Review Article

Social Behavior in WhatsApp Messenger Services: Application of Grounded Theory

Yi-Sheng Wang

Associate Professor, Department of Marketing & Distribution Management,
Oriental Institute of Technology, New Taipei City, Taiwan, ROC.

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ABSTRACT

This study began with a micro view of the WhatsApp services phenomenon, leading to a macro view of social context. To decompose the social behavior in the WhatsApp services, using a three-stage coding process through grounded theory. The contribution of this study is to reveal a theoretically-saturated of a conceptual framework of social behavior and to discover the six theoretical propositions.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the definition by Zingales (2017), WhatsApp Messenger (WhatsApp) services are the services of delivering data to mobile phones *via* wireless transmissions, such as SMS, e-mail, multimedia message system, ringtone downloads, news, weather forecasts and stock quotes, etc.

Fatihi, Belabbes and Janah (2017) found that WhatsApp services can deliver very important social behavior creation as described in value-based adoption of WhatsApp services: an empirical investigation. But there a significant breach of insufficiently and limitation when discussing the micro-view of subjective self-consciousness meanings of the social behavior in WhatsApp services from the macro view of social behavior and social context. Therefore the purposes of this research are: (1) through grounded theory, thoroughly decomposing the meaning of self-subjectivity of the social behavior in WhatsApp services; (2) constructing a conceptual framework in the WhatsApp services.

2. Literature Review

WhatsApp services became an indispensable technology devices for personal consumption and recreation, even technology jewelry (Ahad and Lim, 2014). They are not just a part of many people's exterior decoration for their functions (PDA, digital camera, MP3, internet, etc.) and appearances can be combined to market different smartphone mobile services to different market segments. Furthermore, the use of WhatsApp services also reflexes the differences between social categories or economic groups (Anglano, 2014). The use of WhatsApp services also reflexes the differences between generations (teenagers and youngsters are the main users) (Sánchez-Moya and Cruz-Moya, 2015), classes or income levels (conspicuous consumption for upper-class customers and low subscription rate for lower-class customers) (Yus, 2017), and the differences between genders (special design, production, marketing, and mobile services advertisement delivery for female customers, to form female stereotyped impression) and sex appeal (Sanchez-Machin *et al.,* 2015). WhatsApp services are not products of this company or that company, but also social products (Ahad and Lim, 2014). There are socioeconomic bases for the spread and use of WhatsApp services. New behavior model can also be built with the constraints of social actions and social structure. The contents of value-added WhatsApp services, such as color screens or dual screens of multi-media, polyphonic ringtones, external or internal digital

cameras, SMS messages, pictures, and other downloads via WhatsApp services, have encouraged the rend of WhatsApp capitalism commoditization by helping customers get rid of black-and-white screens and monotone ringtones.

3. Research Design

Research objects are selected from Chunghwa Telecom Co., Ltd. (CHT), the telecom company with the largest market share in Taiwan. Theoretical sampling was performed and the WhatsApp service customers were categorized into three groups by their social behavior. The first group of respondents includes five people in total: the CHT counter supervisor, the CHT product manager, three selling directors, the second group of respondents includes six people in total: an enterprise manager, an enterprise assistant manager, two business owners, a chairman of the board and a CEO, and the third group of respondents includes six people in total: students with age below twenty five. There are 50 respondents in total. Semi-structured interviews, recording, and observation were conducted.

4. Text Analysis

The purpose of performing a three-stage coding process through grounded theory is to obtain the text meanings of social behavior. In order to efficiently deal with a large dataset of 50 respondents, a qualitative coding software package was used for this study to organize and analyze the results from the three-stage coding.

To find out social behavior concepts in choosing WhatsApp services, open coding was performed on the content of the interviews to define phenomenon and generate concept labels in this study. Then the axial coding was performed after open coding to induce the concepts with the same properties into a higher-level context-bound concept. Besides the factors themselves, the relationships between other factors were also considered when selective coding was performed, in order to achieve the purposes of selective coding in grounded theory, which are: (1) to build the relationships between categories. (2) To strengthen the proof-concept relationships between. (3) To continuously search for the properties of the main-categories and the sub-categories and to confirm the dimensional locations of the data. (4) To explore and explain proofs in the phenomenon as shown in table 1.

Table 1 Selective Coding and Axial Coding

Selective Coding	Description	Axial Coding
Customer Needs	Customers' needs for WhatsApp services	˙Needs for WhatsApp communications
Communication Value	The product value of customers' WhatsApp	˙WhatsApp communication product functions
		˙Practicability and effectiveness of WhatsApp communications
		˙WhatsApp communication quality
Service Value	The service value of the WhatsApp	˙WhatsApp communication service quality
		˙The convenience and rapidity of WhatsApp
Image Value	Image and brand	˙Company image and brand
Individual Value	Individual cognition value of using WhatsApp	˙Affections or benefits for WhatsApp communications
		˙Individual value
Overall Customer Costs	The money cost, time and strength cost, and the effort cost of using WhatsApp	˙The convenience and speed of WhatsApp
		˙Price sensitivity
		˙WhatsApp social
Influential Factors	The possible influences of intervening variables on promoting the use of smartphone mobile phones to customers	˙WhatsApp information gathering
		˙Marketing strategies from system manufacturers

With the assistance of a qualitative coding software package, seven text meanings of customer value were derived: customer needs, product value, service value, image value,

individual value, overall customer costs, and influential factors. Thus the "subjective self-consciousness meaning" of customer value had been obtained in this study.

