

Continuance Usage Intention of WeChat By Users In Malaysia

Mohd Syuhaidi Abu Bakar, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malaysia

The IAFOR International Conference on the Social Sciences - Dubai 2016
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

A research released by GlobalWebIndex (GWI) in November 2014 showed the active user base in Malaysia has grown by 1,187% from Q1 2013 to Q3 2014, with young demographic aged between 16 to 34 years old, dominating more than 80% of the WeChat user base. This study intends to explore the continuance usage intention among its 1 million users in the country. By employing six uses and gratifications; namely sex, social inclusion, entertainment, friendship, romantic relationships, and people nearby, adopted from Van De Wiele, C., & Tong, S. T. (2014, September); Pearson-Correlation Analysis was used to test whether there are significant relationships between variables and usage continuance intention. Using Google Docs, data will be collected from 100 WeChat users in Malaysia using stratified sampling. According to Roscoe (1975) sample sizes of greater than 30 and less than 500 are appropriate for most research. Many scholars have also recently implemented Google Docs as a medium for online surveys as it keeps data safe in the most basic format of spreadsheets. The results indicated that factors such as social inclusion ($r=0.479$), friendship ($r=0.443$), entertainment ($r=0.443$), romantic relationships ($r=0.397$), and people nearby ($r=0.442$) have moderate positive correlations with intention to continue using WeChat among Malaysians. However, there was no significant correlation between continuance intention usages of WeChat to pursue sexual events ($r = 0.097$). Findings from this study are contributing to the ever-increasing modernization and expansion of the Internet platform for various purposes.

Keywords: WeChat, People-nearby applications, PNA, Gratification Factors, Continuance Usage Intention

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

In this new era, social networking sites have reached a prevailing revolution. Millions of people are now devoted with this and both online and conservative activities result the swelled platform that touches orthodox way of lifespan. According to Courtney, N. (2007), social network can be defined as profile based platform which permits users and it involves visiting, observing and interrelating the perspectives and sentiments between and among the members through social and personal happenstances. On these persons can be searched based on keyboard descriptions in order to connect and interact and at the same time social phenomena can be exposed.

“People-nearby applications” (PNAs) are forms of global computing that associate users based on their physical setting data. One example of a PNA is WeChat. WeChat is an application for smartphones and tablets users and also tailored as a social media platform. Mobile social communication app WeChat has stretched to 549 million monthly active users (MAUs) globally. It is a jump from the 500 million users-mark marked in April 2015. In Malaysia, PNAs such as WeChat has boasts a 95% smartphone penetration rate. WeChat users are able to construct a profile over the Internet and add contacts that are in their device contact list. WeChat also have the feature called ‘Shake’ that allows user to shake their device to find a contact that is shaking the device as the same time; another feature to allow finding people is the function people nearby, which based on the present location of the user WeChat will recommend people to be added to the friend list. WeChat also allow their user to post picture to share to all their contacts in a feature called ‘moments’. Other than that WeChat is first and foremost an instant messaging application that allows media sharing between their users.

Although quite number of local studies were done on WeChat (Said, H., 2013; Yoag, A., & Siganul, R. S., 2015; Francis, P., Thomas, M., Shahid, S. A. M., & Jani, S. H. M., 2015; Ching, S. M., Yee, A., Ramachandran, V., Lim, S. M. S., Sulaiman, W. A. W., Foo, Y. L., & kee Hoo, F., 2015), these studies were only stating the PNA without any data on the whether users had the intention to continue using the PNA. Surely users has gratified with the use of WeChat but no studies, particularly in Malaysia have yet to identify WeChat users’ continuance usage intention. Due to the above limitations, this study is carried out to fill this gap in the literature.

Review of literatures

Van De Wiele, C., & Tong, S. T. (2014, September) has listed six uses and gratifications (U&G) to represent the success/failure of PNA usages. These variables entail of sex, friendship, entertainment, social inclusion, romantic relationships, and people nearby. The U&G framework dons that individuals’ needs sway their media use. The results achieved from that media use entice and clutch them to media content (Ruggiero, T. E. 2000). Although the U&G framework was formerly developed to probe and pinpoint mass media effects, it has also been smeared to describe individuals’ use of latest Internet technology, as claimed by Dimmick, J., Feaster, J. C., & Ramirez, A. (2011); and Ku, Y. C., Chu, T. H., & Tseng, C. H. (2013); and also to to describe the use of mobile technology (Wei, R., & Lo, V. H. 2006). One important dissimilarity between the initial focus on traditional mass media (such as television) and the transferal to new communication technologies is the vaster degree

