

The effects of mobile phones in society



IMPLICATION OF HANDPHONES TO THE SOCIETY TODAY

INTRODUCTION

In the recent years, handphones have become ubiquitous in our society, it have become an indispensable part of our daily lives. Handphones have been around for several decades in some form or another. The technology began in the late 1940s, when the idea of a handphone was bring to the society.

A handphone, also referred to as mobile or cellular phone is defined as a portable telephone device used for mobile telecommunications which does not needed the use of landlines over a cellular network of specialized base stations. Unlike the usual home phones, handphones can be easily carried anywhere, from place to place. Handphones utilize the frequency transmitted by cell towers to join the calls between two devices. The base stations and also handphones send and receive signals using radio waves. Handphones are different from the cordless telephones that usually being used in a home or an office. Handphones does not have the same characteristic as the cordless telephones as the cordless telephones only provide telephone service inside a limited scope or area through a fixed line and a base station as well as from radio telephones and satellite phones.

Handphones transmit and receive information such as voice messages by the use of radio communication. The phone transmits radio frequency signals to the base station and incoming signals are sent to the phone from the base station at a slightly distinct frequency. The base stations connect handphones to rest of the mobile and also fixed phone network. When the

moment signals reach to a base station, it can be transmitted to main telephone network.

Handphones are looked upon as a modern invention, but their origin can be traced back to the invention of telephone by Alexander Graham Bell in 1870s and success in capturing of radio message. Since then, these basic technologies have combined and shaped themselves together as what we called handphone. The history of handphones is divided into different generations (first, second, third, fourth and so on) which used to indicate the significant step changes in power or abilities as the technology getting better and better each year.

In the first generation – 1G, analog circuit-switched technology is used together with FDMA (Frequency Division Multiple Access). It worked mainly in 800 to 900Mhz frequency bands. 1G is the earliest cellular system to build up. The network contained unreliable handover, poor voice quality as well as poor security.

As the limitation of the 1G, people are trying to create a newer generation of mobile communication, this is the second generation. 2G introduced for the first time the system used purely digital technology. Even though quite a few of the principle connected in a 1G system apply to 2G, there are deviations or a significant change in way that the signals are handled, and 1G networks does not have the capability to give more features ahead in development of the 2G systems, such as text messaging and also caller identity.

3G – The third generation networks are the latest stage in the process development of wireless communications technology. They can support

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higher data transmission rates and provide increased capacity. This allows them to be used for high speed data applications and also for the normal voice calls. 3G systems are created according to a design in such a way to process data, and since the voice signals are transformed into digital data, this leads to the speech being dealt with in similar way as other kind of data. 3G systems use packet-switching technology, which is more effective and faster as compared with the traditional circuit-switched systems.

4G – The fourth generation networks are more reliable. At the present times, more and more companies have began researching and creating the 4G communications system, this technology can have a high uplink rate to approximately 200Mbps, therefore a large number of data can transfer in the handphones. The 4G handphones contain more function such as the television.

A large portion of handphone networks are digital and use the standard such as CDMA, GSM, or iDEN. They are all operating at various radio frequencies. A multi-mode phone operates across different standards whereas a multi-band phone is designed to operate on more than one radio frequency.

In addition to the standard voice function, current generation handphones can support numerous additional services and also accessories rather than only voice calls or text messaging. For example, Bluetooth, infrared, USB, memory card reader (SD), MMS for sending and receiving multimedia elements, email, WiFi connectivity, instant messaging, camera with video function added, music (MP3) and video (MP4) playback, radio, alarms, memo,

GPS navigation and so on. Some of the phones also include a touchscreen to make it much easier to be used.

IMPLICATION OF HANDPHONES TO THE SOCIETY TODAY

The changes of communication technology do have a critical impact on society today which associated with time and space as fundamental dimensions. The investigation on the structure and dynamics of the network society has shown the emergence of new forms/processes of space and time: the space of flows and timeless time (Castells, 2000). For examples, space of flows are consider of the material organization of simultaneous social interaction at the distance by networking communication via telecommunication's technology support, interactive communication support systems, and fast transportation technologies. In a simple word we can call it as the territorial basis of each communication node (network). While, timeless time referred to the random order of moment when using handphone.

