

IMPACT OF SMARTPHONE APPLICATIONS ON POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR OF YOUTH

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Abstract: This research study is conducted to explore the impact of Smartphone applications on political behavior of youth. The study is conducted based on serving standard questionnaire for data collection and analysis. The aim of the study is to explore the impact of Smartphone applications like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, ChatON, Imo, Videos, Music, and many other applications. Youth using Smartphone to Chat, Share ideas, information, upload videos and pictures. Smartphone also provides different social media applications to its users for chatting, sharing information and many other purposes. In this research study 200 male and 200 female students of two universities were selected as respondents. The findings show that respondents use Smartphone since 3 to 4 years. The findings also reveal that majority of the youth use Smartphone to interact with friends. The exclusive analysis of findings reveals that majority of the respondents use Facebook very frequently to share information about politics as compared with other applications. The work also indicates that Smartphone applications are very popular among the youth. They not only use these applications for chatting and call making but also for political information. This research study further indicates that Smartphone application affects the voting behavior of youth. They not only interact with each other but also share and discuss political contents.

Keywords: Smartphone, Youth, Political Behavior, Impact

Introduction

Communication is the essence and omnipresent phenomenon which deals every aspect of human life. Socio-cultural, political, diplomatic, religious development of human being depends mainly on successful communication techniques and effective communication machines used in the process. Technological breakthrough and scientific discoveries, especially in the field of communication have not only changed the traditional communication techniques but also shrunk the world into a ‘global village’. From individual life to international relationships modern communication facilities and technique have changed human behavior and attitude towards entire process of relationship between individual, groups, society and world community.

Smartphone communication is one of the latest facilities and in countries like Pakistan it is not more than a decade old. In Pakistan with passage of time Smartphone companies increased in number and expanded their technology at growing rate. IBM (Internet Business Machine) first ever Smartphone Simon introduced in the market in 1993, eventually it shifted from being phone centric that can handle only limited software to data centric that can perform multiple functions i.e. instant messaging, picture messaging, video and audio playback, Global Positioning System (GPS), games, a video camera, picture and video editing. The purpose behind the introduction of Smartphone is to facilitate its users by introducing different internet applications. This shift was exemplified by the introduction of first-generation iPhone in 2007, and by release of Linux based Android operating system in 2008.

On the world map, Asia is a vast continent and half of the mobile world is in Asia. Egypt tops the compound annual growth rate (worldwide) by having greatest increase in number of mobile phone users followed by Oman, Sudan, Bangladesh, Mozambique, Iran and Pakistan. In terms of mobile phone growth, Pakistan ranks

7th in the world and 2nd in Asia (Portio research 2013). 67% of the Pakistan's total population owns a mobile phone and 23% of them own a Smartphone (Portio research 2013). There are 30 million internet users in Pakistan while half of them browse internet via mobile phones (Ansri, 2013).

Smartphone Applications

After the introduction of mobile phone and its popularity among its users encourage the mobile phone companies to introduce different social media applications. These applications facilitate the users to chat, text, talk and business. Smartphone applications like Facebook, Twitter, ChatON, Imo, WhatsApp and Viber are playing very important role not only to facilitate its users but also give them opportunity to share and participate in political activities.

Currently, there are six companies working in Pakistan i.e. Zong, Mobilink, Telenor, Warid and Ufone. These companies lower their rates of packages to increase the subscribers. And as a result "on the list of top ten countries as a mobile phone subscribers Pakistan stands at 10th position, In 2003 there were 300,000 users of mobile phone but in 2008 it increased to 90 million" (<http://www.google.com/techlahore>).

Importance of political communication:

In the modern world politics and political issues encompass a broad scope of political communication and demonstrate the ubiquity of political communication in contemporary life and in non-electoral periods. Internal and external political communication channels are the nerves of any government. Political system cannot function without effective networks of such channels capable of transmitting political messages (Lee Kaid, 2004). Political communication deals not only with election campaigns but also enable the voters to make an informed decision in order to play their effective part in a democratic process.

