COMMUNICATION & SOCIETY

Young Hispanics' Motivations to Use Smartphones: A Three-Country Comparative Study[1]

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Submitted
December 22, 2016
Approved
July 7, 2017

Communication & Society
ISSN 0214-0039
E ISSN 2386-7876
doi: 10.15581/003.30.3.13-26
www.communication-society.com

2017 – Vol. 30(4)
pp. 13-26

How to cite this article:
Leiva Soto, R.; Benavides Almarza, C. & Wilkinson, K. T. (2017). The Young Hispanics' Motivations to Use Smartphones: A Three-Country Comparative Study. *Communication & Society* 30(4), 13-26.

Abstract

The fast-changing digital media environment has provoked new communication processes in contemporary society. In particular, younger generations engage in new ways of interacting with each other thanks to the constant emergence of digital technologies and mobile communication outlets. New habits arise every year, changing not only our interpersonal communication, but also our overall consumption of information and entertainment content, with video and instant messaging apps being particularly popular among younger populations. This study employs a mixed method approach to measure young Hispanics' motivations to use smartphones in Chile, Mexico and the U.S. The subjects, 18 to 25 years old, participated in focus groups and surveys conducted in 2015: 55 Hispanic smartphone users joined focus groups whilst 1,403 respondents completed surveys in Chile, Mexico and Texas (U.S.). Results show similarities and differences in young Hispanics' motivations and uses of smartphones, including the personal and commercial value they ascribe to information, time spent on social networks, and their preferences for mobile devices compared to other media. The findings are used to develop three archetypes of young users, based on smartphone's motivations and uses. Utilizing factor analysis scores, a linear regression analysis was conducted to identify the main traits of these three archetypes: "always connected," "entertained," and "secure."

Keywords

Hispanics, smartphone, diffusion, young adults, consumers, Uses & Gratifications theory.

1. Introduction

The primary objective of this research is to understand the uses and motivations to use smartphones by Hispanic young populations, considering that mobile phones have been coined "the most radiative

[1] Mª Elena Gutierrez Renteria and Josefina C. Santana conducted the data collection and executed the analysis for México.

domestic appliance ever invented" (Chen & Katz, 2009: 179). The rocketing growth of mobile communication technologies around the world is producing dramatic impacts on contemporary societies (ITU, 2014). This explains why mobile technologies have passed from initially being perceived as interpersonal communication tools, to their current status as "socially prominent device[s] …. involved in every aspect of daily life, including the symbolic and representational" (Chen & Katz, 2009: 180).

The number of smartphone users across the globe exceeded two billion in 2016. This upward trend is expected to continue in the coming years, because mobile phones, especially smartphones, are becoming more affordable. Additionally, the availability and adoption of 3G and 4G technologies are extending rapidly. For these reasons, mobile phone penetration is projected to achieve 57.5% of the global population in 2020, a considerable increase over 47.4% of the world population in 2016 (eMarketer, 2016).

A key factor explaining the smartphone's rapid proliferation is the decreasing cost of these devices and lower service fees which have made mobile technology accessible to new market segments, particularly adolescents and young adults who are growing up immersed in the Internet and digital media environment (Bringué & Sádaba, 2008; Bringué & Sádaba, 2009; Bringué, Sádaba & Tolsá, 2011; Howe & Strauss, 2009). For these younger groups, communication technologies are prevalent and even essential in many areas of their lives: mobile communications have changed their interpersonal relationships, work environment, habits, and consumption of goods and services (Bringué & Sádaba, 2008; Bringué & Sádaba, 2009; Bringué, Sádaba, & Tolsá, 2011).

The smartphone has become the younger generation's favorite device, surpassing notebook computers and tablets (Deloitte, 2016). Mobile phones are increasingly perceived as personal objects that can be customized to express one's identity through ringtones, wallpapers, avatars, etc., changing the device's external appearance and complementing it with various accessories (Brown, Green & Harper, 2002; Srivastava, 2005).

