

Lightning Speed the Driving Force behind Meteoric Rise of Social Messaging Apps: A Critical Study

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ABSTRACT

Since the dawn of civilization, human race has been fascinated towards technology. People remained in constant search of technological solutions to the problems of day-to-day life. This inquisitiveness of human race proved to be the bedrock of the great innovations of the world. Social messaging apps are one of the most important technological innovations that brought a drastic change in the world of communication and in human life simultaneously. The journey of communication, which started with birds and animals that used to take days and sometimes even months, passed through several milestones like 'dak-chaukis', foot post, horse post, modern postal services and telecommunication services. But the advent of messaging apps brought a revolutionary change in the communication scenario of the world. The lightning speed of messaging apps stole the limelight and proved to be the most important factor behind the popularity of these apps.

In the present study, serious efforts have been made to find out the role of speed in the meteoric rise of Social messaging applications. Available literature on the topic was reviewed. A sample survey was conducted and the data were analyzed. Based on the findings of sample survey and content analysis this study reaches to a logical conclusion that 'high speed' plays the most important role in the exponential growth of messaging apps.

KEY WORDS: Inquisitiveness, Human race, Communication, lightning speed, Computer-mediated tools, Messaging apps, Social media, Digital market, Internet revolution, Humane values, Hate campaign, Fake news, Modern postal services.

INTRODUCTION

Social messaging apps are a set of computer-mediated tools that allow people to generate ideas, share or exchange information/ideas and pictures/videos in virtual communities and networks. These social platforms have brought a sea change in the world of communication. Be it personal requirement or professional need, people of all demographics have become dependent on these apps for messaging. The biggest advantages of social messaging apps are that they circulate information instantly and in real time. Whether one has to contact friends or family members residing in any part of the globe or attend a meeting or take part in seminars/symposiums, messaging apps prove to be a wonderful personal assistant, providing all the facilities within minutes. And to avail these services no laptop or computer is needed. A cell phone is sufficient for all that.

These apps are also changing the norms of the business world and the industry sector. The messaging apps allow business leaders to connect and engage their customers in real time. Since it is a two way communication, the apps provide them a platform to address the grievances of their customers and respond instantaneously. The one-to-one nature of this communication channel is very useful for both

business leaders and consumers as it facilitates both parties to have complete context into the conversation and that too in real time.

High speed and immediacy are characteristic features of this communication channel. And thanks to these features, Social messaging apps have outpaced other communication channels like e-mail or phone.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: SURVEY & CONTENT ANALYSIS HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

“Man is by nature a social animal...” observed Aristotle, the legendary Greek philosopher of the 4th century B.C.; and to make social life vibrant man has always relied upon communication. Moreover, since very beginning people have been dreaming up for innovative solutions for those circumstances, when face-to-face discussion is not possible or direct communication becomes inconvenient. Social media in general and messaging apps in particular are the natural outcome of those dreams

The journey of messaging applications began in 1961 with Compatible Time Sharing System. . A monthly membership fee was required to avail its services.

In 1996 ICQ came to the scene, where people could play games, chat, share files get news and send mails. AOL Instant Messenger was launched in 1997. It became a dominant force in the field of messaging apps. WhatsApp was launched in 2009. Today it has become the undisputed leader in the instant messaging market.

The advent of WhatsApp into India's digital market boosted app usage. The number of users increased many fold in rural areas in recent years. Data show that 18-25-year-old youth use it the most daily.

Android device usage data reveal that WhatsApp is the most popular messaging app in 109 countries today, which represents 58% of the 187 countries covered in the survey.

Facebook's other chat app, Messenger has been placed second. Viber is the only other messaging app in the report that is the most popular in at least 10 countries.

PRESENT SCENARIO

The internet revolution of 1990's transformed the communication world in letter and spirit from a few loosely connected people to a digitally connected globe. Today messaging is the most commonly used form of digital communication. On an average, people between the age of 16 to 64 spend about seven hours online each day in India. According to the broadband subscription numbers in India in 2022, there were more than 467 million active social media users and interestingly WhatsApp users surpassed Social media users. The number of WhatsApp users was 487.5 million. This makes India WhatsApp's biggest market, followed by Brazil, with 118.5 million WhatsApp users.

The other noticeable fact is that people in India also use WhatsApp for business purposes at a large scale. India has 15 million monthly active WhatsApp business users. Moreover three million people go through the WhatsApp Business catalog each month. This makes the country a very interesting messaging market for businesses.