The great advancement of communication technology greatly influenced our daily life by spreading the space of flows and timeless time. On the other hand, communication technology enhancement does benefit the people, "distance" can be shortened, and time can be saved. The "freedom of contact" provided by the handphone means for people to free themselves from the place-based context of their interaction, shifting their frame of reference to the communication itself, that is to a space made of communication flows, based on the availability of the technological infrastructure that makes it possible. (Crabtree et al, 2003) And yet, when society is too dependent on such high-tech mobile, those whom not

equipped or forget to bring their handphones will be socially disabled. As what Misuko Ito said, “ To not have a keitai (cell phone) is to be walking blind, disconnected from just-in-time information on where and when you are in the social networks of time and space” (Ito, 2003) Moreover, the availability of wireless communication may saturate time with social practice making other practices cannot be conducted by inserting communication in all moments , such as the “ in-between” time during transportation or in a waiting line (Larimer, 2000, p. A29). For examples, leisure time or working time would be affected when people use this time playing, sending SMS, or listening to music.

Mobile communication may have greatly enhanced opportunity of reach of interpersonal sociability and shared practices but lots of undeniable impacts of handphones to the society. Implications of both positive and negative impacts draw up the contribution to the advantages and disadvantages of handphone to the users. First advantage of having handphone implies when someone is having emergency. The hand phones are undoubtedly a lifesaver on numerous occasions. When travelling abroad, peoples still can keep in contact and it become the most convenient way to communicate. On the other hand, having a handphone for some people, gives them a sense of security, they have the knowledge that the can contact and be contacted at anytime of the day. This is especially important where teenagers are concerned, more or so on the female, were parents may worry if they are out late; if they have a handphone with them, then they can be contacted to see when they are coming back. Therefore, parents bought handphone for their children to act as a safety device. Through the handphone, parents may

know the location of their children as well as the activities their children were conducted. Nowadays, handphone is also use as an entertainment tool. Examples of service that provided are personal organizer, gaming, mp3 and mp4 player, camera, camcorder, Bluetooth, Wifi, GPS navigation RDS radio receiver, and more. No doubt, the rapid developments of handphone do bring a lot of advantages to the world.

Short Message Service (SMS) spreads into everyday life is one of the facets in which technological evolution acts as a factor of cultural and behavioural change in the mobile society. First of all, SMS influences the writing skill of both children and teenagers. The length limitation to 160 characters and the challenge of the interface are two main influential factors in the mobile communications. According to Manuel Castells et al (2004) cited Ling and Yttri (2002), young users have to improve their ability to synthesize and summarize their messages in order to optimize each sent SMS. Therefore, young users develop a new language that can be defined as a new “ writing orality” based on symbols and abbreviations. The new language is based on phonetics due to the reproduction of the oral language helps to save characters, a scarce resource when texting. According Manuel Castells et al (2004) cited Kasesniemi and Rautiainen (2003), messages often bear more resemblance to code than to standard language and a text filled with code language expressions is not necessarily accessible to an outsider. The unique writing style creates opportunities for creativity. A mistake in one letter such as a typing error can produce a new term of endearment, which may remain in the SMS language either for a short time or permanently. SMS can lead to discreet and asynchronic communication. Texting turned out to

be a more “ relaxed” way to inform about feelings and delicate subjects because SMS is not direct confrontation. Users may be more embarrassed to communicate the same information without SMS. Texting helps teenagers and some adult male to overcome awkwardness and inhibitions and to develop social and communication skills. They communicate with more people, and more frequently, than they did before mobiles. (Manuel Castells et al (2004) cited Fox, K, 2001) The creativity being observed among SMS users is the compression of text dates back to shorthand writing, for example for taking class notes and secret codes among friends. On the other hand, older generations are uneasy about the effect this has on the Standard English language as messaging language seeps into formal writing tasks.

Besides that, users can now both send and receive images in addition to text using Multimedia Message System (MMS). MMS is normally used by the teenagers to send a photo/graphic or a short video. Real state agents use camera telephones to forward pictures to prospective buyers for giving a speedy edge in a competitive market. Interns are allowed or permitted to send pictures of an x-ray to the senior doctors in order to speed up the diagnosis as well as suggested treatment process.

