LEVELS AND PATTERN OF USE OF GLOBAL SYSTEM FOR MOBILE TELECOMMUNICATIONS (GSM) POTENTIALS AMONG SELECTED ELITE GROUP IN ABEOKUTA

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ABSTRACT
This study employed a descriptive survey research design to investigate the level and pattern of the use of GSM cell phones among selected elite class in Abeokuta. A rational-logical-analysed instrument was used to elicit information on the variables studied from purposefully selected sample size of 365 participants drawn from students, academic and administrative staff at Moshood Abiola Polytechnic, Abeokuta; Federal College of Education, Abeokuta and Ogun State Government Ministries. The data elicited were analyzed, frequency count and simple percentages to answer the research questions. The analysis showed that, though there is high level of GSM handsets among selected elite groups in Abeokuta, some functions are being underutilized. In addition, the GSM has great potentials are being used more for entertainment than business purposes. Based on these, it was recommended that GSM service providers and regulators should continuously promote education and business use of all functions of the handsets. This would not only promote their businesses but also the national development.

KEYWORDS: G.S.M, Use level, Use pattern, Elite groups, G.S.M impact.

LEVELS AND PATTERN OF USE OF GLOBAL SYSTEM FOR MOBILE TELECOMMUNICATIONS (GSM) POTENTIALS

INTRODUCTION

That Information and Communication Technology (ICT) play crucial role in every facet of life is not in doubt (Peterson, 1990). According to Ndukwe (2008), today, we live in an information age characterized by the use of information and communication technology resources in nearly all aspects of human endeavours and I.C.T tools have taken the center stage in shaping the world economy and will continue to do so far into the foreseeable future. Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (2003) defines Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as comprising technologies that facilitate communication and the processing and transmission of information by electronic means, ranging from radio and television to telephones (fixed or mobile), computers and internet. Omoniyi and Agbatogun (2006) describe it as a means of generating, processing, transporting and presenting information, which has brought about unprecedented increase in the pace and intensity of human communication and development. Thus, ICT builds on the potentials of electronic communication for connecting and accessing various ends in the information pathways. Global system for Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) is a form of

computer and a tool of ICT. According to Ogunsanwo, Owodunni, and Adebowale (2007) communication got a monumental boost when GSM was introduced to Nigeria in 2001. They define a mobile phone as "a low powered lightweight radio transceiver that provides voice telephone and other services to users".

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mobile telephone services in earlier times were basic services. The mobile subscribers were assigned to use one specific channel. Mobile units were assigned distinctive telephone numbers, based upon the coded channel designator upon which they were permitted to operate. Today, telecom signals are digital. Therefore, unlike previous cellular system, GSM uses digital radio techniques, with its attendant multivarious services and potential benefits. The new generation mobile sets provide a very large retinue of services that typically does everything a personal assistant would do, but with greater speed, efficiency and level of cost efficiency. A typical cell phone has about thirty five features or functions. These functions could be grouped under: call, messaging, contacts, call logs, positioning, setting, operation menu, gallery, media, push to talk, applications, organizer, web, SIM services and Personal Computer (PC) connectivity functions, respectively. Oketunji (2008) reports that not only do large percentage of the population make call regularly, they willingly spend several naira per month on personal communications due to its many benefits. According to the reports:

> *"ability to make such calls can either avoid a time-consuming and potentially risky trip, or by scheduling appointments, make the trip more effective. All of these benefits can improve quality of life, reduce cost and reduce time spent away from home or income-producing activities"*.

By these, it is able to enhance faster delivery time, minimize the cost of administration, streamline operations, enhance internal and external communications and networking and research work, leverage the limited human resources, increase productivity and contribute to market expansion, among others. According to Daniel (2005), GSM creates a wide range of employment, employment opportunities, increase efficiency and productivity of the informal sector of the economy and significant traffic decongestion. Its range of applicability continues to expand. In fact, the National Orientation Agency (NOA) of Nigeria sent text messages to mobile telephone handset users to encourage them to participate in the last national census in Nigeria. Also it is now a popular means of summoning and follow-up of both official and unofficial meetings and advertisement of products and services. Many commercial banks now use it to transact businesses with their customers.

Recent developments have enabled a large percentage of Nigerians to have access to acquisition of handsets and connect to various GSM networks. Government policy statements and the selling points of the increasing number of telecom providers is to make more and more Nigerians have access to GSM services regardless of sex, status, location, age and income level. Ndukwe (2008) reports that the number of connected telephones lines have risen from a mere 400,000 lines in pre-2001 to over 55 million lines as at July, 2008. According to Lucas Ajanaku (2008), industry mobile sales volume will be approximately 1.26 billion Naira in 2008 from its 1.14billion in 2007. The National Bureau of Statistics reports on Core Welfare Indicator Survey (2006) show that, unlike personal computer and fixed phones, GSM is rapidly taking its place as an essential household welfare indicator like radio set, television set and wristwatch. It could even be suggested that GSM is capable of replacing these. This is because most mobile phones have facilities for

