

MOBILE AND INTERNET USAGE AMONG SRI LANKAN UNDERGRADUATES

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ABSTRACT

For a developing country like Sri Lanka, the knowledge and application of the modern technology is in utmost important to achieve and establish the objectives of the development of the country in all the perspectives such as social, economic and political. On the other hand, in any country undergraduates are the people who can play a significant role in the development process of the country. In this regards, the understanding of the extent of the knowledge and effective usage of modern technological trends such as Internet and mobile devices among undergraduates is important. However, there is no specific data available on how undergraduates use the Internet and the mobile phones in Sri Lanka.

This research project was undertaken to collect data from undergraduate students in Sri Lanka about their views and their usage on Internet and mobile technology. Research was conducted on survey basis to develop a database among young mobile device users. A survey paper was distributed among the SAITM undergraduates in order to collect data about their usage of mobile devices. This survey was not only restricted to collect data about mobile phones but also to collect more data on mobile devices such as tabs.

The study was further extended to collect data about the mobile and its Internet usability among those users. As there are lots of Internet applications that are directly companied with mobile devices such as tracking systems today the study was primarily focused on investigating the usage of these kinds of new technical equipment with the contact of Internet.

Major interesting findings of this research are undergraduates tend to spend more time on extended facilities of mobiles (like surfing Internet, Internet messaging, social networking, gaming etc), around one third of the sample spend more than one hour per day on mobile calls, large percentage of the group use pre-paid connections while rest uses post-paid connections, considerable number of undergraduates are familiar about their mobile operating system and they spend considerable amount of time in Internet social networking.

Key words: Mobile, Internet, SAITM

1. INTRODUCTION

Mobile devices market is developing in a very rapid phase in the present causing manufactures to research on different new products, technologies specially applications that help users to make their lives easier. Accessing Internet through these small hand-held devices including mobiles, smart phones, tabs and palm tops is increasing among the users. As per many recent surveys it shows that this smart phone and tab sales will surpass the personal computers and laptop sales in the near future.

As many undergraduates are young and keen on new technologies these smart mobile devices have become a major attraction for them. These devices are being used by many young undergraduates for their day to day mobile uses and specially for enhanced services like surfing Internet, social networking, gaming, multimedia applications and many more.

Understanding about usage patterns and trends of

this kind of smart devices will be really important as they represent a major percentage of educated young community in any country. Doing such a research in a community like SAITM undergraduates will surely help to understand their thinking patterns towards new technologies.

Specially findings of this survey can be used to further increase the researches into this area. Service providers like these equipment sellers, mobile service providers, Internet service providers, mobile application writers, social networks, advertising companies aiming this young undergraduates etc can use the findings of this research to enhance their quality of service and to expand in to new areas of the market.

2. METHODOLOGY

A detailed survey questionnaire was used to collect user data. Similar researches done in different communities in different countries are used as the base when preparing the questionnairere. [1, 2, 3]

SAITM undergraduates from all the faculties namely Engineering, Medicine, Management and Media are considered for the survey. A sample of 120 students was randomly selected to collect data from all the batches of students. Sample size was around 20% from each student category.

Questionnaire basically consists of three parts as general section, mobile device and Internet access through mobile. General section was to collect users general information such as the faculty, batch, age etc. In mobile section detailed information about the mobile device was collected. General purpose mobiles, smart phones, tabs, palm tops are considered for this survey. In last section information about their Internet access through the mobile device was collected, including the time spend, most accessed social networking web sites etc.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis of the user data was really interesting as this kind of proper survey data was not available referring to young undergraduates of Sri Lanka. Major findings of the analysis can be discussed under two sections as mobile and Internet usage. Finding of the mobile section are as follows,

- Except three undergraduates from the sample all others use a mobile. Many students use the mobile to surf Internet, connect to IM for online chatting, gaming, artistic purposes (like photography) and social networking further to regular functions of calling and messaging (Figure 1).

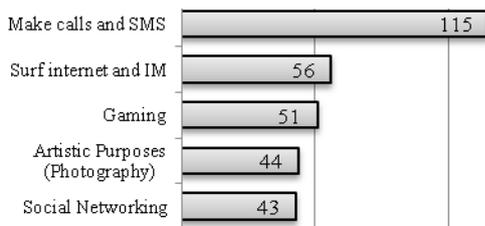


Figure 1: Used features of the mobile

- Nearly one fourth of the sample that is 30 undergraduates spend more than 1 hour per day in mobile calls (Figure 2).

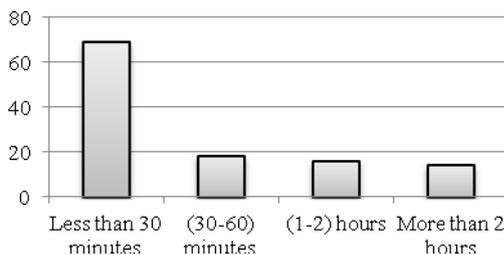


Figure 2: Time spent on mobile calls

- Around three quarter of the sample uses pre-paid connections while others use post-paid connections (Figure 3).

