

USAGE PATTERN OF ACCESSING WHATSAPP AMONG THE GENDERS

Abstract

Access to social media has increased with the advancement of information technology and the availability of sophisticated new media tools. Social media applications such as Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook, are popular, among which WhatsApp is the most popular application worldwide according to Carmen (2018). The process of communication has changed drastically and there is an alarming decline in face-to-face communication while as, increasing the dependencies on text-based communication, like SMS. WhatsApp is a MIM application, dependent on internet connectivity. Henceforth, there is a reason to access social media and WhatsApp in particular varies from individual to individual. The chapter dwells on how the pattern of accessing WhatsApp varies among various genders and the statistical relation between Gender and the pattern. For this descriptive study, data was collected with the help of a questionnaire and analyzed with Chi-square testing. The sample population of the study was the University students of The Assam Royal Global University, Guwahati studying in different faculties.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The communication process has taken its course from the time humans started to communicate, right from cave paintings to sharing images through smart devices. The availability of sophisticated new media tools has changed the complete scenario of interaction among people. Human beings today are enjoying the surreal experience with the help of technology. Because of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), the scope of communication has widened. The world has transformed into a ‘Global Village’.

Social Media usage has increased by many folds with the advancement of ICT. The number of Social Media platforms and the number of their users are also increasing with the increasing popularity of smart devices. Today, social media has become a popular way of communication, while face-to-face interaction between family and friends has decreased (Pujarama & Prasetya, 2018). Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Snapchat, and Twitter are vividly used platforms. There is a sharp rise in the use of Social Media platforms by students and staff of educational institutes where WhatsApp takes center stage (Borgohain & Borgohain, 2020). The present study investigates how the pattern of accessing WhatsApp varies among various genders and the relationship between Gender and the pattern of accessing WhatsApp.

II. WHATSAPP

In 1979 ‘Usenet’, the very first world discussion forum was developed by Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis. Thereafter, other communication platforms like Open diary, Myspace, Facebook, Orkut, WhatsApp were developed. Such platforms are popularly known as ‘Social Media.’ WhatsApp was the brainchild of two Yahoo employees, Brian Acton, and Jan Koum. The mobile application was initially launched for iPhone users in the year 2009 with a one-on-one chat option. In 2010, the application was launched for Android users too. The users of WhatsApp have been on a rise with the added features of the application (Carmen, 2018).

WhatsApp is a social media platform (Wei, 2021). It is an application that runs on the internet, users can upload status in text, image, or audio video format, comment or reply to other user status updates, make payments, and opt for conference calls. The application developers are continuously adding features to WhatsApp making it more user-friendly and an all-in-one application. It was launched as a one-on-one messaging application, followed by group messaging, blue and red ticks, a voice call facility, video call option, group calls, status updates, payment facility, sharing of files, and other features that are added to the services it offers.

III. GENDER

The difference between the genders is a very significant phenomenon among researchers. The difference exists in all spheres of life be it within society, or the way one uses technology. There is a difference in the way gender is expected to behave in society. For example, house chores are the females’ responsibility while the males are to look after the economic needs of the family. The behavioral patterns accepted in society for males and females are different. Males are promoted to be competitive, on the other hand, females are expected to attract admiration through their appearance (Eder & Parker, 1987).

Technology has become an integral part of life. The purpose of technology may vary among genders. Boys are more inclined towards games and other sophisticated tools, while girls use technology majorly for communication (Jackson , et al., 2008). Research suggests that Mobile Instant Messaging applications like WhatsApp help in initiating cross-gender talks and maintaining cordial relations so as to the norms of acceptance and behavior. The interaction that takes place offline is different from the interaction that happens online amongst genders (Mudliar & Rangaswamy, 2015).

Interestingly, the way gender communicates be it a verbal or non-verbal way of communication is also different and categorical. The difference among genders is visible on social media. The quality and quantity of images uploaded by females vary from the ones uploaded by their counterparts. Males upload fewer images compared to females. Females use more filters before they upload an image (Mike & Farida, 2017). Females change their profile pictures frequently, they use more emoticons during chats (Rungta, 2017).

