

features

The year-end is drawing near. To wrap up 2009, we are highlighting our local mobile habits with interim results from a nationwide survey by SKMM. Some results are expected while some are rather surprising.

Mobile phone: Got one?

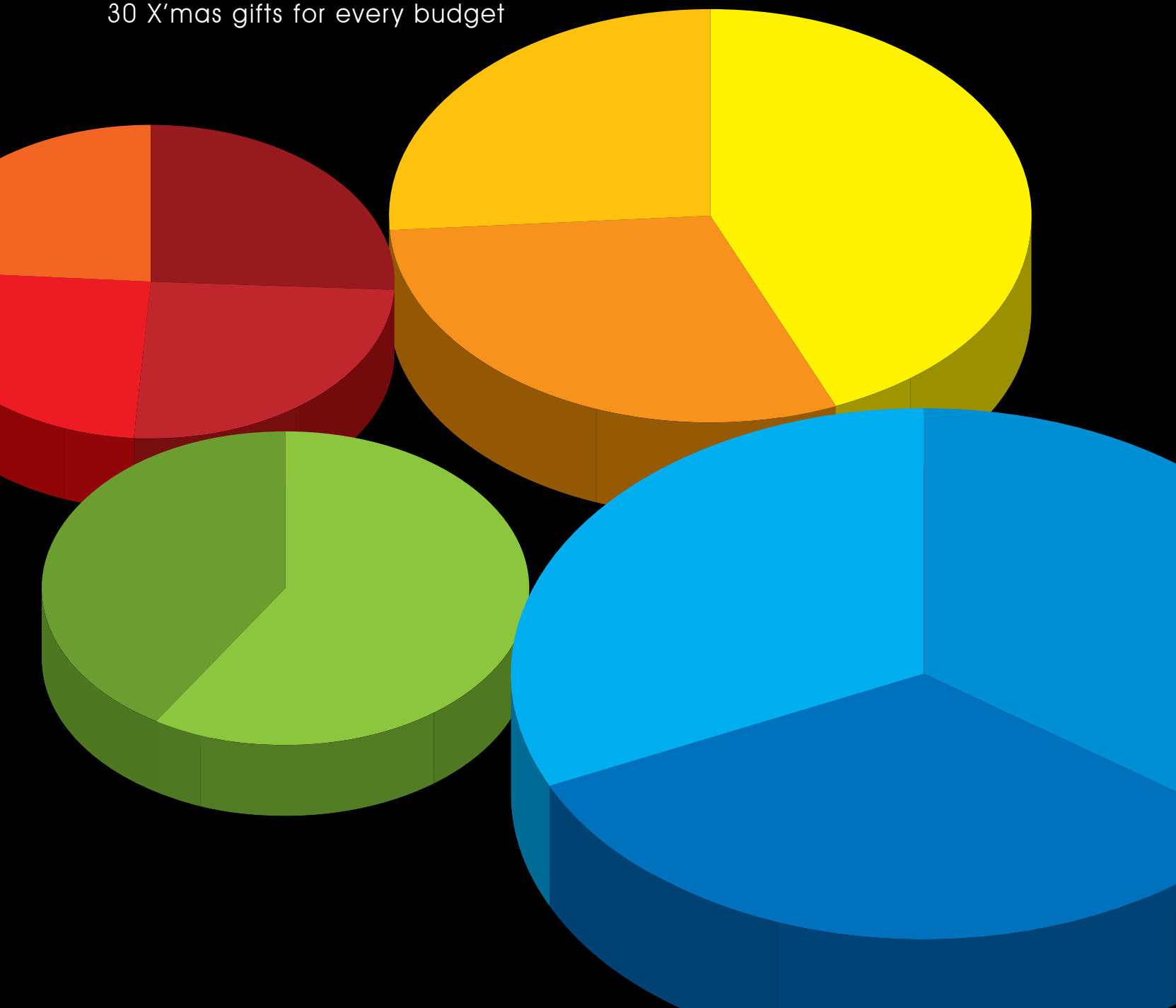
Nokia enters uncharted territory

Broadband plans for all

Can Windows 7 revive UMPCs?

Rugged mobile test

30 X'mas gifts for every budget



Mobile phone: Got one?

An ongoing study confirms facts that we all know about mobile users... and some other surprising revelations.

