WHAT'S UP WITH WHATSAPP? A CASE STUDY AMONG VAALACHANAI RESIDENTS IN BATTICALOA DISTRICT, SRI LANKA

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Abstract

In the current scenario where everyone is involved in their busy Schedule, people often do not have time for their relations, friends and family. But gratefulness to the technology that it accommodates to reduce the gap among our relations. If they want to communicate with the beloved ones they wish to prefer chat on various applications which are free of charge and simply required the least cost of internet package which performs life easier rather spend the high charge of calls and messages to telecom companies. There are a number of applications accessible in the market which people use according to their preference, WhatsApp application is one of them. The main objective of the study is to examine the influence of WhatsApp usage on residents of Vaalachanai. The study was undertaken amongst the residents of Vaalachanai in Batticaloa district. A total of 110 residents' reflections were collected by the questionnaire and required statistical analyses were performed using SPSS software at 5% significance level. Majority of respondents were Males, Aged between 21 to 35 years old. Most of them were students. Among the various actions on WhatsApp, more people prefer chatting and information sharing. Generally, residents prefer to interact with friends and family. 45.5% of the residents spend less than 1 hour on WhatsApp. Half of the people keep their internet for 24 hours. Majority of the people say that the group message is very useful to keep in touch. Recently during the last 1 year, most of them have been connected to groups from 1 to 3, but more people didn't leave from any groups. This study recommends that the positive usage of WhatsApp like collaborative study and research should be encouraged while extreme usage for entertaining purposes is reduced to the least possible.

Keywords: WhatsApp, Vaalachanai, Group message

Introduction

Background

In this current periods, a new wave of mobile communication facilities called Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) applications has extended significant momentum. Applications like WhatsApp, Viber and Line let mobile users send real-time text messages to individuals or group of friends at any time and at not any cost.

Nowadays, one of the supreme interesting MIM Application on the market is WhatsApp. WhatsApp is a platform for prompt messaging application all over the world for Smartphone. More than 1.2 billion people in over 180 countries use WhatsApp Messenger. It is free and offers simple, secure, reliable messaging and calling, available on phones across the world. WhatsApp started as an alternative to SMS. It now supports sending and receiving a variety of media: text messages, images, audios, videos, documents, information and user location as well as voice calls and video calls.

And also the messages and calls are secured with end-to-end encryption (WhatsApp, 2017). WhatsApp was founded in 2009 by Jan Koum and Brian Acton, both former employees of Yahoo (Jain & Jain, 2016). This kind of platform was designed as a way of communication for family, friends and strangers to have conversation and dealings. And now it joined with Facebook in 2014 but continues to operate as a separate app with a laser focus on building a messaging service that works fast and reliably anywhere in the world.

Valaichchenai is a suburban area in Batticaloa district of Sri Lanka having a population of 24,589 (Basic Population Information on Batticaloa District, 2007). A descriptive study in this region was carried out to examine the influence of WhatsApp usage on residents of Vaalachanai.

Objectives of the Study

(i) To examine the influence of WhatsApp usage on residents of Vaalachanai.
(ii) To find out various type of multimedia used by Vaalachanaian.
(iii) To assess the duration of use and time spend on WhatsApp.

(iv) To find out the Vaalachanaian preference of usage of WhatsApp.

(v) To assess the reasons behind residents WhatsApp using.

Literature Review

Social media has to turn out to be an essential tool for everyday use (Yeboah & Ewur, 2014). A Social network is reflected as a means of sharing any information that may or may not affect others (Nicholson, 2011). Social networking is also used as a platform for sharing, discussing, renewing relationships, and introducing new people (Yeboah & Ewur, 2014). As well as more than half of the on-duty employees check a social network per week (Greenwald, 2009), (Deloitte, 2009).A survey has been conducted among 300 youngsters in the city of Bahawalpur to assess the attitude of the youth on social media and to measure the time spent on social media. Most people have agrees that social media influence their day to day life. The majority of the respondents like Facebook mainly then secondly they like Skype. They also say that social media help them for their educational purposes (Shabir, G., Yousef, M., Yousef, H., Safdar, G., Farouq, 2014).Although there have been many types of research on WhatsApp, most studies have been conducted on only students. Fewer studies have been conducted on public opinion (Kumar & Sharma, 2017). So this study has been conducted among the common people. WhatsApp is used as a tool for sharing infinite text messages and sending it free on mobile phones. Without any inconveniences of advertising, it has become a used app on mobile phones such as the iPhone, Android and BlackBerry, which are mostly sold in the markets (Financial Times, 2019), (The Guardian, 2019).

