"Wha' a Gwaan?"

Research Report on a Qualitative Study of Mobile Telephony and Poverty in Jamaica

DIRSI

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Executive Summary

In the midst of unprecedented growth in the telecommunications sector over the past decade, intense and expanded competition among mobile phone service providers and almost universal access, usage and ownership of the cell phone across all segments of the population, there is heightened recognition that poverty remains a central blight on the lives of a growing number of users, especially those at the lower echelons of the socio-economic pyramid.

This study is about how people from these communities feel about themselves, their relationships with their established personal communication technology of choice: the mobile phone and its implications for their release from or continued entrapment in a situation of deprivation. It explores, through a variety of qualitative research methods, the perception of seven focus groups, seven diary informants, three additional diary assisted respondents with detailed personal narratives and interview inputs from a selection of special respondents from the community levels. The study embraces viewpoints from the youth and the elderly, from men and women and from residents in the urban and to a lesser extent rural areas of Jamaica.

Among its central conclusions is that the mobile phone has become an established part of individual and social networking. For some, it is an extension of their own being and an indispensable and omni-present organ. But economic survival, not simply social chatter is at the heart of the pervasive spread of the mobile phone in Jamaica. It is a tool for reaching out, not only for friendships but also for finances and resources with which to survive, whether in the form of jobs, remittances or informal support. That many inner city users with so-called 'wrong addresses' in the eyes of employers, regard the cell phone as conferring some degree of 'address and residential anonymity' is part of the utility of this instrument as a means of economic survival.

Through the voices of the diverse set of respondents, this study has been able to provide answers to the questions of why and how the mobile phone functions within the cultural, social and economic space occupied by the poor in one country of the global South. We learn that received wisdoms about 'texting' as an obvious inexpensive choice for low income users is not necessarily supported by the reality of illiteracy among both young and old in these communities. We explore the many and varied methods used to acquire mobile phones and the secondary market that has developed in the acquisition, repair, encasing and 'unlocking' of the mobiles, as well as in the provision of prepaid cards as business emerging from the phenomenal growth of the sector.

And we are able to hear the expressions of hope that this popular technology can become - helping people to higher levels of engagement within the digital and broadband domains, including more advanced uses such as e-banking, e-government, online education and teleworking.

The conclusions from this qualitative study have not only uncovered meaningful perceptions and attitudes in usage, ownership and economic behaviour of the

target group, but also serve to provide a basis for better understanding some of the key interrelationships which were identified in the initial quantitative study done on mobile telephony in Jamaica, the Caribbean and Latin America.

Acknowledgements

Society', (DIRSI) and its academic and institutional partners in the Caribbean and Latin America.

This research report is a sequel to two other Jamaican studies conducted through the Telecommunications Policy and Management (TPM) Programme, UWI, as part of the same DIRSI Project. A quantitative study entitled 'Poverty and Telephony Access in Latin America and the Caribbean: Jamaica Country Report' was produced in September 2007 and the other 'Genderstanding Mobile Telephony: Women, Men and their Uses of Cellular Phones in the Caribbean' was completed in revised form in December 2007.

This counterpart qualitative examination entitled **'Wha' a Gwaan?: The Research Report on a Qualitative Study of Mobile Telephony and Poverty in Jamaica'**, draws on a team of researchers based in the Telecommunications Policy and Management (TPM) Programme at the University of the West Indies as well as on the engagement of an external field work specialist in Jamaica. In this regard, we thank researchers Richardo Williams and Allison Brown of the TPM Programme, and Lincoln Robinson of Interlinc Communications for their valued data-gathering, fieldwork or other research support. We are also grateful to Keisha Edwards Smith, Grace-Marie Collymore and Barbara McDermott for providing administrative support.

The data gathering could not have been completed without the cooperation and participation of valued respondents and community-based participants. We thank our adult focus group respondents from Charlemont in rural St Catherine and Trench Town in Kingston for their keen assistance and accommodation of our researchers. We also wish to convey special thanks to the students, parents and administrators of the Ardenne High School and Jessie Ripoll Primary School, both in Kingston, Jamaica for involvement. Thanks also to all other focus group members, diary informants, communities ands interview respondents who willingly participated in the project.

Finally, our thanks to the management and staff of the Mona School of Business, home of TPM Programme, for their keen interest and consistent support for this and other related research studies.

