

# Ownership of Mobile Phones by Computer Engineering Undergraduates in a Private University in Nigeria

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**Abstract** *This study was on the ownership of mobile phones by undergraduate students in Edo State, Nigeria. The study focused on undergraduate students in Computer Engineering departments of Igbinedion University, Okada, Edo State, Nigeria for the 2011/12 academic session. The number of registered students was sixty (60). This study was a survey and adopted a systematic random sampling technique. 61 questionnaires were distributed with 60 retrieved (100%). The study found out that 51 respondents (83.6%) were given their first mobile phones by family members and 41 (67.21%) own mobile phone for family reasons. Also, 35 respondents (57.37%) do not consider mobile phones as distraction. The study recommended that mobile phone technology be integrated into teaching, learning and library services offered in Universities in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** *Ownership, Mobile Phones, Computer, Engineering, Undergraduates, Nigeria.*

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## 1. Introduction

Global Mobile System of Communication popularly called GSM has led to an astronomical rise in ownership and use of handsets especially in Nigeria. Since its inception and introduction in Nigeria in 2001, subscriber base hit 59 million in 2009 (Taiwo, 2010) and has grown to about 100 million by June, 2012 (Okereocha, 2012). Demography according to Olatokun (2009) has played a pivotal role in the rise of mobile ownership. This is not however without its attendant consequences of fraud and sabotage (Ojebode, 2012). However, the need for communication and interaction among peers and family has boosted the ownership of mobile phones among students (Adomi, 2006). Mitchel, et al (2010) recorded its wide usage among adolescents in Uganda.

## 2. Literature Review

Ownership of Mobile phones in Nigeria has become pre-eminent and predominant factor in communication (Elegbeleye, 2005). Utulu and Alonge (2011) have noted its wide ownership base and use among students in private Universities in Nigeria. Thornton & Houser (2004) reported that 100% of college students polled reported owning a cell phone in Japan. Dodds & Mason (2005) in a survey of middle school students found that over 75% own mobile phones in the United States. The rise in ownership can be attributed to communication purposes (Diamanduros and Downs, 2007). Aoki and Downes (2003) suggested that young people own mobile phones for a variety of reasons. These include: to help them feel safe, for financial benefits, to manage time efficiently, to keep in touch with friends and family members, et al. This study on ownership of mobile phones among computer engineering undergraduates is significant because it explores their level of technological awareness. This is because computer engineering is information communication technology based too.

## 3. Research Questions

1. Do you personally own a mobile phone?
2. How long have you owned a mobile phone?
3. How did you get your first mobile phone?
4. Which type of mobile phone do you own?
5. Why do you primarily own a mobile phone?
6. Do you consider owning a mobile phone a distraction?

#### 4. Objectives

This study set out to achieve the following objectives:

1. To explore the level of ownership of mobile phones among
2. To discover the reason for owning a mobile phone
3. To find out if family is central in owning a handset
4. To determine if mobile phones are considered distraction

#### 5. Discussion

**Table 1:** Ownership of Mobile Phone

Question 1 Do you personally own a mobile phone?	Answer		
	Yes	No	Thinking of
	60	0	0

In Table 1 60 respondents (100%) actually own a mobile phone. This agrees with the submission of Utulu and Alonge (2011) that in Nigeria there is a wide ownership base and use of mobile phones among private university students.

**Table 2:** Length of ownership of Mobile Phone

Question 2 How long have you owned a mobile phone?	Answer			
	0-4 yrs	5-9 yrs	10 yrs & above	Can't remember
	10	40	8	2

Table 2 reveals that 40 respondents (65.57%) have owned mobile phones for between five to nine years with 10 respondents (16.39%) owing it for zero to four years. The ratio is high signifying and ownership base that precede admission into the University. While the reason for ownership is outside the scope of this paper, it can be suggested that the need for communication might have prompted most to do.

**Table 3:** Manner of owning first Mobile phone

Question 3 How did you get your first mobile phone?	Answer			
	Parents	Siblings	Friends	Gift
	51	6	1	2

Table 3 shows that 51 respondents (83.6%) got their first mobile phones from their parents. A reasonable factor that must not be neglected in this ownership factor by family is demography (Taiwo, 2010).

Table 4: Type of Mobile phone owned

Question 4 Which type of mobile phone do you own?	Answer			
	Blackberry	Nokia	Samsung	others
	28	32	2	4

Table 4 show more respondents own and use Blackberry phones. This is because 28 respondents (45.9%) own Blackberry and 32 respondents (52.4%) own a Nokia phone. The popularity of Blackberry among this category of students is worth finding out.

Table 5: Reason for owning a Mobile Phone

Question 5 Why do you primarily own a handset?	Answer		
	Family	Friends	Business
	41	27	16

In Table 5, 41 respondents (67.21%) own mobile phone for family reasons while 27 (44.26%) do so to communicate with friends. However, 16 respondents (26.23%) own mobile phones for business purposes. Such business purpose include: selling recharge cards, phones parts and other income generating ventures to foot their school bills. 67.21% respondents' ratio supports the proposal of Adomi (2006) that communication with family members has been a driver for students owning mobile phones. Similarly, Aoki and Downes (2003) had suggested that young people own mobile phones for a multiple reasons. These include: to keep in touch with friends and family members especially being out of home. Furthermore, Chen (2007) observed in a research on Language students that students use the mobile phone in their daily life as students and people generally. Such use is for communicating with parents, friends and teachers among other purposes.

Table 6: Mobile Phones as distraction

Question 6 Do you consider owning a handset a distraction as a student?	Answer		
	Yes	No	Sometimes
	6	35	20

In Table 6, majority of respondents did not see the ownership of mobile phones as distraction. 35 respondents (57.37%) believe it is not distraction while 20 respondents (42.78%) agree it does. While there are several debates as to the distracting effect of phones on students, several schools have adopted differing approaches on this subject. While the debate rages on, some scholars its application to teaching and learning has the potential to offer significant advantages (McManus 2002; Wood 2003; Ericsson 2006; Begum, 2011).

## 6. Findings

- A. Family members are responsible for the owners of mobile phones
- B. Communication with family is the principal reason for owning mobile phones
- C. Mobile phones are not distraction in student educational pursuit

## 7. Recommendations

- A. Universities and lecturers should explore application of mobile phone technology to e-learning
- B. Library managers should re-examine its services to make it more suitable for mobile phone application and use
- C. The government should as a matter of urgency mandate network providers to improve on the quality of their services and make network available everywhere.

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