

English Articles

The Relationship between the Usage of Smart Phones as a Communication Medium and Various Social and Psychological Aspects in Kuwait

Ahmad Sharif

Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, Kuwait University

Abstract

This study employs the media uses and gratifications approach to explore the impact of reasons for using smart phones (SPs) and relationship between using them and various social aspects in Kuwait. The responses of 616 university students reveals that they use SPs for *Information*, *Social Connectivity* and *Entertainment* reasons. The survey found that time spent using SPs and the use of SPs for Information negatively predicted social anxiety while *Entertainment* and affinity for using SPs positively predicted it. Also, affinity for using MP's negatively predicted trust in people. Finally, the use of SPs for *Connectivity with Others* positively predicted engagement in social activities. The study discusses the outcomes of this study in the light of the four current stances on the effects of modern communication technologies and the collective nature of Kuwaiti culture.

Introduction

Even though recent studies have explored the use of mobile phones (SPs) (Leung and Wei, 2000; Höflich and Rössler, 2001; Özcan and Koçak, 2003; Wei, 2006; Mazzoni et al., 2007; Hoştut, 2010), the need to update the literature persists, as the industry constantly provides SPs with new, cutting-edge features and applications in order to compete. In addition, it is likely that the reasons for using SPs have changed over time. Modern SPs consist of diverse features, such as internet browsing, watching different TV channels, listening to local and international radio stations and music, reading diverse newspapers, and social media, that satisfy greater and newer needs and this in turn affects the relative importance of different reasons for using them. Finally, the literature still has a gap concerning the use and impact of mobile phones in the Arab world, which enjoys specific collective social contexts. This study explores the uses of certain types of mobile phones, such as the iPhone, Galaxy and Blackberry that have advanced multimedia and Internet connectivity features. Kuwait represents an excellent context for studying the influence of SPs given the high number of users for such technology, which is close to 6 million. This presents a penetration rate of around 200% (CIA Factbook, 2015).

The rapid development in the SP industry and the growing infiltration of the device that contains multimedia and multi applications into society provide compelling grounds for an exploration of the impact of SPs. Because they are accessible, portable, convenient and user-friendly, their influence exceeds other forms of communication technologies (Hoştut, 2010). Wei (2006) argue that because SPs allow a great level of involvement by users, they contribute to the production of a cultural phenomenon that has its own context and characteristics. The technology makes users more concerned about the way they present themselves through the videos and pictures they post of themselves on social networks (Ishii, 2006). An example of the influence of the technology is the iPhones App Store, which includes about 23 application genres and a limitless number of apps that certainly provide satisfaction to users, who may feel emotionally attached to the technology and become susceptible targets of its impact.

This study has two objectives. First, it employs the media uses and gratifications approach as a theoretical framework to explore the reasons for using SPs in Kuwait. Second, it examines the impact of time spent using SPs, reasons for using them and affinity for using them on social anxiety, trust in people and the intensity of engagement in social activities in the State of Kuwait. Kuwait enjoys a particular set of social and cultural milieu that represents a suitable context for the study of SPs in a collective society.

Kuwait Society: Social and Cultural Characteristics

Like other Arabs, Kuwaitis are social and collective in their nature (Al-Kandari, 2002; Clancy, 2012). The nomadic life and Arab cultural values influence the collective culture of the Kuwaiti society. For example, it is normal to see extended families live together. In addition, there are almost no defined personal boundaries in the Kuwaiti Arab culture (Al-Wygayan, 2010). The values of having strong devotion and loyalty to the group are important. Kuwaitis dedicate a lot of their time to social obligations. Arab dictionaries do not have a description for the term “privacy” (Nydell, 2005). A person asking for privacy is called lonely. Of the Arabs, Rosen (2006: 164) said, “A person is primarily identified in terms of his or her network of obligations”. The number of associations a person has reflects a higher social status. Barakat (1993: 201) says, “The need for affiliation is nurtured at the expense of the need for power and achievement”.

Collective values such as honor, pride, reputation, social respect, and hospitality are more important values than values of individualism such as self-worth and self-actualization (Al-Wygayan, 2010). These collective cultural values influence the social life of Kuwaitis who need to be generous in providing food for their guests during the constant occasions they have. These values also cause Kuwaitis to establish diwanis, a type of reception area in the homes of all Kuwaitis, which are used to gather people who visit and spend extended time together talking, entertaining and socially connecting one another. Similar to diwanis and social occasions, Kuwaitis are very likely to use SPs to advance social connection (Al-Kandari, 2002).

Nydell (2005), who discusses the notion of negotiation in the Middle East, says, “Participants in negotiations enjoy long, spirited discussions and are usually not in any hurry to conclude them” (p. 31). With such an intense level of individual interaction, SPs are less likely to cause a person to disengage from social activities or embrace less trust in people, as Kuwaitis make their personal and social judgments of people through this type of exchange. With this sort of culture, the impact of SPs is more likely to be confined to enhancing social activities and level of trust in other people. Accordingly, the conclusions of research in the West, which has found that communication technologies lead to atomization and loneliness, need to be carefully examined (Banjo et al., 2006; Putnam, 2000). Reflecting on the collective personality of Kuwaitis, it seems more likely that people there will use SPs to broaden their social obligations and activities.

