

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WHATSAPP GROUP CHAT FOR INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AT KADOKAWA GEMPAK STARZ™

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ABSTRACT

This study emphasizes on the proliferation of technological devices such as smartphones and the effectiveness of WhatsApp Group Chat in working organization such as Kadokawa Gempak Starz™ for Internal Communication. Technology is applied in work as they aid in solving problems and easy access to information. There were two research objectives which the study seeks to determine. First is to explain the adoption of WhatsApp Group Chat for Internal Communication through Technology Acceptance Model. Second, is to examine the challenges of using WhatsApp Group Chat for Internal Communication. The study employed a research design based on questionnaire with a total number of 120 respondents. Ultimately the findings showed that the respondents find it challenging to use WhatsApp Group Chat for Internal Communication and are on the fence about its usage for Internal Communication as well as the effectiveness to serve as a communication tool for internal Communication at Kadokawa Gempak Starz™, all of these variables will hugely impacted the behavioral intention towards WhatsApp Group Chat in the future.

Keywords: Internal Communication, WhatsApp, Technology, Effectiveness

Introduction

This study highlights on WhatsApp. It is a mobile messaging service for smartphones which was initiated in 2009 which allow users to send out messages, video, images and also audio messages. It was developed by Jan Koum, a college dropout and self-taught engineer. He came to the United States all the way from Ukraine when he was a teenager. He developed the app as a way to communicate with his international friend. He later met with Brian Acton while working in Yahoo, which is now the co-founder of WhatsApp after helping him with getting money for investment (Olson, 2014).

The study emphasizes on the proliferation of technological devices such as smartphones and the effectiveness of messenger apps used in working organization for Internal Communication. Technology is applied in work as they aid in solving problems and easy access to information. Significant information can be shared through WhatsApp Group Chat with the purpose that every worker will get it too (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007; Chesley et al., 2002). It has been proven that WhatsApp Group Chat boost the working performance as it allows easy communication between worker regardless time and location (Day et al., 2012).

Although, not all technology is suitable for certain organization. Not all can commit to solely use messenger apps such as WhatsApp just to discuss about work and share thoughts and exchange opinions for the betterment of their working organization. No doubt some might go off out of topic or even use the messenger apps to text their families and friends during working hours. The implementation of WhatsApp in working organization is still debated as some have debated that it might be misused. Although, it has become a communication tool for everyone as it is user-friendly and free as long as there is an Internet connection.

About Kadokawa Gempak Starz™

Kadokawa Gempak Starz™ is a prominent producer of multilingual comics and magazines in Southeast Asia. First enumerated as Gala Unggul Sdn. Bhd. in 2002, the company was attained by Japanese entertainment content provider, Kadokawa Corporation in 2015 and consequently rebranded as Kadokawa Gempak Starz™ in January 2016.

Headquartered in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the company's fundamental business is the publishing and distribution of comics and magazines in three languages which are Bahasa Malaysia, English, and Mandarin. Among the company's major brands are 'Learn More', 'Magic Bean' imprints of educational comics series and light novels which include best-selling titles such as 'X-Venture', Candy' series, 'Sunny Junior' and many more.

Internal Communication and Employee Communication

Internal communication has been a crucial part of communication management thus as an example the topic of internal communication has regularly shown itself to be the top five most pressing issues in the European communication practice (European Communication Monitor, 2009/2010/2011) and has been emphasized as one of the key functions in The United States of America practice (Goodman et al., 2011). According to the report of Zerfass et al. (2014), the only way to help overcome the pressing issues are to focus on the top three out of ten issues mentioned in the report as follows; first, improving employee engagement and commitment; second, finding, developing and retaining top talent; and lastly, meeting communication needs in diverse cultures in global organizations.

Employee communication is often perceived as one of the key elements of an organizational strategy of employee involvement. Employee involvement "is an umbrella term covering a wide range of intended employer-led initiatives that are planned to inspire more active worker involvement in (organizational) matters" (Caldwell, 1993). The aim of these initiatives is "to raise the level of employee pledge to an organization" (Guest et al., 1993). These initiatives may comprise some or all of the following: first, "amplified information (flow) down the organization"; second, "amplified information (flow) up the organization"; third, "variations in job design"; fourth, monetary participation or involvement; and, fifth, deviations in management or administration style concerning additional participative method (Guest et al., 1993). Employee communication is undeniably vital in all of these sorts of involvement initiatives.

Whatsapp Group Chat For Internal Communication

Adapting new technology in organization can give impacts in so many ways. First, it can help to improve workers working performance. For example, the use of smartphones can aid the speed of communication between workers and help to make better decision making in the workplace. Tasks can be divided smoothly and swiftly (Day A. et al, 2010). Second, it can help to boost organization productivity. As the workers can communicate much faster and with the aid of smartphones, information is just a click away. Meetings and decision making can be made anywhere and anytime regardless (Day A. et al, 2012). Third, faster task accomplishment can be achieved with smartphones, Internet connection as well as quick response through WhatsApp as an example between coworkers (Currie & Eveline, 2011). Fourth, improved collaboration between workers as they have stated that communication gap is reduced by using smartphones to aid better communication.

Technology Acceptance Model

The Technology Acceptance Model was derived from the theory of reasoned action. It explains how users' assertiveness is closely link to their aims to perform responsibilities (Davis, 1989; Davis et al., 1989). This theory is the most accurately defined model explaining the acceptance of new IT technologies developed by Davis and his colleagues (Davis, 1989, 1993; Davis et al., 1989).

