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Market Women and the Mobile Phone in Nigeria

Abstract: Nigeria has witnessed an unprecedented penetration of information and communication technology since the beginning of the new millennium (year 2000). Interestingly mobile phone, popularly referred to as GSM in Nigeria has remained one of the leading technologies in terms of access and usage among Nigerian. People from all walks of life have adopted the mobile phone as an important communication tool used for various purposes. Among the millions of Nigerian who own and use mobile phone are market women. Market women in Nigeria are one of the driving forces of economic growth through their economic activities of buying and selling of goods and rendering services. It is observable that these category of Nigerians (market women) predominantly lack the basic western education, those that are educated have the basic primary school education or secondary school education, yet they contribute to the economy. This study examines the use of mobile phone by these women. The study purposively drew a sample of 150 market women in a popular and the largest market in north-eastern Nigeria: Maiduguri Monday Market in Borno State. The study sought to fill a gap in knowledge as to mobile phone usage. It sought to find out what market women in Nigeria use the mobile phone for? The study found out among other things that they utilize the mobile phone for business transactions and boost business results. The study concluded that the mobile phone has become an important tool for communication and business purposes and market women are exploiting the advantages in spite the challenges.

Key words: *Mobile phone, market women, usage, Nigeria, GSM, ICT*

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Pijačne prodavačice i mobilni telefoni u Nigeriji

Apstrakt: U Nigeriji je zabilježen neviđen proboj informacione i komunikacione tehnologije nakon početka novog milenijuma (2000. godina). Zanimljivo je da je mobilna telefonija, popularno nazvana GSM u Nigeriji ostala jedna od vodećih tehnologija u smislu pristupa i korišćenja među Nigerijcima. Ljudi iz svih sfera života usvojili su telefon kao važno oruđe za komunikaciju koji se koristi u razne svrhe. Među milionima Nigerijaca koji posjeduju mobilni telefon su i pijačne prodavačice. Pijačne prodavačice u Nigeriji su jedna od pokretačkih snaga ekonomskog razvoja kroz sopstvene preduzetničke aktivnosti kupovine i prodaje robe te pružanja usluga. Može se primijetiti da ova kategorija Nigerijskog stanovništva (Pijačne prodavačice) uglavnom nemaju osnovno zapadnjačko obrazovanje, one koje su obrazovane imaju osnovnoškolsko obrazovanje ili srednjoškolsko obrazovanje, a ipak doprinose ekonomiji. Ova studija proučava kako ove žene upotrebljavaju mobilne telefone. Za potrebe studije namjenski je uzet uzorak koji čini 150 pijačnih prodavačica na poznatoj i najvećoj pijaci u sjevero-istočnoj Nigeriji: Maiduguri pijaca ponedjeljkom u državi Borno. Studija nastoji da popuni prazninu o znanju upotrebe mobilnih telefona. Nastoji i da sazna za šta pijačne prodavačice koriste mobilne telefone. Studija je između ostalog otkrila da one koriste mobilne telefone za poslovne transakcije i za jačanje poslovnih rezultata. Studija zaključuje da je mobilni telefon postao važno oruđe za komunikaciju i poslovne svrhe a pijačne prodavačice iskorištavaju te prednosti uprkos izazovima.

Ključne riječi: Mobilni telefon, pijačne prodavačice, upotreba, Nigerija, GSM, IKT

Introduction

The global emergence of mobile phone and wireless service has renewed the drive for new media researches to understand better the relationship between information and communication technologies (ICTs) and society. This is an intellectual challenge comparable to the several posed by the rise of other technologies like the cinema, radio television, computer, internet some decades ago. This study aims at exploring the use of mobile phone by market women in a popular and the largest market in North Eastern Nigeria. The mobile phone has become the fastest growing communication system in the world today. Its advantages of speed, reliability; flexibility and effective service delivery have made the device popular among all categories of people. People use the mobile phone for different reasons. According to Leung & Wei (2000) on their work on the uses and gratification of mobile phone, found that the mobile phone are not only used for social and instrumental motives but mobility, immediacy, and fashion/status motives as well. Similarly, Bae (2001) notes that the Korean people's satisfactions sought from mobile phone are entertainment, sociability, transaction, Immediacy and privacy. In his study, immediacy and privacy reflect the characteristics of mobile phone communication. According to Lee (2001) variety of motives of Korean college students, like; time management, face and conformity, and showing off are some of the reasons for mobile phone use.

