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Review

An ethnographic study of mobile phone users in public places in Nigeria

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The use of mobile phone devices in public places in Nigeria was studied in the context of an emerging new culture in the society. The introduction of new technology especially the GSM and the Internet has changed the way people communicate and do things that would have hitherto been impossible. The use of mobile phone for different aspects of the lives of the people has introduced a new culture affecting various aspects of the people's lives including, communication, shopping, education, banking, gaming, and entertainment. Mobile phones have become part of the dress accessory for most of the user's especially young people who are over 50% of the population of Nigeria. The concept of this study is to observe and understand how average mobile users in Nigeria respond to the use of their phones in public places in a different scenario. The objective of this research work is to identify and establish the fact of the use of mobile phones in public places in Nigeria describing different situations. Though some unspoken rules guide the use of mobile phones in public places, it has become part of the culture of the people. This research is based on an ethnographic study that uses participant observation in identifying the different ways people use their mobile phones in public places. The conclusion of this paper is to explore our relationships with people in public places while relating to how we use our mobile phones as it gradually becomes an embedded culture.

Key words: Mobile phones, smart phones, social media, Wi-fi, GSM, technology, Internet, Information, Africa, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

According to Adeleke (2016), The nation's active telephone lines have hit 145.4 million, with the country's teledensity now 103.9%, according to the latest subscriber statistics just released by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC).

The GSM revolution started in Nigeria in the year 2001 when the Government liberalized the telecommunication sector by auctioning four GSM licenses. At that time, Nigeria could only boast of about 10,000 analog mobile phones. Nigeria has the fastest growth rate in the number of mobile phone subscribers in Africa "teledensity moved from 99.39% in December 2014 to 100.56% in January 2015. By February, March, and end of April, the figure increased to 101.85, 102.81 and 103.91% respectively" (Adepetun, 2015).

Between 2001 and 2015, there has been a tremendous increase in the use of mobile phones in the country.

Technology, which was hitherto, the preserve of the elite and wealthy Nigerians have now become available to almost everyone including the rural poor. The cost of acquiring a mobile phone dropped from about $2000 per line in 2000 to less than $2 in 2015.

The use of mobile phone has gradually become part of the culture; when using mobile phones, it occupies multiple social spaces simultaneously, spaces with norms that sometimes conflict, the physical space of the mobile phone user and virtual space of the conversation (Palen et al., 2000).

The advancement in technology has also introduced various applications, which enables the user to be able to accomplish different activities with the mobile phone. With the use of the Internet, the mobile phone can perform various operations including voice calls, SMS, chatting, photography, clock functions, GPS functions,
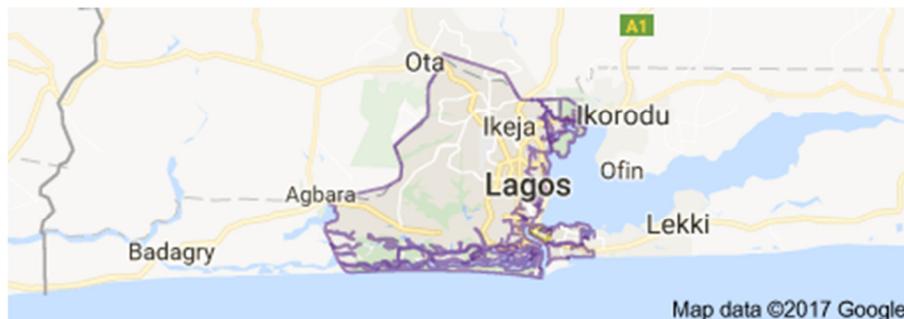
Figure 1. Map of Lagos, Nigeria.

Social Networking, education, health and checking the weather. According to Ling (2004), "the mobile phone has fundamentally affected our accessibility, safety and security, coordination of social and business activities, and use of public places." Advances in technology continue to enable different functionalities on the mobile phone that has affected the way people communicate and perform various activities such as trading, banking, chatting, education, and health. Reading newspaper online has also become popular while the local stock exchange now uses the Internet as a platform for the activities of the stock market, which can be relayed in real time through the Internet to mobile devices.

Due to the affordability of the mobile phone, it is apparent that a significant number of people have imbibed the new culture of using the phone to make a series of activities. Donner (2006) stated that throughout the developing world, millions of people are purchasing mobiles. Eighty percent of the world's population lives within range of a mobile/cellular network. According to Palen et al. (2000), concerning the interaction and co-evolution of technology and human activity, many do not understand the effect of the use of mobile phones on communicative practice and behaviour. Ling (2004) observed that majority of mobile phone usage in public takes place on the street, public transport, shops or restaurant in which the social impact of mobile phone use in public places are investigated. With almost everyone using a cell phone, imagine if there were no standard rules how a conference venue would look like with everyone either receiving or making a call. This study report on four different scenarios of public places and closely observes how people use their mobile phones in this public place. Reportis made on the communicative practices of people depending on their location, perceptions and adaptations to social norms and different situations observed indicated various ways in which people put their phones to use. This study is important as it analyses how mobile phone usage subjugates social spaces, its effects on social perception and how the norm development interphase with our cultural practice.