IV. WHATSAPP USAGE

Studies have found that people are getting dependent on ICT for their daily activities. For example, earlier phone numbers and addresses were memorized and today it is stored in our mobile devices. The usage of sophisticated communication tools has made mankind dependent on technology (Agarwal & Kar, 2015). After the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, the dependency on social media platforms has increased by many folds (Ponnamperuma,, et al., 2018).

The proliferation of media tools has demonstrated hyper-reality. With the video call facility, one need not travel from one part of the world to another to meet a person. Similarly, the features of WhatsApp have made communication easy and economical. Text-based communication through instant messaging applications has deteriorated the vocabulary and writing quality. Abbreviations, numbers, and alphabets for words are being used (Sarwat, Kaleemullah, Ullah, & Bhuttah, 2021). There is an alarming situation with respect to mental health due to the increasing addiction to WhatsApp (Sampath, Kalyani, Soohinda, & Dutta, 2017).

V. METHODOLOGY

The present study dwells on how the pattern of accessing WhatsApp varies among various genders and the relationship between Gender and the pattern of accessing WhatsApp. The study falls under quantitative methodology. Data was collected with the help of a survey questionnaire and analyzed with the help of SPSS through Chi-square test. The questionnaire was divided in two parts. The first part was related to basic demographic questions and the second part of the questionnaire consisted of questions concerning WhatsApp. These were objective questions with five options to choose from. The sample population of the study was the University students of The Assam Royal Global University, Guwahati studying in different faculties. As per the official data of the Assam Royal Global University, 3336 students enrolled in 2021. A total of 150 data was collected. There were only males and females in the study population of which 48 fully filled-in data of each gender were accepted for research.

VI. QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographic Questions:

- Name
- Age
- Gender

Questions related to WhatsApp

- Duration of accessing WhatsApp in a day
- Frequency of changing WhatsApp display pictures
- Frequency of checking display picture of contacts
- Frequency of updating WhatsApp status
- Response time to a WhatsApp message
- Mainly accessed WhatsApp Feature
- Purpose of using WhatsApp
- Action taken on receiving wrong information in a WhatsApp group

Table 1: Response of Students

Particulars					
Duration of accessing WhatsApp in a day	0-1 hour	1-2 hours	2-3 hours	3-4 hours	4 hours and above
Females	4	5	11	15	13
Males	6	17	9	7	9
Frequency of changing display picture	4 weeks and above	Every 2 Week	Every 3 Week	Every 4 Week	Every Week
Female	25	5	6	7	5
Male	38	2	2	6	0
Checks display pictures of contacts	4 weeks and above	Every 2 Week	Every 3 Week	Every 4 Week	Every Week
Females	25	2	5	2	14
Males	25	6	5	3	9
Frequency of status update	0-1 day	1-2 days	2-3 days	3-4 days	4 days and above
Females	17	3	4	5	19
Males	15	8	3	2	20
Response time	0-1 hour	1-2 hours	2-3 hours	3-4 hours	4 hours and above
Females	22	15	6	3	2
Males	31	8	3	0	6
Mainly Accessed feature	Audio Call	Payment	Sharing files	Text message	Video call
Females	1	0	8	37	2
Males	2	1	6	38	1

Purpose	Communication	Education	Entertainment	Information	Business
Females	39	2	1	6	0
Males	35	3	1	9	0
Action on receiving incorrect information in a group	Ignore	Provide right information	Report to the Group	Report to the group Admin	Report to the sender
Females	15	18	5	4	6
Males	15	13	6	4	10

VII. DURATION OF ACCESSING WHATSAPP

Males are spending less number of hours on WhatsApp than females in a day. The majority of boys use the mobile instant messaging application for a duration of 1-2 hours while the majority of the girls use the application for more than 3 hours in a day. The p-value, 0.029 at 95% confidence states that there is a statistical relationship between gender and the duration of accessing WhatsApp.

VIII. FREQUENCY OF CHANGING WHATSAPP PROFILE IMAGE

The majority of the males and females change the display picture after four weeks. The result shows that 10% of the girls change their profile image every week and only 4% of boys change their profile image every two weeks. The p-value, 0.026 at 95% confidence states there is a significant statistical relation between gender and the frequency of changing WhatsApp display picture.

