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## **A survey of the commercial activities created by the mobile telephony for the informal business sector in Botswana**

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### **Abstract**

This paper reports the findings of a survey of the commercial activities created by the mobile telephony in the informal business sector in Botswana. Data for the study were collected using a questionnaire with both open and close-ended questions. All informal businesses dealing with cell phone products and services at Gaborone bus station were approached. One hundred and one (101) respondents answered the questionnaire. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics.

The findings of the study show that the sale of hand pieces (cell phones) is not common in the informal business sector as only one respondent reported selling them. Twelve (11.9%) respondents sold cell phone accessories including cell phone bags, earpieces, etc.... Almost all (99%), of the respondents were selling airtime coupons, 96% provided quick charge service, while 88.1 % provided payphone services. In relation to battery charging, only 31.7% of the businesses provided the service while only 18.8 % repaired cell phones. Although, the revenue generated from the sales seemed to be relatively low, most of the respondents were happy with what they got and they were prepared to continue with their businesses. The study found that the mobile telephony was adding a critical value to the informal business sector, with some businesses having started with the sale of these products and services while others expanded to embrace them because of the potential benefits they saw in them.

**Keywords:** Mobile telephony, Informal business sector, commercial opportunities

## **Introduction**

The mobile telephony has created new commercial opportunities and challenges for the informal business sector in developing countries. These opportunities have helped individuals to widen the range of products and services they could sell to advance their economic and social development. As noted by Banks (2008), in the streets of many African countries, one finds several mobile telephony related commercial activities such as women selling airtime, boys selling chargers and cell phone covers, street vendors charging cell phones for a fee and some shops repairing mobile cell phones. In addition, there is also a market for recycled phone products coming up in developing countries. While some of these businesses have not started with the sale of mobile telephony products and services, they have since expanded into the area. However, there is evidence that new informal business have commenced because of the opportunities availed by mobile telephony products and services. Some have remained focused in these products and services only, while others have expanded to sell other products. Janasson and Krusse (2007) note that the mobile telephony business activities generate crucial income for low income households, and they suggest that it is critical for the telecommunication business community to gain deep insights into how such activities change the lives of the poor.

The present study sought to investigate issues pertaining to the commercial opportunities and activities of the mobile telephony in Botswana. More specifically, the study developed instruments, collected, analysed, and interpreted data to answer the following research questions:

- a) What are the commercial opportunities for the mobile telephony for the informal business sector in Botswana?
- b) What is the dominant mobile telephony commercial opportunity and activity in the informal business sector in Botswana?
- c) Which category of the population is taking advantage of the commercial opportunities of the mobile telephony?
- d) What challenges does the informal business sector face in its efforts to exploit the commercial opportunities of the mobile telephony?
- e) To what extent are the mobile telephony services providers helping the informal business sector to exploit the commercial opportunities available?
- f) To what extent does the mobile telephony contribute to the growth of the informal business sector?

## **The study area**

Botswana is a Southern African country, with a relatively fast developing economy. The country has recently been elevated from the least developed countries of the world to among the middle-income economies. The population of the country was about 1.7 million as of the 2001 population census.

The government of Botswana strives to provide an environment conducive for business. For instance, the government continues to improve its visions, and investing heavily in information and communication technology infrastructure, helping the people of Botswana to exploit business opportunities within the frameworks of the national vision (Vision 2016) and medium term national development plans.

The introduction of competition in the telecommunication market of Botswana has created considerable growth in the sector, particularly the mobile services, which have become very popular in the country. For the past decade, Botswana, like other developing countries has seen a substantial growth in the use of the mobile telephony in all sectors of the community, including the youth, adults, high income and low-income groups and the urban and the rural communities. The mobile telephony gives the users several advantages, such as the convenience of communicating from different locations as long as there is a network service available. Secondly, a number of people who do not afford fixed line telephone services are now able to use mobile telephony because it is less expensive. A study commissioned by the Botswana Telecommunication Authority in 2008 showed that the mobile telephony market has expanded from zero in 1998 to 1.7 million subscribers by end of November 2008. The study also revealed that 57% of the population owns cell phones and this figure is predicted to increase to 61% by 2014 ( Botswana Telecommunication Authority, 2009). The study further showed that the tariffs have decreased significantly in real terms as they have remained constant since 1998 despite changes in the inflation rates. Currently, Botswana has three mobile operators, Mascom, Orange and be Mobile competing to supply both voice and data services to the country.

