

# How Lebanese Consumers Use OLX Mobile Sale Application

A Thesis

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By

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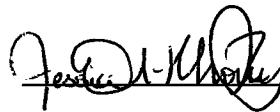
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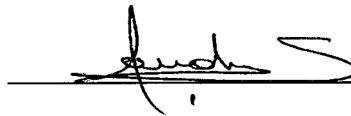
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## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	6
Introduction.....	7
Literature Review.....	10
OLX Ease of Use Application .....	18
On OLX You Can Find Anything You Want. ....	20
Features Added to OLX's Platform.....	20
Theoretical Framework.....	23
Uses and Gratification Theory .....	23
Trustworthiness.....	26
Research Questions and Hypotheses .....	30
Methodology .....	31
Sample.....	31
Procedure .....	32
Variables .....	32
Data Analysis .....	34
Application versus Web Browsers.....	35
81.8% of participants are likely to use sales applications like OLX, Al Waseet for shopping than Web browsers (18.2%) such as Amazon, and Ali Express. ....	35
OLX Consumption, Quality, and Delivery .....	35
Trust .....	36

Uses and Gratifications .....	36
Hypothesis 1: Age and Trustworthiness .....	37
Hypothesis 2a: Ease of Use and Gratifications Sought .....	38
Hypothesis 2b: Trustworthiness and Gratifications.....	38
Discussion .....	40
Mobile Sales Application versus Web Browsers.....	40
Why Use OLX .....	41
Limitations .....	47
Conclusion .....	48
References.....	50
Appendix A: Questionnaire, Figures, Tables and Charts. ....	53
OLX Lebanon Questionnaire.....	53
Appendix B: Tables and Graphs.....	63

## How Lebanese Consumers Use Mobile Sale Applications

### Abstract

This thesis investigates the reasons behind Lebanese consumers' use of sales applications, more specifically OLX, utilizing the Uses and Gratifications theory and the concept of trust. An online survey was conducted to understand Lebanese consumers' use of sales applications. 253 participants through snowball sampling provided information about themselves and replied to questions dealing with trust, trustworthiness, quality, age group, ease of use, uses and gratification and delivery time. Univariate ANOVA, hierarchical regression and frequencies were used to measure the hypotheses and research questions. Referring back to results, there is a significant statistical difference among the age groups and those who thought the application was easy to use. There were no significant differences for the 45 and above age group category. In addition, to these findings an independent t-test was done to double check whether those who claimed they trust OLX will in fact be gratified by the application as opposed to those who do not trust the application. Results indicated a statistically significant difference between those who said yes, they trust OLX.

**Keywords:** Uses and gratification theory, mobile sales application, OLX, trustworthiness, quality and delivery time.

# **How Lebanese Consumers Use Mobile Sale Applications**

## **Introduction**

Mobile sales applications, like OLX, Kazomart, Amazon, Ebay, Ali express, and Wasseet are a smart, easy and effective way that connects sellers to buyers. These applications allow sellers to post their products and customers to share their reviews and leave feedback and comments. Individuals can post or share any product that they want to sell on their personal accounts online.

The Web 2.0 development used in these kinds of applications where the end user is involved and can leave feedback is one of the main sources of trustworthiness built by those kinds of applications among populations (A. Darwich, November 4, 2011). Such an application is OLX.

OLX is one of the huge sales applications worldwide. It was founded in 2006 between Buenos Aires (Argentina) and New York City (United States of America) through a collaboration between Fabrice Gerinda and Alec Oxenford (BelleBeiut, 2016). In 2008, the first offices were opened in India, one year later, in 2009, Brazil saw the opening of the second OLX office. In 2010, Naspers bought OLX; Naspers also acquired Dealfish, Sulit, Allegro and Tokobagus IT agencies that worked to rebrand OLX (BelleBeirut, 2016). In 2012, OLX was classified as the biggest site in India. A year later, OLX was classified the biggest site in Brazil. In 2014, the major shift was made as nine Naspers companies were rebranded as OLX and a partnership agreement was signed with Schibsted in Romania that increased the ownership of OLX in Brazil by 50 percent. In 2015, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region was the only region where Dubizzle was rebranded to OLX. Dubizzle was named before OLX, it is the old website that people purchased products from it, and now it is rebranded to OLX.

In 2017. Nowadays OLX is present in more than 40 countries recording more than 1.7 billion monthly visits (BelleBeiut, 2016).

In the recent years, Dubizzle was re-branded as OLX. Users, who have no time to post, meet with potential buyers or want their privacy protected can entrust the sale of their goods to the OLX sales experts. Since its launch in May 2015 in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, OLX attracted much attention and it registered in 2016 more than 150 million active users and visitors on daily basis (BelleBeirut, 2016). OLX allows people and businesses to buy and sell items. Sellers, whether private individuals or businesses can publish items, upload pictures, provide title description, price and location. Once they post an item, they wait for buyers to call, can track the number of views and calls. Buyers can contact sellers by phone or private message and ask for items and they can negotiate prices.

In the MENA region, OLX operates in Egypt, Algeria, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Tunisia (BelleBeirut, 2016). The OLX Arabia app is the region's leading shopping app. The OLX team wanted to acquire new app users who were likely to contribute listings. At the same time, they wanted to find a way to test the relative performance of different creative and assess the return on investment (ROI) of digital versus TV. They saw that YouTube provided a great way to reach target users while simultaneously tackling branding and performance objectives (BelleBeirut, 2016).

To narrow it down to the Lebanese market and due to its huge success among the various sales applications, buying products in a fast way becomes the main purpose of Lebanese consumers using OLX sales application (BelleBeirut, 2016).

OLX Lebanon released its first yearly report on the Lebanese property market trends and consumer behavior in the year 2016. More than six million visits were recorded, reflecting the



trust Lebanese people have in OLX as a reliable platform (BelleBeirut, 2016). These results show that both Lebanese residing in Lebanon as well as Lebanese expats use OLX Lebanon as a trusted platform.

OLX has proved, and in a short period of time, to be a trustworthy, free and easy method for people to find property for rent or for sale, as it is free and commission-free. By visiting [olxliban.com](http://olxliban.com) on the web, the mobile phone application or any other device, the process is only a click and post away, and you get paid cash (BelleBeirut, 2016).

This topic is important because it tackles one of the most useful and innovative methods for selling goods and reaching customers. OLX is one of the leading applications in this domain; this is why researching about this huge company and analyzing how it approaches and delivers the goods to its customers can provide Lebanese companies and individuals an idea of how sales applications are used and how well they are evolving and developing. This topic will also give us a clear idea about the ethics of the E-buying and selling process and how to keep this experience smooth and safe for both parties.

To sum it up, studying a giant in the world of mobile sales applications will bring forth a greater understanding about the process of doing this business in a professional way and how it can be accepted and adapted to countries, cultures, and people to deliver and reach the same goal worldwide.

Utilizing the Uses and Gratifications theory and trustworthiness framework, this paper investigates the reasons behind Lebanese consumers' use of sales applications, more specifically OLX, and the gratifications they obtain from such use. In this study, many variables will be measured such as gender, age, amount of time spent on OLX, trustworthiness, delivery time, safe, reliability, quality, coverage, credibility and trust.

## Literature Review

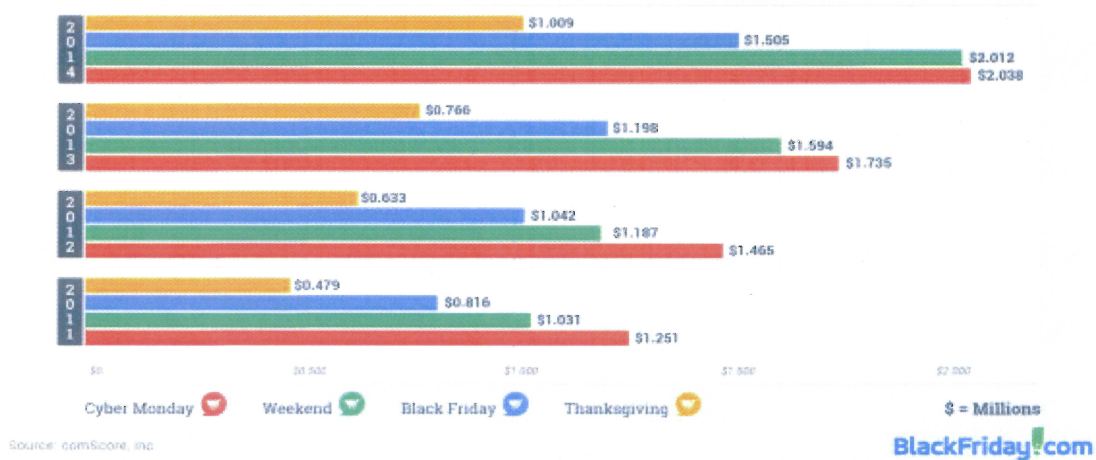
This century is undoubtedly the fastest in developing new innovations utilizing the internet, smartphones and tablets (Khan, 2016). In order to succeed in business and especially in sales, one has to be innovative and effective to stay in the competition, because the competitors are racing to develop new ways to outshine one's own efforts. Online applications became the trend today in the MENA region after they succeeded in the United States and Europe (Khan, 2016). The online classifieds business model is young in this region due to different factors, such as culture, low Internet penetration in some markets and lack of valuation of second-hand goods (Khan, 2016). However, keeping up with consumer demands is a never-ending process. This culture made quick, ready access to products and services the norm rather than the exception.

