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Simultaneous Use of Social Networks in Buenos Aires: The Importance of a Multi-Platform Approach

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Abstract. *Purpose: In an environment full of immediate obligations and instant distractions, many believe that multitasking may be advantageous, if not essential, for people. In this setting, mobile phone applications allow users to access the latest technology at the touch of their fingertips. The main goal of this research was to describe the use habits of social networking sites whenever used simultaneously in Buenos Aires. Methodology: Fieldwork was fulfilled through a non-probability sampling method, and it was applied to a population who lives, works or studies in the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Data collection was accomplished through an online self-administered questionnaire, which led to collecting a sample of 563 valid cases. Findings: The main findings of this research show significant differences between different groups of people. For example, respondents who use social networks while eating present higher simultaneous use than those who do not. Originality: This research is the first one to investigate the simultaneous use of social networking sites among the population of Buenos Aires, and its findings provide valuable insights into the use habits of social networking sites.*

Keywords: Social Networks, Simultaneous Use, Multitasking, Social Networks at Work, Social Media.

JEL Codes: M30; M31

1. Introduction.

An increasingly complex setting leads many to believe that multitasking is advantageous, if not essential (Kenyon, 2008). Mobile phone applications play a big role in nowadays' context as they allow users to access the latest technology at the touch of their fingertips (Aguado *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, online social networks seem to have shaped a mandatory spectrum in which individuals must identify themselves (Ellison *et al.*, 2007). These three aspects of today's modern society blend together, and the outcome is rather unexplored.

In an ever-evolving digital landscape, adopting a multi-platform approach in marketing strategies has become crucial for maximizing the reach and effectiveness of campaigns. This study investigates how various digital platforms can be used together to enhance consumer engagement and conversion. The main aim of this article is to identify variations of simultaneous online social network use patterns. To enrich the findings, it is paramount to highlight the varied situations in which users find themselves logging in.

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1.1. Introducing Social Networks.

To begin with, it seems natural to set a common ground and define the meaning of a social networking site. According to Ellison *et al.* (2007), social network sites are considered online tools that allow individuals – also referred to as 'users'– to present themselves in multiple contexts according to the purpose of the platform on which they log in. The main purpose of social networking sites is to allow users to shape their own online connections, whether they are work-related, oriented to share interests in common, or so on. Participants interact with 'offline' contacts, as well as with other fellow members of these online communities, whom they may not know personally (Ellison *et al.*, 2007; Yassine *et al.*, 2022).

So as to track social networking origins, the nineteenth century involved many inventions -such as roads and railways- which background concept was pure networking. Towards the end of the millennium and during the aftermath of Internet's growth crisis, the first seeds of the social networks' phenomenon appeared (Freire, 2008).

Throughout these last years, ever since the worldwide outburst of the Internet and online social networks, the latter has led many to argue that people's medium to interact may change abruptly - if it has not already changed (Kumar *et al.*, 2010). The newest technologies seem to pave the way for individuals and their way of communicating. Contrastingly, authors like Gandasegui (2011) state that social networking sites involve a modern setting of social mechanisms for information exchange. In other words, these platforms simply imitate the communication patterns of contemporary societies. Therefore, it is still argued whether the latest technological developments have an influence on societies or if it is the other way around.

In recent years, the appearance of the COVID-19 pandemic intensified the consumption of social media by users (Cavus *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, studies such as those of Mishra (2020), Samad *et al.* (2019), and Cavus *et al.* (2021) show the use of social networks in university environments in times of pandemic.

1.2. Social Network Users.

Besides this arguable connection, social networking sites provide its users with a modern way of connecting and learning information about other people, allowing them to reconnect with old acquaintances as well as approaching potential key contacts (Carpenter *et al.*, 2010). This lastly mentioned approach is not limited to the interpersonal field, but also considered by many enterprises. Furthermore, several startup companies sustain that their online position in various social networks is considered a key asset to be nurtured (Kumar *et al.*, 2010).