Significance of the Study

These technological advances and availability of different mobile packages attracted millions of Smartphone subscribers, especially the youth. It has attracted the youth to use Smartphone technology with internet facility not only to chat but also to comment, call and for many other social, economic and academic purposes. Smartphone technology in Pakistan has also attracted the youth to share their ideas, liking and disliking regarding the politics, political leadership and other personal matters. Political communication is one of the most important subjects in communication and media studies. Different political parties use social media and advance technologies for their political campaign and address the voters through different social media websites. In Pakistan different political parties using Facebook, twitter and other online networking to encourage the youth for casting vote in their favor and these parties also update their achievements in order to create soft corner and favor to their policies.

Objectives of the Study

- 1) To explore purposes of using Smartphone by the youth;
- 2) To explore how much Smartphone applications provide information about politics;
- 3) To explore impact on political behavior through Smartphone.

Review of Literature

Communication activities in their manifold forms along with diversified means of communication such as Radio, TV, Internet, Smartphone, Film, books, newspapers and many others have reshaped human lives in all areas. Communication media technological development sparing very rapidly have succeeded in bringing the global setup on tip of fingers. Smartphone is the most rapidly accessible personal device that penetrated into our

day to day life from personal contacts to engage the respondent in political matters. This facility not only increased the speed and scope of interaction in the developed societies but also undertaken new phenomenon of communication from one to one or from one to many.

In a developing country like Pakistan use of Smartphone has been increasingly advanced in recent years. In this regard, internet facility 3G, 4G has been introduced and several mobile companies like Ufone, Zong, Telenor, Warid, Jaz have been offering different internet packages to their users. Commonly known social media and their usage have been increasing since 2006. It is assumed that, "two third of American aged 16 to 29 years of age would choose a mobile phone ahead of a landline phone, compared to 31 percent of those aged over 50 years" (Mobile and Youth, 2004). Today's use of Smartphone is not popularly common among the well educated people but also used by less educated for different purposes. Social media through Smartphone help their users also to keep themselves well informed of different political events and parties in the country. Amenda Lenhart, 2007 argues that "teen send instant messages at least several times a week and each session last half hour and involves three or more friends".

Hermkens, 2011 very rightly says "one vital aspect of social media is that it uses Smartphone and web based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, discuss and modify user-generated content".

Today's generation is very active in adoption of Smartphone. Like any other machines and motives of its use have both merits and demerits. According to Hermkens, "one vital aspect of social media is that it uses mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, discuss and modify user-generated content" (Hermkens, 2011). They use it for different purposes. Use of Smartphone varies from society to society in view of local culture or religious sensitivities. For example, in view of use of Smartphone with camera is not allowed due to privacy risks (Murugaboopathi et al, 2012). In this regard one of the studies conducted in Midwestern University for usage of Smartphone and its impact on studies determined that, "students who frequently use mobile phone and social media on mobile has negative impact and lacking of intelligence in note taking and point scoring while students who do not use text messaging and other applications are more intelligent in notes taking in the class and almost their scores are 90%" (Kuznekoff and Titsworth, 2013).

At present mobile phone has become a social and entertainment hub. There is a difference in use of mobile phone by young and aged people. Use of social media is increasing day by day in Pakistan, not only by the well educated people but also by the less educated people use social media for different purposes. The use of social media on mobile phone is also helping the users to keep themselves informed regarding different political happenings in the country.

Apart from physical negative effects of overwhelming use of Smartphone, it provides direct access in mentioning ongoing family and friend's interaction. In the existing setup of social strata Smartphone has become a social and entertainment hub. In Pakistan social media facilities are increasingly used by the youth. Apart from use of Smartphone at personal level political parties in Pakistan have created their party web pages to communicate and propagate their policies to the voters, especially the youth for motivation and exchange of ideas.

Methodology

Survey research technique is used for data collection and population is consisted of youth. Sample of this research work is very carefully selected keeping in view the scope and reasonable responses of the respondents. Male and female students of two different Universities of Pakistan located in two provinces are selected to control as much variables as possible. 400 students of the above said Universities of both gender are selected and served close-ended questionnaires. The collected data is analyzed by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software to draw the results about the issue under this research.

Findings

Table 1 across gender reveals that 44% female respondents are using Smartphone since 1 to 2 years while as compared to male respondents 28%, similarly 30% respondents both male and female using Smartphone 3 to 4 years with equal percentile. The exclusive analysis shows that 21% male respondents using Smartphone since 5 to 6 years as compared to female respondents 12% (Table 1).

