

## Socio - Economic Implication of Use of Gsm among Abeokuta Metropolis, Ogun State, Nigeria

### L'IMPLICATION SOCIO-ÉCONOMIQUE DE L'UTILISATION DE SGM AU MÉTROPOLE D'ABEOKUTA, DANS L'ÉTAT D'OGUN, AU NIGÉRIA

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**Abstract:** The euphoria that greeted the use of Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) has reached its peak with grave implication for socio-economic conditions of many Nigerians some of who have been complaining about exploitation and unsatisfactory services provided by Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) operation in the country. However, many Nigerians even with high cost of Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) phone will not stop at anything as holding a Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) phone has become a status symbol. Thus, the paper examines the socio-economic implications of the use of Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) among residents in Abeokuta, Nigeria. The result reveal that despite the problems associated with the use of Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) no one can do without it because it is highly useful for economic motives. Consequently unapas the findings it is recommended that government should checkmate exorbitant changes of Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) operators.

**Key words:** Telecommunication; Economic; Mobile; Technology

**Résumé** L'euphorie qui a salué l'utilisation du Système global de télécommunications mobiles (SGM) a atteint son apogée avec les implications en profondeur pour les conditions socio-économiques de nombreux Nigériens, les même que ceux qui se plaignaient de l'exploitation et des services insatisfaisants fournis par le Système global de télécommunications mobiles (SGM) dans le pays. Toutefois, beaucoup de Nigériens, même avec un coût élevé de téléphone du Système global de télécommunications mobiles (SGM), n'abandonneront pas les services du Système global des télécommunications mobiles (SGM), car celui-ci est devenu un symbole de statut social. Ainsi, le document examine les implications socio-économiques de l'utilisation du Système global de télécommunications mobiles (SGM) chez les résidents d'Abeokuta, au Nigéria. Le résultat révèle que, malgré les problèmes liés à l'utilisation du Système global de télécommunications mobiles (SGM), personne ne peut s'en passer parce qu'il est très utile pour des motifs économiques. Par conséquent, il est recommandé que le gouvernement devrait éviter des changements exorbitants du Système global de télécommunications mobiles (SGM).

**Mots clés:** Télécommunications; Économique; Mobile; Technologie

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## INTRODUCTION

In the early history of every society, socio-economic conditions are influenced by information delivered through traditional methods such as message carriers, talking drums and flute. However, as the tempo of change in the society becomes complex individual usually learn from the emerging circumstances to adapt with different implications of change on their socio-economic activities. For instance, in spite of the pre-colonial traditional methods of communication in Nigeria, during the colonial era, the British introduced the post and telegraph communication, which eventually

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developed into the modern information technology including the Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) (Niger, 2003; Alukannah et al, 2001).

In realization of the importance of modern technology for socio-economic growth and development, the Nigeria Telecommunication Limited (NITEL) and Nigerian Postal Service (NIPOST) were established to ensure efficient delivery of information through mail, telephone, telegram, telex, etc.

The information technology industry is this high capital based organization, which has network spread by using modern sophisticated equipment. The role played by information technology in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized since people have been able to share knowledge and combine efforts. The information technology has enable industrials and corporate bodies to develop and expand their store knowledge, technology and culture. In essence the information technology industry integrates different people with the outside world (Utomi, 2004).

In the light of the foregoing, the dynamism, sensitivity and volatility of the Nigeria business environment part of which led to the deregulation of the telecommunication industry lead many private telecommunication operations to start mobile operation within their various licensing capacities as given to them by National Communication Commission (NCC) (Matanmi and Awodun 2005). It is from this exercise that they have been reaping the success with the expected commencement of Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM), which has created different impressions among many Nigerians.