During the week preceding Black Friday in 2012, for instance, many retailers and malls were prepping mobile apps for the event. According to 2012 IBM Holiday Benchmark Reports, mobile sales exceeded 16% on that 2012 Black Friday, an increase of 9.8% over the previous year. Mobile apps in particular are expected to positively affect the progression of this trend during Black Friday 2013(Viveiros, 2012).

According to the National Retail Federation in US2015, half of the shopping will be done online, with 21% of smartphone owners using their phones to make purchases (M. Skoufalos, 2015).

## Retail Online Spending During Black Friday

Total U.S. Home & Desktop Computers



App developers use strategies that motivate consumers such as: quick and easy ordering, comparison shopping, value added benefits and convenience. Developing an app that makes your product and/or service more convenient for the consumer, not only enhances their experience, but increases their chances for repeat business (Hamwi, 2013).

In Lebanon and in the rest of the MENA region, the audience constantly hears and sees advertisements about an application called OLX that aims to buy and sell anything without a middle person. OLX Arabia, is today the leading online classifieds website in the MENA region (Bworld, 2016). Furthermore, OLX.com.ng (OLX Nigeria) launched its premium product “Do It for Me” (D.I.F.M), comes with a minimal fee for OLX, the OLX sales expert can easily sell your old gadgets, phones, appliances, furniture, cars, and clothes. The product is only available in Lagos, but there are plans to extend it to other parts of the country, an initiative which helps users manage the posting and selling on the site. One can surely say that this is another innovative way the company makes life easier and safer for its users. This service comes in two forms: PIFM OR SIFM. Post It for Me (PIFM) where the OLX sales experts manages the posting of items for users

on the site; or Sell It For Me (SIFM), where the entire process is managed from posting the item to actively finding potential buyers until the item is sold by X (Bworld, 2016).

According to an article published in Carleton-University, Oman is among OLX's top three fastest growing markets in the Middle East on App Store and Google Play (Khan, 2016). It has been operating its platforms in Oman since 2015, when Dubizzle was re-branded as OLX. Abdallah Touqan, senior public relations and communications lead at OLX MENA, talked about the growing popularity of his company in the Omani market and emerging trends in the online classifieds business in the region. He specified that these trends and popularity are due to the implementation of five new features, each of which satisfies a unique need and emphasis the user-friendly layout and functionality: Save Search, Chat, Location, Search, and Location Map which are easy to use. For instance, by saving a search you will automatically receive a notification when similar items appear on the platforms; this will definitely increase sales.

Considering distance as a prime criterion, the 'Location Search' uses the GPS on the device to help search out the listings in the closest proximity to the user. The 'Location Map' also uses the GPS to locate and direct the user to an item on the map. One of the challenges according to Muscat Daily was to educate the MENA region's users on the concept of online classifieds so it allocated a decent budget to educate users via online and offline marketing (Khan, 2016).

Such applications are free for users and this is the number one benefit for the consumers. OLX gets money out of the advertisements that appear on the page and few apps are willing to become paid for companies, but for individual users it will continue to be free. Believing that mobile is the future makes people focus on mobile applications since they enable users to become sellers and make extra money from selling for example, their unused household items by listing them on mobile selling apps.

## Mobile Sales Apps and Sustainability

Sustainability is becoming a huge concern worldwide; online classifieds can contribute to a sustainable environment by promoting the re-use of items (Hamwi, 2013). For instance, Accel Partners, a venture capital firm managing more than \$8.8 billion just closed a multimillion-dollar investment in a mobile app for second hand classifieds. Wallapop, a standalone app for second hand classifieds with three million users just got an investment from Accel Partners of around \$6 million. Wallapop, which was launched in 2004 today has offices in Spain, UK, France and Portugal. In Spain alone people re-using second hand items doubled in number in 2014 reaching 50.7% of the population (Hamwi, 2013). This proves three main things, first, that people are willing to become sustainable if innovations help them do it. Second, that there is a great appeal for the use of classifieds websites and apps and third that the best way to deal in second hand items is through classifieds portals (Hamwi, 2013).

“Shout” is also another growing real-time classified app used in New York City; it allows individuals to do exchanges with others. The IOS app lets users offer up something for sale, such as a ticket or a reservation, or make a request, such as a delivery. People using it are linked to a location, a price and a short description and can either be free or cost a specific amount and they can pay within the app (Chokkattu, 2014). Co-founders Reitano and Stern say that several actors have joined the platform to offer services, such as delivering a rose while reciting Shakespeare, or pranking friends and sending the video to the user. The Y Combinator-backed company handles the transaction life cycle, verifies the seller, processes payments and takes care of customer support (Chokkattu, 2014). It has many important features that make this app user friendly, such as narrowed down searches to items or services required or needed. Stern hopes that

universities will implement streams like NYU or Columbia University streams where users will be specific to that area and can build a better sense of community (Chokkattu, 2014).

The mobile VAN sales app offers businesses an integrated merchandising solution, writes Ali Hassan, the executive vice president of "Focus Soft Net" (Hassan, 2015). "This app greatly enhances the sales and accounting cycle, reduces manual data entry and improves efficiency" (Hassan, November 2015, p. 20). It is created for different operating systems, such as IOS, Android and Windows, making it accessible on all smartphones available in the market (Hassan, 2015).

Hundreds of millions of people around the world have used eBay to buy and sell items. Now its classifieds mobile app is bringing free local listings to user's pocket. They launched a tutorial to show the consumer how to use Stamp lay with the amazing ionic framework to create a fully-fledged native mobile app. They wanted to deliver something that can be reused in many ways, so they built an eBay Classifieds clone to let users search, post, and sell their items (Cobelli, 2014).

As the above development in mobile sales applications show, sustainability of the applications is something that all developers aim for. Sustainability is the result of a number of factors working together to prolong the life of the app, that is why, developers constantly work on improving the app and adding new features. John Garofalaki, Antonia Stefani, Vasilios Stefanis, Michalis Xenos researched factors affecting app sustainability. They evaluated external quality attributes like functionality, usability, reliability and efficiency for M-Commerce system from the user perspective (Jane, 2013). One of the quality factors of functionality of mobile apps is suitability, which checks the extent to which an application fulfills needs of a particular user without devastating the user (Jane, 2013). Therefore, mobile applications should attempt to minimize the duration needed to complete an activity by user. When a user uses any mobile

application all the user's data operated by application should be secure. When application run on operating system it may use some features of operating system, application should be able to run without effecting the operating system (Jane, 2013).

### **The Internet and Online Shopping**

Early research on the Internet focused on online experience and online activities. A survey conducted by Hammond in 2000, measuring online experience by how long an individual has been using the Internet, and found that online experience is a predictor of online activities such as frequent browsing of online sites (Kim, 2017). Another study by Forsythe in 2003 proved that heavy online shoppers are likely to be more experienced ones than light and window shoppers because perceived risks of online purchasing decrease as years of online experience increase. Fader in 2004 discovered the positive effect of browsing on online shopping. Specifically, the more visits a consumer makes, they will purchase more products. Furthermore, Bucklin2004 investigated the purchase process using three steps: interest, desire, and finally purchase. They found that online exposure variables, such as number of links, are significant in the first two stages but insignificant at the purchase stage(Kim, 2017).So, we can conclude that online experience is increasing, and all people are using the internet and online shopping and we can see the results done in recent studies about this topic.