The mobile phone is often perceived as a multipurpose device, particularly by younger populations (Hulme & Peters, 2001). Indeed, mobile phones have evolved far beyond their initial intended purpose of basic communication (Lin, 1996), and now are employed to satisfy multiple networking, information and entertainment needs. Nowadays, a mobile phone is used to get news and information, check social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, listen to music, share photos, watch videos, and play online and offline games, among other things (Van Weezel & Benavides, 2009). For some users they have become the almost exclusive way to connect with others. For instance, a study conducted in Spain by Deloitte (2016) found that "millennials" (18–35 years old) look at their smartphones 75.6 times per day on average, whilst people from 65 to 75 years old only do so about 23 times per day. Similar behaviors occur in the U.S., where "millennials" interact with their mobile devices 14% more than the average user, every week. Gao, Yan, Zhao, Pan and Mo (2014) discovered that as people age, they tend to increase their use and dependence on mobile phones.

1.1. Millennials' Uses of Smartphones

Early in the new millennium, text messaging by mobile phone became very popular, and users demanded that new devices have texting capability (Haste, 2005). In the 2010s, manufacturers were obligated to incorporate cameras in their mobiles (front and rear) to satisfy the demand for video recording and still photos, including "selfies". This behavior shift aligns with Palen, Salzman and Young's (2000) observation that people initially adopted cellphones for security and business motivations, but now do so largely for social reasons. Because young people typically develop new contents consumption patterns as new media forms emerge (González and López, 2011).' it is commonly believed that "millennials" have an especially close link with the Internet and mobile technologies. For instance, the

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Pew Research Center conducted a series of studies on the values, attitudes and experiences of "millennials," finding that they outperformed previous generations in virtually all uses of the Internet and mobile phones, and concluding "they are more likely to have their own social networking profiles, connect to the Internet wireless when they are away from home or work, and post videos of themselves online" (2010: 25).

2. Theory

What motivates young people to access multimedia services through their smartphones? The uses and gratifications theory (UGT) developed by Katz and Blumler (1974) can help us address this question. UGT focuses on the identification of audiences' needs and the relationship between a person's selection of a specific medium and the gratification he or she obtains in engaging its content. In plain English, audiences actively use the media to satisfy their needs.

There are five central assumptions undergirding the UGT: audiences are active rather than passive; the choice of using a particular medium to meet certain gratifications depends on each user's willingness to engage it; competing media exist; the audience is able to explain its decisions; and value judgments are avoided when the research is conducted (Ruggerio, 2000). Although the theory has been widely cited and applied in the media management and economics literature (Albarran, Chan-Olmsted & Wirth, 2006), rapid development of the Internet and new information and communication technologies has encouraged UGT's broader application. For instance, Ruggiero (2000) asserts that the increased presence and influence of computer-mediated communication has revived UGT's significance. Similarly, Sundar and Limperos propose that as media technologies become more and more affordable, new user needs emerge, "giving rise to new and distinctive gratifications" that should be studied (2013: 504).

Not surprisingly, uses and gratifications theory has been applied in research on social media. For instance, Dunne, Lawlor and Rowley (2010) used UGT to explore how young people use social networking sites to manage their identities. Korhan and Ersoy (2015) investigated social networking sites (SNS) applications, and what factors makes them particularly appealing to users. For their part, Ha, Kim, Libaque-Saenz, Chang and Park (2015) concluded that the "mobile convenience variable" triggers cognitive gratifications by enabling users to gain information quickly and easily, thereby increasing the social interactive gratification by facilitating user communication with acquaintances. Other authors, such as Chan-Olmsted, Lee and Kim (2011), have determined that portability, convenience and customization are the most salient gratifications "millennials" identify while using their smartphones.

Leung and Wei (2000) found that mobility and immediacy of mobile usage motivations had not been explored adequately in prior literature. They employed UGT to compare mobile phones with landlines, and found that men tended to use their mobile phones more for professional purposes while women engaged in more social uses, with longer calls. Leung and Wei (2000) also confirmed that people communicated through their mobile phones in search of four major perks: mobility, immediacy, instrumentality (instrument or means to an end), and sociability. Ten years later, Host (2010) conducted a similar study, concluding that mobile users had four main different motivations: sociability, relaxation, social status and being fashionable.