However, the proliferations of Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) phone in Nigeria, some families have been adversely affected. For instance, some parents incur the cost of buying Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) phone for their children in spite of the harsh socio-economic conditions in the country with relatively high (56.78%) rate of poverty and deplorable socio-economic conditions in Nigeria (FOS, 2004; Niger, 2003). What benefits or problems have an average Nigerian derived from the use of Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) phone? Ruk behaviour in the use of Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) subscribers who may be prone to accidents arising from abnormal use of Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) phone. For instance, the number of people phoning while driving, a dangerous phenomenon is on the increase in Nigeria (Matanmi and Awodun 2005) and if urgent actions, by way of legislation or other control measure, are not taken against the people that use Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) on wheel what is likely to happen to the number of automobile accidents in the nearest future?

It is believed in many quarters that the exclusion of Communication Investment Limited (CIL), the only full indigenous company that bided for the Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) license earlier in 2001 has strengthened the oligopoly tendency of Mobile Telecommunication Network Nigeria (MTN), Telecommunication Network Nigeria (Econet) and Nigerian Telecommunication (NITEL). Despite their initial foot dragging, thus, capital requirements of the information technology and against deplorable economic situations in Nigeria serve as impediments against indigenous ownership of Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) license in the country.

It is against this backdrop that this paper takes the challenge to examine the socio-economic implications of the use of Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) among residents in Abeokuta Metropolis in Nigeria.

## **1. GLOBAL SYSTEM OF MOBILE TELECOMMUNICATION (GSM): AN OVERVIEW**

Generally telecommunication can be described as a gateway to world of seemingly inexhaustible resources. In other words it is a super-highway of unlimited opportunities. The development Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) as a source of information and a noble channel of communication on recent past has reshaped the concept of socio-economic life in most third world countries. It should be noted that mobile phones are the most common tool used by large number of people for communication. According to Talvitie (2003 and Assa, 2004) Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) is viewed as an important part of modern Information and Communication, Technology (ICT). It is internationally defined as Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM). It has become the world's leading and fastest growing mobile standard spanning over 200 countries around the world.

More importantly, more than one billion people – almost one-sixth of the world's population are now using Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM). The situation in Africa and specifically Nigeria is not different from the rest of the world. This is confirmed by the Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC) 2003, that the proactive approach taken by the government to the telecom sector has made it possible for over 2.5million Nigerians to clutch Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) phones (MTN, ECONET, GLOBACOM) today. The point of notes is that, whatever is called and wherever it is used, this simple accessible technology has changed the way in which individuals conduct their everyday lives (Jenkins, 2004 and Odufuwa 2005). One of the profound impacts of the Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) is the ability to reduce the power of physical distance as a barrier to

communication collaboration and commerce. In actual sense the new telecom system has the opportunity to overcome distance as a barrier to interaction with individuals, organization and communities that have been most disadvantaged by locations design of public facilities. Based on the potential of the Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) to remove the physical boundaries of today's static office as residential structure, enhance communicating and business activities without restriction, it is therefore not surprising that policy makers and economic development experts are touching the new Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) as a powerful tool for improving the social, economical stability and all round likelihood developments in the society.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The paper examines the implications of Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) on socio-economic life of Abeokuta resident's. The primary data for this study was through survey of the socio-economic implication in the use of Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) in Abeokuta, Nigeria. The cross sectional study covers a representative sample of 160 resident's regardless of gender. The study was conducted in one of ten major areas capital cities of Nigeria (Abeokuta) using stratified sampling and systematic random sampling technique to select the respondents. The city was mapped out to reflect variations in the metropolis and four major strata (divisions) already identified in the study area were adopted. In every tenth household's, one person was randomly selected among Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) users in the household. However, in case of no (GSM) user in a particular household, the neighboring household was selected.

Relevant information on socio-economic variables (income, educational, occupational, age etc) were recorded. More importantly the use of the system for several societal sectors (transport, safety and security, housing) was also examined.

Data collected were analysis using simple percentage & proportion while key variables were cross tabulated. Some variable was evaluated using chi-square statistical analysis. In addition, content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data that was obtained from in-depth interviews.