In the Technology Acceptance Model, there is the need to merge users' traits that reflects their readiness to use new technologies which include the conflicting positive and negative feelings toward the usage of technology. According to Parasuraman (2000), technology readiness reflects the complexity of users' traits and the Technology Acceptance Model form a much more detail construct than existing personality traits. The Technology Acceptance Model has been proven to be a useful theoretical model to aid comprehension and explain consumer's behavior toward technology acceptance (Baron et al., 2006; Legris et al., 2003).

Research Design

This study aims to explore the usage of Whatsapp Group Chat for internal communication. Hence, the researcher used the quantitative research method to conduct the research and operationalized the

relevant variables. All data were collected by using self-administered questionnaire method for the interested variables and there were 120 respondents for this study.

All questionnaires were disseminated to the respondents and later collected back. The arranged questionnaires given to respondents are intended to stimulate specific information. The survey of questionnaires was distributed in eighteen departments of Kadokawa Gempak Starz™.

Findings

For Section A, basically, out of the 120 respondents, 117 respondents use WhatsApp. This equals to 42 male respondents and 75 female respondents. From the 117 respondents, 3 respondents do not use WhatsApp Group Chat. This leaves 114 respondents that use WhatsApp Group Chat which includes 41 male respondents and 73 female respondents. Out of those 114 respondents, 6 respondents do not use WhatsApp Group Chat which includes 2 male respondents and 4 female respondents.

The Adoption of Whatsapp Group Chat For Internal Communication Through Technology Acceptance Model

For Section B, most of the respondents are still neutral about the usage of WhatsApp Group Chat for Internal Communication at Kadokawa Gempak Starz™ as it is a toss between ‘slightly disagree’ and ‘slightly agree’.

For Section D, the majority of the respondents are neutral about the effectiveness of WhatsApp Group Chat for Internal Communication as majority of the respondents chose ‘slightly disagree’. Thus, referring to the conceptual framework, since the respondents are neutral about the use and the effectiveness of WhatsApp Group Chat, this will somehow affect the attitude towards the use of WhatsApp Group chat as well as the behavioral intention towards WhatsApp Group Chat in the future.

The Challenges of Using Whatsapp Group Chat for Internal Communication

For Section C, the implementation of WhatsApp Group Chat for Internal Communication can be a challenge as the respondents circled agree the most in their questionnaire for Section C. Moreover, the respondents are still neutral about the use of WhatsApp Group Chat for Internal Communication. The

respondents feel like not everyone is participative in WhatsApp Group Chat. They also prefer to meet face to face to discuss work rather than discussing it through WhatsApp Group Chat. Apart from that, the fact that WhatsApp is only usable with Internet and Wi-Fi connection. The respondents think it is very easy to slip out of topic during work related discussion through WhatsApp Group Chat.

Discussion

From the findings above, the researcher found out that the respondents are neutral about using WhatsApp Group Chat for Internal Communication at Kadokawa Gempak Starz™. Apart from that, a number of challenges were also highlighted by the respondents such as the respondents feel like not everyone is participative in WhatsApp Group Chat. They also prefer to meet face to face to discuss work rather than discussing it through WhatsApp Group Chat. Apart from that, the fact that WhatsApp is only useable with Internet and Wi-Fi connection. The respondents think it is very easy to slip out of topic during work related discussion through WhatsApp Group Chat. According to the Technology Acceptance Model, as perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of WhatsApp Group Chat will somehow affects attitude towards using and behavioral intention towards WhatsApp Group Chat thus as the result of use and effectiveness of WhatsApp Group Chat are neutral will somehow give impacts to the attitude towards using and behavioral intention towards WhatsApp Group Chat.

Consumers' adaptation towards new technologies has been a major apprehension for researchers as the increase of technologies out there are plenty. Researches rely on Technology Acceptance Model to further explain the relationship between consumers and technologies.

Basically, the respondents were neutral about the effectiveness of WhatsApp Group Chat for Internal Communication at Kadokawa Gempak Starz™. The respondents find it challenging for them to use WhatsApp Group Chat in the organization thus deeming WhatsApp as not effective for Internal Communication at Kadokawa Gempak Starz™.

Conclusion

Basically, since the respondents find it challenging to use WhatsApp Group Chat for Internal Communication and are neutral about its usage for Internal Communication as well as the effectiveness to serve as a communication tool for internal Communication at Kadokawa Gempak Starz™, all of these variables will hugely impacted the behavioral intention towards WhatsApp Group Chat in the future. Not saying that it is not effective at all but the respondents do not also rely on WhatsApp Group Chat for Internal Communication.

It can be concluded that since the respondents find it challenging to use WhatsApp Group Chat for Internal Communication, the use of WhatsApp Group Chat for Internal Communication is deemed not effective at Kadokawa Gempak Starz™.

Recommendations

This study can be further extended using a qualitative research methodology in order to better understand the use of WhatsApp Group Chat for Internal Communication or perhaps other social media apps for Internal Communication. Apart from that, an extended study about the topic will further explain why respondents are neutral about WhatsApp Group Chat for Internal Communication. Furthermore, this research topic can also be implemented in other working organization from a different background as well as from a different industry in regards of the use of WhatsApp Group Chat for internal Communication.

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