In a more market-oriented study, Van Weezel and Benavides (2009) explored the uses and preferences of 18 to 25 year old mobile phone users in Santiago, Chile, by means of a mixed method research approach. The study yielded three consumer archetypes: *traditional*, *musical*, and *heavy user.* The first user archetype—*traditional*—is not very engaged with technology and uses the most basic cellular services such as voice and text

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messaging. Complementing those basic services are two psychological features that *traditionals* appreciate: the sense of security and privacy provided by mobiles. The mobile phone should allow *traditional* youths to talk privately and escape parental control; a sense of security derives from their being in contact. The second user archetype—*musical*—often travels by public transport and values the ability to listen to music via his or her mobile phone. These users seek mobile phones with a large storage capacity, and typically use their phones to share multimedia files, such as calendar or agenda.The third archetype—*heavy users*—are experts in technology who require advanced features on their phones, such as Internet access, email and a variety of apps.

A study of American "millennials" by Ezumah (2014) showed similar results. College students used the new media platform and devices to keep in touch with friends (98.9%), share photos (81.7%), keep in touch with family (79.3%), and for entertainment reasons (70.9%), among others. Facebook emerged as the students' preferred SMN (short message network), followed by Twitter, while LinkedIn was the least popular SMS option among that group, because it was related to work activities. Similar conclusions were obtained by studying 362 university students in South Africa through a quantitative approach. Results indicated that the main reason students used a mobile phone was socializing, as well as for safety and privacy purposes. Usability and price emerged as top purchasing factors.

The uses and gratifications theory has received some criticism as this study was conducted and went to press. A major flaw of UGT, according to Shade, Kornfield and Oliver (2015), is that it relies on self-reports, assuming that audiences are active rather than passive actors. However, self-report research methodology has been validated by other researchers (Churchill Jr., Ford, Hartley and Walker, 1985; Lee, 2013; Roman and Iacobucci, 2010). Other authors, like Sundar and Limperos (2013), have criticized the UGT for identifying users' general, not specific motivations to use technologies. We should note that this study identifies and assesses specific uses and motivations declared by Hispanic "millennials" who actively use their smartphones. These are the research questions addressed in this study: (1) what general patterns emerge in smartphone use by young Hispanics across three countries? (2) what are young adult users' perceptions of the services provided by their smartphone? and (3) what new consumer archetypes emerge from the preferred features and uses of smartphones?

3. Methodology

This study explores the uses and motivations for smartphone use by Hispanic young adults between 18 and 25 years old. The authors collected data in Chile, Mexico and West Texas in the United States, in order to compare results among these three countries, following the same methodological perspective carried out by Albarran (2009). Chile, Mexico and the U.S. are among the countries with the highest smartphones penetration in the Western Hemisphere, according to some reports (Table 1).

Table 1. Smartphone user penetration prediction for 2017 (% mobile phone users)

Country	2017
US	82.7%
Mexico	60.4%
Chile	65.7%
Argentina	53%
Colombia	62.1%
Brazil	48%

Source: eMarketer, 2016

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Our mixed-method research included an initial qualitative phase which explored how young adults used their smartphones and perceived the relative benefits and drawbacks of such uses. A second, quantitative phase assessed the importance of different smartphone features, and sought patterns of similarity and difference in preferences and consumption. The multiplicity of features and uses examined provides insight into various consumer identities, or archetypes. Consumer archetypes are based on the individuals' characteristics, capturing the diversity of consumers and grouping them into homogenous clusters (Morris & Schmolze, 2006).

