

PERCEPTIONS OF BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS TOWARDS MOBILE DEVICE USAGE

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Abstract: In today's world, mobile devices became an inevitable part of our lives. The main purpose of this study is to find out perceptions of business professionals towards use of their mobile device in the workplace as well as at the business meeting settings. To understand business professionals' mobile phone usage at the workplace, an online survey was conducted with Turkish business professionals, who are members of Linked-in social network. Findings of the study indicate the fact that, mobile phone usage at work is positively welcomed in general. Respondents especially appreciate "the flexibility" and "the ability of doing a better job" through accessing corporate emails and other business apps outside official working hours and they strongly believe that "mobile phone usage at work is necessary". However, they slightly believe that their colleagues inappropriately use mobile phone at workplace. "Bringing phone to the meeting", "Excusing oneself to take a call", and "Checking time" are among the most appropriate mobile phone actions during the formal business meetings. On the other hand, "Checking a social media account", "Taking a call without excuse", and "Browsing Internet due to boredom" are seen inappropriate by most of the respondents.

Keywords: Bring-Your-Own-Device (BYOD), mobile phone usage, smartphone.

Introduction

Mobile technologies are promisingly evolving and becoming essential in our lives. Mobile device usage and smartphone ownership continues to increase in the world. Based on the Guardian research, China, India, U.S, Indonesia, Brazil, Japan, Russia, Mexico, Vietnam, Germany, and Turkey are the top countries where smartphone penetrations grow fastest and create the largest number of new owners (Arthur, 2014). Smartphone adoption continues to be more popular among 25-34 year olds and followed by 35-44 year olds segment in both US and Europe (ComScore, 2012). In today's world, mobile devices became an inevitable part of our lives. People now expect to access information anytime, anywhere, and in real-time. Fear of missing out, or FOMO in short, is the main driver behind our mobile addiction. Not to miss out from anything, 31% of mobile phone owners state that they never turn their phone off and 45% of owners rarely turn it off (Rainie & Zickuhr, 2015). Smartphones have been becoming so important that 42% of Turkish people indicate they would prefer to give up TV rather than their smartphones (Google Ipsos MediaCT, 2013).

Mobile technologies can be considered as one of the major forces that contribute to change in the way of doing business. Employees are increasingly becoming mobile, and they use mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets to do their work at the office, at home, and while traveling. Employees currently use their smartphones and tablets for the following work related activities: accessing employee intranet / portal, accessing to e-mail and/or calendar, reading or viewing documents, spreadsheets, or presentations, accessing social networking, watching video, taking work-related photos and/or videos, team portals, editing documents, spreadsheets, or presentations, web meeting, instant messaging, processor-intensive activities like analytics or modeling, videoconferencing, and company- or industry-specific application that is created by the company (Cisco Systems, 2012). Findings of the Ovum Multi-Market BYOD research shows employees appreciate flexibility of access to key tasks out of office hours and majority of them believe that accessing to corporate emails and content outside of office hours improves their ability to do their job well (Absalom, 2013).

The use of employee-owned devices in the workplace is clearly rising and companies are increasingly supporting the Bring-Your-Own-Device (BYOD) trend in order to save costs associated with providing devices themselves. BYOD is defined as “using a personal smartphone or tablet for any activity other than making calls or sending texts, therefore accessing corporate data” (Drury, 2012). Regardless of the company’s location, size or industry, BYOD will be a common reality in the workplace (Symantec, 2013). A significant number of employees want to use a single device in all areas of their life. Ovum Multi-Market BYOD research indicates that approximately 57% of all employees worldwide are accessing corporate data in some form on a personal smartphone or tablet (Absalom, 2013). The findings of Rapid7 revealed that 64% of respondents allow personally-owned mobile devices to be used at work; however nearly half of all respondents indicated they were unaware of how many mobile devices on average each employee is using to access company data (Rapid7, 2013). Although “Always-on” access to corporate data is seen as more of a benefit; some companies do not allow personally-owned mobile devices to be used for work because of security risks.