The researcher has recently participated in different functions at various locations including parties, conferences, meetings, in the plane, at restaurants, and at the bus station. In the course of the study, field notes were taken, engaged in participant observation, and conducted informal and formal interviews. The aim of this ethnographic study of the use of mobile phones in public places in Nigeria is to understand the growing culture of mobile phone usage amongst Nigerians in public places through the use of participant observation.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the body of knowledge availabe on mobile telephony and its use. According to Palen et al. (2000), "the popular literature is rife with information about mobile telephony products, as well as with anecdotal commentary about its social propriety as published empirical research on mobile telephony practice has emerged only recently."

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in two cities in Nigeria; Lagos and Abuja. The Geographical coordinates of Nigeria are 10 00 N, 8 00 E. Lagos is the largest city in Nigeria with 6.5244° N, 3.3792° E coordinates and Abuja is the capital city of Nigeria which is located in the middle of the country and has 9.0765° N, 7.3986° E coordinates (Figures 1 and 2).

Four different situations were studied for this research using participant observation of an ethnographic study. According to Spradley (1980), "ethnography is the work of describing a culture. The central aim of ethnography is to understand another way of life from the native point of view." Anderson (2009) describes ethnography as a branch of anthropology that involves trying to understand how people live their lives. This method is preferred for this study as it tends to allow the researcher to veer into strategic questions while observing people behaving on their terms and discretion while using mobile phones. The use of ethnography in this study is aimed at providing rich, holistic insights into people's views and actions, as well as the nature of the location they inhabit through the collection of detailed observations and interviews

Figure 2. Map of Abuja, Nigeria.

Table 1. Matrix table of ethical considerations for the ethnographic study of mobile phone usage in a social setting in Nigeria. Note: Ethical Principals adapted from Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant Observation.* New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

S/N	Ethical principle	Action to be taken
1.	Consider informants first	The rights of the informants will be considered first where there is a conflict of interest
2.	Safeguard informants' rights, interests and sensitivities	The identity of informants at the social gathering shall be protected. There will be no unpermitted intrusions.
3.	Communicate Research Objectives	Where the need arises, research objectives shall be explained.
4.	Protect the Privacy of Informants	Considering the nature of the lounge/bar, the privacy of informants will be protected. There will be no recordings or photography without permission.
5.	Don't Exploit Informants	This research is not for financial considerations and will not be so used in a way that the informants shall be exploited
6.	Make Reports Available to Informants	The copy of the final ethnographic report shall be made available to interviewed Informants on request

(Reeves and Hodges, 2008). The Developmental Research Sequence (D.R.S.) as espoused by James P. Spradley in his book "Participant Observation" is employed in conducting this ethnographic study. The Developmental Research Sequence prescribes twelve tasks that assist researcher from the selecting of a social situation to the final writing of the ethnography. "Each of these larger tasks is broken down into many smaller ones that simplify the work of asking ethnographic questions and making ethnographic analyses" (Spradley, 1980).

Locating a social situation

Observing the importance and impact of the mobile phone usage that intrigues the researcher as to the new culture of speaking and using the mobile phone for e-commerce becomes pervasive in the Nigerian space. There has been a gradual change in how people communicate in public using the mobile phone to do

voice chat and other activities such as chatting, social media, photography, health, music and e-commerce. The interesting aspect that intrigues is the fact that people use their mobile phone all the time in public for various activities from when walking (pedometers) to talking (voice calls) to driving (GPRS). The social situation chosen for this study is the evolving culture involving the usage of the mobile phone in public places in Nigeria.

The study looked at whether there is any protocol for using mobile phones at different social gatherings. It also tried to identify the applications used by people while socializing. It is also interesting to note how the researcher uses a mobile phone in different social circumstances while carrying out the participant observation.

This study will be useful to organizations involved in mobile networks, marketers, and policymakers. The usefulness of the study and the fact that there is available data on the subject makes it the researcher's choice of social situation (Table 1).

Conducting participant observation

According to Spradley (1980), "All human beings act as regular participants in many social situations. Once we learn the cultural rules, they become tacit, and we hardly think about what we are doing." Having started this ethnographic study of the habits of people using mobile phone devices in social circumstances as researcher transformed from the role of an ordinary participant to that of a participant observer and becomes conscious of my environment while using the mobile phone, the method of participant observation allows data to be collected in naturalistic settings by ethnographers who observe and take part in the common and uncommon activities of the people being studied (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011)

The researcher observed conditions surrounding the location mostly determines four different location and circumstances as the use of mobile phones in public places. The first location was a party at a Diplomat's residence. Fifteen people (nine women and six men) were present and many of the participants were with mobile phones using it for one activity or the other throughout the two hours stay at the event. Five people; three men and two women made calls. Six people; four men and two women received calls. Seven of the people; five women and two men used their phones to take photographs. All the women at one time or the other were using their phones for some other activities (Researcher couldn't verify what they were doing, but guessed they were either on social media or sending text messages). None of the participants under observation took any excuse before using their phones.