of interactivity the latter systems offer to users. In the U&G context, interactivity refers to the degree of control individuals experience in the communicative process. For instance, users' ability to supply information to the system, the sensitivity of a medium to its users, and the degree to which a medium facilitates communication among users (Ruggiero, T. E. 2000). Thus the high degree of interactivity of Internet and mobile communication technologies is not just coherent with the active audience assumption of U&G, it lengthens the assumption—as interactivity rises, so does the audience's power over media, which gives them a more “instantaneous” route to gratification than that provided by conventional mass media arrangements, as stated by Alonzo, M., & Aiken, M. (2004).

The use of social networking sites has surfaced precipitously as an idyllic dais for social interaction. Diverse social networking sites are depicted according to their norm like business networking, amusement and social communications. According to Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007), the initiation of social media network eases online communities to sustain preexistent social connections and make new virtual friends. Mital, M., Israel, D., & Agarwal, S. (2010) later claimed that earlier studies on the usage of Social Network System (SNS) reported that SNSs are largely used for messaging, distribution of information and keeping in touch with each other for social inclusion. This has encouraged them to continue using the social media platform. Consequently, the following hypothesis is developed:

H1: There is a significant relationship between social inclusion and continuance usage intention of WeChat.

Outlets such as *Vanity Fair* and *The New York Times* have proposed that the remarkable (if not sole) inspiration for PNA use, such as Grindr, is for “casual sex” or “hook ups”(Kapp, M., 2011; Wortham, J., 2013). Earlier survey research from Landovitz, R. J., Tseng, C. H., Weissman, M., Haymer, M., Mendenhall, B., Rogers, K., & Shoptaw, S. (2013); and Rice, E., Holloway, I., Winetrobe, H., Rhoades, H., Barman-Adhikari, A., Gibbs, J., & Dunlap, S. (2012) has undeniably shown that users frequently turn to Grindr to attain sexual satisfactions. Thus, this study is asking whether:

H2: There is a significant relationship between sex and continuance usage Intention of WeChat.

Apart from Twitter, Facebook has been rated to have the major number of users (Demirtas, M. 2012). The varied entertainment functions like online games, the apps, the advertisement facilities and so on, have made it popular, particularly among the youth. No studies however, have yet confirmed entertainment functions of WeChat and whether it was adequate to retain the attentions of its users. Other studies however suggested additional, less obvious motivations for PNA (Grindr) use, such as friendship, socializing, or committed romantic relationship initiation (Gudelunas, D., 2012; Landovitz, R. J., Tseng, C. H., Weissman, M., Haymer, M., Mendenhall, B., Rogers, K., ... & Shoptaw, S., 2013; and Rice, E., Holloway, I., Winetrobe, H., Rhoades, H., Barman-Adhikari, A., Gibbs, J., ... & Dunlap, S., 2012). Thus, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H3: There is significant relationship between friendship and continuance usage intention of WeChat.

H4: There is a significant relationship between entertainment and continuance usage intention of WeChat.

H5: There is a significant relationship between romantic relationships and continuance usage intention of WeChat.

In brief, PNAs are designed to collect each user's geographic location from a mobile phone. That location is then transmitted to a centralized server, allowing other users to access that information to see who is nearby, state Toch, E., & Levi, I. (2013, September). Grindr as a PNA was praised for its ability to redistribute and redefine the boundaries of "gay space." It was being continuously used for many years in different forms, because of its function to provide protection in numbers, political and social networks, information exchange, and increased community visibility and pride (Crooks, R. N., 2013 and Spring, A. L., 2013). Thus study wanted to see whether:

H6: There is a significant relationship between people nearby and continuance usage intention of WeChat.