T Charles F. Moreira

The mobile phone has crept into every aspect of our lives, so much so that it's hard to ignore the social impact it has on people's lives. Since it has become so ubiquitous, it's easy to conclude that we would know why people use mobile phones, how they choose which phone to buy and what features are most popular. And that conclusion would be reached by just looking at one's own self, with the assumption that everyone does the same thing and are driven by the same motivations.

But are they really so? Are there facts to back up these assumptions? A group of academicians recently set out to gather statistically sound answers to these very questions and more. Mobile World gleans vital information from the interim findings of the study which is commissioned by the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (SKMM).

The findings are fascinating in that one gets a glimpse of the mobile habits of our fellow Malaysians and in doing so discover how much alike we are and how different we are at the same time. We also see just how much impact this little device that has been in widespread use for, believe it or not over 20 years, has had on our lives.

Malaysians and their mobile phone usage

According to qualitative findings on adoption and appropriation, the top reasons for first-time use of mobile phones are the ease of keeping in touch with family and friends and the fact that mobile phones enable them to manage their lives.

For example, a worker at a fixed location said, "It acts as my daily assistant in my work and tasks," while a senior citizen said, "It helps me a lot in the management of my personal matters."

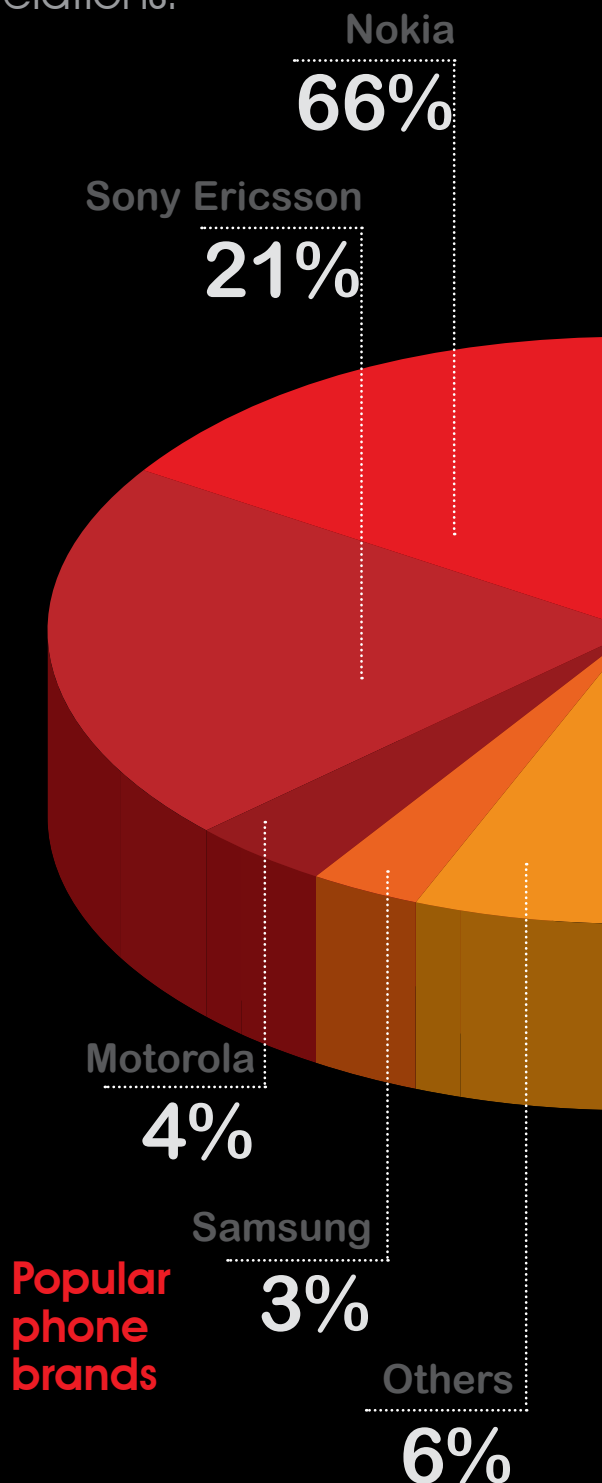
As for phone brands, fixed workers liked Samsung phones for their user interface and functions, Motorola for their user-friendliness and Nokia for their durability, while a mobile worker liked Nokia phones for their easy availability of phone and spare parts, and their simplicity.