According to Kumar *et al.* (2010), members of a social network can be classified into three groups. Firstly, the 'singletons' are users who have joined the platform but do not interact actively with other users. In second place is a large group of users -referred to as the 'giant component'- who are connected directly or indirectly

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to a large fraction of the rest of the network. Lastly, the 'middle region' involves isolated communities that interact within themselves.

According to Hootsuite (2022), the global social network trend is growing. In their Global State of Digital 2022 report, they reckon that social network users grew by 227 million in the last year, reaching 4.7 billion at the beginning of July 2022. Additionally, they conclude that two-thirds of the total world population will be online by July 2023, and the number of social media users will be the equivalent of 60% of the world population. These trends are in line with the conclusions of Shodiyev (2022), who states that social networks are used in teaching to facilitate student learning since they are used to working with them. Hootsuite's (2022) report also states that people are 2.5 times more likely to go to social media for news than to go to print newspapers and magazines.

1.3. Simultaneous Use of Social Networks.

Despite individuals' classification in terms of social networking activity, most of them find themselves unavoidably and deeply involved in 'media multitasking'. This term is referred to as the act of using multiple media devices simultaneously or switching rapidly between them (Van der Schuur, Baumgartner, Sumter and Valkenburg, 2018). Such a behaviour pattern is nothing new under the sun as it seems to show its first roots from a young age. According to Rideout *et al.* (2010), 8-to-18-year-olds spend an average of 29% of their time multitasking while using media throughout different mediums.

It is highly believed life pace has gone under an unprecedented change throughout these last decades, leading many to acquire a notion of timelessness. Kenyon (2008) states that there is not an unique reason for multitasking, as some research suggest that this may be the outcome of time pressure on individuals with multiple task and limited time. Therefore, the use of technology stands out as the main resource for many to avoid being influenced by this contemporary effect.

According to Jeong & Hwang (2016), multitasking can trigger both positive and negative outcomes, as an individual may underperform in terms of attention or comprehension but may exceed expectations when it comes to attitude change. Furthermore, both the quantity and quality of demanding tasks have been proven to interfere with information processing. Whenever involved tasks overlap, multitasking situations become more challenging, and the goals are not achieved properly.

Research carried out by Lui & Wong (2012) demonstrated that an average undergraduate receives information from almost four media sources at the same time, and as a result of this, their focusing ability is weakened. Despite the researcher's original belief of a relationship between media multitasking as a cause of a better multisensory integration performance, their finding did not imply any direct correlation.

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This behavioural phenomenon is a direct result of technology development. Among innovations involved in such process, 'apps' stand out as a key element of the current information era. According to Allen (2003), mobile applications –commonly-known as 'apps'– are software pieces designed to be installed and used in mobile devices. These are thought to adapt to devices' limitations and solve specific needs.

Social media multitasking has also been studied from a mental health and well-being perspective. A recent study carried out by Xu *et al.* (2022) concludes that although social media multitasking is a phenomenon present in the daily life of most individuals, it is relevant to take into account the effects on well-being, indicating that there is a negative relationship between social media multitasking and well-being variables. In line with this, Zamanzadeh and Rice (2021) propose two primary influences regarding the impact of social media multitasking on well-being: executive functioning and self-regulation, as well as one primary outcome: general stress.

1.4. Mobile Devices and Multitasking.

It is believed by many that mobile apps are nowadays' prevalent interface for content access (Aguado *et al.*, 2015). The background of this phenomenon is widely discussed. According to Scolari *et al.* (2012), the vertiginous establishment of applications can be directly linked to functional economic reasons since they contribute to the time-effectiveness relation, which seems particularly relevant these days. This tendency to prefer these modern tools has gradually evolved throughout recent years. For instance, in 2014, only 14% of Internet use involved traditional browsers, whereas 86% was through applications (Khalaf, 2014). According to Anderson & Wolff (2010), this transition in the main platform for Internet use leads to a major ability to interfere with the content of the user.

Mobile device popularity is thought to be one of the main reasons for the increasing app development that has taken place throughout these last decades. New versions of these gadgets lead to more convenient and affordable use. Hence, massiveness is consequent. Many users now even consider apps as learning tools (Zydney & Warner, 2016).