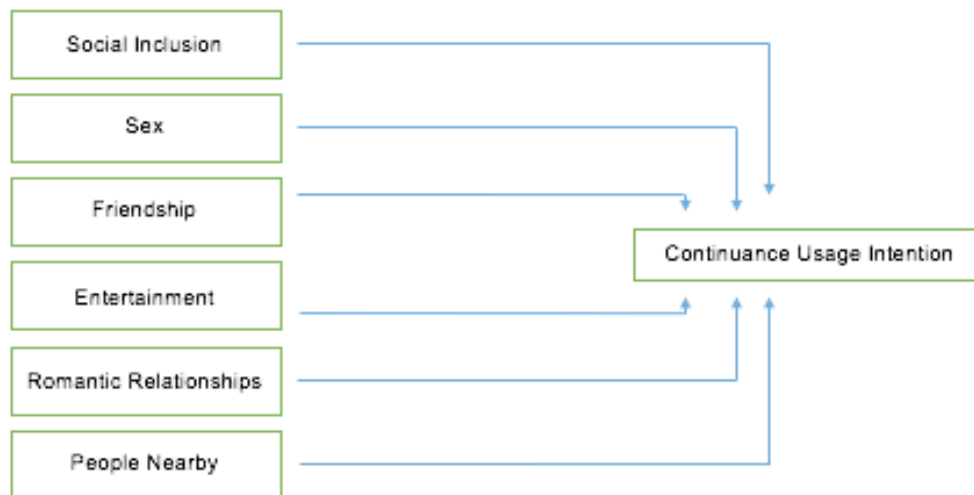


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

Methodology

The respondents of this study were users of WeChat, currently residing in Malaysia; and within the age of 16 to 34 years old. The selection of these strata was based on a research released by GlobalWebIndex (GWI) in November 2014 showing that the active user base in Malaysia were young demographic aged between 16 to 34 years old, dominating more than 80% of the WeChat user base. By employing six uses and gratifications: social inclusion, sex, friendship, entertainment, romantic relationships, and people nearby, adopted from Van De Wiele, C., & Tong, S. T. (2014, September), an online survey using Google Docs was done using stratified sampling. Items for continuance intention usage were adopted from Chong, A. Y. L. (2013). 100 respondents participated in the survey. According to Roscoe (1975) sample sizes of greater than 30 and less than 500 are appropriate for most research. Many scholars

have also recently adopted Google Docs as a means of completing online surveys as it keeps data safe in the most basic format of spreadsheets. The online survey consisted of two sections. The first section gauged information on usage patterns among WeChat users in Malaysia; meanwhile, the second section was designed to determine their continuance intentions to use the PNA. As for data analysis, all data collected were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Various analyses such as reliability of the data, descriptive analysis, and correlation were performed. The results of the analyses are presented in the following section.

Reliability test was done to determine the internal stability and consistency of the data collected. Reliability assessment of the entire scale was first computed followed by the assessments of individual items supposed to measure the research constructs. A total of twenty-seven items measuring six constructs and one dependent variable (five items measuring Social Inclusion, four items measuring Sex, six items measuring Friendship, four items measuring Entertainment, three items measuring Romantic Relationships, two items measuring People Nearby; and three items measuring Continuance Usage Intention were assessed for reliability (n=30) (See Table 1). Next, the overall reliability was assessed and the assessment of the entire scale was observed to be good with a Cronbach's alpha of .876 (n=30); indicating that the questionnaire had internal consistency. As such, the reliability test supported the appropriateness of the instrument used in the study.

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>
Social Inclusion (IV)	5	0.928
Sex (IV)	4	0.960
Friendship (IV)	6	0.921
Entertainment (IV)	4	0.910
Romantic Relationships (IV)	3	0.938
People Nearby (IV)	2	0.984
Continuance Usage Intention (DV)	3	0.839

Table 1. Reliability Analysis Results

Data analysis and findings

Respondents' Background and Correlation Analysis

Respondents in this study have been divided into homogeneous subgroups; which comprises of WeChat users, residing in Malaysia and; aged between 16 to 34 years old. This was made clear on the first page of the online survey. Those who clicked 'Yes' was directed to the next section of the survey; and those who clicked 'No' was made to leave. The "Only allow one response per person" feature in the "Form Settings" was also initiated. This is to ensure that a person only responds to the form, once.

In this study, Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was used to measure the strength of relationship between patterns of usage (inclusion, sex, friendship, entertainment, romantic relationships; people nearby) with their intentions to continue using WeChat. The r -value is between -1 and +1. The absolute value indicates the strength, while the sign (+or -) indicates the direction of the relationship. The scales below were outlined by Elifson, K. W., Runyon, R. P., & Haber, A. (1998) and can be used to

interpret the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable (Table 2).