### **Smartphones and Mobile Shopping**

Smartphone apps in many cases are the mobile versions of online sites and companies usually design and launch apps to let consumers expand their businesses to the mobile platform (Bang, 2013). Furthermore, the differences between smartphones and computers still available, and information search behaviors using mobile phones are different from desktop computer search behaviors (Goh, 2015). According to Han (2013), he found a similar result that the smaller screens

of mobile devices increase search costs, which makes a relative attractiveness of the first search result over the second greater on mobile devices than on computers. These findings underline the distinctions between the online and mobile channels. Wetzels (2007) developed a conceptual model that incorporates the benefits and costs of mobile shopping. In their model, time-related gains in efficiency increase the perceived value of mobile shopping, resulting in higher purchase intention. Bang (2013) analyzed browsing and purchasing data for the online retailer that launched a mobile app, and he found that the online shopping experience was positively related to the downloading of its shopping app because a mobile device allows access to the shopping online site.

### **The Role of Customer Reviews**

The huge number of competing products and overloaded information may make it difficult for online consumers to make choices. Online retailers' websites, such as Amazon.com, provide consumers a platform to post reviews to share their opinions and experiences with the products they have purchased. These reviews, in turn, attract more customers and help potential consumers make better decisions (Cao, 2011). Although consumers generally would benefit from more information, many products have hundreds and even thousands of reviews with various content and inconsistent opinions, which makes it difficult for consumers to use the information effectively for decision making. Websites also rank online customer reviews based on helpfulness votes to reduce consumers' time in finding the useful information (Cao, 2011). Many studies have examined the factors that influence review in a positive or negative way, while the main focus of these studies was improving the review system design to encourage more votes. So, we can conclude that the role of customers to write a review about any product or any item online help



other customers to take the right decision when they want to buy online through an application or a website.

### **A Study Focusing on eBay App**

eBay is a multinational e-commerce corporation based in San Jose, California that facilitates consumer-to-consumer and business-to-consumer sales through its website. eBay was founded in 1995 and became a well-known website and used by all the consumers. eBay cover more than 30 countries, as of 2011. The company manages eBay.com, an online auction and shopping website in which people and businesses buy and sell a wide variety of goods and services worldwide. The website is free to use for buyers, but sellers are charged fees for listing items after a limited number of free listings, and again when those items are sold and then eBay created an application to help consumers use it on their smartphones in an easiest way (Chaffey, 2018).

The strategic approach used by eBay to take advantage of increased consumer adoption of the Internet. The 2018 statistics said that over 50% of purchases on eBay in the UK from mobile. At the end of 2017 eBay had 168 million 12-month active buyers, an increase from 90 million actives in 2010. Nearly two-thirds of transactions are now international (Chaffey, 2018). The challenge of growing the business can be seen by the near static GMV (gross merchandise volume) in the last three years. Globally 58% of GMV is now transacted on smartphones. According to the SEC filing (Securities and Exchange Commission) eBay summarizes the core messages to define its proposition as follows, for buyers: trust, value, selection, and convenience. In 2007, eBay introduced “Neighbourhoods” where groups can discuss brands and products they have a high involvement with. (Chaffey, 2018). As for sellers: access to broad global markets, efficient marketing and distribution opportunity to increase sales. Furthermore, Detailed Seller Ratings (DSRs) enable sellers to be reviewed in four areas: item as described, communication, delivery

time and postage and packaging charges. This is part of a move to help increase conversion rate by increasing positive shopping experiences. For example, by including more accurate descriptions with better pictures and avoiding excessive shipping charges (Chaffey, 2018).

According to risk factors of eBay application, fraud is a significant risk factor for eBay. BBC (2005) reported that around 1 in 10,000 transactions within the UK were fraudulent; a very small percentage of transactions, this is a significant volume. Growth strategy of eBay app focused on reinvesting in their customers by improving the buyer experience and seller economics by enhancing their products and services, improving trust and safety and customer support, extending their product offerings into new formats, categories and geographies, and implementing innovative pricing. As for competitors of eBay application, Amazon is one of the biggest competitors of eBay since it also has marketplace sellers integrated into its products listings (Chaffey, 2018).

### **OLX Ease of Use Application**

As stated earlier, OLX is a very easy to use application. It is firstly available on IOS and Android. Posting an ad on OLX Lebanon takes an average of two minutes, according to the growth manager in Lebanon, Maria Nehme (Personal Communication, 2017). Ms. Nehme explained the steps required to place an ad on OLX:

Step 1 - Click on the sell your item button

Step 2 - Choose the category that best fits what you want to sell

Step 3 - Choose the sub-categories that best fits your item

Step 4 - UPLOAD up to eight pictures of your item

Step 5 - Enter the title of your Ad

Step 6 - Mention the Condition, Price and Brand of the item

Step 7 - Write the description

Step 8 - Select your location

Step 9 - Write your Name, E-mail ID & Phone number

Step 10 - Submit the Ad

Once you submit your ad, it will be approved by the moderation team within a short period of time, as long as it complies with the terms and conditions of the application. The moderation team works 24/7 to make sure listings with forbidden items don't go live on the platforms. "There's not a single ad that goes live on OLX Lebanon without it being moderated whether automatically through predefined strict filters or manually by our team" said Nehme (Personal Communication, 2017).

As a responsible and a committed company operating in Lebanon, they always comply by local law and regulation and hence forbid the listing of any illegal item. OLX Lebanon urges its users to contact them if the user suspects act of fraud on the platform. Reporting another user can be done by clicking on the Flag in the bottom of each ad page. Once the user clicks on that flag, the customer support team will be automatically notified, and they will carry out the necessary investigation. OLX prohibits many ads on their application to keep the selling and buying experience very smooth. That's they ban certain items, words and jobs from their platform (Personal Communication, 2017).

All items that are not allowed to be bought or sold by the law are not allowed on the website as well. All items that could lead to direct or indirect harm are not allowed. All items without legitimate ownership papers (if required) are not allowed. All the jobs or services that promote or include illegal job descriptions or indecency are not allowed. All the words that are inappropriate or indecent are also forbidden (Personal Communication, 2017). For example, laser, weapons, self-defense devices, foreigner's residents, fireworks, visas, medications and

supplements, shrinking or enlarging body parts devices, smallest Bluetooth headset, body parts, smallest cameras (spy camera), any motorcycle without ownership papers, sale or purchase database of customers, all bad words or indecency, iPhone locked I-cloud, contact lenses, metal detectors, personal use devices are all on the filter list. Also, any device that can open the encrypted channels, magic books, non-original windows or any programs, CDs, official documents are also prohibited (Personal Communication, 2017).

OLX put some limitations on their users, limitations are present so OLX can control the free spacing for each user. In other words, there is a certain number of advertisements that one can't exceed. Users can upgrade their account by paying a certain amount of money or they can request to increase the free space of the Ad postings by contacting the OLX office (Personal Communication, 2017).

### **On OLX You Can Find Anything You Want**

To make the user experience easier, when a user is looking for an item to buy, OLX can filter the search by location, type of the item, price, and condition. The user can also save his/her search and he/she will start receiving notification emails once a similar item appears on the platform.

### **Features Added to OLX's Platform**

The 'Save Search' feature makes searching for similar items in the search history a lot easier; by simply saving a search, users will automatically receive notifications when similar items appear on any of the OLX Lebanon platforms. As the name suggests, the 'Favorites' feature saves all user-selected favorite items in a personal watch list so no great deals are missed from sight. The enhanced 'Chat' feature allows for easy interactions between potential buyers and sellers via a chat window. Considering distance as a prime criterion, the 'Location Search'

uses the GPS on the device to help search out the listings in the closest proximity to the user. The 'Location Map' also uses the GPS to locate and direct the user to an item on the map (Personal Communication, 2017).

OLX has many search categories; within these categories users can post the Ads according to fit: Vehicles, Properties, Mobile Phones, Electronics, Home and Garden, Fashion and Beauty, Pets, Kids and Babies, Sporting Goods and Bikes, Hobbies, Music, Art, Books, Jobs, Business and Industrial and Services.

All of those categories are divided into subcategories depending on market need. In the Lebanese market the most used categories are the vehicles and properties; this is understandable as it reflects the nature and the culture of buying and selling in Lebanon where people do not consume all types of second hand items and have preferences for properties and vehicles in this case. Properties around 61,577 and vehicles around 89,509 have the highest ticket size among all the other categories this is why choosing to change your car or to move into a new home are one of the most difficult decisions a Lebanese customer can make. (Personal Communication, 2017).

Lebanon, a third world country, with a small average monthly income per person has developed in its culture and among the Lebanese population the price sensitivity behavior (Personal Communication, 2017). OLX has treated this behavior in an intelligent way and attracted the Lebanese population by not taking commissions neither from the seller nor from the buyer, in contrary to any real estate agent especially in the properties category or any car dealer (i.e. vehicles category).