Apart from that, the social learning process through handphone can be identified as the social appropriation or domestication process. People have learned how and when a handphone could be used and, moreover, some old embarrassments are not usually happening nowadays thanks to the generalization of some technical features. New design of devices has evolved in this direction such as vibration or silent modes. The use of handphones in indoor public places entails the possibility of being overhead

and disturbing people around. A common rule of mobile etiquette (Crabtree et al, 2003) is to talk in a low voice as noisy users are considered the main negative aspect of mobile telephony in public places.

Handphones use has been incorporated to everyday life activities whether they are legal or illegal. According to Crabtree et al (2003), one of the main reasons to purchase a handphone is safety and security. For example, car accidents or main catastrophes in which lives were saved thanks to the availability of a handphone. Besides that, people were able to report to their dearest ones some dramatic situations in which they were involved and even let them know their love (Manuel Castells et al (2004) cited Agar, 2003).

According to Manuel Castells et al (2004) cited Ling and Haddon (2001), the device is useful for the coordination of the daily family activities. Almost all the family members are networked and remote care-giving functions can be developed more easily nowadays. This is valid for children and old-aged persons. Coordination is related to the members of a family habitually do travelling. These journeys can be made by car, public transportation or foot, and include diverse activities. For instance, the activities could be to go to the supermarket or to pick up the children from school and drive them to any out-of-school activity. According to the study done by Manuel Castells et al (2004) cited Ling and Haddon (2001), the mobile telephony is not significantly changing the number of trips a person makes, but allows the redirection of journeys that have already begun. Micro-coordination is the nuanced management of social interactions and can be seen in the redirection of trips that have already started. It can be seen in the iterative agreement as to where and when can meet friends and the ability to call

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ahead when we are late to an appointment. (Manuel Castells et al (2004) cited Ling, 2004)

Next, handphones are helping, and allowing, communication with and within some handicapped individuals. For example, texting is bringing a kind of new normality in the communications of deaf-mute persons and has facilitated improvements in dyslexic children (Manuel Castells et al (2004) cited Kasesniemi et al., 2003). Handphones are very useful in particular situations. For instance, vibra-call is a very interesting feature for deaf persons or even the possibility of preprogramming the automatic dial of a given number when pushing just one button helps old-aged people to begin a remote communication. However, there are still some deficiencies to be solved with the handphones. For example, blind persons have more problems with handphones than they have with traditional wired telephones because interfaces are more complicated.

Furthermore, our working world has been changed by mobile telephony. Indeed, first adopters of the device were truckers, construction workers and maintenance engineers and the device was used as a tool for work. First affected what we can call mobile workers is the staffs that work both at the office and out of the office considering both long distances travels and short distance ones. For example, a mobile worker could be a commercial that has to visit different clients located in the same city where the office is or in another continent. Although technological facilities to be used could be different, but the situation is similar because as long as the staff is away from the home office, contextual constrains become unpredictable (Manuel Castells et al (2004) cited Perry et al. 2001).

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Handphones reinforce networked activity and allow new ways of connectivity to be more easily than other ones. For instance, in long distance travels that need at least one night away from home office, e-mail is generally checked in the evenings, at the hotel room; while the handphone is used more often and, sometimes, as a way of solving disconnection problems which is created during a trip. Moreover, mobile workers who cover short distances routinely also use the handtelephone during car travels. According to Manuel Castells et al (2004) cited Laurier (2002), the workers take advantage of certain situations and try to complete particular pending tasks. This includes making calls or going on with some practical and limited business when there is some time between two programmed activities. All these activities are done despite the fact that access to documents and information is usually poorer than when working in the home office.