Social messaging apps have become a distinct source of information for the networked people. These social platforms play a key role in promoting humane values like sympathy, helpfulness, forgiveness, charity and service to humanity. Be it a natural calamity or man-made crisis, use of this communication channel is proving to be a boon for the society. In the times of natural calamity like flood, Community WhatsApp alerts from Bhutan help people of Assam each year, which is a big relief for them. This system has become a role model to be followed by others.

It is equally useful in the times of man-made crisis like communal violence, social unrest and other such situations. Time to time several Dharmagurus, imams or clerics have embraced this media hoping that it will help them address the flow of misinformation on social networking sites. They feel that messages on social media promoting peace and harmony could be the solution to the online hate campaigns and the fake news.

An important example of the use of messaging apps to serve humanity came from Goa. People connected with a WhatsApp group started identifying lakes and ponds that could be revived. They mobilized locals and stakeholders to search for alternative solutions to their water problem.

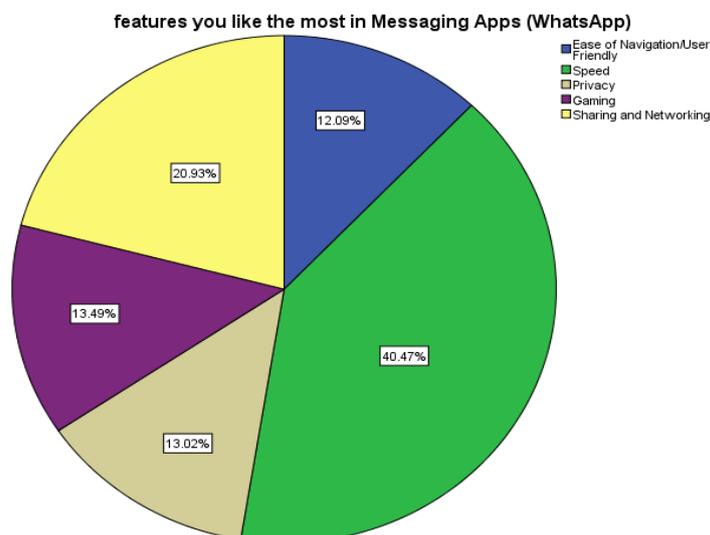
However, the negative aspect of this communication channel is very disturbing. This include rumor mongering, spreading misinformation, creating panic and chaos amongst common people and dividing the society on the basis of caste and community. People across all sections are facing lots of problems due to the misuse of messaging apps.

SURVEY & DATA ANALYSIS

A sample survey was conducted on the topic. Two hundred and fifteen respondents of various age groups, genders, educational qualifications and income brackets took part in this survey. The data collected from this survey revealed many interesting facts. The analysis of data gave a new perspective to this research study. Let us have a look at the findings of this survey and the data analysis.

Features liked the most in Messaging Apps (WhatsApp)

features you like the most in Messaging Apps (WhatsApp)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ease of Navigation/User Friendly	26	12.1	12.1	12.1
	Speed	87	40.5	40.5	52.6
	Privacy	28	13.0	13.0	65.6
	Gaming	29	13.5	13.5	79.1
	Sharing and Networking	45	20.9	20.9	100.0
	Total	215	100.0	100.0	