The qualitative phase consisted of conducting two or three focus groups in each country to explore young adults' attitudes towards mobile telephony, in general, and their uses of smartphones specifically, following validated criteria (Morgan, 1997). All focus group participants were required to have a smartphone and use it regularly. Focus groups took place during March and April, 2015, and were video recorded for subsequent transcription and analysis. The total number of participants was 55: 16 in Chile, 24 in Mexico, and 15 in Texas. The focus groups provided valuable information regarding participants' perceptions, relations and emotions toward their smartphones, and provided the foundation for survey questionnaires distributed in the second, quantitative phase of the study. Most focus group participants were full-time university students, a small minority were part-time students and young professionals. Some participants had a job, but in most cases, parents were still paying for their mobile phone services.

The survey was applied to a sample of 1,403 Hispanic smartphone users, again 18-25 years old, residing in Chile, Mexico and Texas. A combination of online and face-to-face surveys were conducted. The questionnaire included 26 questions focused on mobile service access and payment; patterns of communication with friends and family; use of multimedia technology with mobile phones; the importance of smartphones in daily life; and users' perceptions of smartphones' attributes. The survey was conducted face to face in Chile, and was answered by 332 men and 412 women. The questionnaire was administered on line in Mexico, where 138 men and 315 women participated. It was also completed on line in Texas by 59 men and 147 women.

4. Results

4.1. Qualitative Phase: Focus Groups

Focus group participants in the three countries frequently used their smartphones to search for news and information. In Mexico, approximately 40%, considered most of the information they received through social media irrelevant. Half of participants in Chile and two out of three subjects in Texas shared that perception.

For young Chileans and Mexicans, voice messaging was frequently mentioned as a proxy for long text messages. Two out of three Chilean and Mexican subjects used texting apps to replace voice and long messages; the most frequently mentioned apps were WhatsApp and Messenger. In Texas, the Hispanic-American young adults only mentioned Apple's Siri app as a voice substitute.

All focus group participants used their smartphones to watch videos. Hispanic-Americans in Texas specified the types of videos they watched: music videos, news videos, sports highlights, makeup tutorials, homework help, funny videos, controversial videos, and movie trailers. They also mentioned Vine, ESPN and World Star as their preferred video outlets.

All respondents stated that they liked watching videos on their smartphones for their convenient size, ease, and immediate availability. However, they still preferred watching videos on computer, laptop or television when they were at home or work.

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Two out of three young Hispanic-Americans identified using their smartphones to carry out banking activities. They also used various apps to find coupons or discounts. Young participants in Chile tended to distrust smartphones for online transactions. Half of the Chilean participants declared doing online banking, while none of Mexicans did due to security concerns.

All subjects in the three countries responded negatively about receiving advertising through their smartphones, because they considered it annoying, obnoxious and intrusive. However, they could identify specific brands and product placements integrated into contents received on their phones. Many participants acknowledged that if a creative or funny ad appeared before a video they wanted to watch, they would usually watch the whole ad.

Besides local news sources, the most mentioned global media companies/social networks that participants across the three countries used to get news were Twitter and CNN. Chilean and Mexican participants mentioned national outlets to get local and national news whilst Hispanic-Americans in Texas only mentioned American media brands, including traditional television networks. This difference may be explained by the strong position of U.S. information and entertainment brands in international markets.

Almost all participants in the three countries emphasized the importance of accessing social media through their smartphones. Only one Hispanic-American mentioned that it was not crucial to access social media through his smartphone.

All respondents agreed that Internet-based social networks were not the ideal way to make new friends; they based their mediated social interactions on previously established "real" friendships or relations. Young people in all three countries were conscious of the dangers implicit in accepting strangers as friends on social networks.

All focus group participants agreed that it was usually more difficult to communicate feelings through social media than face to face. Chileans mentioned that online messages or feelings could be misinterpreted more easily. Mexican participants preferred social media only when communicating a message face to face was complicated or inconvenient. Students in Texas emphasized reluctance to express their feelings through smartphones to avoid being ambiguous.

Participants in all countries preferred expressing their positive or status-related feelings through social media: sharing photos of a cool encounter or event, for example. By contrast, strong, negative or very intimate feelings were usually expressed through private text messages.