Table 1 : Demographic Wise Users' History of Smartphone Usage

Category	Gender	
	Male	Female
1-2 Year	*28	44
4-Mar	30	30
6-May	21	12
8-Jul	10	7
More 'than		
8	13	7
N#	200	200

The exclusive analysis of the data reveals that overall 39% respondents very much use Smartphone to interact with friends while 37% much use to interact with family, similarly 24% respondents use it to interact with coworkers. The exclusive analysis of data across gender reveals that 72% male respondents use Smartphone to interact with friends as compared with 67% females and across aged group it has been observed that 69% respondents with low age group use Smartphone to interact with friends as compared with high age group 67%. It has also been observed through empirical data that 67% female respondents use Smartphone to interact with family as compared with 62% male respondents and across age groups the data reveals that both age groups use Smartphone to interact with family members with equal percentile 27%. Interaction with coworkers the exclusive data reveals that 44% male respondents much use Smartphone to interact with coworkers as compared with female respondents 33% with significant difference. Across age groups it has been observed that 39% respondents of low age group use Smartphone to interact with coworkers as compared with high age group 36% with no significant difference (Table 2).

Table 2: Interactional Purpose of Using Smartphone

Category	Overall	Gender		Age	
		Male	Female	25	25+
WITH FRIENDS					
Very Much	*39	48	31	40	36
Much	30	24	36	29	31
Somewhat	18	17	20	18	19
Rarely	11	11	10	11	10
Not at all	2	1	4	1	5
WITH FAMILY					
Very Much	27	26	29	27	27
Much	37	36	38	38	34
Somewhat	21	24	19	22	20

Rarely	12	13	11	10	16
Not at all	3	3	4	3	4
WITH COWORKERS					
Very Much	14	16	13	15	13
Much	24	28	20	24	23
Somewhat	23	18	29	22	26
Rarely	24	24	25	24	23
Not at all	15	16	13	14	16

The exclusive analysis of data reveals that overall 73% respondents use Smartphone for the purpose of text messaging followed by 66% for Information and 62% for music. Similarly 60% respondents use Smartphone for the purpose of call making and 60% for education with equal percentile. The exclusive analysis of data 79% male respondents use Smartphone for the purpose of text messages as compared with female respondents 68% with significant difference and across age groups it has been observed that 75% lower age group use Smartphone for the purpose of text messaging as compared with high age group respondents 70% with significant difference. It has also been observed thorough empirical data that 69% male respondents much use Smartphone for the purpose of call making as compared with female respondents 50% with significant difference (Table 3).

Table 3: Purpose of using Smartphone

Category	Overall	Gender		Age	
		Male	Female	25	25+
Call Making					
Very Much	*29	35	23	27	39
Much	31	34	27	32	26
Somewhat	21	17	26	22	18
Rarely	16	12	21	15	15
Not at all	3	3	3	3	3
Text Messaging					
Very Much	42	50	35	43	39
Much	31	29	33	32	31
Somewhat	17	14	20	14	18
Rarely	7	6	8	6	9
Not at all	4	3	5	4	4
Music					
Very Much	33	37	32	36	30
Much	29	29	28	28	29
Somewhat	22	19	23	19	23
Rarely	12	12	12	11	14
Not at all	5	5	6	5	5
Information					
Very Much	32	35	30	35	24
Much	34	34	34	34	33

Somewhat	21	21	21	20	26
Rarely	8	7	9	6	13
Not at all	5	4	6	5	5
Education					
Very Much	28	31	29	28	26
Much	32	33	30	33	26
Somewhat	22	19	21	21	24
Rarely	9	10	8	7	14
Not at all	10	9	12	10	11

The exclusive analysis of data reveals that overall 70% respondents consider Facebook Smartphone application frequently provide political information as compared with Twitter 52% followed by 50% WhatsApp. The exclusive data reveals that 76% male respondents frequently consider Facebook Smartphone application provides information about politics as compared with female respondents 65% with significant difference. Across age group it has been observed that respondents 72% with lower age group consider Facebook frequently share information about politics as compared with higher age group 64% with significant difference. The exclusive analysis of data also reveals that 52% male respondents very frequently consider WhatsApp Smartphone application provide information about politics as compared with female respondents 48% with significant difference (Table 4).