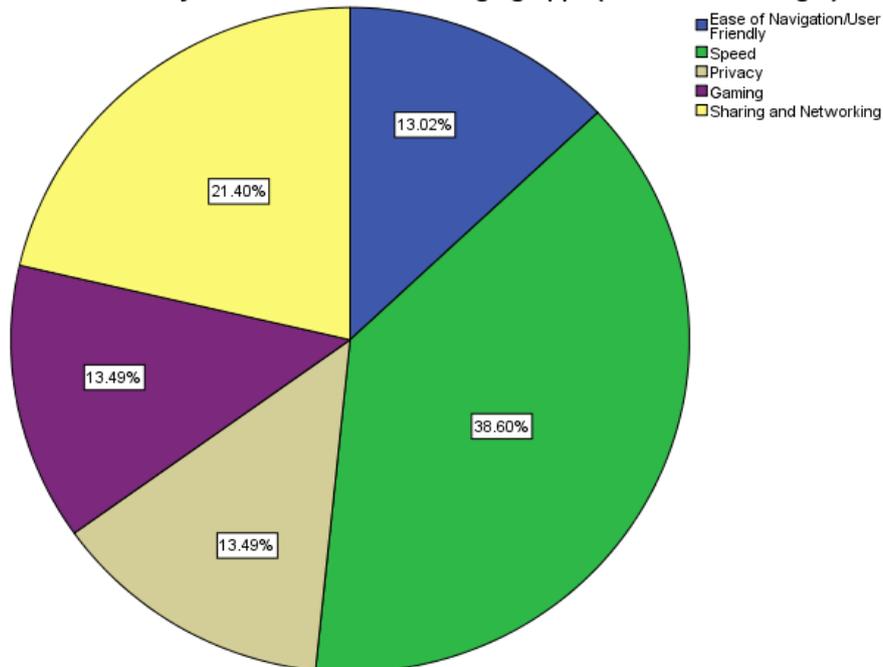
In this chart and cross tabulation, the respondents have been analyzed on the ground of the features of WhatsApp they like the most. After analyzing both the chart and tabulation, we find that out of the 215 valid respondents, 87 respondents are those who like speed the most in comparison to rest of the features of the WhatsApp which is 40.5 % of total respondents. 45 respondents like sharing and networking which is 20.9% of total respondents. Gaming feature of WhatsApp has been liked by 29 respondents which is 13.5% of total respondents. 28 respondents like privacy the most which is 13.0% of total respondents. Lastly, 26 respondents mostly like the ease of navigation/user friendly feature of WhatsApp, which is 12.1% of total respondents.

Concluding analysis says that 87 respondents like the feature of speed on top, which is largest number among total respondents.

Features liked the most in Messaging Apps (Facebook Messenger)

features you like the most in Messaging Apps (Facebook Messenger)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ease of Navigation/User Friendly	28	13.0	13.0	13.0
	Speed	83	38.6	38.6	51.6
	Privacy	29	13.5	13.5	65.1
	Gaming	29	13.5	13.5	78.6
	Sharing and Networking	46	21.4	21.4	100.0
	Total	215	100.0	100.0	

features you like the most in Messaging Apps (Fecbook Messenger)



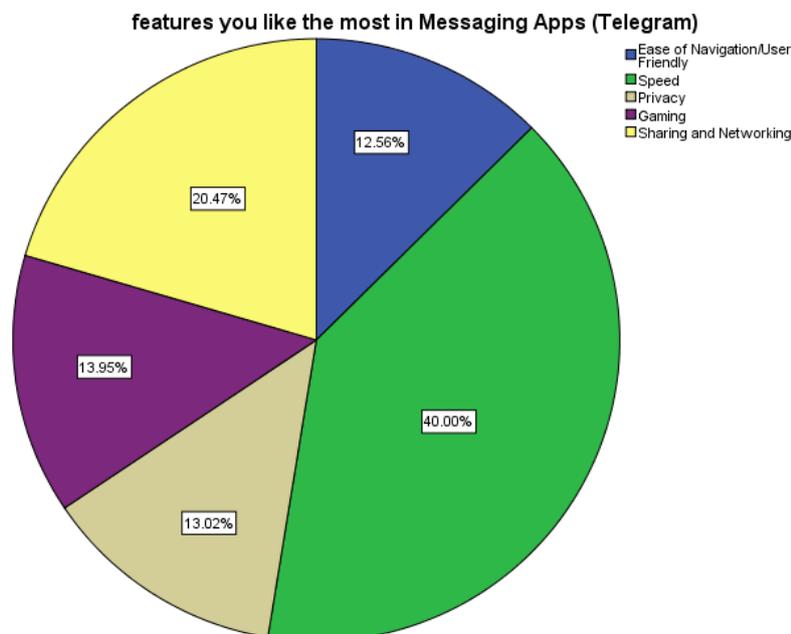
In this chart and cross tabulation, the respondents have been analyzed on the ground of the features of Facebook Messenger they like the most.

After analyzing both the chart and tabulation, we find that out of the 215 valid respondents, 83 respondents are those who like speed the most in comparison to rest of the features of the Facebook Messenger which is 38.6 % of total respondents. 46 respondents like sharing and networking which is 21.4% of total respondents. Gaming feature of Facebook Messenger has been liked by 29 respondents which is 13.5% of total respondents. 29 respondents like privacy the most which is 13.5% of total respondents. Lastly, 28 respondents mostly like the ease of navigation/user friendly feature of Facebook Messenger which is 13.0% of total respondents.

Concluding analysis says that 83 respondents like the feature of speed on top, which is largest number among total respondents.