The second location was at an ice cream shop in the Ikeja part of Lagos where about seven male and six ladies were seated at the time of visit. There were two service attendants (male) and two security guards (one male and one female). The researcher sat in a vantage position where customers and staff could be quietly observed without being obtrusive. At a point, two of the men were using their mobiles, probably on social media. One of them later received a call. Four girls seating together started using their phones while speaking. Another man sitting alone was having a voice call on his phone all through the forty-five minutes stay at the Shop. A couple was busy looking at their phones while the lady kept on giggling. One of the service attendants had a mobile phone in his breast pocket but did not use it throughout my stay in the shop. On the way out, the lady security guard was noticed making a call, while the researcher took some photographs and no one seemed to be bothered.

The third location selected for this study was at a conference organized by a network provider in Nigeria in commemoration of the 10th year anniversary of their Foundation. There were about three hundred participants in the hall at the Eko Hotel in Lagos. During the one-hour observation, two phones rang. This was interesting as previously people were often asked to put their phones on silence at such conferences, but such advice was not given at the start of the conference. Not hearing the babel of ringing phones as previously experienced in such conferences implies that people are now consciously silencing their phones as a rule at conferences.

Four out of the people visible to the researcher was at one time or the other busy with their phones all through the conference. More than twenty people used their phone at one time or the other to take photographs. The researcher noticed a lady and a man using their phones for video purposes and later responded to a text message and joined in taking pictures and videos of the event. According to Spradley (1980), "any survey of participant observers would reveal great differences in the style of their research. One important contrast is the degree of their involvement, both with people and in the activities they observe".

In the three locations described above, the researcher was actively involved since at various times, he had to use a mobile device for multiple activities. List of tasks carried out by researcher at each location includes observing how often people picked their phones; how many people have phones; what people use their phones for at social situations; how many phones people carried; whether the phones are on silence during meetings and conference; how and why people use their phones for photographs.

Making an ethnographic record

Making an ethnographic record is essential to ethnographers as it is important to work primarily with "unstructured data"; that is, data that have not been coded at the point of data collection as a closed set of analytical categories (Reeves and Hodges, 2008). An ethnographic record comprises of recordings, notes, artifacts, pictures and anything that needs to be recorded that adequately describe the situation. In conducting this ethnographic study of the culture of mobile phone usage, it is interesting to note that the utilization of the researcher's mobile devices in itself constitutes a part of the study.

The study was conducted in familiar environments hence language was not a barrier as every term used by mobile users are easily decoded. Spradley (1980) stated that ethnographic researcher is bound to encounter striking language difference. The researcher discovered that the terms used were mostly coined from the local dialect or a different form of the English language and these terms differ between those under the age of 35 and older groups.

However, some words used in the local Internet culture seem to be the universal application while some words were of local nature and widely accepted in the Nigerian

locality.

Field Journal

A field journal that contains a record of ideas, experiences, opinions, mistakes, confusion, success and problems that arises in the course of the study was taken. According to Spradley (1980), a journal represents the personal side of fieldwork; it includes reactions to informants and the feelings you sense from others. Entries and ethical issues relating to the study are recorded as they occur.

Field Notes

Different ethnographers develop their styles and forms of taking field notes. Different kinds of field notes make up ethnographic records, which the ethnographer arranges to aid his analysis. It is humanly impossible to write down everything that goes on or everything informants say. Condensed accounts often include phrases, single words, and unconnected sentences (Spradley, 1980). The expanded account is an expansion of the condensed account.

At the Diplomats residence, all the fifteen people had mobile phones and they used it for different activities. There was an Argentinian lady with an iPhone 6 who continued to look at her phone every other minute. The researcher observed she was chatting with someone or posting on her wall and when approached she gladly responded she was chatting with her sister in Buenos Aires. None of the participants under observation took any excuse to use their phones and it now seems to be part of the people's culture to ensure they have a phone with them when going to social function.

Female participants are observed to have colorful phone cases, and two of them had cases to match the color of their dressing. Further observations indicated that people naturally used their phones to make calls, view documents, post on social media and take photographs. All the people under observation used their phones without seeking excuses from the group. The researcher also actively participated in the activities by receiving calls and taking photographs as indicated by Spradley (1980) that active observer seeks to do what other people are doing, not merely to gain acceptance, but to more fully learn the cultural rules for behavior.

Findings of this study include the fact that all the people observed had mobile phones, and they used it for different activities. All the phones were smart phones and had Internet connectivity. The female was more conscious of how their phones looked and took it as part of their dressing. People accepted that other people could use their phones for social functions without seeking their permission.