Table 4: Extent of Information Provide by Smartphone Application regarding politics

Category	Overall	Gender		Age	
		Male	Female	25	25+
Facebook					
Very					
Frequently	37	43	31	39	30
Frequently	33	33	34	33	34
Somewhat	16	15	18	16	17
Rarely	6	6	6	6	6
Not at all	8	4	11	5	14
Twitter					
Very					
Frequently	35	36	35	37	28
Frequently	17	16	22	17	17
Somewhat	16	19	12	17	12
Rarely	13	13	14	13	15
Not at all	19	17	18	16	29
WhatsApp					
Very					
Frequently	30	27	33	31	25
Frequently	20	25	15	21	16
Somewhat	16	17	16	16	17
Rarely	13	12	15	13	13
Not at all	21	20	22	18	30

The exclusive analysis of data reveals that overall majority of the respondents 72% strongly agree that Facebook Smartphone application affects the political behavior of youth followed by 66% WhatsApp, 65% Video, and 60% Twitter. Across age group it has been observed through data that respondents with low age group 68% agree that Messenger Smartphone application as compared with high age group 61% with significant difference.

The exclusive analysis of data reveals that 79% male respondents agree that Facebook Smartphone application affect the political behavior of youth as compared with female respondents 66% with significant difference (Table 5).

Table 5: Effects of Smartphone Applications on Political Behavior

Category	Overall		Gender		Age	
	Male	Female			25	25+
Facebook						
Strongly Agree	36	49	24	35	39	
Agree	36	30	42	37	32	
Neutral	15	12	19	16	14	
Strongly Disagree	7	6	7	6	8	
Disagree	6	5	8	6	8	
Twitter						
Strongly Agree	38	38	39	38	38	
Agree	22	25	19	27	21	
Neutral	18	18	19	12	21	
Strongly Disagree	9	9	9	10	7	
Disagree	13	12	15	13	14	
Videos						
Strongly Agree	45	46	45	45	44	
Agree	20	23	18	24	20	
Neutral	16	14	18	12	17	
Strongly Disagree	8	8	8	8	8	
Disagree	12	11	12	11	12	
WhatsApp						
Strongly Agree	38	33	45	38	37	
Agree	28	32	25	30	24	
Neutral	16	17	12	15	20	
Strongly Disagree	8	10	7	8	9	
Disagree	10	9	11	10	11	

Summary and Conclusion

This research study was aimed at to find out the “Impact of Smartphone Applications on Political Behavior of Youth”. Survey method is used to collect data from respondents, 200 male and 200 female University students by serving close-ended questionnaire. In this regard, two different Universities students one from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the other from the Punjab University of Pakistan were selected. The study is undertaken to

investigate the habits of the youth using Smartphone and Smartphone applications like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Imo, ChatON, Viber etc. Review of literature was done in order to comprehend the issue under investigation.

Empirical analysis of data reveals that majority of respondents have been using Smartphone from 3 to 4 years (See Table 1). Data analysis also reveals that majority of the respondents use Smartphone to interact with their friends. However, majority of female respondents use Smartphone to interact with their families rather the friends. This shows significance difference of usage behavior (See Table 2). The data further reveal that majority of the respondents use Smartphone applications for different purposes. In this context, male respondents frequently use Smartphone applications for text messages as compared with female respondents which show significant difference (See Table 3).

This is also reveals that male gender uses Smartphone more text messaging as compared with female gender. In this regard, the data shows that Facebook Smartphone application provides more information on politics as compared with other applications (See Table 4). Majority of the youth also agrees that Facebook Smartphone application effect political behavior of youth more than any other application (See Table 5).

The above findings are in line with other studies reveal that Smartphone applications not only provide political information but also affect the political behavior of the youth.

Conclusion

Discussion and analysis of the study reveal that among different existing media of communication and interaction, Smartphone applications have become growingly popular among the youth, especially the University students of Pakistan. Both the genders use this communication mean for different purposes. However, in the context of Pakistan, two facts are surfaced, i.e. the increase of Smartphone usage at personal levels as well as at political level. Male users frequently use this facility to get information relevant to politics and share their views on political affairs and development in the country. They also give opinion and propagate their political views through Smartphone applications. In Pakistan, though the facility is younger than other communication media. However, its applications and number of the users are growingly increasing very rapidly.

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