A survey of 220 people has been conducted to find out which factor makes people satisfy by using mobile instant messengers. Mobile user satisfaction was significantly affected by Social presence, flow and self-expression (Park, Cho, & Lee, 2014). Presence information and follow-up interviews of a group of 19 people using regular WhatsApp for four weeks have been analyzed. Only presence information was sufficient to get an accurate result using daily routines, deviations and inappropriate mobile message time or conversation partners (Buchenscheit et al., 2014).

Another study has revealed that WhatsApp not only sabotages students' study time, but also delays the completion of their assignments, grammatical construction of spelling and sentences, and negligence of students during lectures (Yeboah & Ewur, 2014).To explore the importance of WhatsApp among young people, a survey was conducted among 100 college-going students aged 18 to 23 who use smartphones in the Chennai region. They were found to be online for WhatsApp 8 hours a day and almost 16 hours a day online. And they all use WhatsApp to communicate with their friends and exchange pictures, audio and video files. In addition, WhatsApp is the only app that pops up on their smartphone (Jisha & Jebakumar, 2014).

A study has been carried out at the University of South Africa to evaluate the usage of social networking applications. The study has found that students spend around 5 hours/day on their smartphones interacting with others using social networks (Uys et al., 2012).Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) have surveyed 2012-2013, among 17,500 high school students aged 14-15 in 14 Indian cities. The study has found that about 70% of students have own smartphones, with the full potential of using smartphones as they graduated. Further, the study shows that the post-millennial generation in India, which has surpassed thousands of people born in 1996 and beyond, has reached new heights of using communications on social networks such as Facebook and Twitter and WhatsApp instant messenger (The Times of India, 2013).

A study declares that more than half an hour/day of total time spent on smartphones is for the combined use of WhatsApp and Facebook (Business Standard, 2014), (The New Indian Express, 2013).WhatsApp is retaining young people in countries like India due to the increase in the number of smartphone users in India and the proliferation of cheap smartphones and data plans in India. Young people in India are starting to spend more time on messaging apps. But recent reports declare that young people are moving away from Facebook and that WhatsApp is growing fast (The Indian Express, 2014).Structured questionnaires have distributed to 139 regular research scholars to analyze the usage of WhatsApp. Most research scholars are familiar with social networking sites, especially Facebook, Google+ and YouTube and they use these social networking sites to stay in touch with their friends. The survey indicates that 96.87% of research scholars use WhatsApp to participate in group discussions on their research work and share information about workshops and seminars / conferences (Kenchakkanavar & Hadagali, 2015).

Methodology

Sample and study area

The study was undertaken among the residents of Vaalachanai in Batticaloa district. A total of 130 people were randomly selected in this region and questionnaires were distributed, among them 110 people filled and returned them. The details of those who perfectly unfilled and do not return the questionnaires excluded from the entries.

Data analysis

This study mainly targets the Vaalachanai residents in Batticaloa district who use WhatsApp messenger on their mobile phones. So, this study was performed using a simple random sampling technique from April to June period in 2019. In this case study, both quantitative and qualitative research designs were used. This study has been carried out to examine the influence of WhatsApp usage on residents of Vaalachanai, to find out various type of multimedia used by Vaalachanaian, to assess the duration of use and time spend on WhatsApp, to find out the Vaalachanaian preference of usage of WhatsApp and to assess the reasons behind residents WhatsApp using. Also, descriptive test statistics were performed using SPSS software. Further, 5% of the significant level was used in this study.

Results and discussion

Demographic profile of respondents

The personal demographic profile of the respondents is shown in Table 1. This shows that majority of adult WhatsApp users (53.6%) belong to the age group of 21 to 35 years, 27.3% were aged between 36 – 50 years and 15.5% were aged below 20 years. But the above 50 years old people didn't show considerable interest in WhatsApp. This implies that the WhatsApp population is young adult-centric. The gender of the respondents was found, the majority (51.8%) were males and the rest were females. This indicates that male use the WhatsApp more often than their female counterpart. The study reveals that majority of the WhatsApp users (38.2%) were students. It was used 29.1% of teachers also. This both results reveals that WhatsApp is used for the education. But it was not significant use for the business.