Features liked the most in Messaging Apps (Telegram)

features you like the most in Messaging Apps (Telegram)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ease of Navigation/User Friendly	27	12.6	12.6	12.6
	Speed	86	40.0	40.0	52.6
	Privacy	28	13.0	13.0	65.6
	Gaming	30	14.0	14.0	79.5
	Sharing and Networking	44	20.5	20.5	100.0
	Total	215	100.0	100.0	



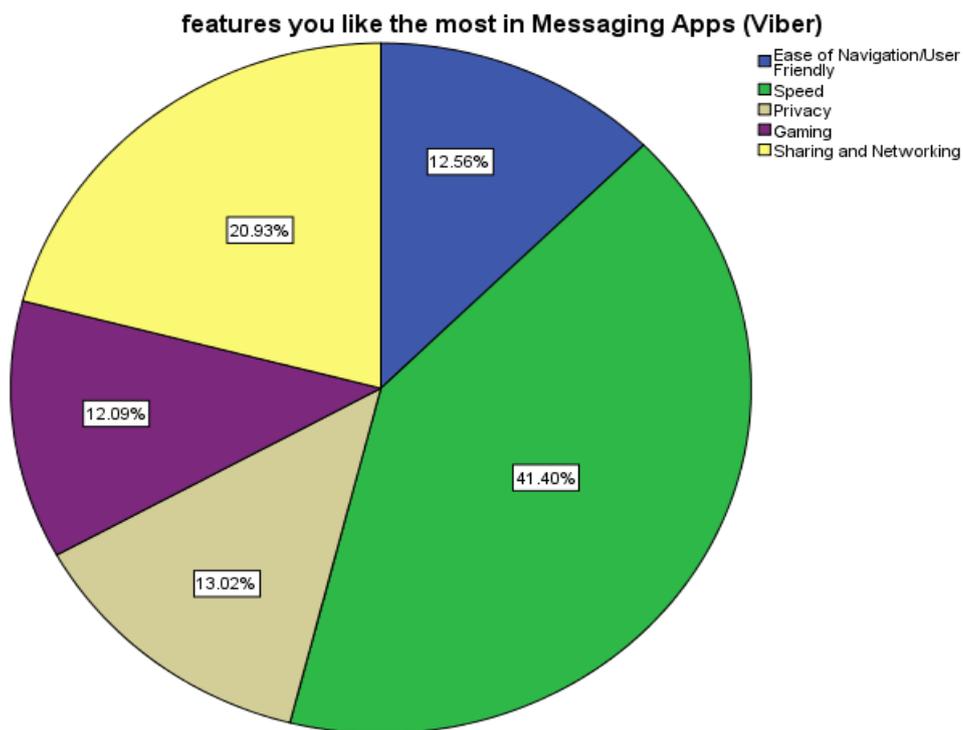
In this chart and cross tabulation, the respondents have been analyzed on the ground of the features of Telegram they like the most. Analysis says that out of the 215 valid respondents, 86 respondents are those who like speed the most among rest of the features of the Telegram which is 40.0 % of total respondents. 44 respondents like sharing and networking which is 20.5% of total respondents. Gaming feature of Telegram has been liked by 30 respondents which is 14.0% of total respondents. 28

respondents like privacy the most which is 13.0% of total respondents. Lastly, 27 respondents mostly like the ease of navigation/user friendly feature of Telegram which is 12.6% of total respondents.

Concluding analysis says that 86 respondents like the feature of speed on top among other features of Telegram which is the largest number among total respondents.

Features liked the most in Messaging Apps (Viber)

features you like the most in Messaging Apps (Viber)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ease of Navigation/User Friendly	27	12.6	12.6	12.6
	Speed	89	41.4	41.4	54.0
	Privacy	28	13.0	13.0	67.0
	Gaming	26	12.1	12.1	79.1
	Sharing and Networking	45	20.9	20.9	100.0
	Total	215	100.0	100.0	