The ads posted on OLX by the seller will be categorized not only by categories, but also by regions. The costumer can search through regions. This searching method will help the costumer to narrow down his/her search and easily communicate with the seller of that specified

location. The Ads also can be modified, edited or removed at any time by the user (Personal Communication, 2017).

According to a Skype interview with Ms. Yara Nemer, Senior Media Relations Executive in RPR (put the full words here) agency, “the Lebanese people use OLX from different areas: Aside from Beirut, Keserwan comes in the first place in terms of traffic to OLX, followed by Tripoli, Aley, Metn, Baabda, Saida, Nabatieh, Chouf, etc.” (Personal Communication, 2017).

"OLX is not reserved to only tech-savvy people as it is very simple to use; people from all age brackets and all socioeconomic classes are using it for different purposes” (Personal Communication, 2017).

According to Nemer, OLX Lebanon is the fifteenth most visited website in Lebanon. OLX Arabia app is the #1 shopping app, and among Lebanon’s top 10 apps on Google Play and Apple Store. According to Nemer OLX has 6,450 unique visitors per day and that is approximately equal to 66,850 pages views on average (Personal Communication, 2017).

Wasseet, one of the famous Lebanese newspapers that includes advertisements to buy and sell products online and printed, has only 3,250 unique visitors per day and that is equal to 32,345 pages views on average (Giving By higher stats).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Uses and Gratification Theory**

The uses and gratifications theory will be utilized for this study. This theory describes that users are totally free and active in choosing and using the media (Blumler & Katz, 1970). According to Blumler (1974) the usage of media depends on each individual, because some may use it to kill their free time, others for social benefits, or for other causes. After all, the user, who is active, is using the media for his/her own benefit and advantages. In perspective of this study, the audience is active and each one can be using sales applications for several reasons.

The uses and gratification approach have four basic assumptions: First, as previously mentioned the audience are considered active rather than passive; this means that they decide what media channels they wish to use in order to satisfy their needs (Katz, 1974). For instance, people might use applications like OLX in order to satisfy their need to purchase a product for a cheaper price, thus they navigate to the site and search for the item gratifying one of their initial steps in the purchasing process.

The second assumption talks about the link between a media choice and the gratification of a need. This idea emphasizes that the user is fully aware of what to absorb from a medium (Katz, 1974). Likewise, the customer who for example wants to buy a used car might use OLX to find a car of his/her liking thus gratifying his/her need.

The third assumption claims that media compete with other resources for need satisfaction (Katz, 1974). This idea shows that there is competition in media to reach satisfaction for users, and to reach their needs. Competition from other sources and/or applications to lure the customer are present, for that reason the OLX team attempts to make the application as easy as possible for all different groups of consumers (Personal Communication, 2017). That said, customers might use

OLX as opposed to Waseet for its ease of use, accessibility and/or popularity among the community.

The fourth assumption claims that individuals give value to certain media (Katz, 1974). This idea stresses the role of the user when choosing what to see or hear because after all the members are active and they are free to consume any media therefore they give it value. For that reason, OLX has to maintain its value in the market by continuing to be a trustworthy source and upholding certain values and regulations in society, such as compliance with the Lebanese sales rules and regulations (e.g., illegal products, weapons) (Personal Communication, 2017). In doing so, the audience might gravitate towards OLX, because they trust the brand; as it is a brand which protects them from unlawful ideas and promises rightful deliveries.

Past researchers have tried to classify the psychological and behavioral aspect of Internet users to identify the underlying motivations for Internet usage. According to Kaye and Johnson (2001), users of the web are more actively involved and engaged in using the Internet, because of its interactivity. Since one of the key strengths attributed to the Internet is its interactivity and since an active audience is the core concept of uses and gratification theory, thus it is regarded as the most effective theoretical basis for studying this medium (Hanjun, 2002). Ruggiero (2000) posits as the rapid growth of the Internet has strengthened the potency of this theory, because this medium requires a higher level of interactivity from its users in comparison with other traditional media. In addition, this level of interactivity and numerous postings allow one to easily question the idea of trust on such networks and/or applications, in this case OLX.



According to previous studies about the uses and gratifications theory, one in particular is indirectly related to the thesis topic, yet important to mention. “What Uses and Gratifications Theory Can Tell Us about Using Professional Networking Sites (like LinkedIn, Viadeo, Xing, SkilledAfricans, Plaxo...)” This study is important as it explains the person’s behavior in the field of Professional Networking Sites by considering the motivations usage for both people and businesses. (Grissa, 2016).

In the digital age, from the early 2000s, the use of this theory has been extended to explain the internet use phenomena, and then virtual communities, and more recently social networks (Grissa, 2016). Nowadays, social networking is very common among the young adults. Mobile apps are gaining popularity by being more useful and helpful by saving time and money.

It is still worth noting however that the uses and gratification theory is not exempt from criticism particularly in the context of traditional media. These criticisms can be summarized in two broad categories:

On the one hand it has a very optimistic and positive vision of media, owing to the belief that social media exists simply to satisfy the needs, desires and interests of people. Moreover, it also considers that individuals are completely free to select media that provides them with the most satisfaction. In fact, in some cases individuals found themselves forced to be followers and exposed to the power of media influence and its socio-political content such as TV and Press (Grissa, 2016).

On the other hand, a very utilitarian perspective of individual behavior concerning the choice of media. In fact, the assumption that media selection is simply the result of purely instrumental behavior leads to the possibility of forgetting that sometimes the use of media could be the result of ritual behavior. This could also lead to ignore

the importance of the sociocultural environment and its ability to influence the media selection (Grissa, 2016).

However, these limits remain in the digital context because the internet gives back more power to individuals. Thus, owing of its interactive features and its many tools, individuals have a choice and become more active (Grissa, 2016).

That is why the use of uses and gratification theory seems to be highly justified in explaining why people use mobile sales applications and the use of social media and social networking sites.

### **Trustworthiness**

According to Haller (2006) trust in mobile applications is defined as the competency belief that an agent would act reliably, dependably and securely within a given context, as well as to stress the importance of trust for the success implementation of any online environment. That is, trust significantly affects the decision of an entity to transact with other entity (Haller, 2006). Haller argues that both consumers and suppliers in an electronic market must trust each other before taking any decisions to consume. If trust is not established between them, they won't share their resources and false transactions may occur regularly (Haller, 2006).

Furthermore, similar to the online environment, trust also plays an essential role in the mobile applications environment. With hundreds of thousands of mobile applications that appear in the app stores, customers are always faced to make a decision or to think twice whether to download the application or no (Liu, 2003). Such decision is even harder to make when there are several mobile apps that have similar functionalities and appear in the application stores and same review, as customers need to decide the most trustworthy mobile application. From customers' point of view, they always prefer to download and consume a mobile

app that is functional, reliable and also with a good quality and delivery time (Schmidt, 2007). However, selecting such functional, reliable and high quality mobile app is challenging. This can be seen from several customers' comments and reviews that are found in the application stores in which customers downloaded the bad quality mobile apps, and they are unsatisfied with their low performance. Therefore, there is a critical need to build the initial trust of mobile apps prior to downloading and consuming them (Schmidt, 2007).

Also, while implementing security measures and policies may reduce the risk of confidential business documents being released to the public, such measures and policies must also be supplemented and strengthened through the use of trust measurement (Patel, 2006). However, such approach may not be favorable for the employees and businesses, particularly when mobile apps improve employee's productivity and bring benefits for businesses (Patel, 2006). Therefore, the efforts to safeguard the critical business information are left with two methods: educating employees for selecting the valid mobile apps, and providing means to measure the trustworthiness of mobile apps prior to downloading and consuming them. Measuring trust of mobile apps is the key that provides the first and additional layer to security and privacy protection (Patel, 2006).

A user's trust in a mobile application is, being highly subjective, inherently hard to measure. It is built up over time and changes with the use of the application due to the influence of many factors. As it is an internal 'state' of the user, there is no way of measuring it directly (Schmidt, 2007). Trust is important because it helps users overcome perceptions of uncertainty and risk and engages in "trust-related behaviors" such as a user's actions to depend on an application or believe the application could perform as expected (Schmidt, 2007).

In addition, according to Ms. Nemer (2017) there are four key points to build trust in an application:

**Have App Store Reviews:**

Having app store reviews helps your app's natural engagement. After checking the app icon and the small description, the most important section that grabs the attention of consumers is the Reviews. If the consumer checks that there are a lot of great opinions, then he/she might give the applications a chance. Otherwise, if users can't stop complaining about its functionalities, then he will leave that place as soon as possible.