Related Studies and Theoretical Framework

The Use of Mobile Phones in Kuwait: Theoretical Framework

The media uses and gratifications theory explores the way that people use media communication technologies in order to satisfy their different needs. Contrary to the early social paradigm of media effects that focuses on what the media do to people, the approach looks at what people do with the media. It maintains that people actively seek the contents that are the most suitable for their needs and employ mechanisms of channel and content selection and avoidance to maximize their gratifications through the use of the media (Katz et al. 1974). Having a greater role in the communication process permits people to constrain the influence of media, which is conditioned by their involvement, and therefore by the ways in which they seek satisfaction and choose to use the media.

Studies have looked at the reasons for using SPs. These reasons include fashion/status, affection/sociability, relaxation, mobility, immediate access, instrumentality and reassurance (Leung and Wei, 2000), reassurance, sociability, immediate access/availability, instrumentality and entertainment/enjoyment (Höflich and Rössler, 2001), status/relaxation, instrumentality/business and security/sociability (özcan and Koçak, 2003), joy/pleasure, sociability, reassurance, instrumentality and communication facilitation (Wei, 2006), relationships, integrated use and info-entertainment (Mazzoni et al., 2007) and relaxation, sociability and reassurance, status and fashion, and innovation (Hoştut, 2010).

Researchers have recognized that the social milieu is an essential variable that alters the use and adoption of SPs. For example, Leung and Wei (2000) found a connection between the adoption rate of SPs and price, availability of infrastructure and the level of perception that the SP is an icon of popular culture in a society. Reasons for using SPs in Kuwait may be expected to be linked mainly with social reasons rather than entertainment, because of the collective nature of Kuwaiti society, where people enjoy having extended associations and being in social gatherings on a daily basis. They favor long, personal and affective social talks (Nydell, 2005). Dedication to family and relatives is more important than personal aspirations and whims. As a result, the outcomes of this study may echo those which have been conducted in collective societies. For example, social reasons were found to lead young Latinos to use SPs (Lee, 2006), while connection with friends predicted the utilization of mobile email by young Japanese (Ishii, 2006) and forming relationships stimulated the Turks to use SPs (Hoştut, 2010).

A country's cultural characteristics and its national personality traits

predict reasons for using communication technologies. Unlike Westerners, who are generally more expressive and communicative with strangers in social contexts, many young Japanese prefer text messaging to avoid anxiety resulting from direct contact (Hashimoto, 2002). Ishii (2006) found that having lower social skills predicted an increased use of mobile mail. Generally, Kuwaitis are outgoing and expressive of their opinions and feelings with strangers. It is therefore not to be expected that the time they spend on SPs will be associated with social anxiety.

Finally, Kuwaitis may use SPs for information reasons. Goggin (2006) discussed the outcomes of the adoption of SPs in the Philippines, which were quite revolutionary as people utilized text messages to exchange information about the malpractice of the authoritarian government there and to share parodies and jokes about the corrupt Estrada regime. The current unrest in the Arab world that has resulted in the toppling of some dictatorial regimes triggers people to use their SPs to seek political information that mainstream media conceal. Al-Kandari and Hasanen (2012) found that Egyptians used the Internet as an alternative source of information, communication and self-expression to mainstream, authority-backed media.

Affinity for Smart Phones

Media affinity theory refers to the intensity of attachment and affection users have for a medium or technology (Hmielowski et al., 2011). The concept supposes that the degree of affinity for a medium mediates, predicts, or correlates with behaviors and attitudes. Research has connected affinity for the media with media consumption. For example, affinity for political humor predicted viewing political television satire (Hmielowski et al., 2011) and affinity for specific television content or channels predicted the exposure to them (Vandebosch et al., 2007). Research has also related affinity for the media to habits and motives for media use. For example, television affinity mediated the companionship and parasocial interaction motives for use (Auter and Palmgreen, 2000). Also, affinity for a medium was positively correlated with the habitual or passive motives for its use (e.g. escapism, relaxation, passing time) while affinity for communication content was positively associated with the active, purposive and instrumental motives for its use (e.g. finding information) (Rubin, 2006).

The utilization of the notion of affinity for SPs as a predictor of behavior and attitudes may prove useful as other studies have found. For example, Internet affinity was associated with forming online romantic associations (Anderson, 2005), affinity for television programs (e.g., soap operas) was positively correlated with the post-viewing discussion of programs (Rubin and

Perse, 1987), and affinity for YouTube predicted the viewing and uploading of videos on YouTube (Haridakis and Hanson, 2009). Second, the capability of SPs to gratify the diverse needs of people is evident. Finding segmented information, entertainment and technology features fosters the selective exposure function of users which increases their satisfaction and affinity for SPs. Third, SPs inspire augmented active roles of users who can produce communication content. Being active with a medium increases dependency on it and level of affinity for it and taken together this may perhaps explain the impact of SPs (Jackob, 2010). According to Rubin (2006; 535), "The roles of activity and level of involvement with a communication technology contributes to the process of media communication effects".

