

The Quantification of Mobile Phone Usage: Does Screen Time Tracking Actually Help?

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Cite as:

Zimmermann Laura (2020), The Quantification of Mobile Phone Usage: Does Screen Time Tracking Actually Help?. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 11th, (83121)

Paper presented at the 11th Regional EMAC Regional Conference, Zagreb
(online), September 16-19,2020



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Abstract

Recently, research has started to uncover negative effects of mobile phone overuse, and as a solution to this problem, a number of screen time tracking applications have emerged. This research demonstrates, using a longitudinal field study and an experimental online survey, that screen time tracking apps are well received by consumers and improve digital self-awareness of usage. However, this improved knowledge does not translate into behavior change (i.e., no reduction of mobile phone screen time). Further, a simple, self-imposed nudge—turning one’s phone to gray-scale mode—may more effective in reducing screen time. Finally, higher mobile phone screen time is linked to lower performance at university (i.e., grade point average) several month later. In summary, the findings of this research advance our understanding of how screen time tracking influences consumers’ self-awareness, their behavior and long-term consequences for performance.