

On Smartphone Indispensability: A Country-level Exploratory Study

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Abstract

To understand a pervasive but seldom examined phenomenon that people become heavily dependent on their smartphone, this exploratory study introduces a new concept, smartphone indispensability, defined as the intensive psychological dependency on smartphones due to the absolute necessary and primary role of smartphones in ones' daily life. Observing that the smartphone indispensability is heterogeneously distributed across country, we argue that this heterogeneity results from a particular country-specific variable, national happiness. By integrating public and proprietary data on global smartphone usage and country characteristics, we use country- and time-fixed effects model and instrumental variable analysis to empirically explore the causal effect of national happiness on the average smartphone indispensability of the population in a country. We also investigate the effect of national happiness on mobile consumption and the mediating role of smartphone indispensability in this relationship. Potential theoretical, managerial and political implications are discussed.

Keywords

Smartphone Indispensability, national happiness, mobile consumption, country-level study, panel data.