Most interviewees reported that they use mobile phones for social management, personal management, security and safety. For example, a husband had video calls with his wife when he wanted to see her face, while a postgraduate student had video calls with her husband when she was out-of-town.

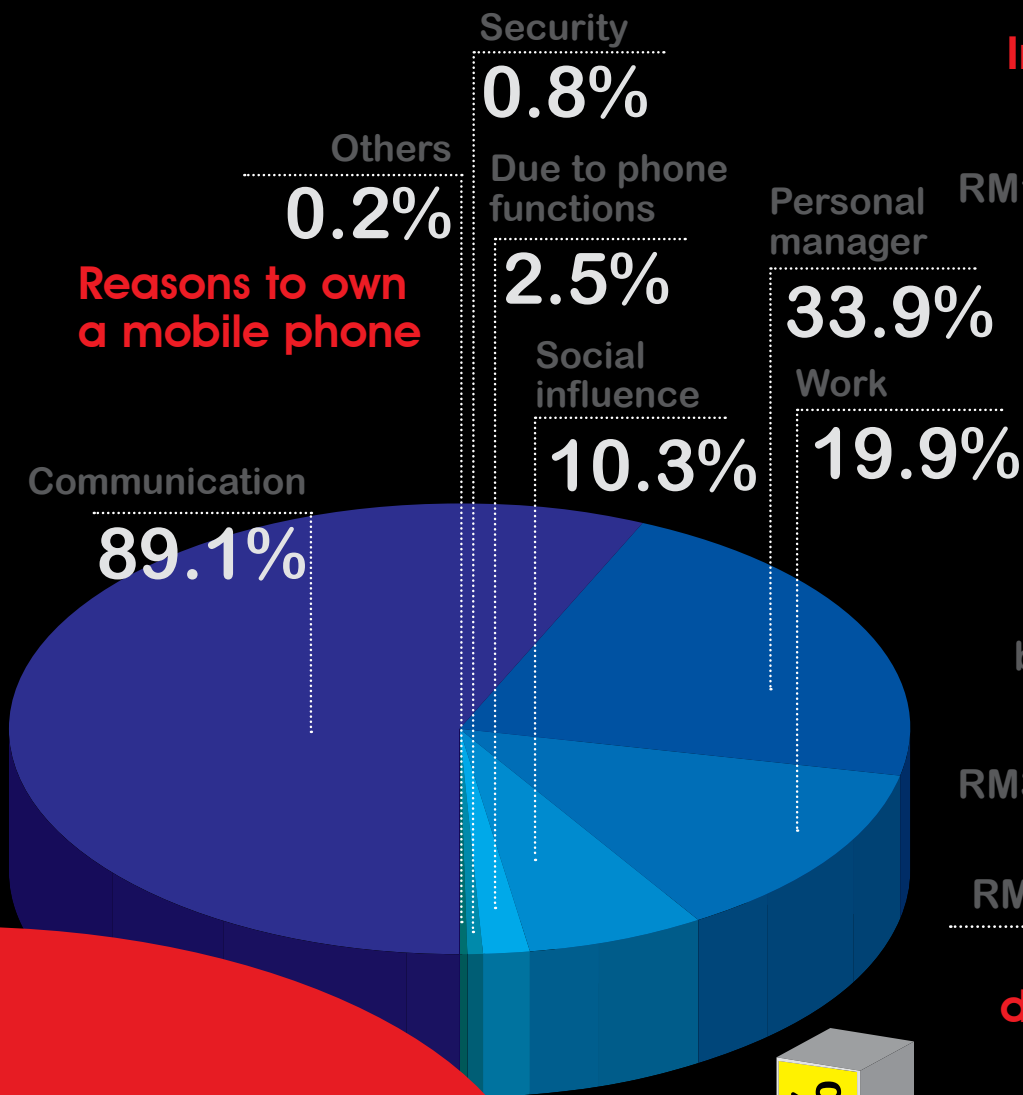
A senior citizen used his phone to send SMS or call his friends, make announcements of meetings and invitations without having to do it physically. As for personal management, a fixed worker uses his phone as a repository for photos and videos, a mobile workers to keep SMS for reference, while an undergraduate student uses it as an alarm clock, to remind about lectures and birthdays.