these. Many of the mobile phone users now go about without wristwatches. Such a device is also critical in an era of e-office or paperless office advocacy and trend. These suggest that GSM has great potentials for increasing personal effectiveness at work and hence national development. As a result, it is expected to impact positively on human performance and the nation's economy. However, the real contribution of GSM cannot be judged mainly on accessibility and potentials. Adedoyin (2006) has asserted that the potential benefits of ICT have been grossly limited by high level of computer illiteracy among researcher and end users. This suggest that the wide spread access to GSM may not have been accompanied by a corresponding level of use efficiency, effectiveness and maximization of contribution to national economy. Thus the real contribution of GSM as a family ICT can only be determined by and dependent on the extent to which its potentials are understood and are actually used maximally for effective service delivery in the economy. This is why Ndukwe (2008) stressed the importance of adequate and timely consumer information and education on these products and services without which they would be unable to optimally derive value for their money. The introduction and wide spread use of GSM was accompanied by such consumer education on Gateway Television in Ogun State by a popular GSM vendor, Mr. Soyinka, the managing director of First Gloria, Abeokuta. The programme has since stopped. Unfortunately, the effect of this and the absence of such programme have not been focused in recent research efforts. This study would therefore reveal the level of adequacy of earlier efforts at consumer education and the problems which maximum utilization of the potentials of GSM which can be resolved. It would therefore enable the GSM phone users to derive greater value for their money and guide the marketing activities of service providers and the National Communication Commission (NCC) in their regulatory agencies functions.

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

If the above potential benefits of GSM are maximally utilized by the well over 1.26billion Nigerian owners of handsets, personal effectiveness and national development is expected to be boosted. This is supposed to be more so among elite groups such as academic staff, students, as well as administrative staff in both the civil services and the tertiary institutions in Abeokuta. These are the people who, according to Scotts (2003) are likely to use GSM more than their less exposed social classes.

However, given the low level of efficiency and effectiveness being reported in Nigeria, one is inclined to suggest that the GSM is not making the expected level of contribution. A possible explanation of this is that the owners of the handsets are not optimizing its potentials. This might conceptually be due to the ignorance of its many functions or inability to use them effectively or satisfactorily. This study therefore investigated the extent to which owners of GSM handsets are optimizing its potentials for personal effectiveness.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the level and pattern of use of GSM handset by a number of selected elite groups in Abeokuta. To guide this study, the following questions were formulated and addressed;

1. Are owners of GSM cell phones familiar with and are maximally using its facilities?
2. Do owners of GSM cell phones have necessary competencies to use it to their own satisfaction?
3. What factors, if any, hinder the level of use of GSM cell phones?
4. To what type of use do they put GSM cell phones?

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey research design was employed to investigate the use level and impact of GSM cell phones among selected elite social class in Abeokuta. The population comprise of students, academic and administrative staff from Moshood Abiola Polytechnic, Abeokuta; Federal College of Education, Abeokuta, Federal University of Agriculture (FUNAAB), Abeokuta and Ogun State Ministries, classified as elite social classes.

The sample for the study consists of 365 members of selected elite class in Abeokuta. They were selected through purposeful random sampling techniques as follows;

Table 1: Distribution of Participants

Class of participants	**Location**				**Total**
	MAPOLY	FUNAAB	FCE, OSIELE	MINISTRIES	
Academic Staff	30	30	30		90
Administrative Staff	25	25	25	50	125
Students	50	50	50		150
Total	105	105	105	50	365

Source: Field Survey

The instrument developed by the investigator and titled "*use level and pattern of GSM cell phone questionnaire"* (ULPGQ) was used to elicit information on the variables studied (level and pattern of use of identified main facilities or potentials of GSM). Items were placed against a five point Likert Scale of Very Great Extent (VGE), Great Extent (GE), Some Extent (SE) and Little or No Extent (L/NE) and Do not Know. The validity of the instrument was ensured through rational-logical-analysis of the items on the instrument by some experts in question construction. Their comments were used to modify the items. The reliability was ensured through test-retest method, which yielded a Crombach Alpha of 0.73. The investigator and his trained assistants personally administered the questionnaires on the participants. The data was analyzed, using frequency count and simple percentages to answer the research questions. A combined response scores of VGE and GE of 50% and above was interpreted as positive response to the assertion of the item while that of "Some Extent" and "*Do not Know*" is interpreted as non-acceptance or negative response.

RESULTS

The first issue addressed in this study is the familiarity with and level of use of GSM handset by members of the selected elite groups in Abeokuta. The response to our question on this yielded the following results.

Table 2: *Familiarity and Use of GSM Handset*

S/N	Variables	VGE & GE		SE, LE & Don't Know	
		Scores	%	Scores	%
1.	You are familiar with most of the functions/potentials of your handset	314	86	51	14
2.	You are making maximum use of your GSM handset	313	86	52	14
	Total	**627**	**86**	**103**	**14**

Source: Field Survey

TABLE 2 above shows that eighty six percent (86%) of the respondents are familiar with and are making maximum use of the potentials of their GSM handset. The second issue is the extent to which they are actually able to satisfactorily operate specific functions on the set. This is to enable us further probe and explain the level of use of the phones suggested in Table 2 above.