The Impact of Mobile Phones and Affinity for them in Society in Kuwait

This study explores if the use of and affinity for SPs predict social anxiety, trust in people and engagement in social activities. The literature on the social effects of new media technologies and SPs provides four possible outcomes. They are the pessimistic, optimistic, mixed effects and the no-effects outcomes. The following section presents these four outcomes in connection with the social context of Kuwait. It also connects the outcomes with social anxiety, which refers to the level of comfort a person displays in social surroundings, trust in people, which refers to the degree of trust a person has for other people, and social engagement, which refers to the intensity of involvement in different social activities.

First, the pessimistic outcome states that SPs and modern communication technologies lead to loneliness, atomization, alienation and reduced civic engagement (Banjo et al., 2006). Putnam (2000) argues that these technologies displace the time people spend in social settings. Americans are less active in the community because communication technologies foster privatization and separation from society (Putnam, 2000). People depend more on modern technologies because they represent more convenient means of information and leisure than engagement with others.

Igarashi et al. (2008) found that people with neuroticism were more likely to rely on SPs. McKenna et al. (2002) also found that antisocial, anxious and lonely individuals were more likely to form online relationships. Those individuals form relationships through their SPs social applications to reduce nervousness encountered in face to face communication (Ezoe, 2009), overcome social anxiety (Stritzke et al., 2004) and escape direct communication because of weak social skills (Ishii, 2006).

Social gatherings require an investment in time, space and commitment. In contrast with this, the informal social connectivity features of SP applica-

tions like WhatsApp and SMS “offer a release from the constraints of normal social relations” (Reid and Reid, 2010, p. 5). Also, SP usage may correlate with less trust in people because these socialization applications include anonymous, dishonest, abnormal and anxious individuals who display poor manners in speech and behavior. Research that connected the influence of new media technologies to various social and life aspects found that use of the Internet was correlated with decreased social capital and reduced commitment to society (Kraut et al., 1998).

The discussion of Wellman (2002) represents the optimistic view of the social impact of modern communication technologies. He argues they enrich the communication process and enable people to expand the number of their personal associations. Kwak et al. (2004: 644) explain, “The familiarity and equity that characterize informal associations likely encourage open interactions”. Research has found positive correlations between the use of Facebook and engagement in social activities and trust in society (Valenzuela et al., 2009).

The mixed effects perspective suggests that the process of media effects is complex and requires the consideration of many intervening factors. Locating effects entails a careful selection of variables that make it possible to predict certain behavior and attitudes. Researchers (Räsänen and Kouvo, 2007) suggest that the influence of a medium, whether negative or positive, is dependent on the type of its use. Therefore, the effect of SPs is contingent on the theories and variables researchers employ and the diverse phenomena they investigate.

In this regard, research has found correlations between the use of certain types of SP applications, such as voice calling and civic engagement (Caspbell and Kwak, 2010). Also, research has confirmed that the use of media for recreational reasons (e.g. entertainment and diversion) negatively predict social engagement (Besley, 2006), while the overall viewing of television is associated with less engagement in civic life. Research has also found that the viewing of specific television genres (e.g. the news) is linked to engagement in social activities (Kwak et al., 2001) and affinity for music is positively related to CD purchasing rather than downloading music online (Kinnally et al., 2008).

The no-effects result supposes that media effects are only one aspect that contributes to the whole and larger social effect phenomenon. This means that communication technologies act, hand in hand, with other social factors in an interplay of effects. The media may go with the flow in an aggregated form with other social entities to cause effects. Collectively, they are like the waves that shape the rocks of the beach it strikes. The inability to

specify or pinpoint media effects means that other social, political and cultural components all contribute to the entire process of social effects. These components may also counterbalance media effects. In this regard, Katz and Rice (2002) suggest that the Internet only enhances already existing associations. Similarly, Ishii (2006) finds that SPs only help in maintaining preexisting associations.

Based on the previous review, the following research questions are posed:

RQ1: What reasons do Kuwaiti university students have for using mobile phones (SPs)?

RQ2: What factors (time spent using SP, reasons of using SPs and affinity for SPs) best predict social anxiety, trust in people and engagement in social activities?

Methodology

Sampling Procedures

The research was aimed at young Kuwaitis. This segment of society has a greater knowledge of dealing with SPs sophisticated applications, unlike older people who mainly use SPs for calls and text messaging (Hyde-Clarke and Van Tonder, 2011). In Kuwait, this segment is even able to purchase advanced SPs which cost around \$600, due to the fact that Kuwaitis in general enjoy a high economic standard of living. Also, each university student in the country receives a monthly grant of \$800.

Six hundreds and sixteen students, 317 (52%) males and 295 (48%) females from Kuwait University volunteered to participate in a self-reporting questionnaire during the entire month of January 2014. The study included the students who were enrolled in introductory Social Science, Information Technology, Linguistics and Arts courses, and completion of the questionnaire, which was in Arabic, took about 10 minutes. These introductory courses were selected based on a random pick of all 100 level university courses after each was given an identification number.