**Respond the Feedbacks and Emails:**

If the app has a problem, it should be fixed as soon as possible to predict any bad reviews, and then to respond to each user that try to reach the application. Thank the users of the app for their interest and encourage them to send you messages and emails whenever they have something to say. It is crucial to pay attention to them if you want them to pay attention to your app.

**Ask Only For Necessary Permissions:**

The new feature of OLX after uploading the ad and being activated online, the agents of OLX send a message including four digits as a code for the user to verify that it is not a spam and to get the final approve. The user will feel safe after putting the code because this feature narrow down the numbers of fake accounts and the bias.

**Show That You Care About Loyal Customers:**

The agent of OLX should focus on the profiles of the users and make sure to continue to attract those customers who trust the app. At the end, to show the users an appreciation and to reward those for their interest in the app.

To conclude, the majority of the Lebanese public know Fady Al Khatib the professional Lebanese Basketball player, who posted feedback on OLX Lebanon, after he sold his car while using OLX application. He also felt safe while using it and it was very easy, so he surprised his public by posting a treadmill for sale on OLX while he provided his personal number for his contact back information; for sure it was an unpaid ad and he was asked to do it because he is a well-known figure and the ad was in the middle of the Lebanese Basketball championship which is and added value for OLX to have a higher rates and people will react more with the ad. His idea was that the first person who calls will end up winning the item for free. A woman called was the lucky winner of the treadmill as well as his additional offer for a free one-month membership at his own gym CHAMP. People who the main audience is familiar with can also help increase the trustworthiness appeal which then can encourage use and satisfaction of use.

## **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

To be able to study the reasons behind Lebanese consumers' use of mobile sales applications, and the factors that affect this use, the following research questions and hypotheses will be addressed.

**RQ1:** Are mobile sales applications mostly used by Lebanese people as opposed to web browsers?

**RQ2:** What makes people use the mobile sales application such as OLX?

**RQ3:** Do consumers see OLX as trustworthy in terms of quality and delivery time?

**H1:** There is a variance among the different age groups and their perception of how trustworthy OLX is.

**H2:** In terms of age: a) the ease of use, and b) trust in OLX application are positively related to gratification sought.

## Methodology

This study will be based on a quantitative approach. Quantitative Research is used to quantify the problem by generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into usable statistics. It is used to quantify attitudes, opinions, behaviors, and other defined variables and generalize results from a larger sample population. Quantitative research uses measurable data to formulate facts and uncover patterns in research (Wimmer & Dominick, p. 116, 2013).

An online survey will be distributed to the participants to reach a wide geographic area around Lebanon; it is an inexpensive way to collect a large value of information. The sample, procedure and variables tested are detailed below, along with how the data is analyzed for this study.

### Sample

Participants for the study were recruited through a snowball sample whereby Whatsapp and Facebook users shared the link with their friends allowing the survey to spread to a bigger population. The survey was posted online in April 10, for five days to reach a high number of participants.

Participants were informed that the survey was going to be confidential and anonymous. The sample for the study originally consisted of 321 respondents; however, the elimination of incomplete or nonresponsive surveys left a total of 253 respondents that use and have access to OLX application. 44.7% (113) of the respondents were male and 55.3% (140) female. The respondents ranged in age from 17 to 66 ( $M = 32.24$ ,  $SD = 7.81$ ). 53.6% of the participants in this study check the OLX application daily, 8.3% do not, and 38.1% check it sometimes. 46.8% of the participants use the OLX application for less than 50 minutes; all other time spent on the app is indicated in the chart below:

In a typical day, how many hours do you spend on OLX?

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Less than 50 minutes	118	46.8
1-2 hours	86	34.1
3-4 hours	29	11.5
5-6 hours	12	4.8
7-8 hours	4	1.6
9 or more hours	3	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Procedure**

A survey link was disseminated to all participants and responses were collected via Qualtrics in April 15. Participation was strictly voluntary, and responses were only used for academic purposes. An online-based survey was conducted during spring of 2018, where all participants agreed to take part in the survey by accepting the terms and following instructions. Applicants were also notified that the online survey was going to be confidential and anonymous. They were free to end their participation at any time. The removal of incomplete or nonresponsive surveys left a total of 68 respondents who don't use OLX application.

### **Variables**

The questionnaire consisted of demographic variables, application usage and consumption, as well as uses and gratifications indicators and trust in order to best measure the research questions and test the proposed hypotheses. The variables are conceptualized and operationalized below.

**Demographics:** Participants were asked to specify their gender and age. Age was first asked by allowing the participant to state how old he/she is, then the researcher categorized age into four main categories 17-24, 25-34, 35-44, and 45 and above.



**OLX Consumption:** Participants were asked to specify whether they used the OLX application. They also had to indicate if they use the OLX application, if so whether they do on a daily basis. In addition, participants were asked to specify how many hours they spend on a daily bases using the OLX application. Participants were then asked if they have bought something from the OLX application and what the products where. Lastly, they were asked if it easy to find the product they are searching for (yes, sometimes, no).

**Quality:** Quality refers to the condition the product was in relation to the description posted on the application. Participants were asked to specify if the quality of product is same like the description of it.

**Delivery:** This variable refers to whether the product was delivered on time and the speed at which it reached them, as well as the reliability of the delivery of the product and the coverage. Time was measured by asking participants to specify if they received the product on time by choosing yes, sometimes or no. Speed was measured using a Likert-type scale of strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 5. Reliability of the product was also measured using a five point agreement scale. Participants were asked to rate the level of agreement with whether the OLX application covers all geographical regions in Lebanon.

**Trustworthiness:** Trust indicates how much a person can believe and depend on the application. Trust was first measured by asking participants to state whether they trust the OLX application. That question was followed up with why or why not question to allow the participants to write an explanation for their answer. However, for such an abstract variable, it was tested by nine statements, created by the researcher, such as “OLX categories and subcategories are accurate” and “OLX shows the products as they are (without changing their

appearance) on a Likert-type scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree to ensure reliability of the measure ( $\alpha = .875$ ,  $M = 4.21$ ,  $SD = 0.53$ ).

**Uses and Gratifications:** Uses and gratifications refers to people using the OLX application to gratify certain needs. This variable was measured using a Likert-type scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. A total of eight items adapted from X person (year) were used. The items included statements such as “I use OLX because it is an application that allows me to see what is available for better prices” and “I use OLX because it offers a variety of choices” ( $\alpha = .815$ ,  $M = 4.178$ ,  $SD = .491$ ).

### **Data Analysis**

The results were examined for outliers. The results of the study were based on 253 participants instead of 321 original set of participants.

Three research questions and two hypotheses drove this research, the research questions are: (1) Are mobile sales applications mostly used by Lebanese people as opposed to web browsers? (2) What makes people use the mobile sales application such as OLX? (3) Do consumers see OLX as trustworthy according to quality and delivery time? These three research questions were tested through frequencies and descriptive analysis.

Hypothesis 1 looked at the variance among the different age groups and their perception of how trustworthy OLX is. This hypothesis was examined through an Univariate ANOVA and Tukey’s post hoc test. Hypothesis 2a in perspective of age, the ease of use relates to gratifications sought was analyzed through Univariate ANOVA and a post hoc test. However, for Hypothesis 2b, to see if there is a relationship between trustworthiness and gratifications sought while accounting for age, hierarchical regression was used.

## Results

### Application versus Web Browsers

81.8% of participants are likely to use sales applications like OLX, Al Waseet for shopping than Web browsers (18.2%) such as Amazon, and Ali Express.

### OLX Consumption, Quality, and Delivery

When asked if they have bought anything from the OLX application 86.8% said yes and the rest 13.2% said no. The item that was most likely to have been bought on OLX by the participants was vehicles (47.4%). This matches OLX statistics in Lebanon for the application is known for as the number one application for selling cars (Personal Communication, 2017). The second item was mobile phones with 31.2% of the participants attesting to purchasing these devices from the application. Other items such as fashion, beauty, pets, home, garden, electronics, and sports made up a total of 21.4% of the purchases. When asked if the quality of the product matched the application description 81.5% said yes, the quality is similar the description, 17.6% said sometimes it matches, and 0.9% said that it wasn't the same. In relation to the ease of searching for a product, 70.8% said it was easy, 27.3% claimed it was sometimes, 0.8% said it wasn't, and 1.2% did not answer. In addition, participants were asked if the delivery of their product was on time; 86.6% said yes, 12.5% said sometimes and 0.9% said that it was late. As far as speed of delivery, 36.0% strongly agreed that the item was received in a fast manner, 48.8% agreed, while 8.3% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 2.1% disagreed, and 0.4% strongly disagreed about the fast turnaround. Furthermore, 87.2% believe that OLX is reliable in delivering their products, and only 1.6% think otherwise, 11.2% were indifferent. In addition, the participants also believe that the OLX application covers all of Lebanon, with 90.1% agreement, and only 1.6% disagreement and 8.3% neutral.