As for safety and security, a fixed worker uses its GPS function to know where he is, especially in unfamiliar territory and as a navigation aid, while a mobile worker uses it to call his wife if he has left something valuable at home and a housewife said it makes her feel safer as she could always call for help.

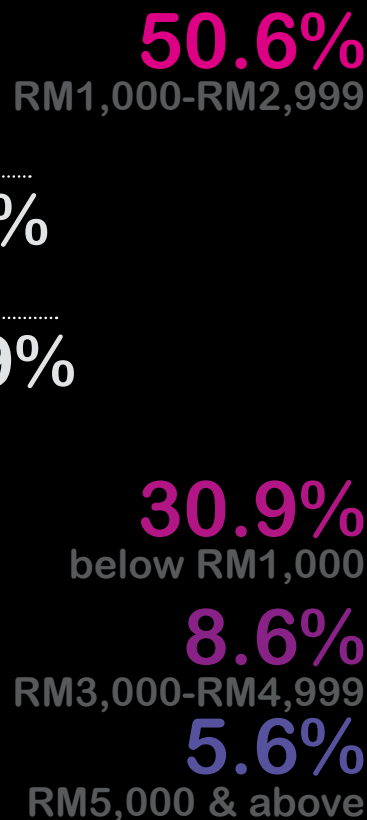
Get up close and personal with the Malaysian Phone User in the charts and figures that follow.



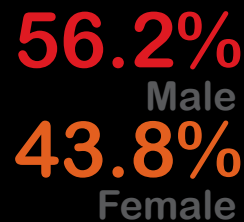
Reasons to own a mobile phone



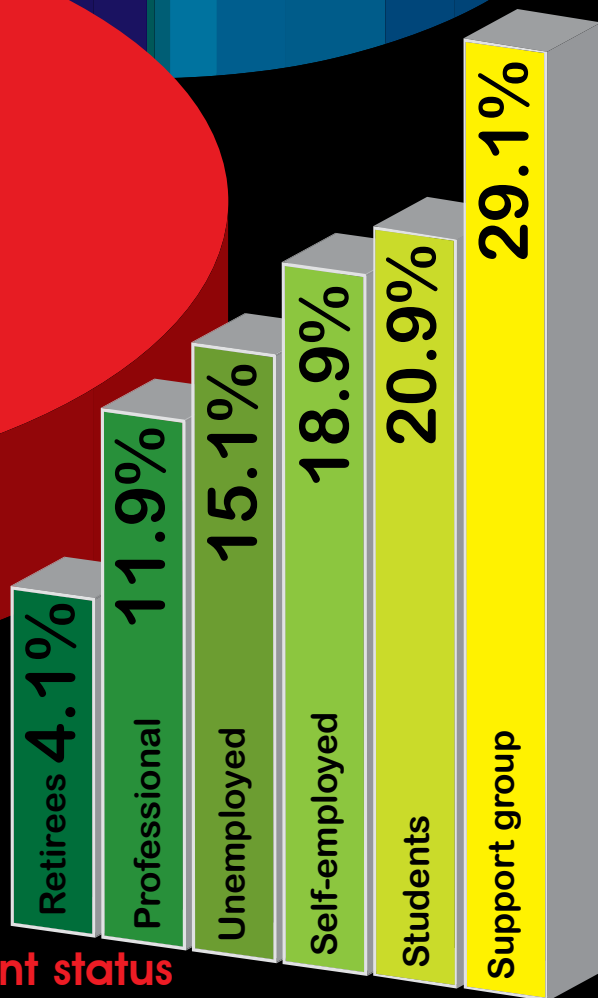
Income group



Participant demographics



Employment status



Choice of brands

The top five reasons for choice of brand are 45.4% for ease of use, 20.8% for performance – ie battery life, memory capacity, speed and stability, 16.5% for features – namely, design, size, colour and so on, 14.9% for its price and 13.3% for brand name.

Functions and features figure significantly in the 13 to 30 years group's choice of brand, while features are the only significant factor amongst those aged 31 to 40 years and social influence amongst those aged above 55.