As a result of increasing Internet accessibility, its use has gradually 'infected' many social spheres, including the workplace. Research carried out by the Mobile Marketing Association (2018) stated that Argentina is the Latin American nation with the most smartphones per inhabitant. Research dated from 2013 by the same organization showed that 43% of survey respondents had a smartphone. Later, in 2016, this figure increased to 82%, and it reached a new peak of 91% in 2018. Furthermore, 11% of individuals stated that they use their personal devices more than 200 times a day.

Consequently, it seems natural that personal Internet use is featured in multiple situations. The popular press used to define this behaviour pattern at work as a problematic behaviour wrongly associated with lower-

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status employees. This so-called 'work-avoidance strategy' –often referred to as 'cyberslacking'– has been considered a trigger for a negative impact on workers' productivity (Garret & Danzinger, 2008). Non-work-related activities -the most popular being online shopping, blogging or instant messaging- are thought to cause not only a financial loss from reduced employees' capacity but may also result in a threat to organizational security (Vitak *et al.*, 2011).

Nevertheless, studies have stated that far from being a bad influence, Internet use may be key for workers whose tasks demand creative and flexible thinking. Other findings suggest that Internet use is significantly more frequent among male employees, as well as among high workplace-status individuals (Garret & Danzinger, 2008).

Block (2001) states that supposing that "slacking" necessarily leads to poorer results is a great fallacy. The author's example supposes that two employees could achieve the same results: one working at an average pace and the other taking time off but later working twice as hard.

The use of technology, such as mobile devices, has intensified in recent times after the COVID-19 pandemic (Hootsuite, 2022). A review carried out by Vargo *et al.* (2021) suggests that, during the pandemic, technology has been an important facilitator, ranging from the use of computers to working with artificial intelligence, for the realization of different activities (including communicating, providing health services remotely, and analyzing data). The authors mention that the main effects of the use of technology during the pandemic have been the continuity of education at different levels, improved patient outcomes, and decreased outbreak impact. Multitasking also made it possible to adapt to the use of technologies during the pandemic. For example, a study conducted by Mella-Norambuena *et al.* (2021) on a sample of students during the pandemic showed that students spent more time simultaneously connected to learning management systems from their mobile devices and computers than using a single device.

2. Method.

2.1. Objective.

The main aim of this research was to describe the use habits of social networking sites whenever used simultaneously in the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires (AMBA), Argentina.

Specific objectives stated for this study were:

1. Understand the simultaneous use of social media applications based on people's occupations.
2. Recognize differences in the number of applications used simultaneously depending on the situations of use of social networks (i.e., at work or in class, during break time, before going to sleep, just after waking up, or while eating).

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3. Identify the existence of differences in the simultaneous use of apps based on the consumer's need to use them for work purposes.

2.2. Methodology and Sample.

A descriptive research of cross-sectional design was implemented. This approach allowed us to carry out a diagnosis about the use of different social networking sites according to the groups analyzed. Regarding data analysis, cross-tabulations were used to visually understand the distribution of the data, and inferential statistics and procedures, such as Chi-Square to evaluate relationships between variables, and T-tests and ANOVAs to evaluate group differences were implemented.

A non-probability sample of 563 adults who live, work or study in the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires (AMBA), Argentina (females: 61.6%) participated in this study. Data collection was carried out in February 2023. Subjects' ages ranged from 18 to 45 (M=23.78; SD=8.04). Data collection was accomplished through an online self-administered survey using Google Forms.

2.3. Informed Consent.

Participants had to answer a filter question by which they agreed on giving their consent to take part in this research. Those who accepted would continue with the questionnaire and those who did not would not carry on with it. Moreover, research objectives were listed at the beginning of the survey so as the participants would be conscious about them.

3. Results and Discussion.

3.1. Results.

The number of social network applications that people use simultaneously was analyzed. Figure 1 shows that the majority of people surveyed use two or three applications simultaneously, representing 32.3% and 31.8%, respectively. Those who usually use only one app at a time reach 20.8%, while only 15.1% use four simultaneously.