Making descriptive observations

At the second location which is the ice cream shop in Lagos, a grand tour of the location was conducted, as such, splendid tour observations were expected to provide only the most general features of the events at this location and give an overview of what occurred (Spradley, 1980). Outside the shop itself were about six tables for those customers who may wish to sit outside the ice cream shop. About three couples were seated and were served by waiters. The demography of the customers at the ice cream shop happens to be that of heavy users of mobile devices which gave an ample opportunity to observe different actors. All the participants observed were involved in various actions over the period of specific findings for the observation included the fact that mobile phone usage at a social gathering such as in a restaurant or the ice cream shop under observation was accepted amongst all the participants.

It was not an anomaly for people to use their mobile phones and at the same time attend to their guests at a public gathering. The use of mobile phones differed in different social gatherings such as meetings and restaurants. Emotions expressed by those observed indicated the joining up of third parties that may be called or chatted with by the participants on their mobile devices. Questions added to field notes tend to explain whether people bothered about what other people did with their mobile devices while at a social gathering or a formal meeting; what type of location was the action taking place, and whether this affected the use of mobile phones by the participants. Also included in the field notes were questions such as how often do people use their phones while at such gathering? What type of applications do people often use while in the company of other people?

In trying to understand what the various participants were thinking of while performing the acts of relating to their immediate environment and at the same time using their mobile devices, a mini-tour observation of the events occurred which also led to further questions in the field notes. Questions such as what was in the mind of the participants in the study, what were the activities of each participant and the effect on their friends if any?

The research study tends to distinguish between the male and female participants in the study. The questions were what the women did differently from the men under such circumstances of mobile usage. According to Hofstede et al. (2010), "Women have on average greater finger dexterity and, for example, faster metabolism, which enables them to recover faster from fatigue, but some men excel in these respects".

The question that comes to mind easily is whether the assertion by Geert indicates that women are more dexterous in the use of mobile devices. It was observed that the women observed tend to use their mobile devices more than the men during this social outing.

However according to Hofstede et al. (2010), "every society recognizes many behaviors, not immediately related to procreation, as more suitable to females or more suitable to males, but which behaviors belong to either gender differs from one society to another."

According to a study by Time Inc. and Nuance Digital Marketing, women like their mobile devices. The study stipulates that 60% of women name their mobiles as the most important devices in their lives, significantly higher than men, at 43% (Moses, 2013). CNN in a 2010 report of a year-long study by Nielson Co. indicated that women spent about 22% more time chatting on mobile phones than men. They spent about 856 min/month on the line, on average, compared with 667 min. for men. Women also texted more, sending or receiving an average of 601 texts per month, compared with 447 for men (Gross, 2010).

Making a domain analysis

In the course of the research study, it was observed that virtually all the ladies were with mobile phones. The mobile phones of the ladies were visible, and they all used the phones while the observations lasted. All the men but one had mobile phones, but not all the men used their mobile phones while being observed. Different categories were thrown up during the observation as every culture generates many categories by taking unique things and classifying them. According to Spradley (1980), anything conceivable can be used to create cultural categories such as eye blinks, ghosts, automobiles, dreams, clouds, and secret wishes.

At the ice cream place, different domains were thrown up including the security man's usage of mobile phone while checking people. The security man's use of mobile phone for things order than voice, can further be broken down to the usage of the security man's phones for another usage such as social media or VOIP like Skype or WhatsApp. Other domains that were identified include the mobile phone usage by the man serving ice cream, the way the ladies use their phones also creates different categories in the use of mobile phones. All the women had phones with very colorful covers while men had simple covers with mono colors.

Interestingly, people sitting near mobile phone users at the public places visited did not complain at the loud conversations that were taking place by mobile phone users and it was noticed that the male customers were louder in their conversations than the female customers. However, the staff both male and female in using their mobile phones was more discreet as they did not want to create attention to themselves.

Mobile and Internet world seems to have created its distinct culture in the form of usage and language, and various aspect of usage identified include voice calls, chatting, games, social media, and other applications.

Language usage takes different forms as abbreviations of English language words, as well as the different local languages, are acceptable. It also appears that the age category of users determines the type of language that will be used by users. Demography plays an important role in the usage of language and thus creates different domains as well.

Some of the terms employed in this study are new because mobile phone usage in Nigeria is relatively new. GSM telephony started in 2001, and the number of telephone subscribers grew from less than 300,000 active lines in 2001 to over 140 million active lines in 2015. Different terms have been formed that also creates a domain. In the cause of this study, the researcher discovered that the type of phone used might determine the type of online media that will be used. All the users of Blackberry mobile phone identified in this study said they use it because of the blackberry messenger.