Of the 616 participants, 171 (28%) said that the monthly income of their family was less than \$5,000, 247 (40%) said it was between \$5,001 and \$8,000, 102 (17%) between \$8,001 and \$11,000 and 82 (13%) said it was more than \$11,001. Only 13 (2%) said they did not own SPs, 7 (1%) said they rarely used one, 33 (5%) sometimes, 115 (19%) usually and 448 (73%) said they used one very often.

Questionnaire Construction, Validity and Reliability

Criterion Variables

A pilot study was conducted to create the questionnaires items and ensure their reliability. Initially, the items of the reasons for using SPs were collected from university students who were first instructed to provide their reasons for using SPs to an open ended question. Then, their statements were categorized to reflect different groups of reasons for using SPs. Finally, these statements were given as a survey along with a 5-point Likert scale of "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Neutral", "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree" as options of selection. An Alpha reliability was tested on each group of reasons. Each reason yielded an Alpha reliability of more than .70. Other scales in the study were adopted from published research and their reliability and validity were proven in this past research.

This study includes 3 main criterion variables. They are social anxiety, trust in people, and engagement in social activities. To measure each of the three criterion variables, a 5-point Likert scale of "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Neutral", "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree" was used to assess the response to various statements. The first composite (alpha reliability = 0.80, mean = 2.62, SD = 0.82) included 6 items to assess social anxiety. The items were: "I am often uncomfortable at social gatherings", "When in a group of people, I have trouble thinking of the right things to talk about", "It is hard for me to act naturally when I am meeting with new people", "I try to avoid formal social occasions", "I usually feel calm and comfortable at social occasions" (reversed) and "I often think up excuses in order to avoid any sort of engagement in social events".

The second index, which measured the level of trust in people, consisted of 6 items (alpha reliability = 0.73, mean = 2.16, SD = 0.62). The items were: "A person can easily trust people", "I feel secure and safe with all people", "The majority of people always think of themselves and their own benefit" (reversed), "An individual must not trust people easily" (reversed), "It is not easy to trust people these days" (reversed) and "People will exploit someone if he/she is not very careful" (reversed).

The last composite measured engagement in social activities and incorporated 7 items (alpha reliability = 0.85, mean = 2.96, SD = 0.82). The items were: "I participate in social events a great deal", "I often get involved in social associations", "As a member, I participate in the organization of cultural and social events", "I effectively participate in the university general election", "I actively contribute to different student organizations", "I know the majority

of our neighbors on a personal level” and “I have always held conversations with our neighbors”.

Predictor Variables

This study consists of three sets of predictor variables that assess the influence of SPs. They are time spent using SPs, reasons for using SPs and the intensity of affinity for SPs. For the first variable, respondents were asked “How often do you use your SP on a daily base?” The categorical responses were: “rarely”, “sometimes”, “usually” and “very often”.

To construct items composing reasons for using SPs, initially, an open ended question asking “Why do you use SPs?” was distributed to 60 students. The students were instructed to provide 5 reasons for using SPs. After the compilation and categorization of responses, the items were distributed to about 50 conveniently selected students. An initial factor analysis was conducted to obtain definitive sets of categories, refine the wording of items, eliminating redundant items, and checking that the scores of alpha reliability of each category or reason were above 0.70. See Table 1 for the complete list of items distributed in the final form of the questionnaire, their wordings and the alpha reliability of each reason for using SPs.

Finally, the scale of affinity for SPs was composed of 7 items (alpha reliability = 0.85, mean = 4.10, SD = 0.73). The items were: “My SP is very important in my life”, “My SP becomes an important part of my daily routine activities”, “I do not think I can stop using my SP”, “I feel I am not connected to the world If I do not use my SP”, “I can abandon my SP at any time” (reversed), “I will feel very sad if my SP malfunctions” and “I feel excited every time I use my SP”.

Findings

The Use of Mobile Phones

The first research question this study explores asks, “What reasons do Kuwaiti university students have for using mobile phones (SPs)?” The factor analysis extracted 3 reasons for the use of SPs, which together explained 68% of the total variance. They are *Information* (mean = 4.36, SD = 0.68; Eigenvalue = 3.86), *Connectivity with Others* (mean = 3.90, SD = 0.74; Eigenvalue = 1.67) and *Entertainment* (mean = 3.83, SD = 0.82; Eigenvalue = 1.24). Respondents used SPs first for *Information*, followed by *Connectivity with Others* and last for *Entertainment* purposes. Table 1 shows the statistics for the Factor Analysis procedure and Table 2 displays the inter-factor correlations.

