

MESSAGING APPS IN BUSINESSES AND NATIONAL ECONOMY

Modern e-commerce is to a high degree implemented through social media and messaging apps. As they are getting increasingly used in marketing, their role in business activity becomes significant. Therefore, more workplaces in national economies are becoming dependent on the use of these online platforms.

Social media are used to target mass audience, while messaging apps allow companies to address customers in person. First, one social network is unlikely to attract the greatest number of users, since social media really differ in format, while messengers are rated mostly by the number of their users and there usually is a dominating messenger in a country. Second, messenger accounts are linked to phone numbers, which makes it easier for companies to address clients. Third, people are increasingly using instant messengers as the fastest and easiest way to communicate in an environment where there is nothing superfluous, which allows to bypass search engines and websites. Finally, messaging apps let their users stay anonymous and secure as they use end-to-end encryption (E2EE).

The most prominent example of how messengers impact businesses and national economies is WeChat (Weixin), a Chinese messaging app. The absence of separation between private and professional life in China has helped WeChat become a unified app that dominates the Chinese e-commerce, social media, and telecommunications space. WeChat first dominated Chinese communications, then payments, and now it is turning into a full-fledged mobile social platform, including mobile advertising. Its QR-payment function boosts business activity. With a base of more than 1 billion users, WeChat is convenient for both businesses and consumers, since one may be assured their counterparty has a profile for payment. Small businesses rely on the messaging app as a distribution channel [1].

Another example of how messengers integrate into a national economy is Iran. There are 42 million Telegram users in Iran, and they use it both as a messaging tool and a social network. Telegram has become a platform for small businesses, advertising and health-related services. For political reasons, Telegram has been blocked in that country, though experts and even some government members state that this may lead to at least 9 thousand direct job losses and even more indirect. Some experts claim that Telegram has facilitated the creation of about 1 million workplaces [2]. Banning country's most used messaging app leads to the communication breakdown between businesses and their clients, which obviously causes downturn in sales and loss of jobs. Restoring all these connections takes time, and another platform is needed to replace the previous one, which implies the need to adapt the businesses' marketing strategy to the scopes of a new app.

Since China's internet space is secured from the outer world by the Great Firewall, and Iran's economy is under severe sanctions, foreign companies can't

effectively access their national markets through messaging apps. Though, for the rest of the world messengers may be a tool for the international expansion of businesses. This process may lead to greater interdependence of national economies and determine the necessity to implement regulating measures on mobile marketing at the legislative level. As messaging apps integrate into the economy, they create the opportunity for foreign actors to invade other markets and influence people's buying behavior or even impede conducting transactions.

The latest example of such behavior is the planned ban of WeChat by the American authorities. Fortunately for China, this ban can influence nothing but the interaction between American and Chinese counterparties within WeChat [3]. On the other hand, this demonstrates how messaging apps ban may be a sanction against a country. Today's most used messengers, including WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and Telegram, are registered in the US, the UK or the EU. Thus, these countries have a way of influencing foreign authorities. They may block the use of messaging apps on other territories, most likely for political reasons. Such actions may lead to temporary economic difficulties. Moreover, this is quite possible to happen as today's Western democracies pay more attention to E2EE-messengers because of their use by terrorists. If the European Union decides to ban end-to-end encryption, it will be a difficult process to achieve a balance between freedom of speech, the right to privacy and national security challenges. Still, national authorities of countries, where messaging apps are actively used in commercial activities, as well as local businesses have to secure themselves from such risks [4].

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