Mobile phone, popularly referred to as GSM in Nigeria has remained one of the leading technologies in terms of usage among Nigerian. People from all walks of life have adopted the mobile phone as an important communication tool used for various purposes. Market women in Nigeria are one of the driving forces of economic growth through their economic activities of buying and selling of goods and rendering services. It is observable these category of Nigerians predominantly lack basic western education and for those that are educated among them, only have the basic primary school education or secondary school education yet they contribute to the economy and use mobile phone for several purpose. This study examines the use of mobile phone by these women. The study population is women traders in a popular and the largest market in north eastern Nigeria called Monday Market. It is the largest market in northeastern Nigeria. It is located in Borno State and provides business and trading avenues for Nigerians and neighbouring countries of Niger Republic, Camron, Chad and as far as Central Africa. Women are actively involved in trading activities in the market. Considering high level rating of mobile phone usage in Nigeria and how the mobile phone has been used by various segment of the society (Administrators, Journalists Farmers, Politicians, Students etc) (Wilson, Gapsiso and Usman, 2014; Wilson and Gujbawu, 2012; Wilson and Gapsiso, 2009) and how mobile phone has transformed trading and other business activities globally, filling a gap in knowledge as regards the use of this warmly embraced technology by market women in Monday Market Maiduguri becomes imperative.

The study has the following objectives.

1. to examine what market women in Monday Market use mobile phones for.
2. to identify their favourite use of the mobile phone.
3. to find out whether their use of mobile phone has any impact on their businesses.
4. to identify the challenges market women encounter in the use of mobile phone.

Mobile Phone in Nigeria

August 2012 marks eleven years since Nigeria joined the rest of the world in acquiring the Global System for Mobile Telecommunication, popularly known as GSM. It was a defining moment; in the history of Africa's most populous nation, which had waited for several years to acquire this very important tool of communication. Prior to this breakthrough, Nigeria's telecommunication industry had been in a deplorable state and monopolised by government-owned Nigeria Telecommunication Limited (NITEL) which according to Uduchay (2008) was characterized by obsolete telecommunication infrastructure, non-availability of telephone lines/ epileptic service delivery, inefficiency and corruption. For instance, the total available telephone lines in the country before GSM was below 500,000. This was grossly inadequate for the country's huge population (Uduchay, 2008).

More than a decade since the introduction of GSM in Nigeria, the country has witnessed an unprecedented development of telecom infrastructure across the country by the several competing operators. Some of these operators include MTN, Airtel, Etisalat, Globacom, Visaphone etc. This tremendous growth of operators and competition are not unrelated to response to the overwhelming demand for GSM service by Nigerians. The regulatory Agency- National Communication Commission has continued to introduce necessary measures to enhance the quality of service delivery and steady growth of the industry. Some of these measures include the introduction of unified licensing, which made it possible for fixed wireless operators to offer GSM service. Equally significant is the granting of 3G licenses to some operators. The 3G as is popularly called is the most advanced technology on GSM, which enable the operators to offer both data and voice services.(Uduchay, 2008)