Table 1: Factor Analysis of Reasons for Using SP (n = 616)

“I use the SP to”					
Factors	Descriptive		Factors loadings		
	Mean	Sd	1	2	3
<i>Factor 1: Information (Average mean = 4.36, Average sd = .68)</i>					
Access the news fast	4.42	.75	.886	.149	.099
Follow the latest news and developments	4.32	.78	.873	.123	.111
Read about what is happening around us	4.34	.79	.830	.193	.113
<i>Factor 2: Connectivity with others (Average mean = 3.90, Average sd = .74)</i>					
Create associations with others	4.06	.96	.111	.773	.141
Get to know new people	3.49	1.10	.008	.721	.180
Stay connected with others by sound and video	4.00	.98	.219	.707	.091
Exchange photos and files with others	4.05	.92	.221	.691	.195
<i>Factor 3: Entertainment (Average mean = 3.83, Average sd = .82)</i>					
Spend my free time in playing entertaining games	3.59	1.10	.036	.136	.882
Use amusing programs	3.68	1.0	.107	.156	.861
Get rid of boredom	4.20	.84	.188	.251	.674
Eigenvalues			3.86	1.67	1.24
% of variance			38.6	16.7	12.4
Alpha (Reliability scores)			.86	.74	.78

Note: Factor loadings over 0.60 appear in bold

Table 2: Pearson R Inter-factor Correlations of all Criteria and Predictor Variables

Variable	Time spent on SP	Affinity for SP	Entertainment	Information	Connectivity with Others
Time spent using SP	-	.602**	.246**	.328**	.262**
Affinity for using SP	.602**	-	.274**	.384**	.395**
Entertainment	.246**	.274**	-	.267**	.416**
Information	.328**	.384**	.267**	-	.363**
Connectivity with others	.262**	.395**	.416**	.363**	-
Social anxiety	-.106**	.060	.106**	-.066	.095*
Trust in people	-.065	-.159**	-.132**	-.116**	-.105**
Social engagement	-.005	-.007	-.014	.114**	.162**

** Correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlations are significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Use of Mobile Phones, Affinity for them and their Social Impact

The second research question asks, "What factors (time spent on using SPs, reasons of using SPs and affinity for them) best predict social anxiety, trust in people and engagement in social activities?" The first linear regression procedure assessed social anxiety. It revealed that after entering all the variables related to the use of SPs in the first block of independent variables in the analysis, the procedure was significant (R^2 change = 0.052, F change (591, 5) = 5.43, p = 0.001). When entering demographics in the second block to control for the first set of variables, the regression lost its significance (R^2 change = 0.003, F change (589, 2) = 0.856, p = 0.426). Even after controlling for demographics, the affinity variable (β = 0.148, p = 0.005) and Entertainment reason (β = 0.98, p = 0.030) continued to positively predict social anxiety and time spent on SPs (β = -0.193, p = 0.001) and the *Information* reason (β = -0.102, p = 0.026) continued to negatively predict it. These results indicate that individuals who use SPs for *Entertainment* and those who have a strong affinity for SPs were more likely to experience social anxiety, while those who spend a lot of time using SPs and use them for *Information* were not.

The second regression procedure, which assessed trust in people, revealed that affinity for SPs (β = -.139, p = .008) was a negative predictor,

even after controlling for demographics (R^2 change = 0.025, F change (589, 2) = 7.97, p = 0.001). Gender was another significant predictor of trust in people (β = -0.166, p = 0.001). The results reveal that individuals who have a strong affinity for SPs were less likely to trust people.

The last regression analysis revealed that affinity for SPs (β = -0.106, p = 0.042) and the *Entertainment* reason (β = -0.96, p = 0.033) were negative predictors of engagement in social activities and the Information reason (β = 0.103, p = 0.023) and the reason of *Connectivity with Others* (β = 0.212, p = 0.001) were positive predictors of the variable (R^2 change = 0.049, F change (591, 5) = 6.11, p = 0.001) before entering the demographics in the last block for control purposes. However, after entering the controlling variables, only *Connectivity with Others* (β = 0.243, p = 0.001) remained a positive predictor (R^2 change = 0.048, F change (589, 2) = 15.62, p = 0.001). Gender was also a predictor (β = -0.552, p = 0.001) of engagement in social activities. The outcomes show that individuals who used SPs for the reason of *Connectivity with Others* were more likely to engage in social activities.

Table 3: Summary of Regression Analyses of Predictors of Social Anxiety, Trust in People and Engagement in Social Activities (n = 597)

Predictors	Social anxiety	Trust in people	Social engagement
Time spent using SP	-.193***	.046	-.018
Affinity for using SP	.148**	-.139**	-.059
Entertainment	.098*	-.063	-.077
Information	-.102*	-.077	.063
Connectivity with Others	.078	.016	.243***
Gender	.035	-.166***	-.226***
Family monthly income	.043	.001	-.048
R^2	.054	.070	.97
Adjusted R^2	.043	.059	.086

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Discussion and Conclusion

This study reports important findings. It finds that finding *Information* is the main reason for the use of SPs, followed by *Connectivity with Others*, and

finally *Entertainment*. Concerning the impact of SPs on social anxiety, trust in people and engagement in social activities, the study discovers that utilizing SPs for the *Entertainment* reason and affinity for SPs predict social anxiety, while spending a great deal of time on SPs and using them to gather *Information* negatively predict social anxiety. Also, affinity for SPs predicts trust in people. Finally, using SPs for *Connectivity with Others* predicts engagement in social activities.