## **3. STUDY AREA**

The study site is Abeokuta, which is inhabited mainly by Egbas, who became after their settlement in Abeokuta. In the decades of intermittent Warfare (from the settlement of Abeokuta until 1890). The war chiefs were their real rulers of the townships. From 1830 up to 1914 they were masters of their own fortune. During the first decade after the settlement of Abeokuta, the Egbas were constantly at war and depend on commerce with Lagos to obtain their ammunitions. Otta is situated close to the trade route between Abeokuta held Lagos. In 1814, the Egbas attacked and laid siege and therefore held Otta by right of conquest (Blair, 2002).

## **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in table 1. The result shows that eh study is not gender biased; over 60.2% of the respondents are male while 39.8% of the respondents are female. This findings is not far from the expectations considering gender differential in the use of Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) in the study area. In terms of the respondent's age groups, the table shows that 38.1% of the respondents are between the age of 26 and 35 years while 33.6% of the respondents are below 25 years and also 15.9% of the respondents are between the 36 and 45 years while 8.8% of the respondents are between the age 46 and 55 years.

However, 3.5% of the respondents are 56 years and above. This implies that the respondent's hit across different age groups comprising of both young and the relatively old with those between 26 and 35 year dominating the respondents. The implication of the above findings is that apart from other age groups, many respondents in the middle age group are characterized b the use of Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM). About the respondents level of education table 2.1 shows that 44.2% of the respondents have HSC/OND/NCE while 33.1% of the respondents have HND/First Degree as against 11.2% of the respondents who have Post Graduate educational qualification is like Master Degree. Also, 8.8% of the respondents have secondary education while 2.7% of the respondents have only primary school leaving certificate. The implication of this finding is that the study area is characterized by many lettered respondents with diverse educational background.

The table further shows the marital status of the respondents in which most (54.9%) of them are married while 23.9% of the respondents are single and 17.7% of the respondents are divorced. However, 3.5% of the respondents are separated from their spouse. From the findings it is obvious that there is a relationship between the age group and marital status of the respondents.

Concerning the respondent's religious affiliations, the table 2.1 reveals that 55.8% of the respondents are Christians while the remaining 44.2% are Muslims. The findings show that most of the respondents have been associated with Christianity probably due to the influence of Western education, which accompanies and facilitated the widespread of Christianity religion particularly in South Western Nigeria.

Based on the respondent's monthly income, 23.6% of the respondents earn below N10, 000 per month. This income group is followed by 22.12% and 21.2% of the respondents who earn between N10, 000 and N20, 000 as well as others with view that their income cannot be estimated due to inadequate record keeping and irregularity in income in the same piece, 17.7% of the respondents earn between N20, 000 and N30, 000 per month, while 9.7% of the respondents earn between N30, 000 and N40, 000 on a monthly basis. Given the configurations of the respondents in respect of income it is obvious that more than half of them ear below N20, 000 per month. Thus, the income of a considerable proportion of the respondents is relatively higher than the natural minimum wage of N7, 500. As regards the respondent's ethnic group, it is observed that 66.8% of the respondents hailed from Yoruba land while 25.7% of the respondents are of Igbo origin as against 8.8% and 9.7% of the respondents who belong to Hausa and other ethnic like Ijaw, Urhobo. This shows that most of the respondents are Yoruba probably due to the geographical setting of the study area, which is Abeokuta metropolis, Nigeria.

**Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Socio-Demographic Characteristics**

Gender	
Male	60.2
Female	39.8
	<b>100</b>
AGE GROUP (YEARS)	
Below 25 yeas	33.6
26 – 35 years	38.1
36 – 45 years	15.9
46 – 55 years	8.8
56 years & above	3.5
	<b>100</b>
EDUCATION	
Primary	2.7
Secondary	8.8
HSC/OND/NCE	44.2
HND/First Degree	33.1
Post Graduate	11.2
	<b>100</b>
MARITAL STATUS	
Single	23.9
Married	54.9
Divorced	17.7
Separated	3.5
	<b>100</b>
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION	
Christianity	55.8
Islamic	44.2
	<b>100</b>
MONTHLY INCOME	
N10,000	23.0
N10,000 to N20,000	22.2
N20,000 to N30,000	17.7
N30,000 to N40,000	9.7
Above N40,000	8.0
Others	21.2
	<b>100</b>

Source: Author's field survey 2009

The table 2; below shows the respondents opinion on the use of Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM). As regard the major reason for using GSM, 42.5% of the respondents agree that the major reason for using GSM, 42.5% of the respondents agree that they use GSM in order to facilitate business, 26.5% of the respondents agree that they use GSM in order to contact friends and relatives, 19.5% of the respondents believe that they use GSM for fashion sake, while 8.8% of the respondents are just using GSM without a particular reason as against 2.7% of the respondents, who use GSM for other reasons.

The finding shows that almost half of the respondents use GSM for facilitating their business, while some of them use GSM for non-economic motives. The result of in-depth interview supports this finding as some discussants note that

many people use GSM for business while some use it for more greeting friends and relatives. For instance, one female interviewee notes as follows:

“When you talk of why I am using GSM, because I am jobless and I see people using GSM to eke calls and I borrowed money from my brothers to give it a trial. I don’t really have to use GSM just because I want to talk to friends, I know that many of these young girls out there even sleep around just to have chance of using GSM but, some of them regret later because after men sleep with them they will just promise them and that is the end”.

Concerning the time and period of using GSM to make calls, 32.7% of the respondents agree that they using GSM to make calls everyday, 26.5% of the respondents agree that they use GSM to make calls on a weekly basis, 20.5% of the respondents disclosed that they use GSM to make calls on a monthly basis, while 11.5% of the respondents note that they use GSM to make calls. This finding shows that there is variation in time and period of using GSM to make calls probably due to cost of voucher, which may make some people to postpone the use of GSM to make calls.

In contrast, during the in-depth interview sections almost all the interviewees note that they use GSM to make call every day. For instance, a male interviewee notes as follows:

“My line is a hot line, if you stay here for more than ten minutes my ringing tone will disturb you. Some times before I finish receiving one call, another one will be waiting, use see my phone is ringing, oh, the person buzzing, even if you say no I will pick it or are you going to pay for talking with you. You and government people are smart, you get information get information from people and you do nothing after”.

Concerning the level of contribution of GSM to social live of people 61.1% of the respondents agree that GSM has highly contributed to social live of people in Abeokuta, while 31% of the respondents note that GSM has averagely contributed to social life of people in Abeokuta, as against 8% of the respondents, who believe that GSM has low contribution to social life of people in Abeokuta. This finding shows that different people have different opinion about the contribution of GSM to social life of people in Abeokuta. However, the larger proportion of the respondents believes that the use of GSM has been highly rewarding the study area.

As regards the major problems that can rise from the use of GSM, 82.3% of the respondents agree that anyone that uses GSM stand the risk of handset to thieves. 16.8% of the respondents remember that high cost of voucher or airtime is major problem that can arise from the use of GSM while only 0.9% of the respondents go for poor network coverage or network failure. This findings shows that the majority of the respondents bother about stealing of handset, while has become a serious problem associated with the use of handset.

Contrary from the above, some discussants throw high on problems other than stealing of handset. They complain about poor services of GSM providers particularly M-Tel, which they believe to be operating below expectations. About general assessment of the use of GSM 88.5% of the respondents agree that the use of GSM is good while 8.8% of the respondents think otherwise and conclude that the use of GSM is not good or bad as against only 2.7% of the respondents with not response. This finding shows that many respondents agree that the use of GSM is good.

In response to the major advantage derived from using GSM 54.9% of the respondents agree that the use of GSM is a source of prestige, 16.8% of the respondents choose business opportunity, while 25.7% of the respondents agree that the use of GSM is advantageous in term if easy contact of friends and relatives as against 2.7% of the respondents, who believe in other advantages. This finding shows that despite problems associated with the use of GSM many people still rely on it for facilitating business or making easy contact.