All subjects agreed that not carrying their smartphones during a social event would be uncomfortable, causing them anxiety and concern. Most declared that they used their phones during social events, even knowing that it was not always appropriate. We now turn our attention to quantitative survey data.

4.2. Descriptive Data

Following the focus groups, we applied a survey to a sample of 1,403 Hispanic smartphone users, aged 18-25 years old. Table 2 reports the smartphone features and apps used by the survey respondents, comparing those cited by a different group of mobile phone users in 2009 (Albarran, 2009).

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Table 2. Respondents' reported use of mobile phone/smartphone features

Feature / App	*2009*	*2015*
SMS/Instant message	99%	97%
Photo	69%	99%
Video	59%	97%
Internet	71%	99%
MP3/Music	60%	88%
Calendar	94%	97%
Clock	99%	99%
Games	90%	79%
Email	40%	97%
Notes	75%	89%
GPS	17%	95%
Facebook	n/a	92%
Twitter	n/a	54%
YouTube	n/a	88%

Several features that require data services (or at least access to Wi-Fi) showed substantial increases between 2009 and 2015: internet, email, and especially Global Positioning Satellite (GPS). These are key services that distinguish smartphones from regular mobile phones. The decline in gaming in the intervening six years may be due to online rather than app-based playing, but merits further investigation in any case.

It is important to note how some applications such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube that did not appear as common apps in 2009, were used extensively by Hispanic young people in 2015. Ninety percent of respondents declared having Facebook on their mobile phones in 2015, but none identified accessing the site through their phones in 2009. The same was true of YouTube: nine out of ten of subjects had this app on their mobile phones in 2015, but no one mentioned it in 2009. It is also important to note that Twitter showed a lower than average penetration among Hispanic young people than Facebook and YouTube: only 54% of respondents affirmed having this application on their mobile phones in 2015.

Table 3. Reported amount of time talking on the phone

Amount of time	*2009*	*2015*
Less than 1 hour	50.2%	97.6%
Between 1 and 2 hours	22.7%	2.4%
Between 2 and 3 hours	13.3%	0%
Between 3 and 4 hours	5.6%	0%
More than 4 hours	8.2%	0%
All the differences among 2009 and 2015 are significant: $p<0.05$		

Table 3 details a significant drop in the amount of time Hispanic young people spent talking on the phone. In 2009, half of those surveyed acknowledged talking on the phone more than 1 hour, but in 2015 only 2% of this segment declared talking on the phone more than 1 hour. Obviously, a dramatic change can be observed at this regard: Hispanic young

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people now use their mobile phones more frequently to access social media and send and receive text messages than to talk.

On average, male users in the three countries in 2015 reported talking by smartphone 12.45 minutes per day, and female users, 15.11 minutes. These low figures might be explained by service plan costs and conditions, including limited minutes, thus motivating respondents to use texting, instant messaging or similar applications for most communications. Table 4, reports important differences by sex.

Table 4. Minutes reported spent talking via smartphone daily, by sex (2015)

	Women	*Men*
Between 0 and 14 minutes	57.0%	66.9%
Between 15 and 29 minutes	27.5%	21.6%
Between 30 and 44 minutes	12.1%	9.5%
Between 45 and 59 minutes	0.0%	0.7%
60 minutes or more	3.4%	1.4%
Average	*15.11*	*12.45*

We can observe in Table 4 that Hispanic young men avowed talking on the phone less time, on average, than their female counterparts. Two out of three Hispanic young men talked on the phone 14 minutes or less per day. In the case of the young women, 57% talked on the phone less than 14 minutes daily. It is important to note that when communicating with family members, 55% of men and 52% of women preferred voice (the combined average for both genders in 2009 was 84.6%). As in the case of total time spent on voice communication, this may also be related to service plans that include a limited number of talk minutes.