Making focused observations

"A focus refers to a single cultural domain or a few related domains and the relationships of such domains to the rest of the cultural scene" (Spradley, 1980). In identifying which domains in the study will cluster together to provide an ethnographic focus, a careful review of the field notes revealed that of all the places studied, it seems that one cultural situation remained dominant amongst those observed in different areas, different times and different circumstances. This dominant situation was chatting with the mobile phone. Also considered were what kind of chatting applications people use, different apps used for chatting, how do people use the apps for chatting, the language used by people chatting, receiving messages, ordering food and making online purchases, young females chatting, and executives chatting.

An activity carried out by people irrespective of the actions that were taking place in all location observed is "chatting using mobile devices". At the conference, since phones were as a matter of tradition and courtesy not allowed for voice calls, the tendency to use chatting as a means of communication by some of the participants was noticed. Likewise, young females and young executives are two groups of people prevalent in using mobile phones for chatting and most of the people actively using their phones throughout the observations are mostly young people between the ages of 16 to the ages of 35.

At the party, five of the attendees were engaged in conversation and it was noted that all use more than chatting application downloaded to their mobile devices. The popular ones were Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and Skype Messenger, and they all had various reasons for using each App at different times. The most popular application amongst the discussants was the WhatsApp messenger due to its functionality of been able to transfer
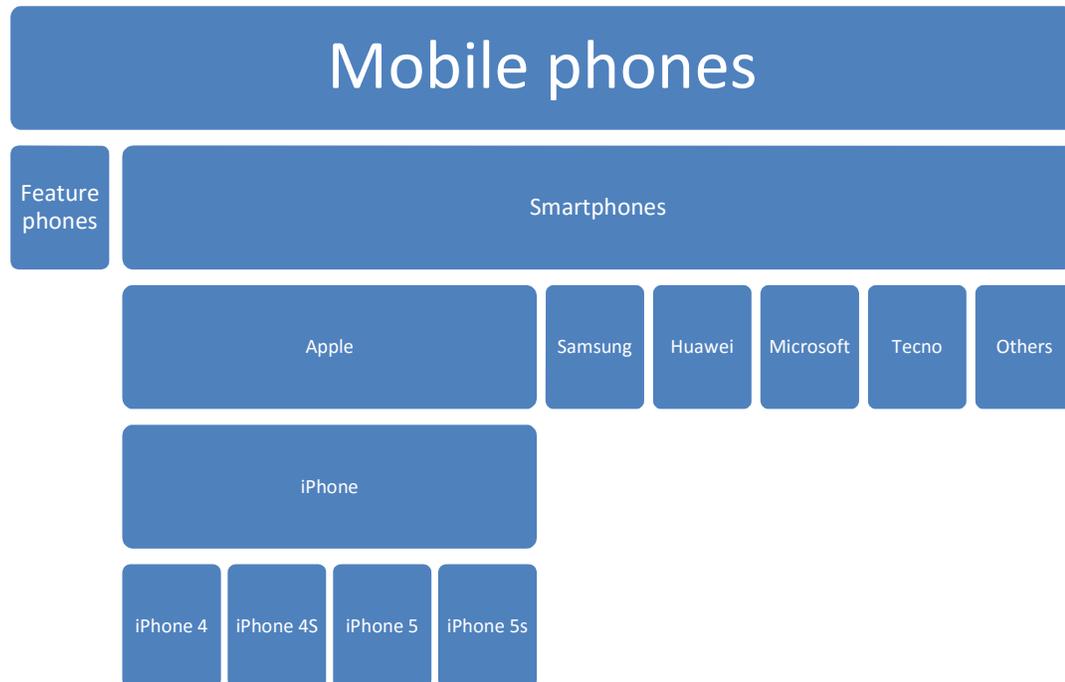
Figure 3. Identified Domains of types of mobile phone.

large files such as pictures and videos. Most of the discussants have at one time, or the other used BlackBerry Messenger (BBM), but all claim that the BBM was not very efficient. All of them used the Facebook to post messages while only two used Skype frequently.

Making a taxonomic analysis

In conducting a taxonomic analysis on one domain, a female participant, who was identified with her use of the mobile device as developing a taxonomic analysis, will reveal different aspects of evolving culture of mobile usage amongst the participants observed. There are many parts and activities of a mobile phone. Some of the Cultural domains are as follows: Types of mobile phones (Analog phones and the Smartphones). Types of Phones used by both male and female (further observations will indicate preferences of both sexes):

Identified cultural domains for phone usage in public places in Nigeria

It is interesting to observe the use of mobile phones in public places and to know the numerous activities that can take place, which will invariably create different cultural domains (Figures 3 and 4). One activity observed from participants is the use of mobile phones to access social media web sites such as Facebook (Figure 5).