Table 1 Respondents' Demographic Profile

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
13 – 20 years	17	15.5
21 – 35 years	59	53.6
36 – 50 years	30	27.3
50 +	4	3.6
Gender		
Male	57	51.8
Female	53	48.2
Profession		
Businessmen	5	4.5
Student	42	38.2
Government Servant	19	17.3
Teacher	32	29.1
Housewife	6	5.5
Unemployed	6	5.5

Usage pattern of WhatsApp

WhatsApp was the most popular mobile messenger rendered by the residents (71.8%), they followed by both Facebook messenger and Viber (23.6%). But both of these IMO and Skype were used in 21.8% and 19.1% respectively. So these Vaalachanaian are more likely to be addicted to WhatsApp messenger.

The least percentage of people (3.6%) use WhatsApp for activities or event updates. Among the several services on WhatsApp the most of residents preferences are chatting (51.8%) and sharing the information (42.7%). 30.9% of people use for uploading photos or videos. Some of them are using WhatsApp for group chat (20.0%) and document sharing (24.5%). The majority of them say that they do not have enough time (47.3%), meanwhile few of them say that they don't have a smartphone (4.5%) for using WhatsApp. It indicates that people use WhatsApp mostly to contact Friends (69.1%) and Family (68.2%) but using the WhatsApp for Business Dealing is very low (5.5%); so that it confirms that people are not aware about the feature of WhatsApp for Business.

It confirms that only 28.2% of Valachaniyan have been using WhatsApp for more than two years, it seems that they have started to use WhatsApp very recently. 45.5% of the respondents use WhatsApp less than one hour daily, but there are people who use more than 5 hours every day. Mostly, people share text messages (52.7%), at the same time they use to share images too (35.5%). 50% of the Vaalachanaian keep their internet for 24 hours. For that reason as much of the quality time of a day is engaged with WhatsApp usage, time for further productive work is reduced. Majority of the people (80.9%) say that the group message is useful and it helps them to be in touch with their friends or families (66.4%). 22.7% of people do not like to use WhatsApp group conversation. But the majority of Valachaniyan are in 1 – 3 WhatsApp groups (40.0%) and 25.5% of residents had 4 – 6 WhatsApp groups which clearly state that people like to keep in touch with group chats.

During past year, most of them have been connected to groups from 1 to 3 (45.5%), also only 2.7% people have joined more than 10 groups. But 32.7% of people didn't show any interest to join with any WhatsApp group. 44.6% of people left groups during the last 1 year, but the majority of Valachaniyan (55.5%) did not leave from any group. It proves that Valachaniyan comfortable with group conversations. 40.9% of people have left because of no useful data and waste of internet data usage. But 17.3% of them have left due to feeling too much disturbance or distraction by WhatsApp.

Table 2 Pattern of WhatsApp usage

Variables	Freq	%
Type of mobile messaging apps/ services used often		
WhatsApp	79	71.8
Facebook	26	23.6
Google	7	6.4
Skype	21	19.1
Viber	26	23.6
Imo	24	21.8
Yahoo	5	4.5
Other apps	6	5.5
Reasons for using WhatsApp		
Chatting	57	51.8
Sending images	34	30.9
Sending videos	34	30.9
Sending audios	5	4.5
Group chatting/discussion	22	20.0
Sharing of document	27	24.5
Activities or event updates	4	3.6
Information sharing	47	42.7
Entertainment	8	7.3
Reasons for not using WhatsApp messenger		
Lack of time	52	47.3
Financial problem	12	10.9
Wasting of time	22	20.0
Not having smartphone	5	4.5
Other	24	21.8
I always chat with using WhatsApp		
Family	75	68.2
Friends	76	69.1
Colleague	13	11.8
Girlfriend/Boyfriend	10	9.1
Business dealer	6	5.5
Duration of using WhatsApp		
0	8	7.3
Less than one year	34	30.9
Between one and two years	35	31.8
More than two years	31	28.2
Other	2	1.8
Time spent on WhatsApp		
I don't use WhatsApp	8	7.2
Less than 1 hour	50	45.5
1 hour to 3 hours	24	21.8
3 hours to 5 hours	22	20.0
More than 5 hours	6	5.5
Type of media content mostly used / shared		
Text message	58	52.7
Audio	10	9.1