PART 1: CONTEXT AND FRAMEWORK

1.1   Introduction

One of the customary ways in which many Jamaicans open an informal mobile telephone conversation is by the vernacular and sometimes rhetorical question: **'Wha' a Gwaan?'.** It is a local salutation that combines the traditional hello with an enquiry about the personal well-being, social news and the specific financial circumstances of the call recipient. The standard and automatic response is often '**Nutten much',** and then to proceed with the real responses

consisting of a return enquiry greeting '**Wha yu a say?**' followed by shared comments on any hot local topic, radio talk show subject or updates on personal and family news. Longer calls tend to dwell on making plans for the rest of the day or on personal, job or political issues.

Despite the difficulties of creating accurate conversation mapping across social groups, the above patterns of interaction, as reflected from user research diaries, focus groups and interviews with low income Jamaicans contained in this study, provides as close a reading as possible on these usage patterns and interpersonal exchanges. And this is what this qualitative study of people and their personal and group practices seeks to unearth at a deeper level. It attempts to do so based on both participant narratives and observed behaviour relating to the cellular telephone. Taking its title from the typical cell call conversation opening, the study itself is about **'Wha' a Gwaan?'** in people' lives and in our society with regard to a widely adopted but still emergent communication and social tool – the mobile phone - about which there has been precious little prior research data available on Jamaica and the Caribbean.

1.1.1   Jamaica - Country Profile and Background

Jamaica is the largest of the English-speaking territories with a population of over 2.6 million people according to the updated national census estimates of 2006. It is part of the 15-member Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), which is seeking to develop into a single Caribbean market and economy.

Jamaica is a constitutional democracy with a bicameral parliament. Twenty one (21) Senators, who are members of the Upper House, are nominated by Government (13) and Opposition (8) leaders and the House of Representatives is populated by sixty (60) constituency representatives emerging from general elections constitutionally due every five years. Of the two major political parties, the ruling Jamaica Labour Party forms the government since the September 2007 General Elections. However, the ruling party is separated from the Opposition People's National Party by a mere four seats and less than 1% of the popular vote. The country is therefore in a semi-permanent state of electoral preparedness.

 Its economy and particularly foreign exchange earnings depend heavily on tourism and remittances. Other exports include bauxite and alumina, sugar cane products, bananas and other agricultural products, which account for a large proportion of jobs. It also trades in music and other cultural products and entertainment services. There is a strong trade union movement, active civil society organizations and vibrant private sector and commodity groupings. Like certain of its Caribbean neighbours such as Barbados and St Lucia, Jamaica underwent significant structural adjustments during the 1980s and 1990s, but its economy remains vulnerable to a failing commodity export market, hurricanes and world economic conditions.

With a labor force of 1.2 million, Jamaica's unemployment rate in April 2007 was estimated by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) at 9.5%. However, unemployment is widely regarded as being higher, given known levels of under-employment and seasonal work patterns, particularly in the agricultural sector. Unemployment and under-employment are concentrated in deep rural communities and in inner city enclaves of deprivation in the capital and main towns. Women and girls tend to number more heavily among the unemployed. In April 2007, STATIN indicated that the number of men in the unemployed labor force was 44,000 or 6.2%, while women numbered 76,300, or a female unemployment rate of 13.6%.

1.1.2 Poverty: Definitions – Jamaica and UNDP

In 2007 Jamaica's household poverty rate was 10.3%, with the country's GDP per capita income recorded at US$4,200 in 2005, with a real GDP growth rate of 1.4%. Inflation was at 12.9% in the same year but estimated in 2008 at 20%. Literacy levels were reported to be 79.9%, suggesting that close to 20% of the population were semi literate or illiterate.

The Statistical of Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) and the Planning Institute of Jamaica indicated that persons are categorized as 'in poverty' when they live below the 'poverty line' which means they earn less than JA$63,717.17 per year (or about US$937.02). An average family of five (two adults and three children) is considered 'poor' if accumulated earnings are below JA$240,816.57 per year (or US$3,541.42). These indicators are based on consumption patterns annually rather than total income, which tends to be difficult to obtain.

Household poverty in Jamaica as tracked by the National Survey of Living Conditions has recorded significant declines over the past decade, moving down from 33% in 1996. The statistical indicators of reduction in the poverty levels can partly be explained by the inflow of funds from abroad through remittances, which in 2006 topped US$ 2 billion, exceeding earnings from tourism and the bauxite/alumina industries combined.