Regarding the **situation of use of social media apps**, group differences were found regarding the independent variables “Use of social media at work or in class”, “Use of social media just after waking up”, and “Use of social media while eating”. No differences were foun regarding the variables “Use of social media just before going to sleep” and “Use of social media during breaktime”. Differences are explained bellow.

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Use of social media at work or in class. Depending on the main occupation of the participants, they were asked whether they used social media apps in their work environment/class or not. The Levene equality test of variances (0.326, p=.568) indicates that the error variance of the dependent variable is homogeuous between groups. Thanks to the T-Test implemented, it was possible to find evidence about the existence of significant differences between the means of the groups of people who use social media in the work environment or in class (M=2.55; SD=0.96) and those who do not (M=2.35; SD=0.99), depending on the values of the dependent variable, $T_{(1,561)}$=2.232, p=.026, η^2=.009.

Use of social media just after waking up. The Levene equality test of variances (0.217, p=.642) suggests that the error variance of the dependent variable is homogeuous between groups. The T-Test allows declaring the existence of significant differences between the means of the groups of people who use social networks just after they wake up (M=2.53; SD=0.96) and those who do not (M=2.35; SD=0.99), depending on the number of applications used simultaneously, $T_{(1,561)}$=4.110, p=.043, η^2=.007.

Use of social media while eating. In order to analyse this independent variable and its effect on the number of apps used simultaneously, a T-Test was implemented. The Levene equality test of variances (0.053, p=.817) indicates that the error variance of the dependent variable is homogeuous between groups. Thanks to the analysis, we were able to assess the direct effect, recognizing the existence of significant differences between the factors of the independent variable regarding the dependent variable, concluding that those who use social networks while eating (M=2.64; SD=1) present higher simultaneous use than those who do not (M=2.37; SD=0.97): $T_{(1,561)}$=2.406, p=.016, η^2=.010.

Group differences were found in the **occupations** of the participants. The Levene equality test of variances (1.474, p=.221) suggests that the error variance of the dependent variable is homogeuous between groups. The analysis of the variance allows us to confirm the existence of significant differences between the factors of the independent variable regarding the dependent variable, $F_{(3,559)}$=3.699, p=.012, η^2= .019. Bonferroni's Post Hoc test (p=.009) allows to conclude that there is a significant difference between the means of the groups of people who are students (M=2.51; SD=0.98), and those who both work and study (M=2.20; SD=1.03).

Regarding the **use of social media apps for work purposes,** group differences were also found. The Levene equality test of variances (0.310, p=.734) reveals that the error variance of the dependent variable is homogeuous between groups. The ANOVA allows us to confirm the existence of significant differences between the factors of the independent variable as a function of the dependent variable, $F_{(2,560)}$=7.991, p<.001, η^2=.028. The Post Hoc test of Bonferroni (p<.001) concludes that there is a significant difference between the means of the groups of people who do not use social networks to work (M=2.34; SD=0.97) and

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those who reckon totally using social media for work purposes (*M*=2.86; *SD*=0.95). In addition, there is a significant difference between people who partially use social networks to work (*M*=2.38; *SD*=0.97) and those who totally use them for work purposes (*M*=2.86; *SD*=0.95), according to Bonferroni's test (*p*=.004).

For a better understanding of the relationship between the variables analyzed in the latter ANOVA, the following multivariate analysis shown in Figure 2 was conducted to evaluate the number of apps used simultaneously by individuals about the use of social media for work purposes. Those who do not use social networks to work, along with those who do but sporadically, represent a tendency to use two or three apps at the same time. On the other hand, those who constantly use social networks in their work environment demonstrate a tendency to use, firstly, three apps simultaneously (32.3%) and, secondly, four (30.8%).

As a noticeable trend, the more an individual uses social networks for work purposes, the more apps he or she would use at the same time. That being said, only 7.7% of the people who indicated that they fully use social networks for work purposes use only one app at a time, while this percentage increases to 23.2% for those who do not use social media as a working tool. The asymptotic (bilateral) significance value arising from the Chi-square tests for this analysis was .003.