<i>Correlation coefficient (r)</i>	<i>Strength of relationship</i>
0	No relationship
0.01–0.30	Weak
0.31–0.70	Moderate
0.71–0.99	Strong
1	Perfect

Table 2. Pearson's correlation coefficient strength indicator

<i>Intention to continue using WeChat</i>		
Social Inclusion	Pearson's correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	0.479** 0.000
Sex	Pearson's correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	0.097 0.339
Friendship	Pearson's correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	0.443** 0.000
Entertainment	Pearson's correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	0.443** 0.000
Romantic Relationships	Pearson's correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	0.397** 0.000
People Nearby	Pearson's correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	0.442** 0.000

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 3. Table of results

As shown in Table 3, it was found that all the five independent variables were significantly and positively correlated to customers' continuous intention to use WeChat (p -value < 0.01). The results indicated that factors such as social inclusion ($r=0.479$), friendship ($r=0.443$), entertainment ($r=0.443$), romantic relationships ($r=0.397$), and people nearby ($r=0.442$) have moderate positive correlations with intention to continue using WeChat among Malaysians. This means that, these factors has moderately influenced them to continue using WeChat; and played reasonable, modest; and sensible roles for them to keep using the PNA. However, it was found that there was no significant correlation between continuance intention usages of WeChat to pursue sexual events. ($r = 0.097$).

		TOTALCONTINUANCE	TOTALSOCIAL
TOTALCONTINUANCE	Pearson Correlation	1	.479**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
TOTALSOCIAL	Pearson Correlation	.479**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4. Relationships between social inclusion and continuance usage intention

		TOTALCONTINUANCE	TOTALSEX
TOTALCONTINUANCE	Pearson Correlation	1	.097
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.339
	N	100	100
TOTALSEX	Pearson Correlation	.097	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.339	
	N	100	100

Table 5. Relationships between sex and continuance usage intention

		TOTALCONTINUANCE	TOTALFRIENDSHIP
TOTALCONTINUANCE	Pearson Correlation	1	.443**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
TOTALFRIENDSHIP	Pearson Correlation	.443**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6. Relationships between friendship and continuance usage intention

		TOTALCONTINUANCE	TOTALENTERTAINMENT
TOTALCONTINUANCE	Pearson Correlation	1	.443**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
TOTALENTERTAINMENT	Pearson Correlation	.443**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7. Relationships between entertainment and continuance usage intention

		TOTALCONTINUANCE	TOTALROMANTIC
TOTALCONTINUANCE	Pearson Correlation	1	.397**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
TOTALROMANTIC	Pearson Correlation	.397**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8. Relationships between romantic relationships and continuance usage intention

		TOTALCONTINUANCE	TOTALNEARBY
TOTALCONTINUANCE	Pearson Correlation	1	.442**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
TOTALNEARBY	Pearson Correlation	.442**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 9. Relationships between people nearby and continuance usage intention

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Relationships</i>	<i>Result</i>
H1	There is a significant relationship between social inclusion and continuance usage intention	Supported
H2	There is no significant relationship between sex and continuance usage intention	Not supported
H3	There is a significant relationship between friendship and continuance usage intention	Supported
H4	There is a significant relationship between entertainment and continuance usage intention	Supported
H5	There is a significant relationship between romantic relationships and continuance usage intention	Supported
H6	There is a significant relationship between people nearby and continuance usage intention	Supported

Table 10. Hypothesis Result Summary

Conclusion and Recommendations

Due to the lack of studies in investigating continuance usage intention of WeChat among Malaysians, this study is performed with the aim to test whether there are significant relationships between what WeChat has offered (social inclusion, sex, friendship, entertainment, romantic relationships, and; people nearby) and intention to continue using it in the future. This study has undoubtedly provided a platform for PNA service providers to come out with better technological aspects to cater uses and gratifications of WeChat in the future. Prospect research should also examine other important factors such as how individuals' experiences within physical localities (e.g., community centers, bars/clubs, etc.) affect the frequency and type of WeChat use.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Dean of Faculty of Film, Theatre and Animation, UiTM Kampus Puncak Perdana; Y.Bhg. Dato' Professor A. Razak Mohaideen; the Head of Programme for the Creative Writing Department, Encik Ibrahim Jamaluddin; and Dr. Norman Yusoff, Head of Postgraduate Studies who have always supported, encouraged and believed in my interest towards research writing. My deepest appreciation also goes to Jabatan Pembangunan Sumber Manusia (JPbSM) UiTM that has funded this paper. Last but not least, I dedicate this research paper to my parents, Tuan Haji Abu Bakar Daud and Puan Hajjah Fatimah Mat Hassan for their continuous love and their supports in my decisions. Without whom I could not have made it here.