5. A Conceptual Framework

The theoretically-saturated framework built in this study is composed of six inter-textual thesis concepts. It follows the meanings of the theoretic reference model from grounded theory. And this structure is also the "hermeneutics meaning" obtained from this study. (Figure 1).
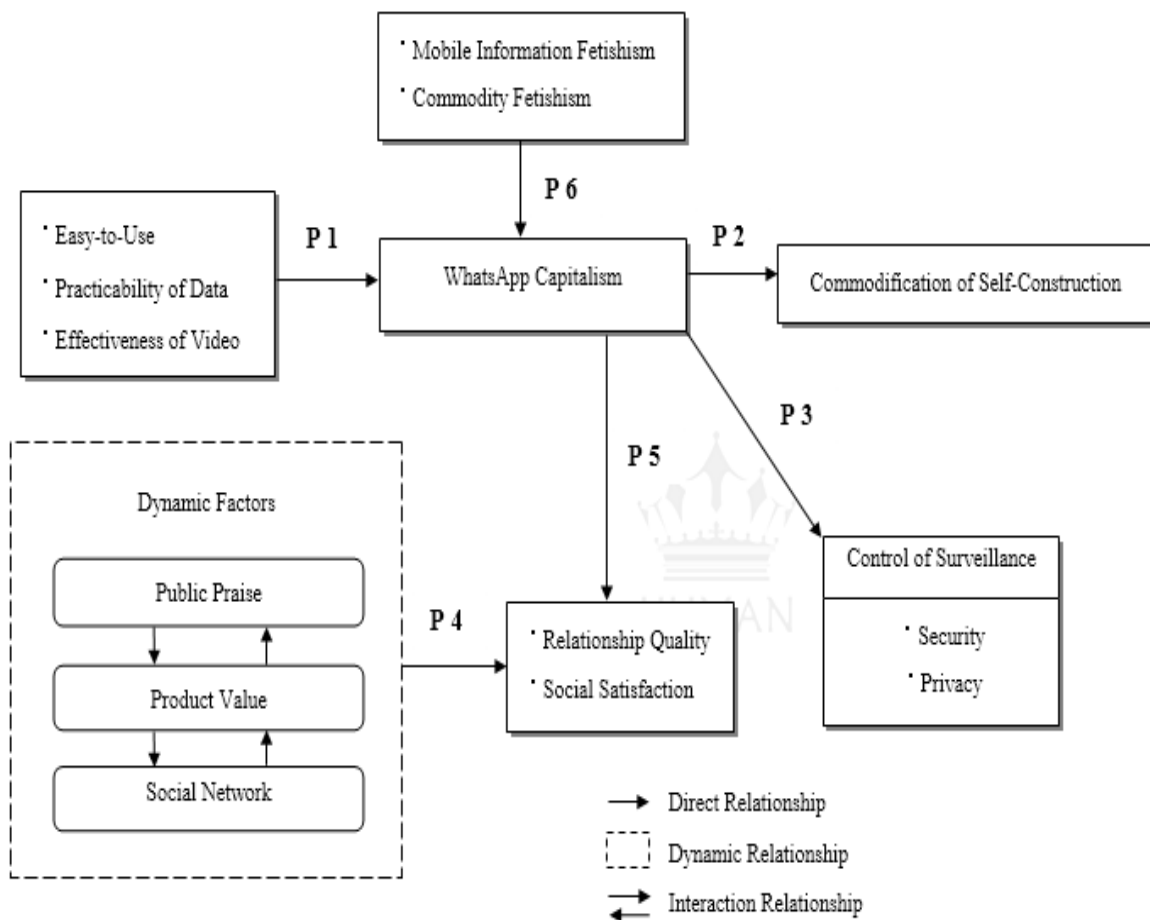

Figure 1 A Conceptual Frameworks of Social Behavior

5.1. Development theoretical propositions

The practicability, effectiveness, and easy-to-use characteristic of WhatsApp services come from the applications of content value-added services and the universality of use.

Proposition 1: With the easy-to-use characteristic of voice, the practicability of data, and the effectiveness of video, the implementation strategy of WhatsApp capitalism creates social needs through advertising and all the other channels so that the capital in the circuit of capital can be consolidated.

Proposition 2: Through WhatsApp interface, mobile service system limits the transmission resolution quality and stability in the frame of WhatsApp, forming social' dependency on WhatsApp services. The stronger the social' dependency on WhatsApp services, the stronger the commodification of self-construction is.

Proposition 3: Enterprise customers of WhatsApp services first take security and privacy into consideration. Although WhatsApp services bring huge convenience, it is also accompanied by the control of surveillance.

Proposition 4: Public praise, product value, and social network are the dynamic factors of the overall social behavior in WhatsApp services. The more dynamic the relationship quality is, the stronger the driven force of social satisfaction and trust is.

Proposition 5: WhatsApp service market segmentation can be done by the value-added services of mass-customized digital content. Personalized designs of WhatsApp services can be achieved by the customization of social behavior. The customization of digital content and WhatsApp can deliver the maximization of individual value.

Proposition 6: The production and marketing model and advertising strategies of WhatsApp are the bases of mobile information fetishism and commodity fetishism. The commodification of self-construction is achieved through products. The social behavior and liberty are built on the use value of commodification.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In the practical strategy business aspect, by the means of the advertisement, promotions, brand image, and campaign in mobile information fetishism, marketing effect can be maximized. There are three key paths of this meaning: (1) WhatsApp service providers must close the knowledge gap between the information poor and the information rich, especially the gap between the four-generation and the five-generation. Otherwise, WhatsApp services would just be fashion commodities for the minority of elites and students. (2) Use customer curiosity well with experiential marketing. Through experiences, social would actually be convinced to participate. For example, sending emails through a WhatsApp phone is very cool, or being able to roam with the same WhatsApp form abroad is very cool. This group of five-generation users is the largest and shouldn't be ignored.

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