As Table 5 illustrates, there were also significant differences in texting among male and female respondents from the three countries. In Chile, men spent an average 121.3 minutes per workday texting with their phones (SD= 126.2), and women spent 183.9 minutes (SD= 198.7). This difference was highly significant, $t(742)$= -4.98, p< .001. The effect size was 0.18, considered as moderate. In Mexico, men claimed to text for 182.7 minutes per workday (SD= 151.410), and women, 316.2 (SD= 634.529). This difference was significant, $t(451)$= -2.44, p< .05. The effect size was .11, considered as moderate. In Texas, men reported texting 188.9 minutes per workday (SD= 180.139), and women, 342 minutes (SD= 311.525). This difference was highly significant $t(204)$= -3.54, p< .001. The effect size was .24, considered as moderate.

Table 5. Time spent texting (Minutes per day)

Country	*Gender*	*N*	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*	*Std. Error Mean*
Chile	Male	332	121.34	126.24	6.93
	Female	412	183.87	198.73	9.79
Mexico	Male	138	182.68	151.41	12.89
	Female	315	316.21	634.53	35.75
U.S.	Male	59	188.85	180.14	23.45
	Female	147	342.04	311.52	25.69

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According to the qualitative analysis, older users in the 18-to-25-year-old demographic segment were the most interested in having a data plan for their smartphones. This contrasted with younger users who considered data service unnecessary, especially due to higher fees in the two Latin American countries.

Table 6 illustrates young people's different motivations for using their smartphones. "Keeping in touch with family and friends" emerged as the most valued use, with nearly three out of four respondents considering it a "very important" motivation. "Getting news" was the second-ranked "very important" motivation, but it lagged far behind "keeping in touch." "Privacy in communication" appeared as the third most important motivation, ranking closely to the fourth mention: "Feeling secure." Highly significant differences between men and women appeared for the variables "keeping in touch with family and friends," "feeling secure," and "playing games off line." Significant differences based on gender also appeared with the motivations "getting higher status" and "playing games on line." In general, Hispanic young men and women in three countries had similar motivations to use their mobile phones, but the strength of those motivations varied significantly by gender.

Table 6. Motivations to use the smartphone, comparing genders

Motivation	*Very unimportant*	*Unimportant*	*Indifferent*	*Important*	*Very Important*	*Pearson Chi-Square Value*
Keeping in touch with family and friends	0.4%	1.1%	4.3%	23.5%	70.7%	23.374(4)**
Privacy in communication	4.9%	7.7%	26.2%	34.7%	26.2%	9.381(4)
Feeling secure	6.8%	8.7%	27.4%	31.3%	25.5%	50.059(6)**
Getting higher status	26.7%	16.3%	34.9%	15.7%	6.0%	18.787(7)*
Getting news	3.0%	5.2%	15.1%	40.5%	36.1%	6.561(4)
Watching videos and movies	31.7%	22.8%	24.0%	14.1%	7.1%	9.991(5)
Playing games on line	38.4%	19.8%	21.9%	12.3%	7.2%	17.094(4)*
Playing games off line	38.9%	20.4%	24.0%	10.8%	5.6%	33.416(4)**
*= $p < 0.05$; **= $p < 0.01$ at the time of measuring gender differences.						

4.3. Factor Analysis and Regression

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted in order to determine whether the archetypes identified in the focus group analysis held for the survey sample data. The uses and motivations detailed in Table 6 were employed in a factor analysis following validated criteria (Hair, Bush, & Ortinau, 2000; Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006; Mazzocchi 2008).

Three main components were extracted using the maximum likelihood extraction method; they explained 71% of the variance. We labeled the first factor "always connected." This factor reduced variables regarding smartphone use to communication with family or friends—and also variables related to informational or news uses. It correlated highly to the need for orientation or information about what is happening around the world. The second factor was coined as "entertained," because it correlated with watching videos and movies using the smartphone, as well as playing games both on line and off line using various communication technologies. We named the third factor "secured," because it correlated variables using the smartphone to maintain protected communications—this included personal security, and the need to be connected by smartphone in order to feel secure.

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Using the factor analysis scores, a linear regression analysis was conducted in order to know how the three reduced variables, "always connected," "entertained," and "secured" would explain users' engagement with their smartphones, measured by the time spent texting (minutes per workday). Dummies were also run as control variables to know specifically whether the gender (0=male; 1=female) and/or the country of origin led to significant differences.