The United Nations Development programme (UNDP) approaches poverty from a more diverse and subjective perspective. According to the UNDP more than one-fifth of the world's population live in extreme poverty, which they see as multi-dimensional, affecting not only income but also security, empowerment and access to basic services such as health care, education, security and recreation. The UNDP considers persons living on less than US$1.00 per day (J$70) to be in extreme poverty.

While the UNDP's definition of poverty is to a large extent the most comprehensive, there are other considerations that must be kept in mind, such as social exclusion. Social exclusion recognises the root problem of a lack of material resources, but it facilitates the understanding of the social and political processes

that lead to poverty. The interrelated nature of economic, social and political factors that contribute to poverty makes separation between them difficult.

1.2 Mobile Telephony: Jamaica Data

Since the year 2000 when a process of liberalization and de-monopolization of the telecommunications sector began in Jamaica, new entrants in the mobile sector have intensified competition, reduced both handset and call rate costs and opened up the market for access to people from all social classes. The one-time monopoly player, Cable and Wireless, while remaining dominant in the wired telephony sector, has been superceded by a Irish entrant Digicel, which now controls close to two thirds of the mobile market. Other players, such as MiPhone, recently acquired by América Móvil, occupies third place in a market that continues to mature and diversify. Triple-play provider, Columbus Communications Limited, trading as Flow, seeks to open up the combined market for landline phones, Internet service and subscriber (cable) television, in competition with a pre-existing network of smaller broadband and STV providers. Mobile tele-density in certain demographic groups in Jamaica exceeds 100% and there are more cellular handsets in use than the total number of people in the country.

Chart 1: Mobile Phone Market Share in Jamaica – 2005

000s

140		
120		
100		
80		
60		
40		
20		
0		
Digicel	**C & W**	**MiPhone**
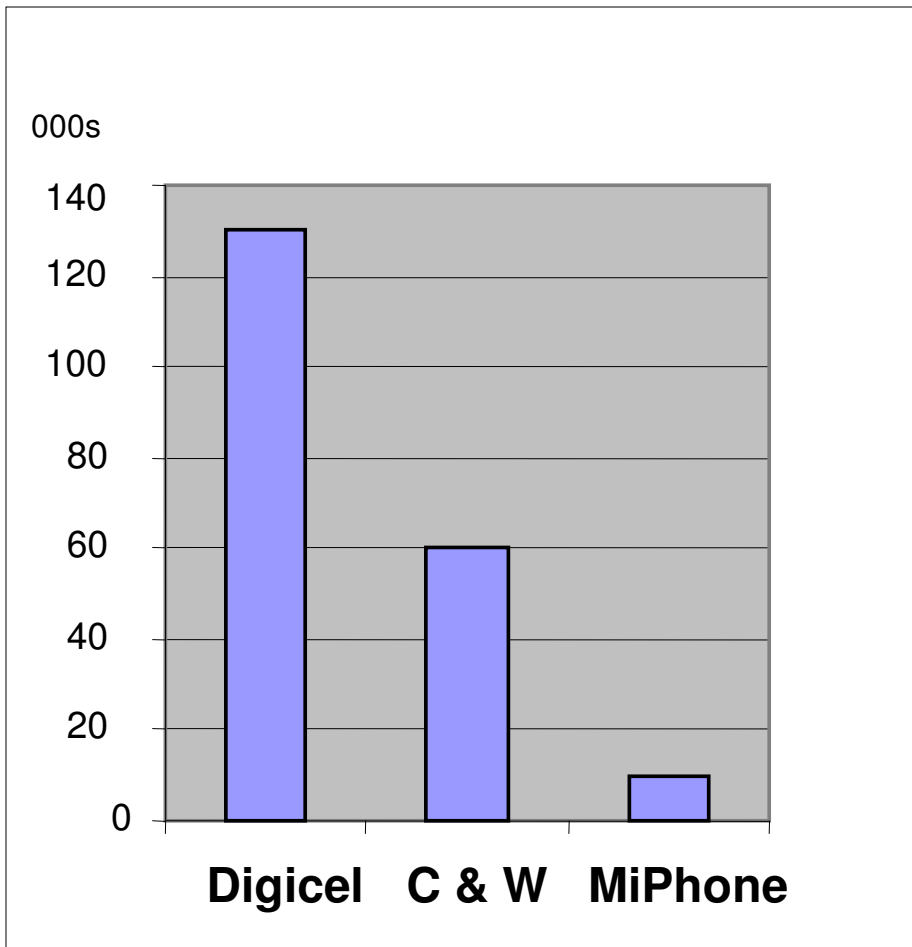
Source: TPM 2007