Nigeria has an estimated over 150 million inhabitants. In the earlier years when only fixed telephone lines were available in Nigeria, the service was restricted to urban areas. To find a telephone line in the rural areas was unheard of. However, with mobile phone, rural areas are included in service. Grey (2004) notes that mobile subscribers in Nigeria rose from 25,000 in 1999 to 9.1 million in 2004. Mobile networks in Nigeria have the fastest growth on the continent. The penetration of telephones in Nigeria increased from 0.5% in 1999 to 8% in 2004. Ndukwe(2005) adds that in 2005 there were 16 million telephone subscribers in Nigeria there were 18,587,000 mobile phone lines in 2005. In the same year, there were 1,223,000 fixed lines in the country. Mobile phones have a growth rate of 103 % (National Bureau of statistics, 2006). Ogendengbe, Odukoya and Nkadi (2008)

found that in 2006, there were 31.1 million mobile phone subscribers in Nigeria and at least 15 million subscribers were connected in 2007. In 2011, it is estimated that Nigeria had about 86.2 million mobile phone subscribers (Kombol, 2009). Presently in 2012, Nigeria has the most mobile phone subscribers in Africa with more than 93 million subscribers (BBC News, 2012)

Mobile Phone Usage

Since the invention of the mobile phone technologies several studies have been conducted on the use of this technology by different categories of people. And these researchers have identified several uses of the mobile phone. Kreutzer (2008) in his work *Assessing Cell Phone Usage in a South African Township School* identified that the most frequently actively used applications are making phone calls and sending text messages, with 65% making calls and 62% sending text on a typical day. He notes that practically all respondents have ever done either of those two activities in their lives (99% calls and 97% SMS).

Kreutzer further reveals that over the past years, the importance of cell phone features other than communication has been rising with extreme speed. Almost all new phones produced today provide the ability to play music, take pictures or record videos, and play games. According Okabe and Ito (2003) growing body of work with teens in locations such as the United Kingdom, Finland, Japan, Norway and Sweden, finds a common patterns of mobile phone use in other countries. Text messaging appears as a uniquely teen-inflected form of mobile communication, in that is lightweight, less intrusive, less subject to peripheral monitoring, inexpensive, and enables easy contact with a spatially distributed peer group.

Wajcman et al(2007) in a similar work looked at the Impact of the Mobile Phone on Work/Life Balance in Australia, found out that the overwhelming use was for talking (97%) and SMS texting (87%). Half of the respondents used the Voicemail facility to recover messages. Other uses point towards the convergence of media and telephony functions: around a third use the mobile to capture or send visual images; a further quarter to play games; a similar proportion use their phone to enter competitions or to vote on SMS polls; about the same number for accessing the internet; and just under a quarter use their phone as an MP3 player or a radio. Calls on the mobile phone are predominantly for social or leisure purposes or for managing home and family. Others are for interpersonal contacts calls related to work or study.

Cell phone videos are fast gathering steam in Asia. Big Asian telecom companies like Hutchison Whampoa and SingTel are pioneering Third Generation (3G) cellular services that allow for the transmission of rich multimedia content such as full motion videos. 3G networks are the next step in the evolution of cellular technology and their popularity is growing. Already, Asian handset manufacturing companies such as Samsung and lesser known companies like China's HTC and Ningbo Bird are slowly competing with Motorola, Sony Ericsson and Nokia. The increase

in handset manufacturers, coupled with cheaper more powerful chips, are making videophones even more affordable to more people (Posadas 2006).

There are several interesting uses of the mobile phone in various fields of human endeavours Plant (2009) notes that we live in an age of intelligent machines that are in perpetual communication, creating new networks of knowledge, information and empowerment across the globe.

In Madurai region in Southern India women traders are using a system called CAM. This CAM system allows them to record all their business transaction. CAM uses a Nokia 6600 mobile phone to record daily transactions. This includes small loans, buying livestock, or operating retail business. The phone's camera takes picture of book keeping forms to identify and track all document (Southern innovator)

Musyoki (2010) conducted a research on mobile phone as central entertainment platform among Kenyans. He finds out that Kenyans are now turning mobile phones as their central business platform, consumers are largely using mobile phones for business related calls.

Heeks (1999) notes that:

mobile phone is an infrastructure which brings people from different parts of the world together, linking them with multimedia devices that help analyze data, transfer information and manage knowledge in order to expand the capability of human effort. Mobile phone encourage a way of linking people from various part of the world together.