## **Trust**

93.6% of the participants trust OLX application, however 6.4% do not. Those who do not trust the application claimed the reason they don't was because the app contained many fake accounts, descriptions of the item were very bad, the prices were not fixed, people used the app to trick buyers, and/or they had a bad experience with the application itself. The percentages below are based on the 242 participants who fully answered (11 were missing). 54.5% of participants said that the categories and subcategories are accurate, while 0.8% claimed they are not, and 11.2% were neutral. When asked if OLX seems to be objective in their posts by allowing the seller to write the product descriptions, 31% strongly agreed, 55.4% agreed, 10.7% were neutral and 0.4% strongly disagreed. 41.3% strongly agreed that OLX shows the products as they are (without changing their appearance), 43.4% agreed, and 0.8% strongly disagreed.

When asked if OLX is a stable application which delivers the message without any bugs or crashes, 38% strongly agreed, 46.3% agreed and 1.2% strongly disagreed. 38.8% of the participants said that OLX application is more credible than other apps that post products for sale, 47.5% agreed, and 0.4% strongly disagreed. In relation to OLX having fast delivery like it promises, 36% strongly agreed, 49.8% agreed and 0.4% strongly disagreed. Finally, 38.0% of participants claimed that OLX is a trustworthy sales application, 50.8% agreed and 0.8% strongly disagreed, while only 2.1% did not think it was. All of these were indicators of perceiving the application as trustworthy.

## **Uses and Gratifications**

Participants use OLX for various reasons, such as its ease of access, variety of choices it offers, and consumer feedback, to name a few. 25.6% of participants strongly agreed that they

use OLX because it is different from traditional shopping, 61.6% agreed, while 10.7% were neutral, 1.7% did not think it was and 0.4% strongly disagreed. When asked if they use OLX because it is safe, 34.7% strongly agreed, 50% agreed, and 12% were neutral and 0.4% strongly disagreed. 32.2% strongly agreed that they use OLX because it divides the products into easy access items, 57% agreed, and 3.3% disagreed.

When asked if they use OLX because it is leading in sales application, 34.7% strongly agreed, 47.5% agreed and 0.8% strongly disagreed. 33.5% of the participants said that use OLX because it has variety of choices, 55.8% agreed, and 1.7% disagreed on this statement. In relation to the use of OLX because it is an application that allows us to see what is available for better prices, 36% strongly agreed, 49.2% agreed and 0.8% strongly disagreed. According to the participants that use OLX because it is a very updated application fast, smart, follow the trend, 36.6% strongly agreed, 50.4% agreed and 0.8% strongly disagreed. Finally, 42.6% of participants use OLX because it has reviews which help the consumer know more about the product, 41.3% agreed and 1.2% strongly disagreed, while only 2.9% did not think it was. All of these were indicators of uses and gratification.

### **Hypothesis 1: Age and Trustworthiness**

Univariate ANOVA indicated a statistical significant difference among the different age groups and trustworthiness of OLX application ( $F(1, 238) = 17.260, p < .05, \eta = .179$ ). Tukey's post hoc test was run to examine which groups had a greater significance. Results indicated that 35-44 ( $M = 4.43, SD = .444$ ) saw the application as more trustworthy than the other age groups 25-34 ( $M = 4.21, SD = .520$ ), and 17-24 ( $M = 3.76, SD = .535$ ). There was no significant difference for the 45 and above age group category and the rest.

## **Hypothesis 2a: Ease of Use and Gratifications Sought**

To examine the ease of searching on the application and uses and gratifications sought, while considering age, a Univariate ANOVA was used. The test indicated a significant statistical difference among the age groups and those who thought the application was easy (Age:  $F(3, 232) = 8.273, p < .05, \eta = .097$ ); Ease:  $F(2, 232) = 6.388, p < .05, \eta = .052$ ). Those who thought the application was easy to use ( $M = 4.125, SD = .060$ ) were more likely to use it for its various gratifications than those who thought sometimes ( $M = 3.904, SD = .074$ ) and of course than those who didn't think it was easy ( $M = 3.375, SD = .301$ ). However, there was no significance between those who sometimes think it is easy and those who do not think it is easy. In relation to age, there was significance among the age groups, such that 35-44-yearolds ( $M = 4.039, SD = .146$ ) use it for gratifications more than 45 and above ( $M = 3.865, SD = .163$ ), more than 17-24 ( $M = 3.826, SD = .068$ ) which are also more than 25-34 ( $M = 3.789, SD = .146$ ). There was a significant difference among 17-24 and all groups except for 45 and above. Also, the same pattern was true for 25-34 and all the groups. However, when it comes to the age group of 35-44 there was a significant difference among this age category and all the rest.

## **Hypothesis 2b: Trustworthiness and Gratifications**

Hypothesis 2b: Hierarchical regression indicated that there is a strong positive relationship between trustworthiness and gratifications ( $b = .679, SE = .040, r = .743, p < .05$ ). Trustworthiness accounts for 55.3% of gratifications sought when controlling for age (although age on its own does not hold to be significant). In addition, to these findings an independent t-test was done to double check whether those who claimed they trust OLX will in fact be gratified by the application as opposed to those who do not trust the application. Results indicated a

statistically significant difference between those who said yes they trust OLX ( $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = .423$ ) and those who said no ( $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = .464$ ) ( $t(1, 16.814) = 8.247$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

## **Discussion**

This study reveals information about the Lebanese consumer's use of the sales application OLX, an intermediary with the buyer and seller where one can find all kinds of products with competitor prices, fast delivery, and short period of time. Also, OLX has a wide range of products, including computers, cell phones, furniture, sporting goods, services, cars, real estate, and many more categories that consumers can benefit from and use. The survey participants found OLX to be trustworthy in delivering its products in the same way advertised/promoted. This research focused on questions evaluating elements such as trustworthiness, quality, delivery time, age group, ease of use, and consumption of OLX. Discussed below are the ways the results of this study enhance the theory and concepts used and suggest practical application of such variables and associations.

### **Mobile Sales Application versus Web Browsers**

The first research question examined whether Lebanese people use mobile sales applications more than the web browsers. There is a big difference between web browsers and online applications like OLX. OLX became the trend today in the region after a big success (Khan, 2016) which is consistent with the results of this study where the participants are more likely to use mobile sales applications like OLX more than using web browsers. People tend to follow new trends, and OLX is exactly that, however its value comes from its buyer seller relationship; one perhaps that is based on trust (as will be further discussed below). Thus, application developers are motivating consumers to engage due to the creation of these apps to be fast, smart, and accessible. It is the easy on-the-go access that provides an added value over the web browsers. In the ecommerce space, the contrast between mobile apps and web browsers is even more evident: mobile app users spend an average of 201.8 minutes per month shopping,



compared to 10.9 minutes/month for website users (Bworld, 2016). Moreover, more people own mobile phones than desktops or laptops, which means mobile marketing reaches a far wider and diverse audience (Hassan, 2015).

According to the results indicated in this research, 81.8% of participants are likely to use sales applications (e.g., OLX, Al Waseet) for shopping than Web browsers (18.2%) such as Amazon, and Ali Express. OLX in Lebanon is the fifteenth most visited website. OLX Arabia app is the #1 shopping app, and among Lebanon's top 10 apps on Google Play and Apple Store (Personal Communication, 2017). So, in all the MENA region the use of OLX application is more than these websites listed. Moreover, OLX app is platform through which a vast number of objects and services can be sold and the seller can meet with the buyer at anytime and anywhere, while for instance "Amazon does not let you capture a buyer's email" one of the cons of the Amazon website (Von Bernuth, 2014, para 4).