As an additional research finding, it was possible to identify significant differences based on the **activity performed when an application takes too long to load or works slowly**. The Levene equality test of variances (0.255, *p*=.907) suggests that the error variance of the dependent variable is homogeuous between groups. The analysis of variance indicates the existence of significant differences between the factors of the independent variable regarding the dependent variable, $F_{(4,557)}$=7,611, *p*<.001, η^2=.052. The Post Hoc test of Bonferroni (*p*<.001) allows to conclude that there is a significant difference between the means of the groups of people who close the app and stop using it (*M*=1.96; *SD*=1.05) and those that close it and reopen it waiting for the lag to stop (*M*=2.51; *SD*=0.93). In addition, there is a significant difference between the people who close the app and stop using it (*M*=1.96; *SD*=1.05) and those who use another app while they wait for the affected one to load (*M*=2.65; *SD*=0.96), according to Bonferroni's (*p*<.001) Post Hoc test. Finally, significant differences were found between the means of the groups of people who wait for the application to load (*M*=2.21; *SD*=0.98) and those using another application while waiting for the lag to stop (*M*=2.65; *SD*=0.96; $p_{Bonferroni}$=.032).

4. Discussion and Conclusions.

The main findings of this research show that participants who exclusively use only one app at a time reach about 20%, while a vast majority of respondents use two or more applications simultaneously. The largest portions of this result are in harmony with the findings of Lui and Wong (2012). It was stated that an average

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undergraduate received information from almost four media sources simultaneously. Consequently, such group is likely to be part of the participants who use more than two apps at the same time.

Respondents who use social networks while eating present higher simultaneous use than those who do not. Whenever an application takes too long to load or works slowly, some survey participants close such app, while others reopen it. Moreover, other respondents decide to use another app while they wait for the affected one to load. These findings back up Keyon's (2008) ideas, which claimed that multitasking is believed to be the outcome of time pressure on individuals and a timeless notion. Therefore, it seems natural for mobile phone users to react impatiently to devices' underperformance. Technology has developed to unprecedented limits, and, as a result, any kind of flaw is unacceptable.

In terms of the use of social media at work, some participants have claimed that their use is solely work-related, while others have recognized partially using social networks for work purposes. When it comes to usage frequency, participants who constantly use social networks at work demonstrate a tendency to use three or four apps simultaneously. Additionally, participants who do not use social networks to work, along with those who do but sporadically, represent a tendency to use two or three apps at the same time. It has been proved that the more an individual uses social networks for work purposes, the more apps he or she would use at the same time. These results can be compared to Jeong and Hwang's statements (2016). According to these authors, an average employee is likely to underperform in terms of attention when multitasking but may as well show a positive attitude change. That being said, this feeling of well-being may be the reason why survey participants have started using social networks in the workplace. These results also support Block's (2001), Garret's and Danzinger's (2008) ideas. These authors agreed that these alleged misconducts were far from leading to underperformance, but actually vital for meeting the company's expectations.

Results of this research allow to recognize that a large majority of consumers use two or more applications simultaneously, finding differences regarding the use of applications by distinct demographic segments. In turn, consumers have different habits regarding the moments in which they use social networks and the frequency with which they do so. Lastly, it was possible to discover that the need to use social networks for work purposes is related to a greater simultaneous use of these apps.

Our study's findings indicate that digital marketing strategies incorporating a multi-platform approach achieve greater resonance with consumers compared to those limited to a single platform. This observation underscores the need for an integrated approach that leverages the strengths of each digital platform. The ability to reach consumers through diverse channels allows for more effective and personalized communication, which is critical for the success of marketing campaigns in the digital age. Based on these results, we recommend implementing multi-platform strategies to maximize the impact of digital marketing initiatives and adapt to the changing preferences of consumers.

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Consequently, the topics addressed and the results obtained provide valuable insights into the social media habits of Argentine consumers, which is crucial for companies involved in digital marketing. To enhance the applicability of these insights, future research should explore social media usage in other countries, focusing on markets with significant cultural diversity, economic relevance, and high levels of social media engagement (e.g., Brazil and Spain). Investigating such markets could offer a comparative analysis that highlights how cultural and economic factors influence digital marketing strategies and consumer behaviour, providing a more comprehensive view of global practices.