Tenhunen (2008) also notes that mobile phones increase the efficiency of the market, facilitate alternative, political patterns, and invigorate traditional networks of kinship and village sociality. These uses of mobile phone cuts across several societies of the world

Jensen (2009), Reuben (2007), note that mobile phone use in India focuses on their deployment for development purposes. Specifically, in the economic domain access to mobile phones helps small entrepreneurs overcome information a symmetries in the market place that have traditionally led to their exploitation through middle men. The Kerala fishermen who find out about the best prices for their catch before landing in a particular port is a common example.

Interestingly, Iqbal, (2007) identified an interesting development in India , in his study of gender inequalities in access to telecom, that women had greater access than men to household owned landlines than to individual owned mobile phones, but had similar access to public phones and much greater access to phones owned by others. (Even when women owned a mobile phone, it was primarily men who made the decision about how much money to allocate to phone use (1qbal 2007).

The developing countries are still struggling with issue of access. There are still several Nigerians that do not have access to mobile phone services especially in the rural areas. There are also challenges of cost of acquiring and maintaining mobile phone. Tariffs are still very high in Nigeria and several services offered by the operators are still expensive. These challenges have not deterred users. Subscribers increase daily worldwide.

Method:

The study population is market women in a popular and the largest market in the North eastern region of Nigeria. The market is in Maiduguri, Borno state Nigeria and called the Monday Market. The study purposively selected 150 women. They were purposively selected based on women who own and use mobile phones in Monday market. Questionnaire was the instrument of data collection Time devoted by the researcher to explain to respondents who could not read or write the various questions and options. The responses or choices of options were appropriately ticked or written for them. The questionnaire was made up of open and close ended questions.

Findings

Table 1. Demographic Information

Age	Number of Respondents	Percentage %
18-25	74	49.3%
26-39	64	42.6%
40-above	12	8%
Total	150	100%

The data illustrated in table 1 above shows that 49.3%of the respondents are of 18-25 age, 42.6%of the respondents are of 26-39 years old while 8%of the market women sample are 40 and above years old.

Table 2. Use of mobile phones by Monday market women

Respondent were asked what they use of mobile phone for.

Use of mobile phone	Number of respondents	Percentage %
Scheduling appointments	63	42%
Placing orders for goods	76	50.6%
Others, specify	11	7.3%
Total	150	100%

The above data in table 2 indicates that 50.6%of the respondents reveal that the mobile phone is use for placing orders for goods, 42%of the respondents reveals that the mobile phone is used for scheduling appointments, while 7.3%of the respondents reveals that the mobile phone perform other uses such as entertainment and informing customers about new goods.

Table 3. Favourite Use of the Mobile Phone by Market Women

Respondents were asked what their favorites use of the mobile phone are.

Use of mobile phone	Number of respondents	Percentage %
Entertainment	39	26%
Scheduling Appointment	40	26.6%
Placing orders for goods	51	34%
Contacting customers	14	9.3%
Other, specify		4%
Total	150	100%

The above data in table 3 indicates that 34% of the respondents reveal that placing orders for goods is their favorite use of mobile phone, 26.6% of the respondents reveal that scheduling appointment is their favourite use of mobile phone, 26% of the respondents reveals that entertainment is their favourite use of mobile phone, 9.3% of the respondents reveals that contacting customers is their favourite use of mobile phone, while 4% of the respondents reveals that mobile phone has other impact on their business.

Table 4 The Impact of Mobile Phone on the Businesses of Market Women

Respondent were asked what impact does mobile phone has on their businesses.