### **Why Use OLX**

The second research question was posed to ask people what makes them use the mobile sales application OLX; this question allowed the researcher to gain insight about the uses and gratifications of OLX sales application. OLX has many features that help the consumers post their product or to buy anything from this application. It includes many categories, vehicles, properties, mobile phones, electronics, home and garden, fashion and beauty, pets, kids and babies, sporting goods and bikes, hobbies, music, art, books, jobs, business and industrial and services (Personal Communication, 2017). It is very easy for the buyer and seller to know what to select or which category to choose and search. There is a wide variety of products, and out of all the categories available, the category that ranks number one in relation to purchase by the participants was vehicles (47.4%) and the second category was mobile phones with 31.2% of

participants purchasing these devices from the OLX application. Also, OLX covers all regions in Lebanon; if one is interested in posting any products the application is linked directly to the GPS and it registers the person's location. It is a very updated and smart app that anyone can use and have easy access to it by simply creating an account. The app can be downloaded and found on android and app stores (Personal Communication, 2017); again, this shows how accessible the application is and free for all who would like to use.

### **Is OLX Trustworthy?**

The third research question was used to see if consumers see OLX as trustworthy with respect to quality and delivery time. According to the interview with Ms. Nehme OLX is a secure application and it is monitored by the moderation team who is in charge of quality control. The team also checks the ads within a short period of time, as long as a person's ad complies with the terms and conditions of the platform then it remains posted; if someone is posting unwarranted illegal items, then such items that are unlawful (e.g., weapons) are automatically refuted. Thus, there is control on OLX application and all posts require approval. In addition to the team, any user can stop an ad if they see that it is harmful or have any doubts that it belongs to a fake account. The user can report this presumably fake account or post at anytime.

On such a demanded application, which has 6,450 unique visitors per day covering all regions, quality control is a must (Personal Communication, 2017). To strive for quality, each and every product uploaded on OLX should contain a full description including the location price, size and a detailed description of the product; doing so provides an added value for this application.

To attest to the aforementioned, when asked if the quality of the product matched the application description 81.5% of participants said yes, the quality is same like the description. This is what gives OLX an advantage of other app you can see each detail before buying the product and also you can read reviews posted by other consumers. The seller also can check how many views his/her ad had and he/she can boost it by paying a specific amount so the ad will get more viewers in turn more calls that the seller will get (Personal Communication, 2017); this is similar to paid advertising

Furthermore, concerning the delivery time of products, participants also had a favorable attitude about the delivery time of their products whereby 86.6% claimed that their products were delivered on time. This is an impressive number given that there were a variety of products listed by the participants in which they purchased; in other words, regardless of the product type people are satisfied with the delivery time. In addition, 84.8% of participants agreed (36.0% strongly agree and 48.8% agree) that there is speed in the process of acquiring about the product to actual delivery. This shows the importance of the two-way communication between the buyer and the seller; when the buyers and sellers have ongoing communication with one another, the mission of selling and buying the product becomes easier for both and with the contact the buying and selling process becomes more comfortable and the deal done. Moreover, 87.2% of participants agreed that OLX is reliable in delivering their products. This shows, that the majority of the participants would purchase again and/or keep returning to OLX for various products because they see it as reliable, has high quality and credible in relation to delivery time and postings communicated about the products all of which breed trust in the application.

Sure enough, 93.6% of the participants said that they trust OLX application; for those very few (6.4%) who do not trust the application, the reasons were that the app contained many

fake accounts, descriptions of the item were very bad and other such reasons. The trust issue is very important for costumers for both the buyer and seller because the buyer wants to buy a product that will be guaranteed and in good condition and quality; for the seller, he/she want to sell his/her product in a fast way also to a person with a legitimate account (Personal Communication, 2017). In addition, 88.0% (38.0% strongly agreed and 50.8% agreed) that OLX is a trustworthy sales application. One can conclude that all of above are indicators that show that the application is perceived as trustworthy. So, when people trust an application and more specifically OLX, then one can conclude that OLX has very high potential to lead in the market and is currently the case as the most used application in the MENA region.

Furthermore, trustworthiness was tested on another level and differentiated among the age groups and their perceptions of how trustworthy the OLX application is. Results of this first hypothesis indicated that there was a significant difference between the age groups such that the second youngest age group (25-34) had more positive perceptions of trustworthiness than all the other groups; the other three groups showed significant differences. The people between 25 and 34 can still be considered young users, who grew up with the Internet and at the same time aware of its use and presumably know what they want and have the authority to purchase products such as cars, cell phones etc. without the approval or permission from their parents (Personal Communication, 2017). The older age groups might be more resistant to maneuvering different applications or unlike their younger counterparts, already have the ordinary big products (e.g., cars) from the other age.

The second hypothesis was divided into two segments combining the ease and trust of OLX use with respect to also in the perspective of age and gratifications sought. The first segment, ease of use, there was a significant statistical difference among the age groups and

those who thought the application was easy to use. According to Ms. Nehme (2017), the application is very easy to use because it is divided to many categories and each category divided into subcategories full of descriptions. According to the results, 61.6% agreed that they use OLX because it is different from traditional shopping, 57% strongly agreed that they use OLX because it divides the products into easy access items, 55.8% agreed that it has variety of choices. All these statements are proof enough that OLX application is different than other sales applications, because it has many features that are listed above and the vast majority of participants agreed on all these features which give OLX an added value in relation to the same parameters given by other application.

More specifically, in relation to age, there was significance among the age groups, such that 35-44 year olds ( $M = 4.039$ ,  $SD = .146$ ) use the application for gratifications more than 45 and above ( $M = 3.865$ ,  $SD = .163$ ), more than 17-24 ( $M = 3.826$ ,  $SD = .068$ ) which are also more than 25-34 ( $M = 3.789$ ,  $SD = .146$ ). There was a significant difference among 17-24 and all groups except for 45 and above. Also, the same pattern was true for 25-34 and all the groups. The results showed above that OLX is an application that we can use easily. The results show that the age group 35-44 years old use the application more than others age groups,

Then hypothesis 2b) was posed to measure trust in OLX application and the gratifications sought. There was a strong positive relationship, in which trustworthiness accounts for 55.3% of gratifications sought when controlling for age. Trust is a key determining factor for seeking product searches via OLX application and in turn getting gratified by the application. Thus, one can conclude that the relationship between trustworthiness and gratification is a bonding factor and that the majority of all users of OLX trust the application and are satisfied with their purchase of products. The idea of trust can also encourage participants to write reviews and

comments (being involved in the community of buyers and sellers) - comments which others are heavily relying on for their own personal purchasing decisions. Trust is demanded for a lot of things to function, likewise trust is need and offered on OLX for its continuous success.

## **Limitations**

There were several limitations due to the use of an online survey to conduct the research. Even if online surveys are able to accomplish higher response rates than that the traditional approaches, internet users nowadays are frequently bombarded by messages. Participants may also believe that online surveys raise ethical concerns and can attack their privacy. However, all participants were promised confidentiality and remained anonymous throughout the study.

Another limitation of the study is the fact that the research doesn't know exactly who is filling out the questionnaire; one can only assume that others have the goodwill to present themselves as honestly as possible. However, like any other study researchers base their results on self-reports of individuals.

Due to the type of sample chosen, snowball, researcher bias could have been a factor since the list of people approached, at least at the start, were the researcher's Facebook friend group. This could create like-minded individual bias, yet such types of error were controlled for.

Furthermore, because of the sample, generalization can't be made, however that was not the aim of this study. It is true that the convenience sample permitted snowballing to occur; however, the weakness to this distribution method is that the survey reached only a limited population. As a result, the distribution method formed limited representation of sections in the answers.

Future research should investigate further why the very few participants did not have favorable attitudes about OLX, especially the reasons they have stated that halts trust. In addition, future research should look at whether the gratifications sought were actually obtained with continuous purchase.

## Conclusion

This study isn't the first that discusses the reasons behind consumers' use of sales applications, several researchers explored this topic and their analysis helped to start this research on reasons behind Lebanese consumers' use of sales applications. Although there are several past researches about consumer's use of sales application, this was the first study known to have explored the topic in Lebanon and more specifically on a leading sales application OLX. Today, people use mobile sales application in general for different reasons to satisfy their needs and wants. For instance, buying products from different region in Lebanon; a service which comes with free delivery, good quality products and in a short duration of time.

Information discovered in this study proved that OLX is an easy application to use; it has many categories and subcategories including all kinds of products like cars, properties, and mobile phones, in which people are purchasing. According to the participants in this research who believe OLX is an easy application to use with a fast period of time in delivery of products. Also, OLX can be trusted and there is a significance in trusting this application, which can imply that Lebanese people might no longer be hesitant in using online applications hence moving towards other systems of online purchases and mobile pay. All age groups use this application and can benefit from it because it is the leading application in mobile sales applications and especially in the MENA region and in Lebanon; this has future implications for business owners and entrepreneurs.