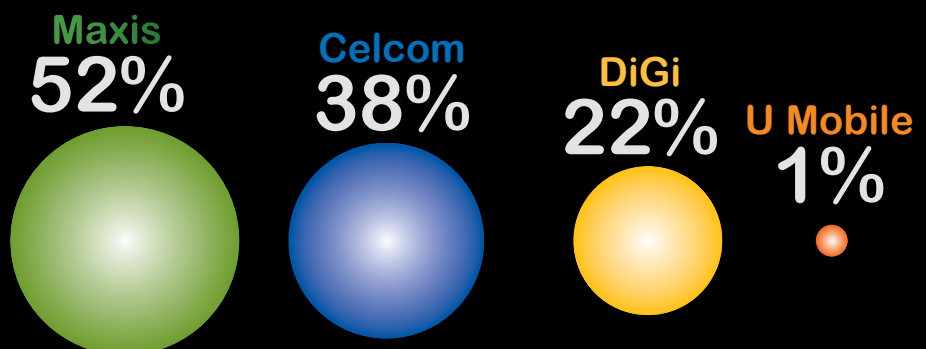
The four lowest reasons that influence brand choices are 7% social influence, 5% personal image, 4% marketing and advertising and 3.8% other reasons. This should give pause to advertisers who pour millions into advertising and promotions annually.

Of those with more than one phone, 64.8% are aged between 20 and 40 years, predominantly male, employed and with a monthly income of RM5,000 or more.

Telco of Choice

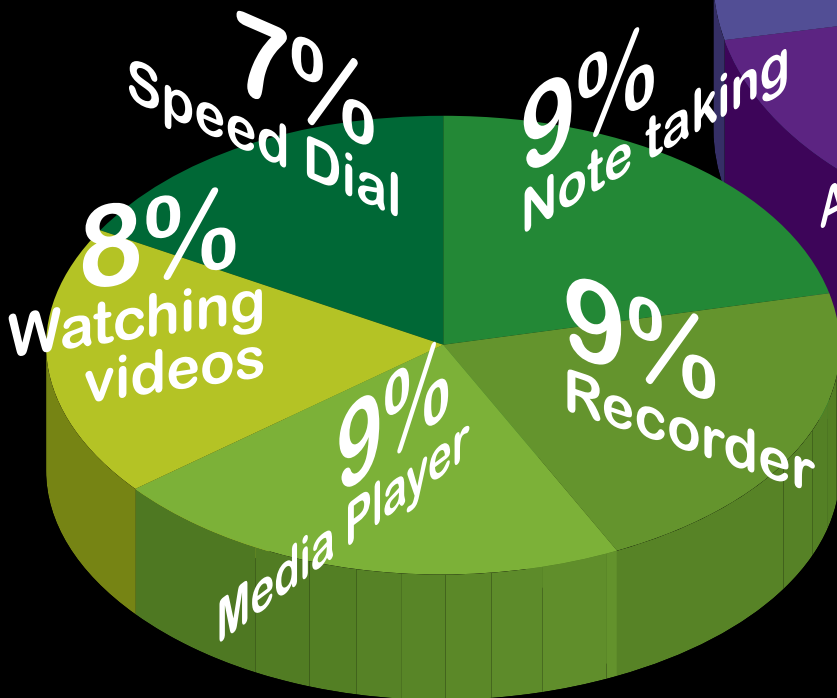
Maxis is preferred across all age groups, amongst the younger age groups and singles. Celcom is more popular among older age groups, among Malay and other ethnic groups, while DiGi is more popular amongst Indian and Chinese ethnic groups.

These percentage points add up to over 100% because 29% of those surveyed have more than one phone, and 61% of them do so to separate different purposes, such as work and personal use, while 23% do so for backup.