## **The informal Business sector Botswana**

The Government of Botswana has always recognised the contribution of the informal sector in the socio-economic development of Botswana (Botswana Government, 1991). Jimu (2004) supports such recognition as he suggests the need for everybody to be given the opportunity to contribute their share to the socio-economic development of the country regardless of how small the contribution may appear. According to the 2007 national informal sector survey, the sector grew by 72% in the past eight years to reach a total of 40,421 informal businesses (Botswana Government, 2007). Various factors contribute to this growth and they include the decline in the formal employment and government support for citizen owned business. The report further shows that informal sector businesses are owned and operated by people with low levels of education. In terms of employment, the study found that the sector employed 60, 386 people.

Most of the informal sector businesses are located in the cities, towns and semi-urban centres. The majority (20%) of these informal businesses are found in Gaborone. Studies have shown that the challenges that these businesses face relate to capital, income and skills to expand their activities (Kapunda and Mmolawa, 2007). The businesses are unproductive and they struggle to survive.

The term informal sector has been a subject of debate amongst researchers and academics for sometime. Ikoja-Odongo and Ocholla (2004) note that many names have been used in different parts of the world to describe the informal business sector. Examples of such names are unofficial, parallel, undeclared, concealed, creeping, clandestine, alternative, marginal, independent, submerged, invisible, illegal, unobserved, fraudulent, hidden, submarine, secondary, underground, dual, secret, black,, irregular, veiled, peripheral, shadow, informal, disguised, grey, counter-economy, wangling economy (Hope, 1997 and 2001). As can be seen from the examples of the names used to denote the informal sector, there is an element of illegal operation. Hence, there is a tendency for these businesses to clash with law enforcement agents. Furthermore, a number of such businesses operate in ungazetted premises with either a temporary or no shelter, and very often with substandard facilities. The International Labour Office (ILO), points out that an informal sector consists of “very small-scale units established and operated by self-employed persons for the purpose of creating their own employment and generating income. They are mostly operated by persons working alone, with the help of unpaid family members and possibly with a few hired workers on apprentices”. From the various definitions of informal business sector, the notable characteristics are that they are small scale and usually owned by a family or a household (Alexander, Mbere and Setimela, 1983) and/or just an individual.

## **Methodology**

The study adopted a survey design. Data were collected using a questionnaire containing both closed and open-ended questions. The survey population consisted of informal businesses operating at Gaborone bus and taxi station. This area was chosen because there is a congregation of several informal businesses, operating street vending activities, trading different types of goods and services, which may include: fruits and vegetables, newspapers, cosmetics, jewellery, watches, women’s bags and wallets, second hand clothes to shining of shoes on the streets, highways, sidewalks, avenues etc (see also Jimu, 2004). Only those businesses that included mobile telephony products and services participated in the study.

Gaborone bus station was found suitable because of the potential of the market for mobile telephony products and services. Several people visit the place on transit to various destinations in and around Gaborone, as well as boarding buses to other places within and outside the country. These people create a good potential market for mobile telephony products and services. All the informal businesses in the area selling or providing mobile telephony products and services were identified and approached. The owners were asked to participate in the study. Altogether, one hundred and one (101) respondents participated.

The design of the instrument was in part based on Heeks’ (2008) framework for gathering “a basic set of background data on an ICT-based enterprise”. Data collected related to the type of service/product sold, age of both the business and entrepreneur, the market, number of employees, turnover, revenue, and performance of the business. A second focus was on the motivations of the entrepreneur to be in the mobile telephony business. The questionnaire also asked questions related to the growth of the business. The researcher administered the instrument with the help of a trained research assistant. During the data collection process, the questions were read and interpreted for the respondents, and the researcher and or research assistant recorded the responses. This method was found appropriate because, given the educational background of the respondents; it was going to be a challenge to use a self-administered questionnaire. Further, the method allowed for discussions and following up of some important leads. Quantitative techniques were used for analysing the data and it was presented using descriptive statistics. The findings of the study are presented below.

## **Research findings**

This section reports the findings obtained from analysing data from the 101 respondents. It comprises of the demographic information of the respondents and the description of the informal businesses, the products and services provided or sold and the perceptions and motivations of the respondents on the mobile telephony products and services sales. The findings also cover the socio-economic situations of the participants.