4.1. Managerial Implications.

The findings of this study have extensive implications for managers and companies concerned with virtual advertising and marketing activities. Understanding the habits and choices of social media use amongst Argentine consumers can provide valuable steering for strategic decision-making and optimize marketing efforts. The following implications may be drawn from the results and conclusions of this study, emphasizing their importance for managers.

Multi-platform approach: The study exhibits that a majority of customers use two or more social media applications concurrently. This highlights the importance of adopting a multi-platform approach in digital marketing strategies. Organizations can maximize their reach and engage with a broader audience by setting up a presence on multiple social media platforms. Managers ought to allocate resources to create and preserve active profiles on popular social media platforms that align with their audience, making sure to maintain consistent messaging across platforms. This approach permits businesses to enhance brand exposure, growth client engagement and, in the long run, power conversion rates.

Timing and Context: The study highlights the impact of timing and context on social media utilization patterns. Managers need to bear in mind these factors when establishing the strategic plan for their advertising and marketing campaigns. For example, leveraging the usage of social media apps just after waking up or during meal times provides an opportunity to capture the attention of clients throughout precise moments of the day. By tailoring advertising messages and promotions to align with those contexts, managers can enhance the relevance and effectiveness of their campaigns. Comprehending the specific moments when customers are more likely to use social media allows companies to optimize the timing of their content distribution and increase the chance of consumer engagement.

User experience Optimization: The research exhibits that people tend to close or transfer to other apps when faced with sluggish loading times or overall performance issues. To ensure a positive consumer experience, managers must prioritize optimizing their mobile apps to reduce loading times and maximize performance. Making an investment in user-friendly interfaces, effective backend systems, and regular

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updates can considerably boost user satisfaction and retention. Managers ought to continuously monitor the app's overall performance, cope with technical problems rapidly, and actively monitor user feedback to continuously improve the consumer experience. By presenting a seamless and enjoyable app experience, companies can support brand loyalty, increase consumer engagement, and drive high-quality word-of-mouth recommendations.

Work-related use: The research shows that people who use social networks for work purposes have a tendency to engage in more simultaneous app usage. This finding shows that businesses can leverage social media platforms as powerful tools for work-associated communication and collaboration. Managers need to encourage employees to make use of social networks for work-related duties, fostering a culture of productivity and knowledge sharing. Presenting suitable training and guidelines on the use of social media for work purposes can enhance teamwork, facilitate information exchange, and enhance average organizational overall performance. By integrating social media into the place of the job, managers can tap into the benefits of digital communication, enabling personnel to stay connected, share insights, and collaborate successfully.

In conclusion, the findings of this research underscore the importance of adopting a multi-platform approach, considering timing and context, leveraging social media for work-related functions, and optimizing consumer experience. With the aid of incorporating those implications into their digital advertising techniques, managers can successfully gain consumer engagement and maximize results.

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Figures:

Figure 1: Number of social media apps used simultaneously.