Impact of mobile phone	No of respondents	Percentage %
Speedy and easy transaction	90	60%
Cuts cost of receiving and dissemination of information	18	12%
Maintaining relationship with customers	37	24.6%
Other	5	3.3%
Total	100	100%

The above data in table 4 indicates that 60% of the respondents reveal that the mobile phone is speedy and easy for their transaction, 24.6% of the respondents reveals that the use mobile phone to maintain relationship with their customer. 12% of the respondent reveals that mobile phone cuts cost of transaction, while 3.3% of the respondents reveals that mobile phone has other impact on their business such as establishing relationship with distributors and companies, contact with other traders

Table 4. Challenges in the Use of Mobile Phone by Market

Respondents were asked the challenges they are facing when using mobile phone.

Challenges in the use of mobile phone	No of respondents	Percentage %
High cost of use (maintenance, recharging, cost of phone)	63	42%
Network problem	85	56.6%
Others, specify	2	1.3%
Total	150	100%

The above data in table 5 indicates that 56.6% of the respondents reveal that high cost of use is the challenge they face when using mobile phone, 42% of the respondent reveals that network problem is the challenge they face when using mobile phone, while 1.3% of the respondents reveal that they face other challenges when using mobile phone.

Discussion

Based on the data gathered from the research conducted on the use of mobile phone by market women in Monday Market Maiduguri, it is obvious that most of the respondents were young women between the ages of 18 and 25. The study revealed that mobile phones are used by these women for placing orders for new stocks from suppliers and companies. They also use their mobile phones to find out the prices and cost goods and services among themselves, which in some instances help them set price tag for products, just as what obtains among farmers in Niger Republic who use mobile phones to find out the market that gives the best price for their product (New York Times, 2003). In Kenya, a text message based system was created by Gichamba, allowing farmers to query dairy companies so they know how much farmers can charge for their cow milk, and places orders for goods. Many fishermen in Zanzibari according to a BBC report (2003) now carry mobile phone while they are at sea, using them to check market prices, and place orders. In Monday Market, the women make use of mobile phone to place order for goods because it cuts costs of transaction, and reduces the risk of traveling and it also save time, money and energy.

The research findings also show that most of the market women sampled on the research make calls to place orders for new stocks or goods from their suppliers as their favourite use of the mobile phone. Donner and Telez (2009) who investigated the use of mobile phones among small enterprises in India and found a reliance of voice and text messaging that voice calls is the favourite service they use, because it is speedy and easy to reach their business clients and feedback is immediate for transactions.

The research findings further show that most of the market women in Maiduguri Monday market enjoy some positive impact of the mobile phone on their business such as speedy and easy transaction. Market women in Maiduguri rely on mobile phone because it is easy to reach their customers and other business clients speedily and easily, which also helps them save cost. It has cut down on the cost of travels to buy products from suppliers. With the mobile phone they just call their suppliers and the goods are delivered. It has also enabled them to contact customers on arrival of new stocks which encourages purchases by customers.

Market women in Maiduguri Monday market face challenges in using mobile phone, Most of the respondents major challenge is network problem which sometimes make it difficult and even impossible to reach and get feedback from clients or customers. Sometimes customers in need of certain goods or service cannot reach the market women.

Other findings of the research show that most of the respondents reveal that Nokia phone is more preferable, this was revealed by the 65.3%of the respondents. This is because Nokia phone is very cheap and portable to use, market women prefer Nokia phone because it is easy to maintain. According to IPC media, Nowhere in Africa is the use of mobile phone more prevalent than Nigeria which has the fastest growing Nokia mobile phone market on the continent (www.ipcmedia.com). Nokia phone is resistant and affordable by the market women in Maiduguri, which is why most of the women in Maiduguri Monday market relied on Nokia phones. This implies that the cheaper a phone the more the patronage.

Conclusion

This study revealed that mobile phone has become a major source of communication and in satisfying communication needs of various segment of the society, which in this case are market women. Despite the numerous challenges of the use of mobile phone it has stood out as an important means of communication in every society. Businesses have gained boost as a result of the use of mobile phone, the use of mobile phone has enabled market women to cut cost of doing business. It has helped to establish and maintain relationship with customers which was almost impossible before the access to mobile phone by market women in the popular west African “Monday Market”.

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