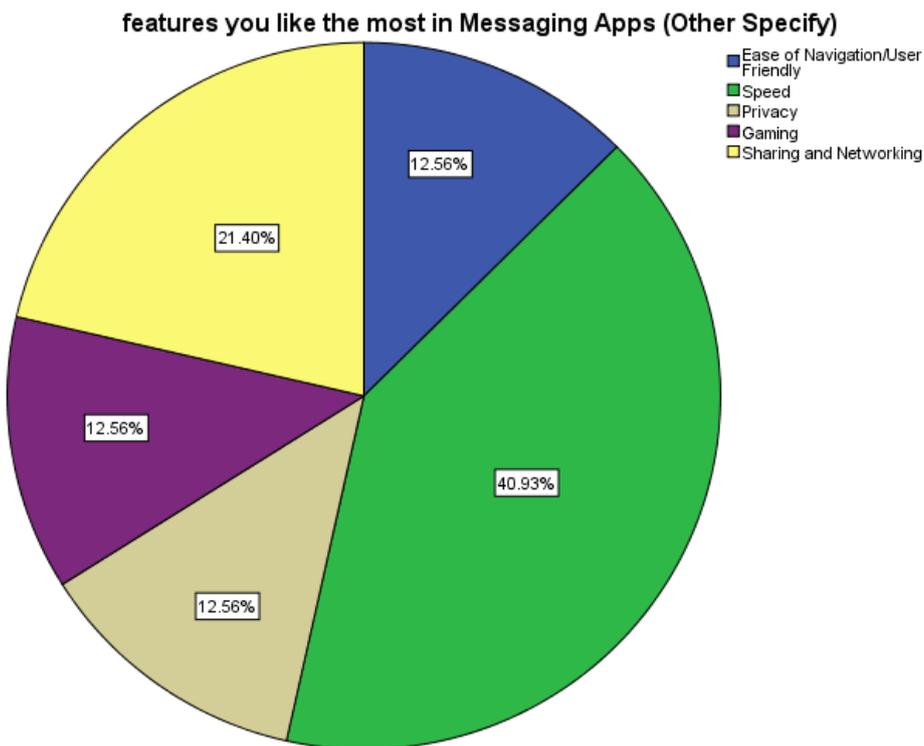


In this chart and cross tabulation, the respondents have been analyzed on the ground of the features of Viber they like the most. In analysis we find that out of the 215 valid respondents, 89 respondents are those who like speed the most in comparison to rest of the features of the Viber which is 41.4 % of total respondents. 45 respondents like sharing and networking which is 20.9% of total respondents. Gaming feature of Viber has been liked by 26 respondents which is 12.1% of total respondents. 28 respondents like privacy the most which is 13.0% of total respondents. Lastly, 27 respondents mostly like the ease of navigation/user friendly feature of Viber which is 12.6% of total respondents.

Concluding analysis shows that 89 respondents like the feature of speed on top among other features of Viber, which is the largest number among total respondents.

Features liked the most in Messaging Apps (Other Specify)

Features you like the most in Messaging Apps (Other Specify)		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ease of Navigation/User Friendly	27	12.6	12.6	12.6
	Speed	88	40.9	40.9	53.5
	Privacy	27	12.6	12.6	66.0
	Gaming	27	12.6	12.6	78.6
	Sharing and Networking	46	21.4	21.4	100.0
	Total	215	100.0	100.0	



In this chart and cross tabulation, the respondents have been analyzed on the ground of the features of other specific sites or apps they like the most. Analysis says that out of the 215 valid respondents, 88 respondents are those who like speed the most among the features of other specific sites or apps which is 40.9 % of total respondents. 46 respondents like sharing and networking which is 21.4% of total respondents. Gaming feature of other specific sites or apps has been liked by 27 respondents which is 12.6% of total respondents. 27 respondents like privacy the most which is 12.6% of total respondents. Lastly, 27 respondents mostly like the ease of navigation/user friendly feature of other specific sites or apps which is 12.6% of total respondents.

Concluding analysis says that 88 respondents like the feature of speed on top among other features of various apps, which is the largest number among total respondents.

CONCLUSION

The findings of sample survey make it crystal clear that the speed is king, playing the most crucial role in the meteoric rise of Social messaging apps.

Famous American author, popularly known as the father of modern linguistics Noam Chomsky said “The major advances in speed of communication and ability to interact took place more than a century ago. The shift from sailing ships to telegraph was far more radical than that from telephone to email!” Noam Chomsky may be justified in his argument, but he would also agree that the lightning speed of social messaging apps is a revolution in the world of communication. Expediency of communication facilitates short, sharp conversations and allows people to share information quickly. The instantaneous nature, wide reach and circulation of information in real time make social messaging apps useful in every sphere of life. Today every individual has become dependent on these apps for both personal and professional requirements. Whether it is communication with one’s near and dear ones residing in any part of the globe or office/corporate communication, whether it is business dealings or political/social mobilization, instant messaging apps have revolutionized the entire communication scenario. Thanks to the lightning speed of social messaging apps, they are growing at a fast speed and scripting new chapters of success with each passing day.

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