Finding that the *Information* reason is the primary reason for using SPs, followed by *Connectivity with Others* and *Entertainment* is comforting. It is encouraging to find that Kuwaitis use SPs mainly to find information rather than for entertainment. Although entertainment is part of the daily activities of people and should not be considered as something negative, finding information is linked to progressive involvement in different social aspects. Previous studies have found that the use of media recreational purposes is negatively associated with social engagement (Besley, 2006).

Unlike the studies that have been conducted in other countries, which have found that entertainment and sociability are leading reasons for using SPs (Leung and Wei, 2000; Höflich and Rössler, 2001; Özcan and Koçak, 2003; Wei, 2006; Mazzoni et al., 2007; Hoştut, 2010), this study finds that seeking information is the principal reason for using SPs. Even though this study does not explore the influence of current political unrest in the Arab region on the use of SPs for information, there is a plausible link with that circumstance. It is very likely that Arabs use SPs to find information that is not supplied by their mainstream media. Also, the conservative nature of Arab societies is very likely to prompt Arabs to search for other sources of information that are less influenced by gatekeepers, so they can freely access information and even find out about taboo subjects. Traditional and conservative Arab settings cause individuals to find alternative channels of communication. A third reason for the finding is that the majority of modern SPs are connected to the Internet unlike the SPs examined in past studies. This underscores the importance of the suggestion made at the beginning of this paper, that updating the literature with new findings is crucial, as the technology constantly provides cutting edge applications that affect the priorities people have in using SPs, and influence peoples attitudes and behaviors.

Past studies have found that people in Asian nations use SPs to avoid social anxiety (Hashimoto, 2002; Ishii, 2006). Researchers have also suggested that dependency on modern technologies causes atomization and loneliness (Banjo et al., 2006). In contrast with those findings, this study finds that time spent using SPs is a negative predictor of social anxiety, an outcome that is in line with the optimistic view of the effects of modern communication

technologies. Phone users may use their SPs to start extended discussions and chats with others. The findings also reflect the fact that those who have do experience social anxiety spend little time on SPs, possibly because they have fewer friends to talk to and therefore SPs are not helping them to the same extent as those who do not experience social anxiety. The latter group may use SPs to strengthen their relationships with others. As discussed above, Kuwaitis have a strong sense of devotion and commitment to their groups, dedicate a lot of time to social obligations and enjoy sharing long emotional chats (Nydell, 2005).

In addition, the present study finds that individuals who have an affinity for SPs are more likely to experience social anxiety and less likely to trust people. These outcomes reflect the pessimistic view of the effects of communication technologies. Probably, strong affinity indicates an emotional attachment to SPs which negatively influences the social life of individuals. Those individuals become victims of SPs and suffer under their irrational affective influence, unlike individuals do not have an affinity for SPs. Those who are not emotionally attached to their SPs use them for utilitarian purposes and they are in control of their SPs, which they use to satisfy their wishes and desires, and to gain benefits and therefore are able to circumvent their impact, unlike those who develop strong sentiments for the technology.

Furthermore, this study finds that entertainment is the reason for using SPs that predicts social anxiety while gathering information negatively predicts it. Individuals who search for information are not socially anxious and they probably search for information that they can exchange with others in real life social discussions and gatherings, while who use SPs for entertainment are probably cutting themselves off from social interactions. Searching for information is unlikely to serve the latter group in social gatherings, as they experience socially anxiety in such settings.

Unlike past studies, which have found that the use of media for information is correlated with social capital (Campbell and Kwak, 2010) and that the use of media for entertainment and diversion negatively predict engagement in social activities (Besley, 2006), the present study finds that the reason *Connectivity with Others* is the only positive predictor of engagement in social activities. Unlike De Bruijn, Nyamnjoh and Angwafo (2010), who argue that new communication technologies foster higher levels of individualism and the attainment of personal aspirations, in collective cultures SPs could foster collectivism.

This study has a number of limitations. First it is conducted with students and, therefore, its findings cannot be generalized. This study finds that students mainly use SPs for the gathering information, probably because

Kuwaiti youth advocate political transformation. They have protested and demanded that the selection of the Kuwaiti prime minister should be from average Kuwaitis, rather than from the Al-Sabah ruling family. If this study were conducted on older Kuwaitis, the reasons for using SPs would probably be different. In addition, the outcomes of this study cannot be generalized to other Arab countries. Kuwait is a rich country and its people are able to purchase expensive SPs that connect to the Internet. Other Arabs, not from the Gulf, may have different uses for SPs or may only be able to afford to purchase less expensive SPs that do not have Internet connectivity. Even in other rich oil Gulf countries that are more conservative than Kuwait, people may use SPs first to connect with the opposite sex, as the culture and religion segregate the genders (Al-Menayes, 2014). Also, people there do not participate effectively in local politics and therefore they may prefer to use SPs for entertainment instead of information. It will be fruitful in the future to compare the uses of SPs by people in different Arab countries that have various economic, political and cultural backgrounds.