### **Characteristics of the respondents**

Out of the 101 respondents who participated in the study, 54 were female, while 47 were male. This shows an almost balanced gender distribution of informal business sector owners amongst the population taking advantage of the commercial opportunities created by the mobile telephony. In terms of age distribution, there was quite a wide spread across ages. The majority (37.6%) of the respondents fell in the age range of between 31 to 40 years, 23.8% of the respondents were between the age ranges of 21 to 30 and 41 to 50 each, while 12.9 % of the respondents were more than 50 years old. Only one respondent fell in the age range of 11 to 20 years. From the distribution of ages of the respondent, it can be seen that the commercial opportunities created by mobile telephony are taken by people who are below 50years of age, and thus active in the of socio-economic development activities of the country. These are people who either are about to start families, as 56.4% of them reported to be single, or have started families as indicated by 39.6% who are married.

Concerning education levels, the findings show that the majority of the respondents are people with low levels of education. For instance, about thirteen (12.9%) of the respondents had never attended school, while 38.6% and 37.6% had completed primary and junior secondary education respectively. Five percent (5%) had completed senior secondary education, while only 4% and 1% had completed certificate and diploma level courses respectively. Given the educational background of the respondents, it would be difficult for them to secure formal employment were specialised skills and competences are required. Hence, opportunities such as those provided by the mobile telephony are essential for their livelihoods.

### **Description of the business**

The main objective of this study was to investigate the commercial activities created mobile telephony in the informal business sector. The respondents were asked to describe their business. Content analysis of the responses revealed variations in way the participants view their businesses. For instance, 75.2% of the respondents saw a high potential in their business even though they were making low profits. Twenty six percent (26%) of the respondents pointed out they were too many risks involved, while 8.9% said they were just struggling to make ends meet.

The study also sought to establish the number of years that the businesses had been in operation. Data showed that the number of years the various businesses had been in operation ranged from less than one year (3%) to more than five years (44.6%). About twenty-six percent (25.7%) businesses were established in the past 4 to 5 years, 19.8% were established in the past 3 to 4 years, 5.9% between 2 and 3 years ago, while only 1% was established in the past 1 to 2 years. Given that the majority of the businesses were in existence for more than 5 years, it means they have kept those working in them gainfully employed for all the time that they have existed. Consequently, the commercial opportunities created by the mobile telephony are contributing to the socio-economic development of the country.

### **Mobile telephony products/services provided**

Botswana has three mobile telephone operators, namely, Mascom, Orange and Be Mobile. The latter being relatively new in the market as it started its operations in 2007. Data shows that all businesses were selling products and services for Mascom and Orange operators, while, only 33 (32.7%) were selling those for Be Mobile. The respondents were asked to indicate the kind of products and services they sell or provide in their businesses. The data shows that only one (1%) respondent reported selling hand pieces (cell phones), about twelve percent (11.9%) sold cell phone accessories including cell phone bags, earpieces, etc.... Almost all (99%) of the respondents sold airtime coupons, 96% provided quick charge service, while 88.1 % provided payphone services. In relation to battery charging, only 31.7% of the businesses provided the service, while only 18.8 % repaired cell phones. When the respondents were asked if they had any contracts with the cell phone operators whose products and services they sold, all of them reported that they had none. This is understandable given that these are informal business without proper registration to operate as businesses. It was not viable for the mobile telephone operators to enter into any formalised agreements with such business.

## **Establishment of the businesses**

The study sought to find out how the businesses were established. One of the questions asked the respondents to indicate whether they started the business by selling or providing mobile telephony products and service. Data indicated that 41 (40.6%) of the business were started on the sale or provision of mobile telephony products and services, while 57 (56.4%) were started on other products. However, those businesses that were conceived on the sale and provision of mobile telephone products and services expanded to sell other products as well. For instance, data shows that 86.1% of the businesses also sold food and beverages, 18.8% sold clothing, 6.9% sold other electronic gadgets, while 5.9 % sold newspapers as well.

## **Marketing and sales**

In terms of the preferred methods of marketing the products and services, 87.1% of the respondents said they preferred written notices. The written notices that were seen hanging on the shades where they operated confirmed this finding. In fact, it was interesting to note that although these businesses did not have any contracts with the mobile telephony operators, they were using these companies' logos to advertise themselves. About fifty-seven (57.4%) reported that they made verbal announcements to passers-bys about their products and services as a way of getting customers to come and buy their products. All the respondents reported that they do not have specific market segments who buy from them. They targeted everybody who passed next to their selling points.