The disadvantages brought along with this fast grown development cannot be ignored. First of all, handphone that provided us safety and protection may bring opposite effects. It might attract danger, the danger of being rob. Example was taken from an article, " A girl was seriously ill in hospital last night after being stabbed by a gang of teen robbers for her mobile phone. The youngster was jumped by three youths as she stood at a bus stop in Croydon, South London. The gang stabbed her twice in the back and the leg, before snatching her mobile phone and running off, leaving her lying in a pool of blood. She was rushed to hospital suffering from a punctured lung."(Versatile, 2002) Besides that, it inflicted handphone addiction is also a big social problem. People, especially teenagers are easily attracted by the services provided by the handphones in all time. Moreover, it is a trend to

get up to date handphone model makes people tend to change their handphone frequently and this caused unnecessary spending on bills and costs. After all, being fully acquainted with the handphone, people find uses, that they are able and desired to and thus it lead to another crimes call cyber crimes by abuse people using handphone. Next, many scientists do believe that radiation coming from the handphones may affect our health such as headache, earaches, blurring of vision and most crucial sickness, cancer. Thus many people are advice to reduce the usage of handphone although there is still no concrete evidence since this may only appear in long term of using.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

RESPONDENTS OPINION OVER IMPLICATION OF HANDPHONES TO THE SOCIETY

Figure above shows the opinion of the respondents over the implication of handphones to the society. The result shows that most of the respondents agree that handphones will bring positive impact to the society. Out of 100 respondents, 73 of them believe that handphones will bring positive impact to the society while 27 of them believe that it will bring bad impact to the society.

From the respondents of who choose handphones will bring positive impact to the society, they believe that handphones are good because it bring the people closer together. This is because they could use handphones to contact their love ones. For example, parents could use handphones to contact their children who are studying abroad or far away from their hometown to keep in touch with them. Besides that, they could use it to fill up their free time by playing games or listen to the music using their

handphone. For example, people who are waiting for LRT or bus to go to work could use handphone to play some simple games or listen to the music.

For the respondents who choose negative impact, they believe that handphones wasted their children's time because they become addicted to the game provided by the handphone manufacturer. Besides that, some of them also believe that handphone will bring negative or bad impact to the society as those students will busy "SMS" during the class and pay no attention to the teacher.

In short, there are more respondents agree that handphones will bring positive impact to the society as compared to negative impact.

WHEN STUDENTS START TO OWN A HANDPHONE

Based on the feedback from the students, out of 100 students, 20 of them got their first handphone during primary school while 7 of them received their first handphone after secondary school. Besides that, as we can see from the pie chart, majority of them received their first handphone during secondary school.

According to one of the students who received his first handphone during primary school, he said that due to the poor condition in the school facilities, his parent was buying him a handphone so that he could make a call to them if he was in urgent. In the sense of care, this is correct but in the sense of security, this might cause jealousy in between classmates and caused some conflicts.

Minor of them received handphone after they graduated from the secondary school. Their reason is because their parents think that they are more suitable to get a handphone after they finish their secondary school as they will be more mature and think wisely.

As we can see from the pie chart shown above, majority of the students received their first handphone during secondary school. This is commonly happening everywhere. A lot of the parents will allow their children to own a handphone during secondary school. According to one of the students, her parent gave her handphone is due to the numbers of tuition class that she needed to attend and some other activities that she involved. Handphone make her contact her parent easily and report to them about her current location.

Another reason that mentioned by a student is because some fall into a relationship during secondary school time, thus they need more privacy to talk and handphone is the solution. Other reason is due to the peer pressure. One convinced his/her parent to buy him/her a handphone because his/her friend had it.

IS IT A NEED FOR THE PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TO OWN A HANDPHONE TO CONTACT PARENTS DURING EMERGENCY?

Figure above shows the opinion of respondents on whether should a child own a handphone. The result shows that 68 percent of the respondents think that the students do not need a handphone while only 32 percent of the respondents think that it is needed.

The reason that the respondents think the students do not need a handphone is that the primary students are still very young and they will only abuse the handphone and use it to play games. Even if emergency really happens, the students can always consult their teachers to ask for help or contact their parents using a public telephone booth.

On the other hand, the respondents who agree that primary students do need a handphone because in some of the rural school, the facilities are very limited and some school even do not have a public telephone booth.

Therefore, it is more convenient for a student to own a handphone since it does not cost much to buy a handphone with a basic call function.

In short, most of the respondents think that there is no need for a primary school student to own a handphone.

IMPORTANCE OF HANDPHONE

According the chart above, we can see that 10% of 100 students think that handphone is very important while 15% of them think that handphone is not important to them. Besides that, between moderate and important, it is only 5% different which is 40% for important and 35% is for moderate.

