues	15 6.0%	52 20.8%	92 36.8%	54 21.6%	37 14.8%	3.18
Businesses / shops	47 18.8%	81 32.4%	78 31.2%	22 8.8%	22 8.8%	2.56

The following table (4) shows the experience of participants in using various 'social messaging applications' that they use in communication. Table (4) also shows the number, percentages along with their mean values, that they communicate with, in various degrees (never, rarely, sometimes, most of the times & always), in using Instant Message Applications, in the descending order. The table (4) shows that the highest number of 'social messaging applications experience' that the participants use is 'text chat' (Mean = 4.34), the second highest number of 'social messaging applications experience' that the participants use is 'photo sending' (Mean = 3.81), and the third highest number of 'social messaging applications experience' that the participants use is 'group chat' (Mean = 3.79). The lowest number of 'social messaging applications experience' that the participants use is 'video call' (Mean = 2.84).

Table 4
USER EXPERIENCE WITH SMA FEATURES
THE COLUMN VALUES SHOW THE COUNT AND THEIR PERCENTAGE

Social messaging applications Experience	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of	Always	Mean
Text chat	5 2.0%	7 2.8%	32 12.8%	59 23.6%	147 58.8%	4.34
Photo sending	11 4.4%	16 6.4%	61 24.4%	84 33.6%	78 31.2%	3.81
Group chat	8 3.2%	23 9.2%	66 26.4%	70 28.0%	83 33.2%	3.79

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of	Always	Mean
Voice call	12 4.8%	28 11.2%	77 30.8%	55 22.0%	78 31.2%	3.64
Voice chat	16 6.4%	22 8.8%	82 32.8%	62 24.8%	68 27.2%	3.58
Video sending	13 5.2%	38 15.2%	70 28.0%	58 23.2%	71 28.4%	3.54
Location sending	35 14.0%	50 20.0%	84 33.6%	51 20.4%	30 12.0%	2.96
Video call	35 14.0%	82 32.8%	56 22.4%	43 17.2%	34 13.6%	2.84

The following table (5) shows the most important features of social messaging applications, specifically answering Q4: What is the most important feature for user's when using social messaging applications? The table (5) shows the number, percentages along with their mean values of 'the most important features of social messaging applications' that the participants use it, in various degrees (never, rarely, sometimes, most of the times & always), in the descending order. The table (5) shows that the highest number of 'the most important features of social messaging applications' that the participants use is, 'Its ability to interact with groups at the same time', (Mean = 4.14). The second highest number of 'the most important features of social messaging applications', that the participants use is, 'It is free of charge', (Mean = 4.09), The third highest number 'the most important features of social messaging applications', that the participants use is, 'It is simple', (Mean = 4.08). The lowest number of 'the most important features of social messaging applications', that the participants use is, 'The amount of people that use is its contacts', (Mean = 3.70).

Table 5 THE MOST IMPORTANT FEATURES OF SMA'S TO USERS THE COLUMN VALUES SHOW THE COUNT AND THEIR PERCENTAGE						
Important Perceived features of social messaging applications are:	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of	Always	Mean
Ability to interact with groups at the same time	4 1.6%	14 5.6%	31 12.4%	96 38.4%	105 42.0%	4.14
It is free of charge	4 1.6%	11 4.4%	40 16.0%	98 39.2%	97 38.8%	4.09
It is simple	5 2.0%	6 2.4%	39 15.6%	113 45.2%	87 34.8%	4.08
It is personal	5 2.0%	22 8.8%	28 11.2%	111 44.4%	84 33.6%	3.99
It shows when the other person is typing a reply	7 2.8%	26 10.4%	41 16.4%	91 36.4%	85 34.0%	3.88
It shows when the message is delivered	4 1.6%	25 10.0%	47 18.8%	113 45.2%	61 24.4%	3.81
it shows when the message is read	9 3.6%	24 9.6%	45 18.0%	104 41.6%	68 27.2%	3.79
The amount of people that use it- contacts	21 8.4%	18 7.2%	32 12.8%	122 48.8%	57 22.8%	3.70

The Table (6) shows the frequency of using social messaging applications, specifically answering Q5: How frequent do user's use social messaging applications? The highest number of participants 123 (49.2%) use social messaging applications more than 10 times a day. The lowest number of participants 14 (5.6%) use social messaging applications about 1-2 times in a month.