Making selected observations

The fourth study location was a First Nation Airline flight flying from Lagos to Abuja. In the course of this ethnographic study of people using mobile phones, the researcher observed that daily occurrences provide ample opportunities to make further observations. The plane ride was a one-hour flight duration in which observations and more field notes are written. As the plane took off, the researcher used the opportunity to start a conversation of an informal interview with two ladies inside the flight. The one-hour flight duration was used to discuss the different phones and their possible usage with my fellow passengers, an exercise to which they willingly participated and gave me an opportunity to fill my field notes. Most of the questions and discussions were based on the use of phones in public places, types of phones, messaging applications, Facebook and other social media applications, and benefits of the Internet in society

In understanding the new culture of mobile phone usage, one must have a greater insight into the different cultures emerging from the use of technology in various formats. Carrying out participant observation has thrown more light and shown how attached people are to their mobile devices. It is, however, difficult to be able to phantom what people are doing and understand the different domains that this social situation throws up unless one has a personal interaction with some of the actors. The only way to have a deeper understanding of
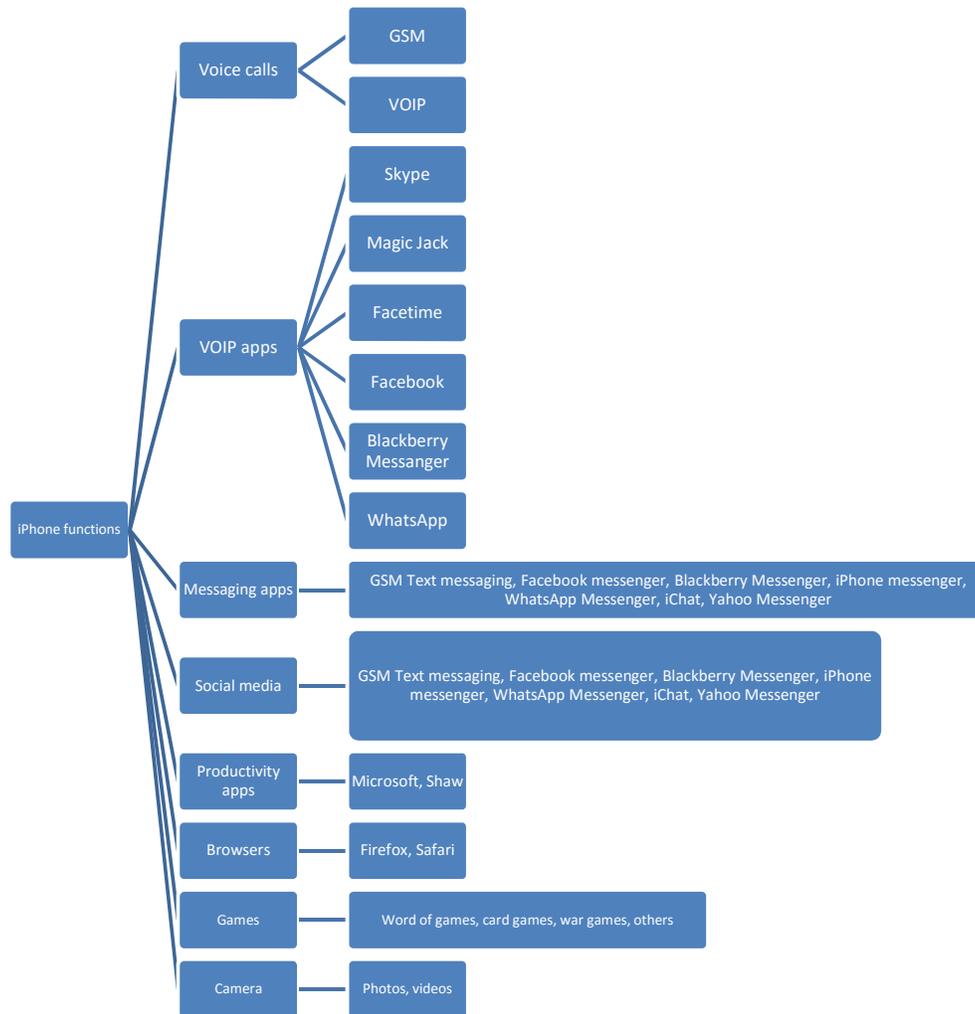
Figure 4. Identified Domains from IPhone applications.

the cultural domains inherent in this chosen social situation is to a have an insight into the minds of the actors. This can be done by not just observing from afar but by actually talking to the participants to be able to see what they do, why they do it and where they do it. To also be able to make comparisons and understand the different cultures that will emerge from the observations. One way of doing this is through formal and informal interviews.

To have further insight into some of the aspects under consideration, few formal and informal interviews of participants at a different location were conducted. In conducting a formal interview with a mobile technology analyst, one domain in which contrast questions are asked is the use of messaging applications. However, the meaning of each cultural domain comes from the differences as well as the similarities among terms. The study brought to the knowledge that people use different messaging apps at different times due to the peculiarities of the circumstances of the time.

Making a componential analysis

Belfarhi (2013) stated that componential analysis enables the reader to analyze words into different components and establishes their interrelations which are a systemic interactional approach working vertically in the search and analysis of relatable attributes. After developing a taxonomic analysis to simplify data collected from the ethnographic study, there is the need to organize and represent the contrasts discovered. This process is called componential analysis.