The critical sales time for the business varied. For instance, on a daily basis, the highest sales were obtained in the mornings and afternoon, and these were reported by 82.2% and 92.1% of the respondents respectively. In terms of weekly sales, weekends were general reported to have more sales, with 26.7% of respondents reporting that sales were better between Fridays and Saturdays. About forty-three (42.6%) percent of the respondents reported that sales were better at the end of the month. The respondents also reported monthly variations with the month of December mentioned as better in the sale of mobile telephone products and services. Surprisingly public holidays did not seem to be giving much sales as only one respondent reported to be making good sales during those days.

In terms of revenue generated from the sale or provision of mobile telephony products and services, data showed that it was relatively low, 63.4% reported annual sales of less than BWP1000. About twenty-five (24.8%) reported annual sales of between BWP1001 and BWP2000. Four percent (4%) reported annual sales of Between BWP2001 to BWP3000, 3% of business recorded BWP3001 to BWP4000 and BWP4001 and BWP5000 each. Only one business reported to be annual sales of more than BWP5000 from the sale and provision of mobile telephony products and services. Surprisingly, when the respondents were asked to rank the performance of their business with regards to mobile telephony products and services on a scale of; 1 = very good; 2 = good; 3 = fair and 4 = poor, the majority (66.3%) rated the performance as good. About fifteen percent (14.9%) said the performance was very good, 17.8% said it was fair, while only 1% rated it as poor. The findings show general low returns from the sale of mobile telephony products and services in terms of the amount of revenue generated per year.

The respondents were further asked about their level of agreement with the statement "You are in the business of selling cell phone products /services because it provides enough income to meet your basic needs" using a scale of; 1 = strongly agree, 2 =agree, 3 neutral , 4 = disagree and 5 = strongly agree (see table 1 below). The findings show that the majority, that is 81.2%, and 11.9% of the respondents, strongly agreed or agreed with the statement respectively. While this finding seems not to tally with the low figures of the revenues generated from the business, it could be explained by the fact that these people at one point had no source of income in their lives. Therefore, being able to make some, money is regarded as a significant contribution to their livelihoods regardless of the amount they are able to generate. Alternatively, given the educational background of the respondents their financial reporting could be suspect.

When asked to indicate the preferred mode of payment for goods and service, almost all (99%) respondents that they only sold for cash to their customers. This is understandable given that the respondents also reported (100%) that they buy cash from the operators or suppliers. Further, the fact that there is no specific market segment targeted, it would be difficult to use other modes of payment, as tracing the customers would be difficult.

In terms of start-up capital, 99% of the respondents reported that they used money from their own savings. Relatives and or friends helped only 9.9 % of the respondents. None of the respondents got a loan from financial institutions. Again, this finding does not come as a surprise given the informal nature of the businesses. It would

be difficult for funders to give money to such businesses as their sustainability and ability to payback the loans would never be guaranteed, as they are not registered. Another follow up question wanted to find out if the respondents had other sources of income apart from the businesses they were running. Interestingly, the responses show that, only 32% of the respondents had other sources of income. Other sources of income reported included farming by twenty percent of the respondents, 5% were renting out property, and a few (1%) mentioned their spouse's salaries as the other sources of income they had.

From the above findings, it is clear that the people involved in the cell phone business have very little income base. Hence, the ability to make the most out of the mobile telephony commercial opportunities would be essential to their livelihoods. In addition, the fact that only 32% had other sources of income is an indication of how critical these businesses are to the lives of the respondents.

An essential benefit of any business venture is the ability to generate employment. To this end, one of the questions sought to find out about people working in the businesses. About seventy (71.3%) of the respondents reported single persons (owners) working in the business, 25.6% reported two people, and 2.0% and 1.0% reported three and four people working the businesses respectively. It is evident from the findings that the businesses do not employ many people. This is because of their small size. For those businesses with more than one person working, 26.7% reported that these other persons were relatives. It was interesting to note that none of businesses reported to be using children to work in their businesses. This is a welcome finding in that children are not used as labourers in the family businesses. This however, needs further investigation to corroborate this evidence through other methods such as observing the sites for a longer period.

