How People Use Copilot Depends On Device, Microsoft Says via @sejournal, @MattGSouthern

How people use Microsoft Copilot depends on whether they're at a desk or on their phone.

That is the core theme in the company's analysis of 37.5 million Copilot conversations sampled between January and September.

The research examines consumer Copilot usage patterns across device types and time of day. The authors say they used machine-based classifiers to categorize conversations by topic and intent without any human review of the messages.

What The Report Says

On mobile, Health and Fitness is the most common topic throughout the day

The authors summarize the split this way:

> *"On mobile, health is the dominant topic, which is consistent across every hour and every month we observed, with users seeking not just information but also advice."*

Desktop usage follows a different rhythm. Technology leads as the top topic overall, but the researchers report that work-related conversations rise during business hours.

They describe “three distinct modes of interaction: the workday, the constant personal companion, and the introspective night.”

During the workday, the paper says:

- Between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., “Work and Career” overtakes “Technology” as the top topic on desktop.
- Education and science topics rise during business hours compared to nighttime.

Outside business hours, the paper describes a shift toward more personal and reflective topics. For example, it reports that “Religion and Philosophy” rises in rank during late-night hours through dawn.

Programming conversations are more common on weekdays, while gaming rises on weekends. They also note a spike in relationship conversations on Valentine’s Day.

Methodology Caveats

A few limitations are worth keeping in mind.

This is a preprint, so it hasn’t been peer reviewed. It also focuses on consumer Copilot usage and excludes enterprise-authenticated traffic, so it doesn’t describe how Copilot is used inside Microsoft 365 at work.

Finally, the topic and intent labels come from automated classifiers, which means the results reflect how Microsoft’s system groups conversations, not a human-coded review.

Why This Matters

This paper suggests that the use of AI chatbots varies with context. The researchers describe mobile behavior as consistently health-oriented, while desktop behavior is more tied to the workday.

The researchers connect the mobile health pattern to how people use their phones. They write:

> *“This suggests a device-specific usage pattern where the phone serves as a constant confidant for physical well-being, regardless of the user’s schedule.”*

The big takeaway is that “Copilot usage” is not one uniform behavior. Device and time of day appear to shape what people ask for, and how they ask it.

Looking Ahead

Enterprise usage patterns may look different, especially inside Microsoft 365. Any follow-up research that includes workplace contexts, or that validates these patterns outside Microsoft’s own tooling and taxonomy, would help clarify how broadly these findings apply.

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