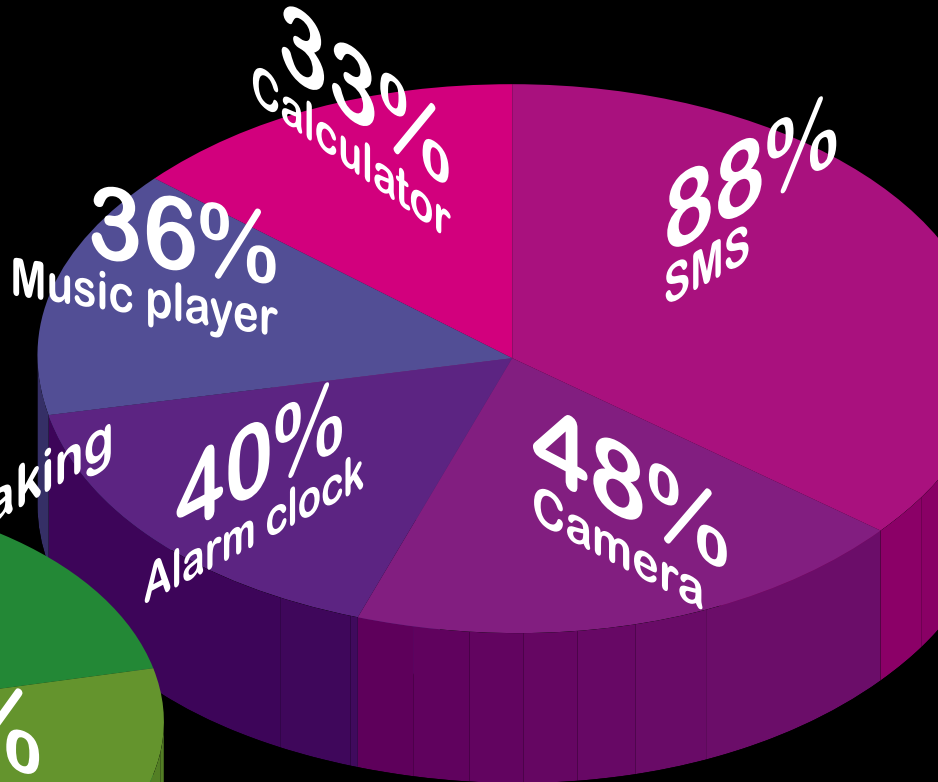
Five least used phone functions



Other usage

These findings are expected to contribute to theoretical knowledge in wireless communication use, with the application and conceptualisation of a technology adoption and the results of this study may serve as a mechanism to guide the development of wireless phone applications and design.

- Teenagers tend to use them more for pleasure and entertainment, while retirees (over 55 years) use them for basic communications.
- The middle-aged (working adults) use phones for their work and buy phones according to their earning power.
- Most mobile users change their phone due to damage or loss, though this practice was higher amongst working adults but significantly lower amongst teenagers, while retirees are less likely to change their phones due to damage.
- Males tend to buy phones significantly more for work, while females are more likely to get phones as gifts than males.
- Males tend to choose their phones according to brand and functionality, while females are more likely to buy a brand due to social influence.
- Students tend to choose their phone brands due to function and social influence and image, while professionals are more concerned with their features that suit their interest and work.
- Singles are significantly higher users of these functions and are more prone to change their phone than married couples are.



Five most used phone functions (besides voice)

Positive Impact

said SMS, MMS and 3G let them be more creative in their communication and activities

72%

use their phones to connect with family or friends through sharing of jokes, advice and so on

75%

said they use unique grammar and smileys in their messages.

58%

said phones enable them to improve their work performance

56%

said it let's them generate more income

39%

use their phone to provide opinions on social issues in newspapers, polls and so on

34%

they use their phones to participate in social and political activities involving political groups and in non-political activities such as sports

22%

mobile phones let them get involved with activities with their family and friends

90%

it enables them to participate with TV and radio programmes including reality shows


25%

have more friends and contacts since using a mobile phone

75%

it gave them more social freedom than before

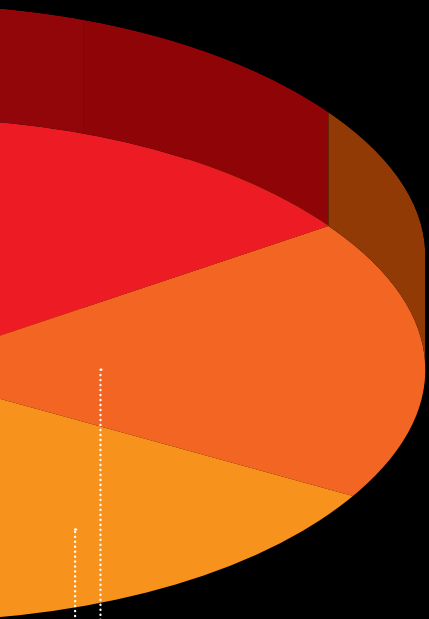
72%

 Being connected and informative

 Being participative

 Being productive

 Being culturally innovative



it lets them keep up with current issues and information

65%

it gives them convenient access to online information

60%

Who's behind the study?