"Componential analysis is the systematic search for the attributes (components of the meaning) associated with cultural categories. The componential analysis is looking for the units of meaning that people have assigned to their cultural categories" (Spradley, 1980).

The domain chosen for this research work is Users of Facebook App in Nigeria as listed below. The users are divided into male and female as the use of social media applications between both sexes differs in style and
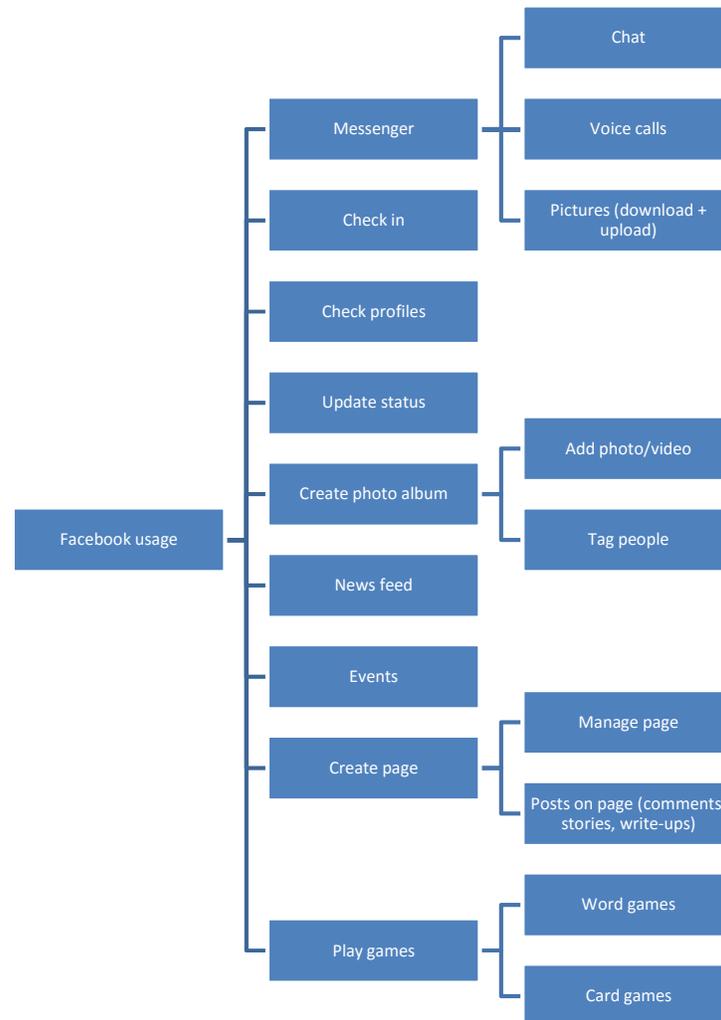
Figure 5. Taxonomic Diagram for Using Facebook.

character. Different domains have also been applied to include professions for both sexes to see what different categories of users do. All those observed fall within the range of 16 to 35 years mainly because this is the demography that mostly uses the social media in Nigeria.

Users of Facebook App in Nigeria

Female: Bankers, Traders, Civil Servants, Teachers, High School Students, University Students, Job Applicants.
Male: Bankers, Traders, Civil Servants, Teachers, High School Students, University Students, Job Applicants.

The study revealed that female bankers interviewed use Facebook profile postings, chatting and phoning friends. Female bankers do not use it for work-related activities. Both male and female traders interviewed use Facebook

to advertise themselves and their products. They also frequently chat with prospective customers and use the phone feature on the application. Both male and female traders also use the profile postings to make general announcements about their trade. Female Civil servants seem to be very conservative as they seldom post their activities on Facebook. However, due to the private nature of the Messenger feature, they sometimes use it to chat with close acquaintances. Male Civil Servants like their female counterparts are also seen to be quite conservative and hardly use Facebook at all. Both female and male high School Students and University undergraduates use Facebook for postings, school work-related activities, Facebook Messenger and for making calls. These categories of Facebook users are young and spend the most time on social media. Another interesting group is job applicants; this group utilizes all the Facebook features including searching for work. Interestingly, all the participants interviewed have a

Table 2. Paradigm Work Sheet.

Domain		Dimension of Contrasts			
		Facebook for profile postings	Facebook for Work related activities	Facebook Messenger	Facebook for phoning
Female	Banker	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
	Trader	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Female	Civil Servant	No	No	Yes	No
Female	High School Student	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Female	University Student	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Female	Job Applicants	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Male	Banker	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	Trader	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Male	Civil servant	No	No	No	No
Male	High School Student	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Male	University Student	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Male	Job Applicants	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Facebook presence and visit Facebook pages to read the postings of other users (Table 2).