With regards to the level of skills of people working in the business, 67.3% of the respondents reported that they were unskilled, 27.7% said they were semi-skilled while only 5% reported to be skilled in the work they were doing. This finding also substantiates the finding that the educational levels of the respondents were relatively low.

### **Working habits of the respondents**

One of the questions sought to map out a typical work life of the people working in the businesses selling or providing mobile telephony products and services. The study found that the work was very hectic, with 46.5% of respondents reporting that they worked 6 and 7 days per week each. Only 1% reported working five days a week. In terms of the number of hours worked per day, again, the findings show busy schedules with hours of work ranging 0400hrs to 2030hrs. For instance, 34.6% of the respondents reported that they work 14 hours in a day, 31.7% work 13 hours in a day, 13.9% work 14 ½ hours in a day, 9.9% work 11 ½ hours in a day, 5.9% work 12 ½ hours in a day, while only 3.0% work 11 hours in a day. All the respondents reported that they do not take any breaks during the day. Regarding going on leave, of the forty-seven respondents who answered this question, forty-one respondents said they only go away on emergencies. Only six respondents said they sometime go on leave any time during the year.

### **Motivation and perceptions on the business**

The study sought to analyse the motivation and perceptions of the respondents towards the sale and provision of mobile telephony products and services. To this end, the respondents were given several statements in relation to their business and they were to respond by stating their level of agreement with the statement using a scale of, 1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = neutral; 4 = disagree and 5 = strongly disagree. Table 1 below summarises the responses.

**Table 1: Motivations and perceptions on the businesses**

<b>statement</b>	<b>1(very much agree)</b>	<b>2 (agree)</b>	<b>3 (neutral)</b>	<b>4 (disagree)</b>	<b>5 (very much disagree)</b>
1. You started the business of cell phone products and services because you had no other source of livelihood	97(96.0)	1(1.0%)	1(1.0%)	2 (2.0%)	0 (0%)
2. You took up the business of selling cell phone products and services	93(92.1)	7(6.9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

because you saw opportunities for growth					
3. You are in the business of selling cell phone products /services because it provides enough income to meet your basic needs	82(81.2)	11(10.9%)	5 (5.0%)	2 (2.0%)	9 (8.9%)
4. Your business is doing fine and you are not under any pressure to expand it	82(13.9)	11(10.9%)	5 (5.0%)	2 (2.0%)	0 (0%)
5. Your cell phone products/ service business has been steadily growing over the years	14(81.2%)	24(23.8%)	16 (15.8%)	33 (32.7%)	13 (12.9%)
6. You intend to close the business in the near future	3(3.0%)	4(4.0%)	6 (5.9%)	23 (22.8%)	63 (62.4%)
7. The sale of cell phone products/services is an additional source of revenue in your business	16(15.8%)	58(57.4%)	21 (20.8%)	4 (4.0%)	1 (1.0%)
8. Cell phone products /services contribute significantly to the success of my business	14(13.9%)	54(53.6%)	26 (25.7%)	5 (4.0%)	1 (1.0%)
9. If it were not for the sale of cell phone products/service, you would not be having any business	4(4.0%)	9(8.9%)	4 (4.0%)	33 (32.7%)	50 (49.5%)
10. I have no intentions of leaving my cell phone products/services business for any employment elsewhere	16(15.8%)	41(40.6%)	12 (11.9%)	18 (17.8%)	12 (11.9%)
11. It is easier to get cell phone products/services to sell in a business than other products	22(21.8%)	68(67.3%)	9 (8.9%)	1 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)
12. The terms for getting cell phone products/services for sale are conducive for my business	11(10.9%)	27(26.7%)	21 (20.8%)	28 (27.7%)	13 (12.9%)
13. The cell phone products/service providers are very supportive of business such as yours	7(6.9%)	17(16.8%)	17(16.8%)	34 (33.7%)	25 (24.8%)
14. You are in a cell phone products/service business just for the maintenance and continuation of your life	64(63.4%)	31(30.7%)	1(1.0%)	2 (2.0%)	2 (2.0%)

As can be seen from table 1 above, the motivations and perceptions of the respondents towards selling and or providing mobile telephony products and services varied. For instance, in relation to why they started the businesses, 96.0% of the respondents strongly agreed that they started the businesses because they had no other source of livelihood. Given such a finding, it is clear that the development of the mobile telephony is helping in uplifting socio-economic situations of the poor and the desperate individuals who otherwise would have no source of income.