Based on the feedback from the students, they feel that handphone is important because handphone make life easier. They can contact their friends without whenever they need. Besides that, due to the service like SMS, MMS, 3G that offer by the operators, handphones become a need. Other than that, handphones nowadays do allow public to install some applications like calculator, to-do-list, languages translators etc do make their life even easier and flexible. Some even use handphones to watch live

show or TV. Another function that comes with the handphone is the camera which is the big temptation and the reason why handphone is important for them.

THE IMPORTANT OF THE FUNCTION PROVIDED BY HANDPHONE BASED ON THE RESPONDENTS' OPINION

The importance of the function provided by handphone based on the respondents' opinion

Figure above shows the respondents' opinion over the function provided by the handphones. Based on the survey, we can see that voice call is the most important function for a handphone. Out of 100 respondents, 57% of them think that voice call should be the most important function on a handphone followed by SMS (20%), gaming (8%), music player (6%), camera (6%) , GPS navigation (3%) and also video call (1%).

Most of the respondents choose voice call as the most important function of a handphone because of the fact that the main function of a handphone is to make voice call to other person. Besides that, SMS becomes the second important function because it is convenient and cheaper way to contact other person. Moreover, gaming becomes the third most important function because nowadays, many teenagers buy sophisticate handphone such as iPhone which provides numerous free games for the user.

For other function such as Camera, Music Player, GPS navigation and video call, they are just optional function and it is implemented as an extra credit for the user. Some respondents do think that camera is an important function as they could capture down those memorable moment with his

handphone while others prefer music player as they like to listen to music anytime and anywhere. In short, voice call remains as the most important function of a handphone. However, more function equipped inside it will definitely attract large number of customers to purchase it.

CONCLUSION

Almost everyone owns at least one handphone in today society. Over 50 percent of the population now owns a handphone, and the percentage is growing rapidly each year. During the time when handphones hit the street many years ago, it is a fantastic and wonderful invention that brought to this world, beside providing us the ability to communicate with our beloved family, friends as well as colleagues anytime and anywhere, at the same time, it also brought along a great impact to our society, transforming our social behaviour and made a enormous cultural impact as well.

Based on the results of the survey, we can clearly conclude that most people think that handphones are important to them. Handphones can be considered to be a necessity nowadays. There are enormous numbers of additional functions added in the modern handphone, making life easier as well as flexible. The additional functions included are calculator, alarm, to-do-list, stopwatch and many more. Some of the handphones are just like a mini computer which can provides access to the internet if configured.

Next, we can also make a conclusion that majority of the people strongly agree that handphones will bring positive impact to the society rather than negative impact. Handphone is a device that enables to bring people closer together regardless of how far the distance between both of them.

Handphones bring into existence of massive social change in our lifestyle patterns and also behaviours. From the research that we have conducted, we can observed that the impact of handphone on the society varied in both positive and negative outlooks. Even though there are quite a number of negative impacts of handphone to the society. However, one cannot overshadow the comfort provided by handphone. With no doubt, handphones have successfully making the world look smaller than ever before.

APPENDIX

Assignment 1: Implication of handphones to the society today.

Questionnaire:

1. Handphone is the most important and common device nowadays for communication.

Agree?

2. According to your opinion, handphone gives positive impact or negative impact to the society? Why would you say so?

a) Positive impact, because _____

c) Negative impact, because _____

3. When you start to own your first handphone?

a) primary school

b) secondary school

c) after secondary school (university time or working time)

4. Is it a good or bad to own a handphone during early age? Why?

5. The students nowadays normally own a handphoned. This is encourage by the parents in

the sense that student can contact parents during emergency. Is it a need for a primary school student to own a handphone?

Yes..... No.....

6. Nowadays students bring their luxury handphoned to school just to show off. Agree?

Yes..... No.....

7. Some said handphone is part of the accessories for the body in nowadays. Do you agree

that?

Yes..... No.....

8. How important is the handphone to you?

a. very important

b. important

c. moderate

d. not important

9. Please rate from 1 to 6 most important to unimportant according to the function of the handphone. (Eg: 1 = unimportant, 7 = most important)

___ Voice call ___ Take photo ___ SMS ___ Listen to music

___ GPS navigation ___ Gaming ___ Video Call

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