Discovering cultural themes

With technology and the Internet, the culture to a great extent is without borders as people end up using different social applications across borders. With the transnational character of Internet usage also comes to a new language for communicating. In Nigeria, accessibility to this new world culture has been made possible through the use of new smartphones which continues to be affordable due to the influx of Chinese imports of different types of devices.

With over 148 million mobile phone subscribers in Nigeria, the culture of mobile phone usage will continue to be of interest to social science researchers in Nigeria (NCC, 2015). As the participant observation progresses, new domains break out and recurrent cultural themes also become more apparent and identifiable. According to Spradley (1980), cultural themes for ethnographic research are defined as "any principle recurrent in some domains, tacit or explicit, and serving as a relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning." A theme is defined as a position acknowledged with a stimulating activity that is flexibly upheld in the society. Ryan and Bernard (2008) observed that cultural systems comprise sets of interrelated themes as it relates to how often it appears; how pervasive it is across different types of cultural ideas and practices.

The cognitive principle is used to review the different themes that were identified during observations at different locations as the cognitive principle is something that people believe and accepts as true and valid; it is an assumption about the nature of their commonly held experience (Spradley, 1980). Using the assertion that

"women like expensive phones" was established as out of five male and five female participants who were informally interviewed, four male uses phone valued at about $100 while one used an iPhone 6 valued at over $500.

The entire male interviewed were not bothered about the price of the phones but thought the functionality mattered more to them. The females interviewed, however, saw the use of expensive phones differently. Two of the females interviewed used expensive phones valued at over $500, one female had a Samsung Edge 6, while two had iPhone 5S. Two of the females had cheap phones. All the females interviewed would like to use the latest phones and the most expensive phones.

Other cultural themes that have come up during the observation of people using mobile phones in public place are as follows:

"It is rude to receive or make calls at a meeting or conference."
"You put your phone off at a meeting or conference."
"You put your phone in silence at a meeting or conference."
"You put your phone on vibration at a meeting or conference."
"If you have to use your phone at a meeting or conference, you take an excuse and step out of the venue.

In discovering the various cultural themes attached to the use of mobile phones in other social situations such as at parties, with friends at a dinner or the bus station, it is observed that the rules of mobile phone usage differ to a great extent from that of using mobile phones at a meeting or a conference. Cultural themes that occur at parties include "it's cool to take pictures with the mobile phone"; while at bus stops, "it's rude to speak loud using

your mobile phones," "take your private discussions somewhere else, and don't disturb us with your calls."

According to Spradley (1980), cultural themes need not apply to every part of the culture as per some themes recur within a limited context or only link two or three domains. It is more likely that a culture or a particular cultural scene will be integrated around a set of major themes and minor themes. The study noticed that most of the themes identified were acceptable norms as the culture of mobile phone usage evolves in the Nigerian society while cultural domains keep on appearing as a network connected by nodes that lead to further values and norms yet to be discovered. Thus, different themes seem to revolve around the norms in a seemingly acceptable way to the users.

Taking a cultural inventory

Conducting this research has been an eye-opener as it gives the researcher a new knowledge of an emerging culture among mobile users in Nigeria and the opportunity to see a new world of groups interconnected through a mobile device. As a mobile user myself, conducting this participant observation, made see things from the other people's perspective and enabled me to have a peep into other people's thoughts from their actions in different locations.

CONCLUSION

It is apparent that a new culture had emerged in the use of mobile phones in public places in Nigeria. New unspoken rules of how people use phones at meetings, at conferences and in less formal situations such as parties have also become apparent. With the advent of e-commerce, Nigerians now use their mobile phones for purchases, banking, booking airline seats and hotel rooms.

In recent times, the Nigerian government has also introduced mobile phones to farmers. "The ministry of agriculture has come up with an innovative project to distribute 10 million mobile phones to farmers. This would help develop a database of farmers in Nigeria, doing away with a situation where policy decisions are based on guesswork" (This Day, 2013). As technology continues to improve, it is envisaged that Internet connectivity will increase with an attendant increase in the number of mobile phone users utilizing the device for more activities in public places. The culture of using mobile devices in public places will, therefore, continue to be an accepted part of the people's lives.

Another usage of mobile phones by young adults includes booking taxis using applications such as Uber,

booking for airline seats and Internet banking. It is observed that most young adults now use their mobile phones for timekeeping while traditional wristwatches are mostly used as forms of jewelry. Older adults tend to use their mobile phones for voice calls and text messaging only. There is a need for further studies on the demography of mobile phone users in public places and engaging in social activities, as this will help policymakers, advertisers, marketers and other entrepreneurs in making decisions targeted at different users of mobile phones in Nigeria.

In conclusion, demography has a lot to play in what people do with their mobile phones in public places. Young adults were seen to be more dexterous in the use of mobile phones for activities such as sports, social media, purchase of household items and taking "selfies" (the recently adopted art of taking pictures of oneself by oneself using mobile phones or other cameras).

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