Entitled *Adoption, Appropriation and Impact of Mobile Phones Amongst Malaysia Society*, the study was headed by Prof. Dr. Rose Alinda Alias, Dean of UTM School of Graduate Studies, Johor in partnership with Nor Zairah Abdul Rahim, Assc. Prof. Dr. Naomie Salim, Assc. Prof. Dr. Azizah Abdul Rahman and Dr. Norafida Ithnin of UTM in collaboration with Assc. Prof Dr. Jennie Carroll of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), Australia, Assc. Prof. Dr. Nor Shariza Abdul Karim, Dr. Norshidah Mohamed and Dr. Murni Mahmud of International Islamic University Malaysia (UIAM) and Dr. Shamsul Anuar Mokhtar of Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL).

These interim findings were disclosed at the Malaysian Mobile Phones Strategy Workshop organised by UTM, RMIT, UIAM and UniKL at

the KL Hilton in September. and participated in its proceedings, and as the survey was on-going at the time, the findings presented here are interim.

The survey methodology involves qualitative methods such as interviews of cohort groups such as workers at a fixed workplace, mobile workers, postgraduate students, undergraduates, senior citizens, housewives and non-users; hold focus groups on the adoption, appropriation and impact of mobile phones and analysis using the Nvivo8 method. It also involves a computer-aided telephone interview (CATI) conducted by trained interviewers at the SKMM CATI centre.

In the interim report, 1,710 successful interviews on phone usage had been conducted nationwide out of 2,000 samples drawn. At the same time, 1,708 successful surveys out of 2,000 had been conducted on social impact.

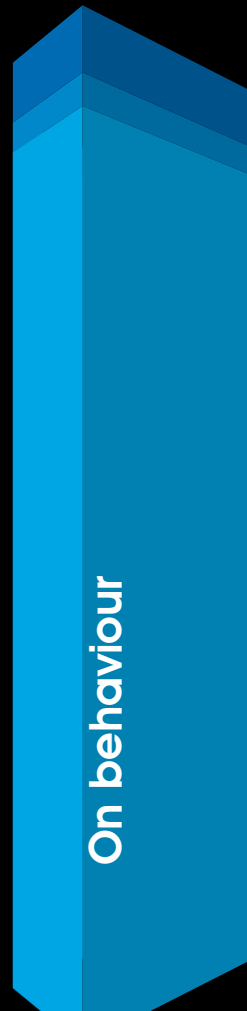
MW

Negative Impact



36%
overspent their budget on mobile phone bills

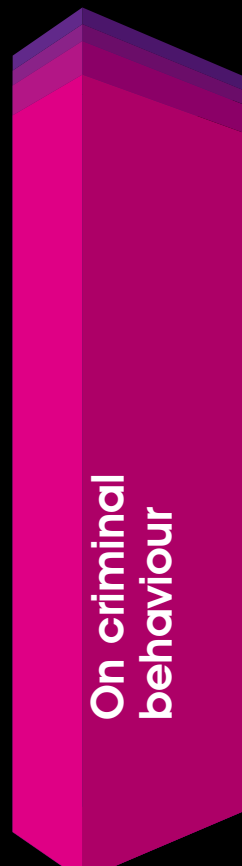
25%
sometimes experienced financial problems due to mobile phone expenses



62%
had been interrupted or disturbed through inappropriate use of mobile phones in public places

58%
said that written communication skills had deteriorated through use of abbreviations and other new forms of text messages

56%
said that on many occasions, meetings, lectures and so on had been disrupted by their own or others' mobile phone use



52%
said they know of cases where mobile phones were used to threaten, harass, blackmail and so on

51%
know of phones used in activities which undermine the law

50%
know of cases where phones used as a threat to social integration

48%
know of phones used for immoral activities such as gambling, prostitution and so on

29%
said they sometimes find themselves occupied on the phone when they should be doing other things

27%
said they spend a great deal of time speaking on their phone at the expense of those around them

23%
had on occasions been threatened due to their phone use