Employees use their mobile phone during the business meetings that they attend. There are several studies on the use of mobile devices in the business settings such as business meetings (Broughton et al., 2010; Washington, Okoro, & Cardon, 2013; Bradberry, 2014; Wahla & Awan, 2014). While some people show tolerance for mobile phone use in business settings; some people think it’s inappropriate and annoying to use mobile phone during business meetings. Three out of four people indicated that checking texts or emails is unacceptable behavior in business meetings; while 87% of people declared that answering a call is rarely or never acceptable in business meetings. Even at more informal business settings, the majority of people said that writing or sending a text message is inappropriate (Washington, Okoro, & Cardon, 2013). According to some research results, elder people with higher positions tend to approve mobile phone use in meetings less than their colleagues at lower positions do (Washington, Okoro, & Cardon, 2013; Bradberry, 2014).

In this study, perceptions of Turkish business professionals towards use of their mobile device in the workplace as well as at the business meeting settings will be analyzed. The Consumer Barometer Report (2015) results reveal that Turkey is the 6th country among the world regarding the personal internet usage and as first half of the 2015, mobile phone penetration rate reached to 92.9% in Turkey (Bilgi Teknolojileri ve İletişim Kurumu, 2015). It is obvious that smartphone penetration is on the rise in Turkey. Therefore it is worthwhile to analyze perceptions about the use of mobile device in business settings.

Research Methodology

The main purpose of this study is to find out perceptions of business professionals towards use of their mobile phone in the workplace as well as at the business meeting settings. To understand business professionals’ mobile phone usage at the workplace, an online survey was conducted with Turkish business professionals, who are members of Linked-in social network, in June-July 2016. The main advantage of conducting the survey with the members of Linked-in social network is to reach people who are really business professionals. In this online questionnaire attitude toward mobile device usage in the business settings was measured with 14-item, five-point Likert-type scale (1= “strongly disagree” to 5= “strongly agree”), which is adapted from the study of Wahla and Awan (2014). The Cronbach’s Alpha for this 14-item scale is 0.814; so it can be argued that scale reliability is quite high. Perceived appropriateness of mobile phone actions during formal business meetings was measured with 11 item, five-point Likert-type scale which is adapted from the study of Washington, Okoro, and Cardon (2013). This 11-item scale is highly reliable with a Cronbach’s Alpha score of 0.862.

383 respondents answered the online questionnaire and 42 respondents who do not work currently are eliminated from the analysis. A total of 341 usable responses was gathered and demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented as frequencies and percentages in Table 1.

The distribution of gender groups are quite fairly distributed. Among the 341 respondents, 55.7% of the respondents consists of females while 44.3% consists of males. Majority of the respondents (55.1%) are between the ages of 30-39, 29% of respondents between the ages of 20-29, and finally 11.4 % of them are between the ages of 40-49. Regarding their occupations, 80.9% of respondents are working at private sector, while 15.8% of them are working at public sector. The majority of the respondents (51.9%) have graduate, and 38.1% of the respondents have bachelor degree.

Table 1 Demographic profile of the respondents

		N	%			N	%
		Education	Primary School			2	0.6
High School	12		3.5	Female	190	55.7	
2-years University	20		5.9	Age		N	%
Undergraduate	130		38.1		Below 20	2	0.6
Graduate	177		51.9		20 - 29	99	29.0
	N		%		30 - 39	188	55.1
Occupation	Private	276	80.9		40 - 49	39	11.4
	Public	54	15.8		50 - 59	12	3.5
	NGO	3	0.9	60 and over	1	0.3	
	Other	8	2.4				

As it is illustrated in the Table 2, employers (9.4%), senior executives (10.9%), middle managers (27.6%), lower level of managers (13.8%), employees (20.8%), and teaching staff (15.5%) are among the participants of the online survey.

Table 2 Position of the respondents

Position	N	%
Employer	32	9.4
Senior Executive	37	10.9
Middle Manager	94	27.6
Lower Level Manager	47	13.8
Employee	71	20.8
Teaching Staff	53	15.5
Other	7	2.1
Total	341	100

Results and Discussion

Majority of the respondents (98.5%) who attended the survey own a smartphone. 70.6% of the respondents stated that they use their personally-owned mobile devices for both business and personal usage. Some of the respondents (21.9%) use two mobile phones, one is for personal purposes the other is for business use. While, 7.5% use corporate phone both for personal and work-related purposes. 37.5% of the respondents indicated that their work-related phone calls are paid by their corporation. When the respondents were asked whether their corporation allows them to use their personal mobile phone for work, 14.7% of the respondents told that it is not permissible.