**Table 2: Showing Opinion on the Use of GSM**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>MAJOR REASON FOR USING GSM</b>	
To contact friends	26.5
To facilitate business	42.5
For fashion	19.5
Just like it	8.8
Others	2.7
	<b>100</b>
<b>TIME AND PERIOD OF USE</b>	
Daily	32.7
Weekly	26.5
Monthly	20.4
Sometimes	11.5
Rarely	8.8
	<b>100</b>

To be continued

Continued	
Response	Percentage
LEVEL OF CONTRIBUTION OF GSM	
High	61.1
Average	31.0
Low	8.0
	<b>100</b>
MAJOR PROBLEM OF USING GSM	
Stealing of handset	82.3
High cost of voucher	16.8
Poor network / services	0.9
	<b>100</b>
GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF GSM	
Good	88.5
Bad	8.8
No response	2.7
	<b>100</b>
MAJOR ADVANTAGES DERIVED FROM USING GSM	
Easy contact	25.7
Business opportunity	16.8
Prestige	54.9
Others	2.7
	<b>100</b>

Sources: Author's field survey 2009

The table 3: below shows the respondents opinion on implications of the use of GSM to socio-economic activities of residents in Abeokuta metropolis. Concerning the contribution of GSM to social life, 32.7% of the respondents strongly agree, 26.5% of the respondent, 20.4% of the respondents are not sure and 1.5% of the respondents disagree. This findings shows that two third of the respondents believe GSM has contributed to social life in one way or another. This finding is largely in accordance with the notion expressed by Matanmi and Awodu (2005) who noted that GSM has become a status symbol in Nigeria because many people see holding handset as fashionable thing.

The opinion of the IDI discussants corroborates the above findings because almost all of them agree that GSM has contributed to social life in Nigeria. For instance, one IDI discussants note as follows:

“Let me tell you people are always condemning GSM but they continue to use it, why? The truth of the matter is that Nigeria want cheap thing. But if you are to think about the cost of transportation and time it will take you to go and visit somebody and the cost of using GSM to talk to the person, then you will see that GSM has contributed to social life in Nigeria”.

As regard the effect of GSM on decision making, 42.5% of the respondents agree that the effect of using GSM is more negative than positive, while 35.3% of the respondents agree that the effect of using GSM is more positive than negative as against 19.5% of the respondents who behave that the effect of using GSM in negative and positive. However, while 2.7% of the respondents do not provide any definite responds respondents believe that GSM has negative effects on decision making due to many problems associated with it. These problems include stealing of handsets, high cost of airtime, network failure and so on.

Concerning relevance of GSM to economic activity; 82.3% of the respondents agree that GSM is very relevant to economic activity, 16.8% of the respondents agree that GSM is fairly relevant to economic activity, while only 0.9% of the respondents not that GSM is not all relevant to economic activity. This finding show that an overwhelming proportion of GSM users confirm that GSM is relevant to economic activity.

The above finding is supported by IDI discussants some of who note that role of GSM to economy cannot be overemphasized given the proliferation of phoning business centers in various parts of Abeokuta metropolis, where the study is conducted. For instance, one IDI discussant note as follows:

“God has blessed me through this GSM call I am doing here, do you know that through this GSM I have bought land, I have bought one small care and I have opened two shops. I am a Pastor and do not even stay here all the time but anytime I come as early as six in the morning, I do not close until ten-eleven at night. If you are serious this GSM business is good”.

Concerning the effect of GSM on behavior, 88.5% of the respondents agree that GSM has positive effect on behavior of the user, while 8.8% of the respondents think otherwise because they feel that GSM has turned some GSM users to liars as against only 2.7% of the respondents, who note that the effect of GSM on behavior is both negative and positive depending on the prevailing circumstances. This finding shows that though GSM can have negative effect on the behavior it is most likely that GSM will promote positive behaviors.