1.2.1 Mobile Telephony National Household Survey Data – Jamaica

According to data from the 2007 DIRSI-TPM National Household Survey, mobile telephony usage in Jamaica was among the highest in the Caribbean and globally. Among 1,182 survey respondents sampled nationally, some 93.8% indicated that they had used a mobile phone to make or receive calls in the last three (3) months. This number exceeded 100% among certain middle and upper class respondents. The results also indicate that only 3.8% of respondents in the national sample had not used a mobile phone in the reference period. A total of 94.9% of women and 93.1% of men used a cell phone in the last three months, and these users were from all social classes. The study concluded that mobile phones constituted a widespread and constant feature in the lives of a large majority of Jamaicans. Some 69% of the respondents report that they had used the mobile phone for a period of four years or more, which is consistent across both male and female users.

1.2.2 Preferences and Messaging

The data indicated that 96.8 % of respondents used prepayment plans involving buying credit in advance through cards and other devices for conveying or topping up balances. Prepayment is near universal across all major telecoms providers and user groups in the country. A mere 2.3% of the respondents indicated they had some form of post paid or controlled rental plan. The data suggest mobile phone bill post-usage payment (or rental) plans were not popular among the respondents, especially in the poor and marginalised social classes.

A total of 66.7% of the respondents indicated that they had received or sent a text message, whereas 33.3% indicated they had not sent or received a text message. The 42% of this group that indicated they don't know how to use text messaging is perhaps indicative of older age, illiteracy or visual disability among such respondents.

It is against this quantitative background of mobile phone density, usage patterns and access methods that we are examining the more intensive, qualitative and personal narratives and analyses of mobile phone usage in Jamaica.

1.3   Selected Global Theories of Technology Adoption

The emergence and growth of the current phase of constantly emerging technologies, including mobile technology, has given rise to a discussion about the role of technology and its impact on change and on society. It is argued here that while technologies are not ends in themselves, but means by which humans can fashion our environments and societies, these means, when taking the form of pervasive tools of communication or media, they can acquire disproportionate influence beyond their normal role. In the life of Jamaican and Caribbean people, the premier culturally accepted technology entertainment, reflected in television in all likelihood, has superceded many of the traditional socializing institutions in providing our global and even local constructions of reality.

The mobile telephone is at least as prevalent in the lives of new adopters as television and radio combined. This messaging and information system has enjoyed a faster adoption rate than any other communication technology in the region, and has captured the imagination of both men and women, and of all age ranges. The mobile phone is at once social and personal, and is in current deployment as the almost anywhere any time personal access point to many other antecedent or subsequent innovations and services, including radio, television, the traditional telephone and the Internet.

1.3.1   Early Adoption Theories

Early analysts of technology innovation and diffusion have argued that adoption modeling by successive groups of users can account for the nature and pace of adoption of innovations. In his 1962 book 'Diffusion of Innovation' Rogers argued that a minority of early adopters lead the way into mass utilization of newly emerging technologies. He advocated measurement of two key variables: the

speed of initial take-off and the pace of subsequent growth. Applied to Jamaica and the Caribbean, it is clear that while initial adoption was slow, the primary factor was service and handset prices and network effects such as widespread access by other users. Once competition had driven prices down and made access more general in the population, growth became exponential.

Rogers' early 1960s ideas of innovation diffusion were built on the earlier theoretical constructs of the technology adoption lifecycle model, introduced by Beal and Bohlen in 1958. Discussing agricultural and seed corn innovation, they argued that a new product or service will be more easily adopted based on knowing the mindset and characteristics of specific groups of innovators or first adopters followed by other groups of early adopters, then late adopters and afterwards those who are the end-stage adopters, called laggards. Applied to the mobile phone adoption market, the latter group would include an estimated 4% of Jamaicans who have expressed no pressing need to acquire a cellular phone. But the great majority would be represented in the early to mid-point stage of the product lifecycle in Jamaica and the region.

In Jamaica, early development and marketing of the mobile phone was targeted at the upwardly mobile and professional classes. It was meant as an expensive product for the business leaders, who were the elite group of innovators and early adopters. But once the product became accessible in price and availability, there was a rapid mass adoption, based on pent up demand and failure in the market for wired domestic telephones. Young people were among the fastest adopters and at present, it is a small group of middle aged to older citizens that constitute the 'laggards' within the system.