The results are as follows:

Table 3: *Use of different GSM functions*

S/N	Variables	VGE & GE		SE, LE & Don't Know	
		Scores	%	Scores	%
1.	Call Functions	343	94	22	6
2.	Messaging Functions	341	93	24	7
3.	Contacts Functions	330	90	35	10
4.	Call Log Functions	306	84	59	16
5.	Setting Functions	301	83	64	17
6.	Operator's Menu	273	75	92	25
7.	Positioning Functions	261	72	104	28
8.	Gallery Functions	255	70	110	30
9.	Media Functions	241	66	124	34
10.	SIM Services Functions	223	61	142	39
11.	PC Connectivity Functions	224	61	210	39
12.	Applications Functions	219	60	146	40
13.	Organizers/Utility Functions	219	60	146	40
14.	Web functions	192	53	173	47
15.	Push to Talk Functions	188	52	185	48
	Total	3978	71	1636	29

Source: Field Survey

Table 3 above shows that seventy one (71%) percent (i.e. large majority) of the respondents were able to operate most of the functions on their mobile phones satisfactorily. However, while more are able to operate common functions like call functions (94%), Messaging functions (93%), contact functions (90%) and call log functions (84%), much lesser number of users were able to satisfactorily operate important functions like web function (53%), push to talk functions (52%) application functions (60%) and organizers/utility functions (60%), among others. The next question addressed was the pattern of use of GSM phones by the respondents. Results of response to the questions on this yielded the following.

Table 4: *Type and Impact of Use of GSM Phones*

S/N	Variables	VGE & GE		SE, LE & Don't Know	
		Scores	%	Scores	%
1.	GSM handsets serve me more as an entertainment than a business device	238	65	127	35
2.	GSM phone replaces your need of a wristwatch	250	68	115	32
	Total	**488**	**67**	**242**	**23**

Source: Field Survey

Table 4 above shows that majority of (i.e. sixty-five percent) of the respondents perceive GSM handset as an entertainment than a business device. However, in terms of specific impact, the table shows that sixty-eight (68%) percent of the respondents believe that their GSM has replaced their need for a wristwatch.

Next, we are interested in the extent to which inadequate knowledge and skill for operating GSM phone sets negatively affected their use level. The result is presented below:

Table 5: *Effect of inadequate knowledge and skill on use on level of GSM handset*

S/N	Variables	VGE & GE		SE, LE & Don't Know	
		Scores	%	Scores	%
1.	Inadequate knowledge of GSM set functions negatively affected the use level of your handset	160	44	205	56
2.	Inadequate skills in using GSM set functions negatively affected the use level of your handset	154	42	211	58
	Total	**314**	**43**	**416**	**57**

Source: Field Survey

Table 5 above shows that about fifty-seven (57%) percent of the respondents believe that inadequate knowledge and skill do not negatively affect their level of the use of their GSM handset.

DISCUSSION

This study suggests that the use level of GSM phone among the respondents is very high. This is consistent with the report of Oketunji (2008) that large percentages of the population call regularly and willingly spend several Naira per month on personal communications on GSM. This might be due to factors like the education programme on GSM phone, sponsored by First Gloria Limited, Mr. Soyinka on Ogun State Television (GTV), Abeokuta, in the earlier days of the introduction of GSM as well as the demand for computer literacy by government and the tertiary institutions in the State. It is however important to note that the high use level is not general for all functions. The use level of some key functions like web functions, push-to-talk functions, organizer/utility etc, functions is relatively low. The implication of this is that the claim of maximum use of the potential of GSM functions or absence of the hindrance of inadequate knowledge and skill is not true for some functions. This support the call of Ndukwe (2008) for adequate and timely consumer information and education on these products/functions.

Another important picture from the finding is the pattern and effect of use of GSM phones. GSM phones are replacing the need for wristwatches but are being used for entertainment than business.

If it is replacing the need for wristwatch, then we can infer that it has great potential impact or personal and corporate effectiveness and national development as contended by Adomi (2006). However, the second finding suggest that this potential is being utilized for entertainment than business end. It is common to see youths using their handset to play different types of games, music, get football match information, etc. both in the office and at home. The proportionately higher number of students in the sample however, suggests the need to further examine if this picture is specifically true for adults as well. Since youth constitute important and growing segment of the population, there appears to be a need to promote the use of GSM for business purpose.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From this study one can infer that, though there is a high level of use of GSM handset among selected elite groups in Abeokuta, some functions are being underutilized. In addition, the GSM has great potentials for impact on lifestyles. However, these potentials are being used more for entertainment than business purposes. Based on these, it is recommended that GSM service providers and regulators should promote education and business use of all functions of the handset. This would not only promote their business efficiency but also national development.

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