References

- Alonzo, M., & Aiken, M. (2004). Flaming in electronic communication. *Decision Support Systems*, 36(3), 205-213.
- Ching, S. M., Yee, A., Ramachandran, V., Lim, S. M. S., Sulaiman, W. A. W., Foo, Y. L., & kee Hoo, F. (2015). Validation of a Malay Version of the Smartphone Addiction Scale among Medical Students in Malaysia. *PloS one*, 10(10), e0139337.
- Chong, A. Y. L. (2013). Understanding mobile commerce continuance intentions: an empirical analysis of Chinese consumers. *The Journal of Computer Information Systems*, 53(4), p22-30.
- Crooks, R. N. (2013). The rainbow flag and the green carnation: Grindr in the gay village. *First Monday*, 18(11).
- Courtney, N. (2007). Library 2.0 and beyond. *Innovative Technologies and Tomorrow's User. Westport: Libraries Unlimited*.
- Demirtas, M. (2012). An Analysis In Purpose To The Facebook And Twitter Users In Turkey. *British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 9(2), 116-125.
- Dimmick, J., Feaster, J. C., & Ramirez, A. (2011). The niches of interpersonal media: Relationships in time and space. *New Media & Society*, 13(8), 1265-1282.
- Elifson, K. Runyon. RP & Haber. A. 1998. Fundamentals of Social Statistics.
- Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook "friends:" Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer -Mediated Communication*, 12(4), 1143-1168.
- Francis, P., Thomas, M., Shahid, S. A. M., & Jani, S. H. M. (2015). Importance of Teaching Effectiveness among Lecturers in Institutes of Higher Learning in Malaysia. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 5(4), 374.
- Gudelunas, D. (2012). There's an app for that: The uses and gratifications of online social networks for gay men. *Sexuality & Culture*, 16(4), 347-365.
- Kapp, M. (2011). Grindr: Welcome to the world's biggest, scariest gay bar. *Vanity Fair*, 27.
- Ku, Y. C., Chu, T. H., & Tseng, C. H. (2013). Gratifications for using CMC technologies: A comparison among SNS, IM, and e-mail. *Computers in human behavior*, 29(1), 226-234.
- Landovitz, R. J., Tseng, C. H., Weissman, M., Haymer, M., Mendenhall, B., Rogers, K., ... & Shoptaw, S. (2013). Epidemiology, sexual risk behavior, and HIV prevention practices of men who have sex with men using GRINDR in Los Angeles, California. *Journal of Urban Health*, 90(4), 729-739.

Mital, M., Israel, D., & Agarwal, S. (2010). Information exchange and information disclosure in social networking web sites: Mediating role of trust. *The Learning Organization*, 17(6), 479-490.

Rice, E., Holloway, I., Winetrobe, H., Rhoades, H., Barman-Adhikari, A., Gibbs, J., ... & Dunlap, S. (2012). Sex risk among young men who have sex with men who use Grindr, a smartphone geosocial networking application. *Journal of AIDS & Clinical Research*.

Ruggiero, T. E. (2000). Uses and gratifications theory in the 21st century. *Mass communication & society*, 3(1), 3-37.

Said, H. (2013). Keperluan medium perkhidmatan atas talian dalam pelaksanaan penasihat akademik.

Spring, A. L. (2013). Declining segregation of same-sex partners: Evidence from Census 2000 and 2010. *Population research and policy review*, 32(5), 687-716.

Toch, E., & Levi, I. (2013, September). Locality and privacy in people-nearby applications. In *Proceedings of the 2013 ACM international joint conference on Pervasive and ubiquitous computing* (pp. 539-548). ACM.

Van De Wiele, C., & Tong, S. T. (2014, September). Breaking boundaries: the uses & gratifications of grindr. In *Proceedings of the 2014 ACM International Joint Conference on Pervasive and Ubiquitous Computing* (pp. 619-630). ACM.

Wei, R., & Lo, V. H. (2006). Staying connected while on the move Cell phone use and social connectedness. *New Media & Society*, 8(1), 53-72.

Wortham, J. (2013). How Grindr is changing the way we connect. *New York Times*.

Yoag, A., & Siganul, R. S. (2015). Internet Use as a Marketing Tool by Retailers: An Exploratory Study in Labuan, Malaysia. *American Journal of Economics*, 5(2), 264-268.

Contact email: syuhaidi@salam.uitm.edu.my