In addition table 3 depicts respondents opinion on what government can do about the problems associated with the use of GSM, 54.9% of the respondents opt for free handsets, and this implies that more than half of the respondents want government to provide free handsets so that it would be easy for everybody to use GSM, which is almost free now, 25.7% of the respondents want government to find means of stopping exploitation of the GSM subscribers by GSM services providers, while 16.7% of the respondents want government intervention in security matter concerning GSM as against 2.7% of the respondents, who make case for government role in fixing price for GSM charges. This finding shows that many respondents believed that free handset will go a long way in making the use of GSM more beneficial to socio-economic activities of GSM users.

**Table 3: Showing Opinion on GSM and Socio-Economic Activities**

Response	Percentage %
CONTRIBUTION OF GSM TO SOCIAL LIFE	
Strongly agree	32.7
Agree	26.5
Not sure	20.4
Strongly disagree	11.5
Disagree	8.8
	<b>100</b>
EFFECT OF GSM ON DECISION MAKING	
Positive	35.3
Negative	42.5
Both positive & negative	19.5
No response	2.7
	<b>100</b>
RELEVANCE OF GSM TO ECONOMIC ACTIVITY	
Very relevant	82.3
Fairly relevant	16.8
Not at all	0.9
	<b>100</b>
EFFECT OF GSM ON BEHAVIOUR	
Positive	88.5
Negative	8.8
Both positive & negative	2.7
	<b>100</b>
GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY ABOUT GSM	
Free handsets	54.9
Stop exploitation	25.7
Fixing price	2.7
Security	16.8
	<b>100</b>

Sources: Author's field survey 2009

**Table 4: Chi-square Analysis on Relationship between the Use of GSM and Socio-Economic Life of Abeokuta Residents**

Variables	X <sup>2</sup> value	Asymp.Sig	Decision
Friends	37.446	.0020	Significant
Employment	27.137	.0012	Significant
Rate of spending	18.783	.0024	Significant
Cost of GSM	23.339	.0001	Significant

Tested at 0.05 level of Significant.

Source: field survey, 2009

To buttressed the above analysis, it is observed that the accessibility of GSM use contribute immensely to the socio-economic life of residents in Abeokuta metropolis. In fact it has created in little ways sustainable livelihood for some of the residents in the study area.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This paper sought to address fundamental facts and future scenarios regarding the use of GSM and socio-economic life of people. From the research it has been observed that the socio-economic implication of the use of GSM in the study area cannot be overemphasized because GSM has become a virile tool for promoting business and facilitating contact among friends and relatives. However, in a situation where stealing of handsets is rampant and where GSM service providers charge exorbitant rate the use of GSM may be difficult among residents in Abeokuta metropolis. The use of GSM has been a source of job to many people's particularly those that operate phoning business centers. A business GSM is the GSM, which allowed to and encouraged to fulfill its economic purposes in society without restriction and intimidation. Form the philosophy of business management, popular reference is made to the role of GSM in employment generations which point to the capacity of GSM to contribute towards poverty reduction.

In contrast, the Nigerian socio-political environment is yet to allow the use of GSM to be massively affordable in the country due to the interface between greedy GSM service providers and inadequate government regulation.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The GSM users should find ways of protesting against exorbitant charges rather than dancing to the tune of GSM service providers who may want to influence the quality of service made available to the public. All political leaders at local, state and federal level of governance should regulate the power of GSM service providers in order to promote the contribution of GSM service providers in activities of GSM users. The Nigerian government at local, state and federal levels should improve the impoverished socio-economic conditions that serve as the inhibiting factors that prevent some people from using GSM.

Above all, practical steps should be taken towards developing the political environment in Nigeria so that the politics of exploitation of GSM users would drastically reduce or totally eradicated.

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