Respondents were asked 14 questions (see Table 3) about their attitude towards mobile device usage in the business

settings. 9 of the scale items remarked with “R” in Table 3 were asked with negative statement towards mobile device usage, and then had been coded as reverse questions for the ease of analysis. The statements that respondents mostly agree with are “I like the flexibility of being able to access corporate emails and other business apps outside official working hours” (μ : 4.29), “Mobile phone usage at work is necessary” (μ : 4.23), “Being able to access corporate emails and other business apps outside official working hours enables me to do my job better” (μ : 4.17) and “Employer does not have a legal right to restrict use of mobile phone in office” (μ : 3.96). On the other hand, the statement that respondents least agree with is “I don’t think my colleagues inappropriately use mobile phone at workplace” (μ : 2.63). And for the statements “Mobile phone usage does not cause distraction in workplace” (μ : 2.99) and “Personal mobile phone usage in staff and team meetings should be allowed” (μ : 2.92), people tend to neither agree nor disagree with a mean score near 3.

Table 3 Attitude toward mobile device usage in the business settings

	Mean	Std. Dev
I like the flexibility of being able to access corporate emails and other business apps outside official working hours	4.29	1.009
Mobile phone usage at work is necessary	4.23	1.019
Being able to access corporate emails and other business apps outside official working hours enables me to do my job better	4.17	1.127
Employer does not have a legal right to restrict use of mobile phone in office (R)	3.96	1.316
If my employer strictly bans use of mobile phone it will have negative impact on my morale	3.79	1.259
Supervisor does not have a responsibility to monitor the appropriateness of mobile phone usage (R)	3.77	1.385
Employer should not apply restriction on use of mobile phone in office timing (R)	3.75	1.254
Using mobile phone at work improve your efficiency	3.57	1.182
Mobile phones can be used for personal purposes at work (R)	3.37	1.301
Unproductive use of mobile phone like calls to friends and family will not be harmful for organization and employees' performance (R)	3.37	1.239
It is not necessary to make personal phone calls only during breaks and lunch time (R)	3.23	1.412
Mobile phone usage does not cause distraction in workplace (R)	2.99	1.342
Personal mobile phone usage in staff and team meetings should be allowed (R)	2.92	1.507
I don’t think my colleagues inappropriately use mobile phone at workplace (R)	2.63	1.238

Table 4 illustrates the professionals’ attitude towards mobile device usage in formal business meetings. The most acceptable actions are “Bringing phone to the meeting” (μ : 3.78), “Excusing oneself to take a call” (μ : 3.53) and “Checking time” (μ : 3.35). On the other hand, “Checking a social media account” (μ : 1.90), “Taking a call without excuse” (μ : 1.90) and “Browsing Internet due to boredom” (μ : 2.12) are not seen appropriate by most of the respondents.

Table 4 Perceived appropriateness of mobile phone actions during formal business meetings

	Mean	Std. Dev
Bringing phone to the meeting	3.78	1.227
Excusing oneself to take a call	3.53	1.162
Checking time	3.35	1.341

Checking incoming calls	3.07	1.295
Writing text messages or emails	3.05	1.312
Reading text messages or emails	2.99	1.392
Using a mobile app	2.58	1.316
Making calls	2.44	1.439
Browsing Internet due to boredom	2.12	1.233
Taking a call without excuse	1.90	1.192
Checking a social media account	1.90	1.217

Conclusion

In this study, perceptions of business professionals towards use of mobile phone in the workplace as well as at the business meeting settings were analyzed. Findings of the study indicate the fact that, mobile phone usage at work is positively welcomed in general by most of the professionals. Professionals especially appreciate “the flexibility” and “the ability of doing a better job” through accessing corporate emails and other business apps outside official working hours and they strongly believe that “mobile phone usage at work is necessary”. However, they slightly believe that their colleagues inappropriately use mobile phone at workplace. The use of mobile phone in formal meetings is questioned as well. To some extent, it is acceptable for professionals to bring phone to the meeting, excusing oneself to take a call and checking time. However, checking a social media account, taking a call without excuse and browsing Internet due to boredom are regarded as inappropriate in formal business meetings.

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