References

- Al-Kandari, Ali., and Hasanen, Mohammad. "The Impact of the Internet on Political Attitudes in Kuwait and Egypt". *Telematics and Informatics* 29 (2012): p. 245-253.
- Al-Kandari, Yaqoub. *Dywaniah in Kuwait: Its Social and Political Role*. Kuwait: Dar Albalag Publisher, 2002.
- Al-Menayes, Jamal. "The Influence of Demographics, Media Use and Islamic Religious Orientations on Attitudes toward US Military Action in the Middle East". *Arab Journal for the Humanities* 32.128 (2014): p.201-215.
- Al-Wygyayan, Khalifah. *Culture in Kuwait*. Kuwait: The National Counsel for Culture and Art, 2010.
- Auter, Philip & Palmgreen, Philip. "Development and Validation of a New Parasocial Interaction Measure: The Audience-Persona Interaction Scale". *Communication Research Reports* 17.1 (2000): p. 79-89.
- Banjo, Omotayo, Hu, Yifeng, & Sundar, Shyam. *Cell Phone Usage and Social Interaction with Proximate Others: Ringing in a Theoretical Model*. Paper presented at the International Communication Association, Dresden, Germany, 2006.
- Barakat, Halim. *The Arab World: Society, Culture, and State*. Berkeley, LA: University of California Press, 1993.
- Besley, John. "The Role of Entertainment Television and its Interactions with Individual Values in Explaining Political Participation". *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 11.2 (2006): p41-63.
- Campbell, Scott, & Kwak, Nojin. "Mobile Communication and Social Capital: An Investigation of Geographically Differentiated Usage Patterns". *New Media and Society* 12 (2010): p.435-451.
- CIA Factbook*. Accessed in August 1, 2015 from: <http://www.cia.gov>, 2015.
- Clancy, Tom. *Countries of the World: State of Kuwait*. Seattle, WA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012.

- De Bruijn, Mirjam, Nyamnjoh, Francis & Angwafo, Tseghama. "Mobile Interconnections: Reinterpreting Distance, Relating and Difference in the Cameroonian Grassfields". *Journal of African Media Studies* 23 (2010): p. 267-285.
- Ezoe, Satoko, Toda, Medicine, Yoshimura, Kimio, Naritomi, Aki., Den, Rei, & Morimoto, Kane-shisa. "Relationships of Personality and Lifestyle with Mobile Phone Dependence among Female Nursing Students". *Social Behavior and Personality* 37.2 (2009): p. 231-238.
- Goggin, Gerard. *Cell-Phone Culture: Mobile Technology in Everyday Life*. Routledge, London, 2006.
- Haridakis, Paul, & Hanson, Gary. "Social Interaction and Co-Viewing with YouTube: Blending Mass Communication Reception and Social Connection". *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 53.2 (2009): p. 317-335.
- Hmielowski, Jay., & Holbert, Lance, & Lee, Jayeon. "Predicting the Consumption of Political TV Satire: Affinity for Political Humor, the Daily Show, and The Colbert Report". *Communication Monographs* 78.1 (2011): p. 96-114.
- Höflich, Joachim. & Rössler, Patrick. "Mobile Schriftliche Kommunikation Oder: E-Mail Für das Handy". *Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft* 49 (2001): p. 437-461.
- Hoştut, Sibel. "Uses and Gratifications of MP Use among Students in Turkey". *Global Media Journal* 5.1/2 (2010): p. 10-17.
- Igarashi, Tasuku, Motoyoshi, Tadahiro, Takai, Jiro, & Yoshida, Toshikazu. "No Mobile, No Life: Self-Perception and Text-Message Dependency among Japanese High School Students". *Computers in Human Behavior* 24 (2008): 2311-2324.
- Ishii, Kenichi. "Implications of Mobility: The Uses of Personal Communication Media in Everyday Life". *Journal of Communication* 56.2 (2006): p. 346-365.
- Jackob, Nikolaus. "No Alternatives? The Relationship between Perceived Media Dependency, Use of Alternative Information Sources, and General Trust in Mass Media". *International Journal of Communication* 4 (2010): p. 589-606.
- Katz, Elihu, Blumler, Jay & Gurevitch, Michael. "Uses and Gratifications Research". *Public Opinion Quarterly* 37.4 (1974): p. 509 - 523.
- Katz, Elihu, & Rice, Ronald. E. *Social Consequences of Internet Use*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002.
- Kinnally, William, Lacayo, Antonio, McClung, S. & Sapolsky, B. "Getting Up On the Download: College Students Motivations for Acquiring Music Via the Web". *New Media & Society* 10.6 (2008): p. 893-913.
- Kraut, Robert, Patterson, Michael., Lundmark, Vicki., Kiesler, Sara., Mukhopadhyay, Tridas & Scherlis, William "Internet Paradox: A Social Technology that Reduces Social Involvement and Psychological Well-Being?" *American Psychologist* 53 (1998): p. 1017-1031.
- Kwak, Nojin, Shah Dhavan & Holbert, Lance. "Connecting, Trusting, and Participating: The Direct and Interactive Effect of Social Associations". *Political Research Quarterly* 57.4 (2004): p. 643-652.
- Lee, Sun. *Generational and Lifestyle Differences in Mobile Phone Usage*. Paper presented at the 2006 meeting of the International Communication Association, 2006.
- Leung, Louis & Wei, Ran. "More than Just Talk on the Move: Uses and Gratifications of the Cellular Phone". *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 77.2 (2000): p. 308 - 320.