IX. FREQUENCY OF CHECKING PROFILE PICTURES

The maximum number of students check the profile image of their contacts after four weeks. Followed by checking profile images every week, where the number of females who check it every week is more than the number of males. The p-value, 0.511 at a 95% confidence level is more than 0.05, states there is no statistical relation between gender and the frequency of checking profile pictures.

X. FREQUENCY OF STATUS UPDATES

The maximum number of girls and boys update their status after a gap of four days where the count for boys is more than that of girls. This is followed by students updating their status regularly on a daily basis where the count for girls is more. This shows that girls update their status more frequently than boys. The p-value of 0.426 at a 95% confidence level states there is a statistical relation between gender and the frequency of updating WhatsApp statuses.

XI. RESPONSE TIME

The majority of students respond to a WhatsApp within an hour of receiving the notification. 31 boys in comparison to 22 girls respond to a WhatsApp message within an

hour. This is followed by responding to a notification between 1-2 hours where the majority are girls. The data shows that boys respond to WhatsApp messages faster than girls. The p-value, 0.47 at a 95% confidence level states there is a significant statistical relation between gender and response time.

XII. PURPOSE OF ACCESSING WHATSAPP

As per the collected data, the majority of the students use the instant messaging application for communication purposes. The next major purpose of using WhatsApp is for information gathering and circulation. The p-value, 0.797 is greater than 0.05 at a 95% confidence level. This states there is no statistical relation between gender and the purpose of accessing WhatsApp.

XIII. MAINLY ACCESSED FEATURE OF WHATSAPP

Most boys and girls use the application for texting followed by sharing files. The application has no word limit, nor does it have a limit to the number of messages one can send within a day. The p-value, 0.74 at a 95% confidence level shows there is no statistical relation between gender and the accessed feature of WhatsApp.

XIV. ACTION ON RECEIVING INCORRECT INFORMATION IN A WHATSAPP GROUP

It has come to notice that many messages that are shared over WhatsApp are either incorrect or are not related to the context. To understand the behavioral difference between genders on how one responds to such wrong information, the following options were given: Ignore, provide the right information, inform the group, report it to the admin of the group, or inform the sender about it. The majority of the females provide the correct information in the group while the majority of the males ignore such messages. The p-value, 0.755 at a 95% confidence level states there is no statistical relation between gender and the way incorrect information is dealt with.

XV. CONCLUSION

In this digital age, information is the most expensive commodity. Information circulates at the speed of light and the authentication of messages is important. Digital education for the present-day digital natives is vital. Even when one notices the information being shared in a WhatsApp group is incorrect most of the users ignore it. Here females are actively providing the correct information in such cases. The study found that females spend more time accessing WhatsApp than males. Contrastingly it is found that females take a longer time to respond to a WhatsApp message whereas a maximum of boys reply within two hours of receiving a WhatsApp message. The sex and age of the social media user are important attributes that contribute to emotional representation on WhatsApp (Carmen, 2018). There is a need to promote face-to-face communication (Sampath, Kalyani, Soohinda, & Dutta, 2017). The majority uses the instant messaging application, WhatsApp for texting. WhatsApp is a text-based communication application with added features where one can share files, make audio-video calls in a group or one-to-one, and do payments. There is a deterioration in the command over the language among youths because of WhatsApp (Yeboah & Ewur, 2014). Especially the writing skill in the English language of males has

deteriorated (Sarwat, Kaleemullah, Ullah, & Bhuttah, 2021). Females tend to use the visible features of WhatsApp more than males. The frequency of changing the WhatsApp profile pictures, updating status, and using emoticons are higher among females when compared to males (Rungta, 2017). The present study found that females change their display picture more frequently than males and the result is the same for checking the display picture of their contacts. The research found there is a relation between gender and the usage pattern of accessing WhatsApp.

XVI. LIMITATION AND FUTURE SCOPE

The chapter does not consider the reasons for the difference in the pattern of accessing WhatsApp among the genders. Thus, further research may help in finding the reasons for the same in detail.

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