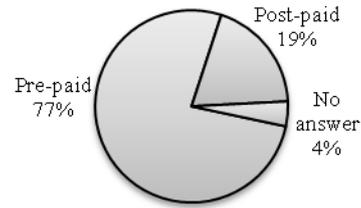


Figure 3: Payment scheme (pre-paid, post-paid)

- Around one third of the sample spends more than 1000 Rupees per month on their mobile bills (Figure 4).

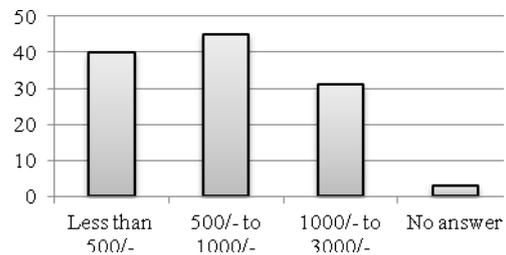


Figure 4: Average monthly bill

- When considering the manufacturer of the mobile device, Nokia is leading the sample with 45%, while Samsung is being the second with 18% and Sony Ericsson being the third with 13% (Figure 5).

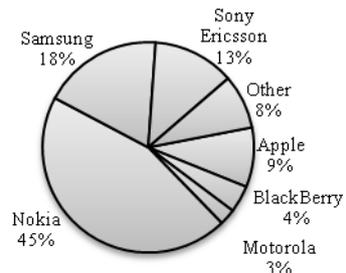


Figure 5: Mobile manufacturer

- Still the mobile operating systems are basically unknown to users. But still it was interesting to observe that 45% of the sample knows what is their mobile operating system is (Figure 6).

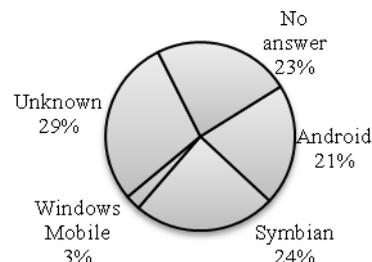


Figure 6: Mobile operating system

- Considering the mobile service providers Dialog is the leading choice representing 60% of the sample, Mobitel being the second with 20% share of the sample. Airtel have enabled to secure 9% while Etisalat and Hutch together makes 11% (Figure 7).

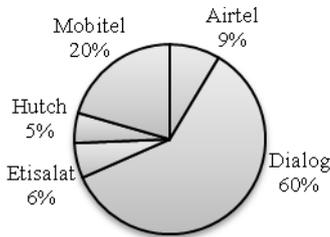


Figure 7: Service providers

Following are the findings of the analysis in the Internet usage through mobile section.

- Many of the undergraduates of the sample are used to access social networks through their mobile. Among the social networking sites they access using the mobiles; Facebook is leading with 54%. All others namely, Twitter, My space and Google+ together contributed to 14% (Figure 8).

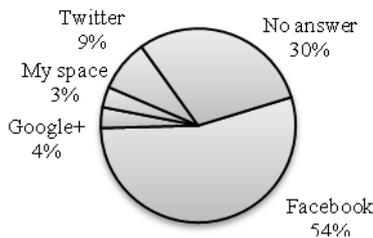


Figure 8: Social networking sites

- Around 23% of the sample spend more than 30 minutes per day accessing social networking sites through the mobile (Figure 9).

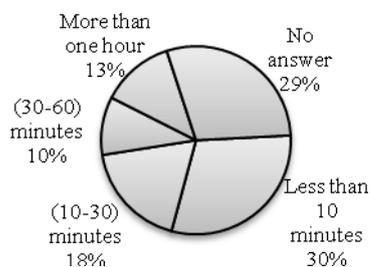


Figure 9: Time spent on social networking web sites

- Around 50% of the sample accesses their emails via the mobile. Around 20% of that uses auto push services to automatically push mails to the mobiles from the mail servers while the rest 30% access mail servers only when

required (Figure 10).

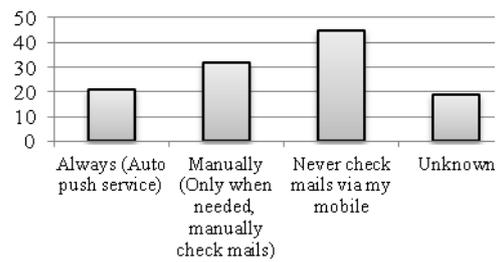


Figure 10: Methods of accessing emails through mobiles

4. CONCLUSION

This analysis results show that majority of the young undergraduates of the sample use mobile for extended purposes beyond regular usage like for browsing Internet, gaming, social networking etc. Time spent on mobile also a considerable amount and further surveys can be done in to this area to find in detail information about their web browsing patterns and famous web sites. Another worthwhile finding was many undergraduates of the sample use pre-paid connections as their connection type. This finding will really benefit to mobile service providers to enhance their service offering to this market segment.

Majority of the sample use the mobile as a social networking access method through the Internet and Facebook is the leading choice among them. In average this age group spends a considerable time in social networking web sites. This finding can be used to introduce new innovative teaching methodologies specially in undergraduate level through social networking web sites carrying our in detail researches in this area Further social networking sites can be used as a very effective communication medium to address this young Sri Lankan undergraduates.

5. REFERENCES

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