OLX plays a major role in providing information about their products accompanied with a full description. This platform makes it quicker and easier for a person to search out products and to find his/her request in a fast way; its success can be used as a model for other businesses. The prices are very competitive on OLX because this application functions without commission, so the two-way interaction takes place directly between the buyer and seller. Also, the products found in



this app, and according to the results, are well presented a value needed to maintain its standards and image.

Furthermore, eBay is a well-known website and used in all region and a competitor of OLX but as there is a lot of difference between them, OLX has many features better than eBay like you can post anything for free but eBay the customer should pay to post his product online also the seller will pay for the shipping and he/she will wait for delivery time, in OLX it is easier and faster, because all the products that you are searching for are in the region near you. According to the part of privacy and security and to be safe when you are purchasing a product OLX has a feature to put a 4-digit number before you upload your ad and there is agents on OLX that control the bias and the fake accounts in eBay this feature doesn't exist. We can conclude that OLX has many advantages on eBay and maybe that's why all Lebanese people choose it and use it and this also a reason why OLX is one of the leading applications in our region.

Finally, and in summary, it is essential to understand why Lebanese consumers use OLX, the modernized way people have available to them for buying and selling products, while there is a lot of competitors in the market and a lot of application are being born but still OLX is leading and being successful. This is one of the reasons that I focused on to choose this application a topic for my thesis.

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**Appendix A: Questionnaire, Figures, Tables and Charts.**

**OLX Lebanon Questionnaire**

I would appreciate your assistance with this research while investigating the reasons behind Lebanese consumers' use of mobile sales applications, specifically OLX. All you need to do is complete this questionnaire, which should take approximately 10 minutes. Responses will be completely anonymous; your name will not appear anywhere on the survey. Pressing the next button constitutes your consent to participate.

Please specify your gender.

Male

Female

How old are you?

---

.....

Do you shop online?

Yes

No

---

What do you use the most for shopping?

Sales applications (ex. OLX, Al Waseet...)

Web browsers (ex. Amazon, Ali express..)

---

Do you have OLX application?

Yes

No

**Skip To: End of Survey If Do you have OLX application? = No**

---

Do you check OLX application daily?

- Yes
  - Sometimes
  - No
- 

In a typical day, how many hours do you spend on OLX?

- Less than 50 minutes
  - 1-2 hours
  - 3-4 hours
  - 5-6 hours
  - 7-8 hours
  - 9 or more hours
- 

Page Break

---

It is easy to find the product you are searching for

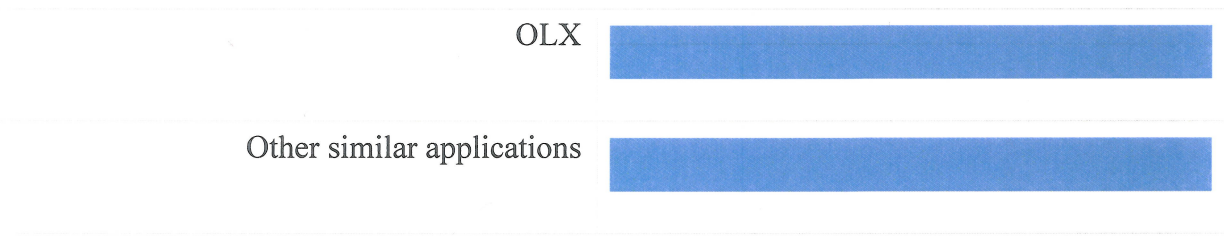
- Yes
- Sometimes
- No

Do you trust OLX?

- Yes
- No, specify why? \_\_\_\_\_

Compared to other sales application how would you rank OLX? (Slide the bar...10 being the highest)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10





Have you bought something from OLX?

Yes

No

What are some of the items you have searched for on OLX? Select all that apply.

Vehicles

Properties

Mobile Phones

Fashion and Beauty

Pets

Home and Garden

Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

*Display This Question:*

*If Have you bought something from OLX? = Yes*

What are some of the things you bought?

---

---

---

---

---

*Display This Question:*

*If Have you bought something from OLX? = Yes*

Is the quality of the product the same like the description of it?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No

*Display This Question:*

*If Have you bought something from OLX? = Yes*

Was the delivery on time?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No

Rate the level of agreement or disagreement in relation to the following:

I use OLX because it is....

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
OLX categories and subcategories are accurate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
OLX seems to be objective in their posts by allowing the seller to write the product descriptions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
OLX shows the products as they are (without changing their appearance).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

OLX is a  
stable  
application  
which  
delivers the  
message  
without any  
bugs or  
crashes.

OLX  
application is  
more credible  
than other  
apps that post  
products for  
sale (ex.  
cars).

OLX covers  
all areas in  
Lebanon.

OLX is  
reliable in its  
delivery of  
products .

OLX has fast  
delivery like  
it promises.

OLX is a  
trustworthy  
sales  
application.

## Appendix B: Tables and Graphs

A graph of NRF (National Retail Federation) of retail online spending time during Black Friday that shows mobile users are more than web users.

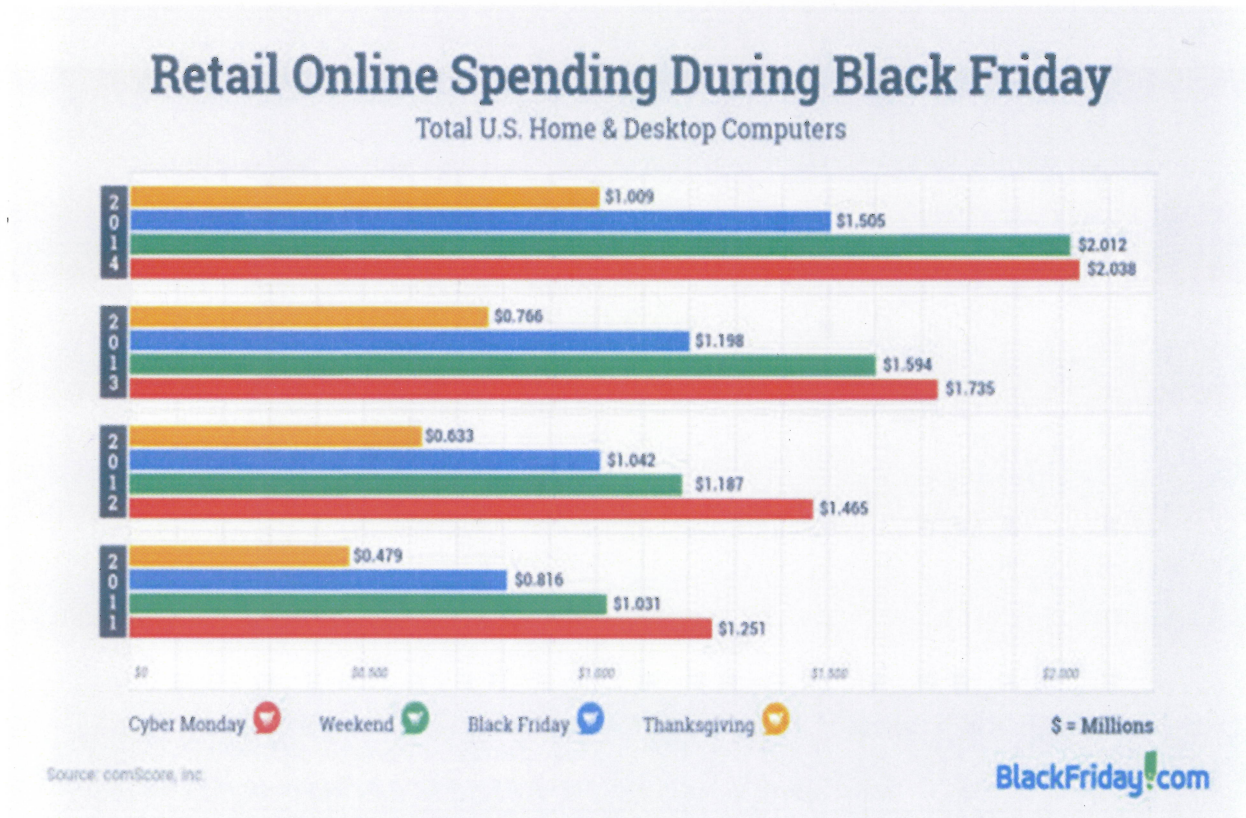


Table showing the participants' number of time spent per day using OLX application.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Less than 50 minutes	118	46.8
1-2 hours	86	34.1
3-4 hours	29	11.5
5-6 hours	12	4.8
7-8 hours	4	1.6
9 or more hours	3	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>100</b>