

DO WHATSAPP STICKERS FORM EXTENDED-SELF AMONG YOUNG ADULTS? MEDIATING ROLE OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

A. Saharan^{a*}, A. Antil^a, and Satyam^b

^a*Jindal Global Business School, O. P. Jindal Global University, Sonapat, Haryana, India*

^b*Indian Institute of Management, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India*

**asaharan@jgu.edu.in*

Abstract

Young adults, being digital natives are increasingly using graph icons (graphical icons), i.e., emoticons, stickers, etc., in their daily communications, particularly on smart mobile devices. The purpose of this study is to understand why young adults use WhatsApp stickers. Also, the study aims to understand the relationship between sticker usage in WhatsApp and extended-self along with the mediating role of self-promotion and ingratiation. Based on the literature review, a conceptual model is developed. A pilot study using the survey method was done to test the model. A total of 35 responses were collected from young adults in the age group of 18 to 35 years living in India. PLS-SEM was used to analyze the data. The results indicate that sticker usage on WhatsApp by young adults leads to the formation of extended-self, and the relationship is mediated by self-promotion and ingratiation. The study posits that sticker usage in virtual communication leads to extended-self. We contribute to the theory of extended-self in the context of computer-mediated communication. The mediation can be explained by drawing from impression management theory. This study can help managers of instant messaging application companies understand sticker usage, a competitive advantage. The use of stickers, which are unique to each application, can be pivotal and can enhance the stickiness of the instant messaging app. The switching cost will increase with the higher sticker usage.

Keywords: Extended-Self, Ingratiation, Self-promotion, Sticker, WhatsApp