On whether they saw opportunities for growth in the business, the majority of the respondents strongly agreed (92.1%) or agreed (6.9%) that they saw those opportunities. However, this thinking might have changed overtime, as the responses to find out what kept the respondents in business show that, 63.4% and 30.7 % strongly agree or agree that they were staying in the business just for the maintenance and continuation of life. It seems the optimism about growth had faded overtime. Perhaps this reason could be explained by the lack of support from the mobile telephony operators as shown by the response to statement that “the operators are very supportive to businesses” such as those run by the respondents. The majority of the respondents answered negatively by strongly disagreeing (24.85%) or disagreeing (33.7%) with the statement. About seventeen (16.8%) were neutral, while another 16.8% and 6.9% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

With respect to the statement on the growth of the business, only 13.2% and 23.8% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed respectively that their businesses had been steadily growing, whereas, 32.7% and 12.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. About sixteen percent (15.8%) were neutral about the statement. However, about whether they have intentions to close the business in the near future, 62.4% and 22.8% strongly disagreed or disagreed respectively that they intend to close the business in the near future. Only 3.0% and 4.0% strongly agreed or agreed that they intend to close the businesses in the near future. Further, the findings show that 56.4% of the respondents indicated that they do not intend to leave their business for employment elsewhere. Again, this findings show the importance of the business in the lives of the respondents, despite the seemingly poor performance of the business in terms of growth and revenue generation

Coming to the procurement of mobile telephony products and services for business, 21.8 % and 67.3% respondents strongly agreed or agreed respectively that they are easier to get than other products. This finding is interesting as it is an indication of the mobile telephony potential to contribute to the informal business sector. Further, it shows why it was possible for these people to start the business despite their poor financial status. However, on how conducive the overall environment is, the respondents had some mixed opinions. For instance, 10.9% and 26.7% strongly agreed or just agreed that the terms for getting the products were conducive, 20.8% of the respondents were neutral, whereas, 27.7% and 12.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed respectively with the statement.

The value of mobile telephony products in business is realised through their contribution to the overall success of the informal business, but not as standalone products and services. As can be seen from the responses to the statement, “The sale of cell phone products/services is an additional source of revenue in your business”, the majority of the respondents said they strongly agree (15.8%) or agree (57.4%) with the statement. About twenty (20.8%) percent were neutral, while only 4.0% and 1.0% said they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Almost Similar findings were found in relation to the statement “Cell phone products/services contribute significantly to the success of my business”, with 13.9% and 53.6% strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement respectively, while 25.7% were neutral, and 4.0% and 1.0% disagreed or strongly disagreed respectively with the statement.

However, concerning the statement “If it were not for the sale of cell phone products/service, you would not be having any business”, the findings are almost the exact opposite, with almost all the respondents, 49.5% and 32.7% strongly disagreeing or disagreeing respectively with the statement. Four percent of the respondents were neutral, while only 4.0% and 8.9% strongly agreed or agreed respectively with the statement. From this finding, we can see that mobile telephony products and services on their own are not preferred in business. It seems they do well as an additional product or services sold or provided in a business

## **Conclusions**

From the findings of this study, it is evident that mobile telephony developments are contributing to the commercial activities of informal business sector in Botswana. As indicated in the findings, 40.6% of the informal business investigated started on the sale of mobile telephony products and services. For those businesses that started on other products, the entrance of the mobile telephony products and services into the market was seen as an opportunity to grow the business and hence was embraced. The study has shown that the informal businesses that sold or provided mobile telephony products or services contributed to the socio-economic development of the country by way of keeping the owners employed. As found out in the study, the majority of the respondents do not intend to seek employment elsewhere. In addition, given that the majority of the business have been in existence for more than five years means they are critical to the livelihoods of those involved.

Another interesting finding is that mobile telephony as the sole products and services provided by the informal business did not seem to be attractive. However, when bundled with other products seemed to provide results

that were more positive. In terms of the people who had taken the opportunities availed by mobile telephony, the majority were in the age range of 31 to 40 and included both males and females. Further, these were people with low levels of education, some of which had never attended school. Given this demographic characteristics, the mobile telephone seems to be helping some of the most vulnerable portion of the society.

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