- Mazzoni, Clelia, Castaldi, Laura, & Addeo, Felice. "Consumer Behavior in the Italian Mobile Telecommunication Market". *Telecommunications Policy* 31 (2007): p. 632-647.
- McKenna, Katelyn, Green, Amie & Gleason, Marci. "Relationship Formation on the Internet: Whats the Big Attraction?" *Journal of Social Issues* 58.1 (2002): p. 9-31.
- Nydell, Margaret. *Understanding Arabs: A Guide for Modern Times*. Yarmouth, ME, Boston, MA: Intercultural Press, 2005.
- Özcan, Yusuf & Koçak, Abdullah. "A Need or a Status Symbol? Use of Cellular Telephones in Turkey". *European Journal of Communication* 18. 2 (2003): p. 241-254.
- Putnam, Robert. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000.
- Räsänen, Pekka, & Kouvo, Antti. "Linked or Divided by the Web?: Internet Use and Sociability in Four European Countries". *Information, Communication & Society* 10 (2007): p. 219-241.
- Reid, Frase & Reid, Donna. "The Expressive and Conversational Affordances of Mobile Messaging". *Behaviour & Information Technology* 29.1 (2010): p. 3-22.
- Rosen, Lawrence. "Expecting the Unexpected: Cultural Components of Arab Governance". *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 603.1 (2006): p.163-178.
- Rubin, Alan. The Uses and Gratifications Perspective of Media Effects. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research* (2nd ed., pp.525-548). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006.
- Rubin, Alan & Perse, Elizabeth. "Audience Activity and Soap Opera Involvement: A Uses and Effects Investigation". *Human Communication Research* 14.2 (1987): p. 246 -268.
- Stritzke, Werner, Nguyen, Anh & Durkin, Kevin. "Shyness and Computer-Mediated Communication: A Self-Presentational Theory Perspective". *Media Psychology* 6 (2004): p. 1-22.
- Wei, Ran. "Motivations for Using the MP form Mass Communication and Entertainment". *Telematics and Informatics* 25.1 (2006): p. 36 - 46.
- Wellman, Barry. "Little Boxes, Glocalization, and Networked Individualism". In M. Tanabe, P. van den Besselaar, & T. Ishida (Eds.), *Digital Cities*. LNCS 2362, 10-25, 2002.
- Vandebosch, heidi, & Van Cleemput, katrien. "Television Viewing and Obesity among School Children: The Role of Parents". *European Journal of Communication Research* 32 (2007): 417-446.
- Valenzuela, Sebastian, Park, Namsu & Kee, Kerk. "Is there Social Capital in a Social Network Site?: Facebook Use and College Students Life Satisfaction, Trust, and Participation". *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication* 14.4 (2009): p. 875-901.
- Young, Kimberly. *Caught in the Net: How to Recognize the Signs of Internet Addiction-And a Willing Strategy for Recovery*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998.

مجلة العلوم الاجتماعية

فصلية - أكاديمية - محكمة

تصدر عن مجلس النشر العلمي - جامعة الكويت

تتمنى بنشر الأبحاث والدراسات في تخصصات السياسة والاقتصاد والاجتماع والخدمة الاجتماعية وعلم النفس والأنثروبولوجيا الاجتماعية والجغرافيا وعلوم المكتبات والمعلومات



رئيس التحرير: هادي مختار أشكتاني

توجه جميع المراسلات إلى:

رئيس تحرير مجلة العلوم الاجتماعية

جامعة الكويت

ص.ب 27780 الصفاة، 13055 - الكويت

تليفون: 00965-4810436

فاكس 4836026

E-mail: JSS@kuc01.kuniv.edu.kw

تفتح أبوابها أمام

أوسع مشاركة للباحثين العرب في مجال

العلوم الاجتماعية لنشر البحوث الأصلية

والاسهام في معالجة قضايا مجتمعاتهم

التفاعل الحي مع القارئ المثقف والمهتم

بالقضايا المطروحة.

المقابلات والمناقشات الجادة

ومراجعات الكتب والتقارير.

تؤكد المجلة إلتزامها بالوفاء والانتظام بوصولها في

مواعيدها المحددة إلى جميع قرائها ومشتريها.

الاشتراكات

الدول الأجنبية

الكويت والدول العربية

15 دولاراً

أفراد

3 دنانير سنوياً ويضاف إليها
دينار واحد في الدول العربية

أفراد

60 دولاراً في السنة
110 دولارات لسنتين

مؤسسات

15 ديناراً في السنة
25 ديناراً لمدة سنتين

مؤسسات

تدفع اشتراكات الأفراد مقدماً نقداً أو ب شيك باسم المجلة مسجوباً على أحد المصارف الكويتية ويرسل على عنوان المجلة، أو بتحويل مصرفي لحساب مجلة العلوم الاجتماعية رقم 07101685 لدى بنك الخليج في الكويت (فرع العديلية).

Visit our web site: <http://pubcouncil.kuniv.edu.kw/jss>