Results confirmed that the second model fit better, assigning significant importance to the gender and country of the subject. Additionally, the effect size of the first model (R^2= .008, p< .05) was not as strong as that of the second model (R^2= .057, p< .001). In spite of the above, only the reduced variable "always connected" appeared as highly significant. Gender and country of origin also appeared as highly significant, having a robust effect on the time spent texting with smartphones.

Considering the variance encountered, we should note that the t-test for "being connected" is highly significant, unlike the cases of "being secured" and "being entertained." Collinearity statistics confirmed that predictors were independent: tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) of predictors exhibited acceptable levels, indicating that independent variables did not overlap.

Table 7. Regression Analysis

Model		*Unstandardized Coefficients*		*Standardized Coefficients*	*T*	*Sig.*
		B	*Std. Error*	*Beta*		
1	(Constant)	215.086	9.460		22.735	.000
	Connected	-3.492	9.449	-.010	-.370	.712
	Secured	-5.525	9.451	-.016	-.585	.559
	Entertained	-31.239	9.441	-.088	-3.309	.001
2	(Constant)	98.667	17.659		5.587	.000
	Connected	-51.993	15.617	-.147	-3.329	.001
	Secured	11.832	10.825	.033	1.093	.275
	Entertained	-1.709	10.158	-.005	-.168	.866
	Dummy Mexico	86.604	19.505	.118	4.440	.000
	Dummy US	94.372	21.207	.125	4.450	.000
	Dummy Gender	240.472	48.350	.239	4.974	.000
	Age (number of years)	-.120	.193	-.016	-.620	.535
a. Dependent Variable: Minutes texting during a workday						

Factors resembled the archetypes of users found in the qualitative phase of this study. While Factor 1 included the features more valued by *heavy* users, Factor 2 could be linked with the needs of *video* users, and Factor 3 could be associated with the needs of *traditional* users who had little interest in technological features, but relied on the smartphone's most basic functions of communicating via voice or text, and also to increase one's sense of security.

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5. Conclusions

Employing a mixed method approach to measure motivations for smartphones use among Hispanic young adults Chile, Mexico and Texas, this study validates the uses and gratifications theory developed by Katz and Blumler (1974). Our results reveal similarities and differences in the uses and gratifications young Hispanics derive from information they access, the preferred applications and communication features on their smartphones, and the time they devote to talk and text.

Results also show that young Hispanics devote more of their leisure time than their predecessors to being connected, and rely on their smartphones to be entertained and feel secure. "Keeping in touch with family and friends" emerged as the most important motivation to use the smartphones followed by "getting news," "privacy in communication" and "feeling secured".

Although the Hispanic young men and women we surveyed expressed similar motivations to use their smartphones, the strength of these motivations varied significantly by gender. Indeed, highly significant differences by genders were observed regarding the most important motivations: "keeping in touch with family and friends," and "feeling secured."

In its final stage, the study presents three archetypes of young users. Factor analysis scores were utilized to conduct a linear regression analysis in order to reveal the interaction among three variables: "always connected," "entertained," and "feeling secure." Being "always connected" surfaced as the most significant use, impacting the time respondents spent texting with their smartphones. Significant differences were also found regarding the country of origin and the time respondents spent texting.

We also observed important similarities among study participants in the three countries. Perhaps the most salient similarity is the cross-country popularity of text-messaging as opposed to verbal communication. It should be noted that this finding may also be affected by the emergence of popular texting apps lime WhatsApp and Messenger at the time the study was conducted.

5.1. Limitations and future research

An important feature of this research is that it studies and compares young Hispanics from three different countries with the largest regional penetration of smartphones: Chile, Mexico, and the United States (Texas). However, this a limited number of countries and only young adults were included. It would be advisable to expand the research to other Hispanic societies, and to compare young populations with older ones. It could also be revealing study how varying levels of smartphone use correlate with other economic and social factors within as well as across the countries studied.

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