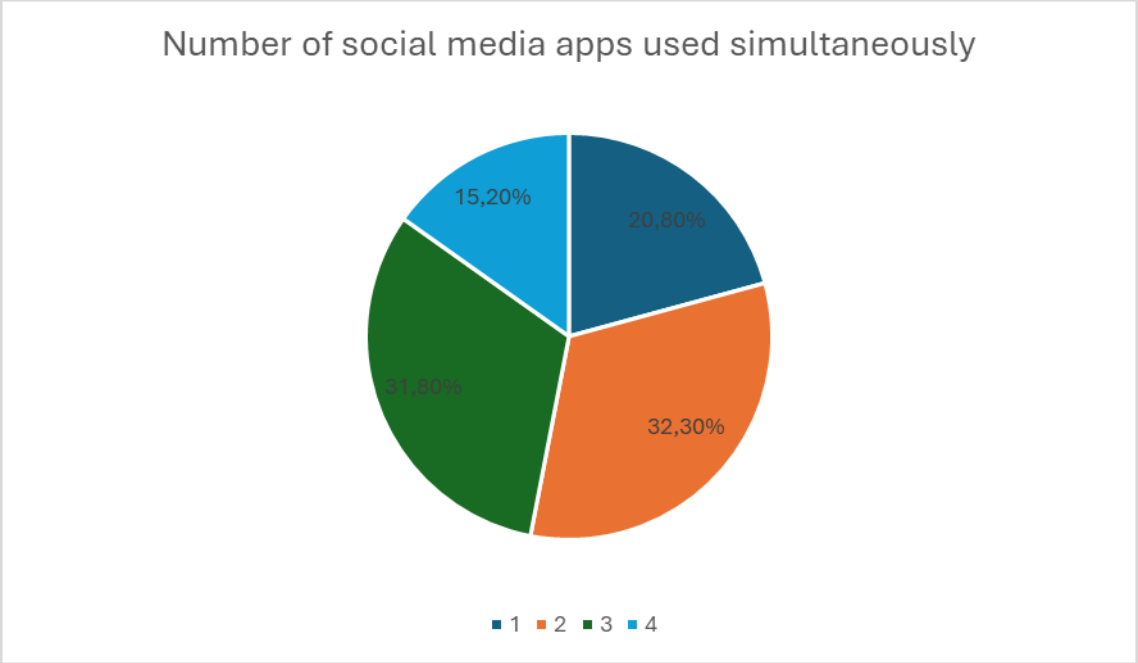
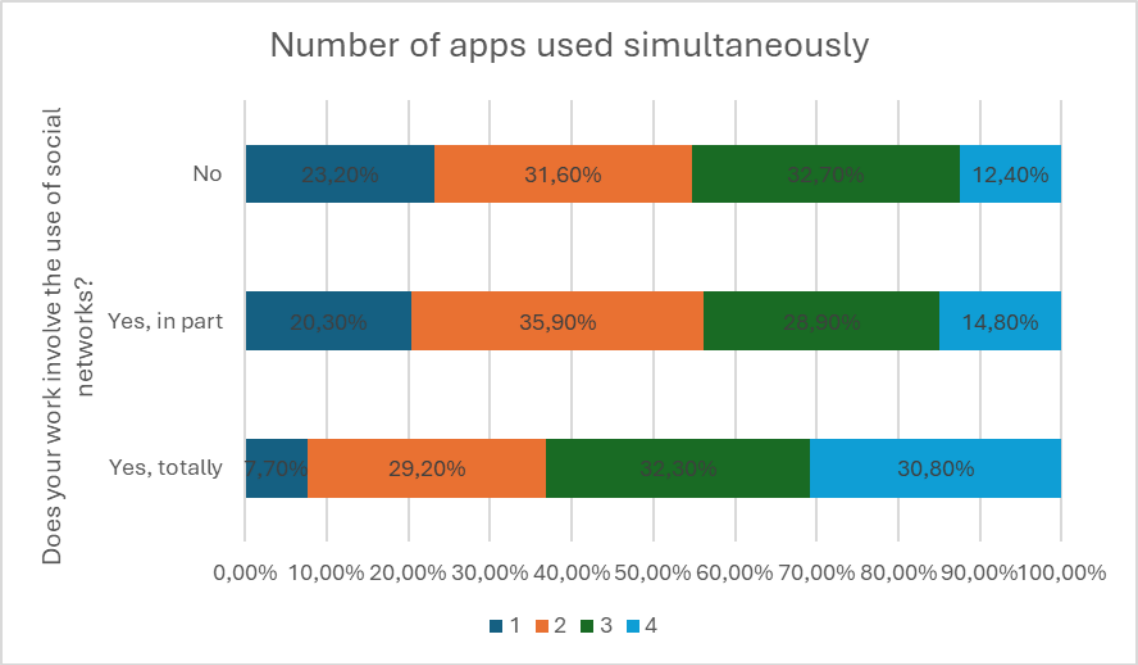


Figure 2: Number of apps used simultaneously in relation to work use of social media.

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