

Most SA urban cellphone users want to upgrade devices - study

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A recent study conducted by World Wide Worx and backed by First National Bank (FNB) and BlackBerry has revealed that many consumers out of SA's 16 million urban cellphone users are highly aspirational people looking to upgrade their phones, and are looking specifically for devices that have more features.

"This is a new trend," World Wide Worx MD Arthur Goldstuck told a press briefing held yesterday, Tuesday 3 November 2009, at the Wanderers Club in Illovo, Johannesburg.

"Almost half of all consumers (47%) plan to get a new cellphone in the next year - up from 37% in 2007 when a third of consumers did not plan to get a new cellphone - so this number has decreased to 10%," Goldstuck indicated.

"An average of 3.9 phones have been owned to date, but Nokia and Motorola owners have not had as many cellphones as Sony-Ericsson and Samsung owners," he pointed out.

Nokia leads the pack

While Nokia, which leads the way with 48% and Samsung second with 23% in terms of current usage, Sony-Ericsson and Nokia have the highest retention intention scores of all mainstream brands, whereas newer brands such as BlackBerry (1%) and iPhone have high attraction despite low current ownership, according to the study.

However, despite the rage of the cellphone revolution in SA (38 million cell users), the study found that most consumers continue to be frustrated by poor services of the network operators.

Network quality, which has severely plummeted in the past few years (25% in 2009 from 48% in 2007), has lower satisfaction rating than phone and features, Goldstuck said, urging network operators to do more.

But, what will probably shock SA society is that only a third of drivers (33%) have hands-free kits - more than a quarter of those without hands-free still talk on the phone while driving

"This makes 19% of our drivers more dangerous than usual," Goldstuck said.

It has the features, but...

The study also found that age drives cellphone expenditure, with voice getting 76% of total spend and SMS 16%.

“Voice spend proportion increases with age and peaks at 36 - 45 years and total spend increases with education level,” he said.

Most consumers admitted to not making use of their cellphones features more often despite having them in their devices, putting camera at the top list of most used features (56%).

Furthermore, the study said 60% of users in metropolitan areas have access to an internet browser on their cellphone, but do not use it on a regular basis, making internet (21%), email (10%) and instant messaging capabilities, among others, the most underutilised features, but with future growth potential.

The camera's the killer

“Features and affordability are key drivers when it comes to actually choosing a cellphone.

It overrides brand which is thought to be more important - people are more likely to mention 'brand' when asked what cellphone they will get next.

“Respondents' current cellphones have a large number of features (7.2 on average), but they only use an average of 2.9. Future usage only increases to 3.7 - meaning only half of the available features are used.

“The camera is the killer application of the moment, also driving high MMS usage. But the biggest proportionate growth areas are e-mail and internet applications, presaging the imminent arrival of the mobile internet,” he concluded.

Go to www.worldwideworx.co.za.

ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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