Video	16	14.5	**Number of groups joined in past one year**		
Picture	39	35.5			
Connected internet at any time			0	36	32.7
			1 – 3	50	45.5
Yes	55	50.0	4 – 6	16	14.5
No	55	50.0	7 – 10	5	4.5
Usefulness of Group Messaging			10 +	3	2.7
			Number of groups left in past one year		
Yes	89	80.9			
No	21	19.1	0	61	55.5
Primary purpose of Group Messaging			1 – 3	39	35.5
			4 – 6	8	7.3
To stay connected with friends / families	73	66.4	7 – 10	1	0.9
			10 +	1	0.9
Business & professional communication	9	8.2	**Reasons for leaving the groups**		
To stay updated with news/ media	14	12.7	Too much disturbance / distraction	19	17.3
Other	14	12.7	Group topic became irrelevant	7	6.4
Number of WhatsApp groups			Loss of interest	10	9.1
			No useful data	23	20.9
0	25	22.7	Loss of time	8	7.3
1 – 3	44	40.0	Waste of internet data usage	22	20.0
4 – 6	28	25.5			
7 – 10	9	8.2	Other	21	19.1
10 +	4	3.6			

Impact of WhatsApp usage

Majority of the people agree that they feel anxious when they can't use WhatsApp (40.0%) meanwhile 36.4% of the residents disagree about that and 20.9% of them strongly disagree with that. 37.3% of Vaalachanaian say that people around them should install WhatsApp because they use, but 31.8% of them reject that in the meantime 20.0% of them strongly reject it. Majority of the people disagree with WhatsApp affecting their rest time (52.7%) and 28.2% of people say their rest time is affected by WhatsApp. The bulk amount of people say that they do not use WhatsApp during their working time (64.5%). For the people who are hanging on the mobile phones even when talking to others, it is not advisable to use WhatsApp during their working time, but 14.6% are using WhatsApp at their work time. For that reason, as much of the valuable working time of a day is engaged with WhatsApp usage, the working hours of that day will be affected. 71.8% of them say WhatsApp has high quality and 78.2% say it reduces the face – to – face communication.

Table 3 Impact of WhatsApp usage

Values	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Feel anxious when I can't use WhatsApp	23	20.9	40	36.4	44	40.0	3	2.7
People around me should install WhatsApp because I use	22	20.0	35	31.8	41	37.3	12	10.9
Affect rest time	13	11.8	58	52.7	31	28.2	8	7.3
Use WhatsApp during work time	23	20.9	71	64.5	9	8.2	7	6.4

High quality in WhatsApp	7	6.4	24	21.8	42	38.2	37	33.6
Reduces face-to-face communication	12	10.9	12	10.9	45	40.9	41	37.3

Conclusions

In this study, the majority of the people are males, aged between 21 to 35 years old. Most of them were students. This study reveals that most of them have adopted with WhatsApp messenger because of easy chatting, information sharing and staying connected with friends or families. Mostly, people share text messages, at the same time they use to share images too. But WhatsApp is used for Business Dealing is very low; so that it confirms that people are not aware of the feature WhatsApp for Business.

The majority of them say that they do not have enough time, meanwhile few of them say that they don't have a smartphone. More residents spend less than 1 hour on WhatsApp per day but there are some people who use more than 5 hours every day. Half of the people keep their internet for 24 hours. For that reason, as much of the valuable working time of a day is engaged with WhatsApp usage, the working hours of that day will be affected. And they say that they also prefer to use WhatsApp in the meantime they want the people around them to start to the usage of the WhatsApp.

At the same time, they say the group chat is very useful. Recently during the last 1 year, most of them have been connected to groups from 1 to 3, but more people didn't leave from any groups. It proves that Valachaniyan are comfortable with group conversations. But they agree with that WhatsApp reduces the face to face communication and they disagree with using WhatsApp during their working time. Among the people who are hanging on the mobile phones even when talking to others, it is a good improvement they do not use WhatsApp during their working time.

WhatsApp is considered to be the best messenger and they feel that in future also it will be useful. This study recommends that the positive usage of WhatsApp needs collaborative study and research should be encouraged while extreme usage for entertaining purposes is reduced to the least possible.

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