Table 6
FREQUENCY OF USING SOCIAL MESSAGING APPLICATIONS

Frequency	Number of Participants	%
Between 1-2 times a month	14	5.6
Between 1-2 times a week	15	6
Between 1-2 times a day	28	11.2
Between 3-5 times a day	40	16
Between 6-9 times a day	30	12
More than 10 times a day	123	49.2

CONCLUSION

This study has focused on the use of SMA in Kuwait as research about the Gulf region is scarce and not as much attentive to researchers as other regions in the world. There's a lack of understanding about the use and adoption of communication technology in general. Specifically, the use and adoption of social media in the Gulf region as it is the main trend and fashion in communication. Thus, this study was aimed at exploring this field in research to understand user's adoption behavior and preference.

This study has resulted in several findings. Findings indicate all respondents have social messaging applications and are active users of them. This means that SMA are very much used among all segments in society. They are used as one of the major methods of communication that are also used and considered important in the workplace.

In terms of social messaging application use results show that the highest number of participants 236 use WhatsApp, the second highest number of participants 151 use Snap Chat, and third highest number of participants 76 use Viber.

In regard to respondent's experiences in SMA results show that the highest number of participants 219 experiences are in using is in text Chat, and the second highest number of participants 176 experience is in Photo Sending, and the third highest number of participants 169 experience is in Group Chat.

Findings also indicate the highest number of contacts that they communicate with using SMA is friends, the second highest is family, and the lowest number of contacts with whom participants communicate with is Businesses.

In regard to the most important features of SMA, participants claim that their ability to interact with groups at the same time is the most important feature to them, while the second highest feature of SMA is that it is free of charge, and the third highest features of SMA is that it is simple to use.

The results show that the highest number of participants use WhatsApp, the second highest use Snap Chat and third highest use Viber. In terms of frequency of use results show that

the highest number of participants 123 (49.2%) use social messaging applications more than 10 times a day. The lowest number of participants 14 (5.6%) use social messaging applications about 1-2 times in a month.

IMPLICATIONS

This study has generated vital practical implications. First, this study has added knowledge to the scarce and limited research of information and communication technology specifically the use of social messaging application in organizational settings. This study recommends and highlights the importance of SMA use throughout the Gulf countries for entrepreneurs where cross border small businesses can benefit from SMA adoption rates and acceptance among users as a communication medium that should be used by business owners in different Gulf countries.

Second, in practice, as evident SMA's are an important communications sources for users, as they are considered one of the major sources communication mediums used by different categories of users. This finding show important implications for the Gulf countries in general as they share similar financial, economic, and cultural environments. Results indicate important practical implications for small business owners and entrepreneurs in general as it has been evident that SMA are used intensively by users, business owners should take advantage of such a phenomenon and focus their marketing strategies on SMA in an effective and efficient method, where costs are less, and business owners are able to reach huge numbers of users in a rapid and simple way. This study recommends and highlights the importance of SMA use for entrepreneurs where cross border small businesses can benefit from SMA adoption rates and acceptance among users as a communication medium that should be used by business owners in different surrounding countries.

Users of social messaging applications should also be aware of the attachments related to such use, and the degree of engagement which in return can be a double-sided edge of technology adoption and can take advantage of such high degree of acceptance and use of SMA.

FUTURE RESEARCH

The research is limited to Kuwait and findings can be generalized other countries in the region due to similarities in cultural and economic settings. More research is required to focus on different categories of users in the same region in relation to their perceived advantages and disadvantages of each communication technology. A limitation of the study is the fact that the survey was limited to university population. Future studies should undergo a more general approach to the same study, which would generate more categories of users and differences in demographics.

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