1.3.2 Projected Adoption Trends - Jamaica

It is being argued here that once hardware price and network access are affordable, a similar pattern of wide scale popular adoption of broadband technologies, is likely to follow in the same way that there has been mass adoption of the once elite cellular phone. The patterns of adoption to date have demonstrated that Jamaicans are not technology averse, and would be early or mid-stage adopters in the lifecycle of innovations regarded as beneficial to themselves and their families. The technologies of choice in the present era appear to be ones that combine mobility, low and user regulated costs with high speed and easy broadband access. The growth in network competition, its expected continued downward impact on prices, as well as improvements to the fidelity of WiFi and Wimax wireless technologies would appear to map a future of more wide-scale adoption mobile broadband among working people.

1.3.3 Disruptive Technologies

It may well be that the low-priced mobile phone is developing as what Christensen and Bower earlier described as a 'disruptive technology' and in Christensen's later works he called 'disruptive innovations'. These innovations

are regarded as ones that may be lower in performance and cost, but which fundamentally change the market diffusion patterns of an established technology. This radical market disruption often comes from low-end products that more effectively meet the user needs and are found to be attractive to a larger number of users than the main existing product. Among recent examples of disruptive innovations include cheaper digital photography which made print film obsolete for a large part of the market and the effect of the inexpensive mobile 'flash drive' on the cost and purchasing patterns of earlier systems of computer memory storage. A distinction is made between radical technology innovations that offer low end but more widely adopted and attractive solutions as against revolutionary new products that offer an entirely new and higher quality service or product to the market, usually at higher prices, at least initially.

That mobile broadband is becoming a disruptive innovation in relation to conventional methods of Internet access is increasingly evident with its emerging convergence with Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) - a cheaper means of delivering telephone calls globally. Figure 1 illustrates how disruption can occur across multiple established services and usages each showing mild to moderate growth rates, but superceded by the radical growth of a low-end innovation over a similar or shorter period.

Figure 1: How Low-End Disruption Occurs Over Time.
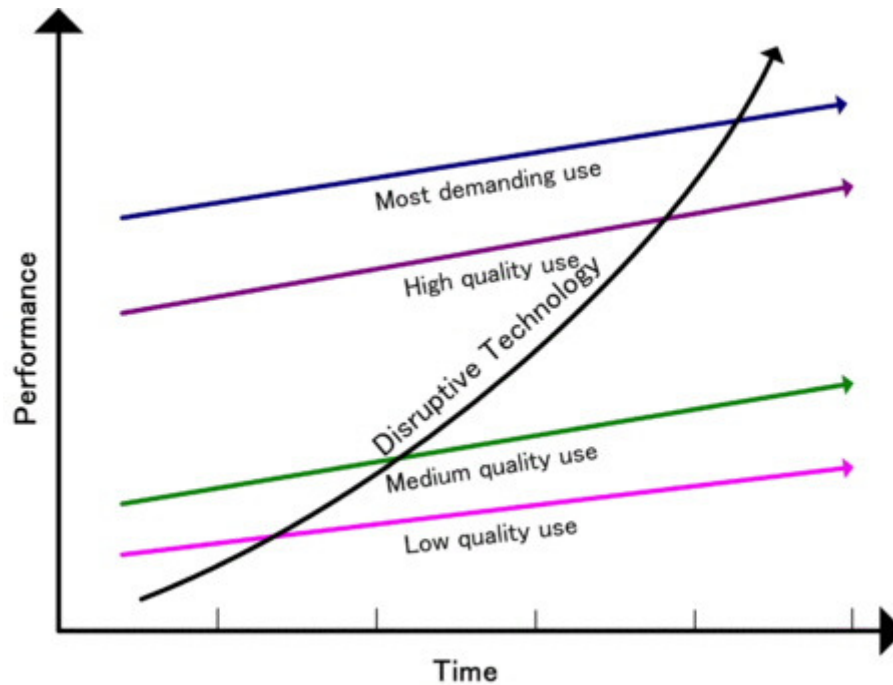
If the cell phone succeeds, as predicted here, to become a disruptive innovation and to re-structure and radically change the established desktop or laptop access patterns to the Internet among a majority of users, it would not be doing this for the first time. The mobile phone has already transformed the established market for wired telephony in ways that now render disproportionate the number of mobile to landlines both in Jamaica and globally. According to the ITU, the process widely documented as mobile substitution is continuing to redefine the meaning of such terms as 'teledensity' and 'universality', as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Global Fixed to Mobile Substitution Trends
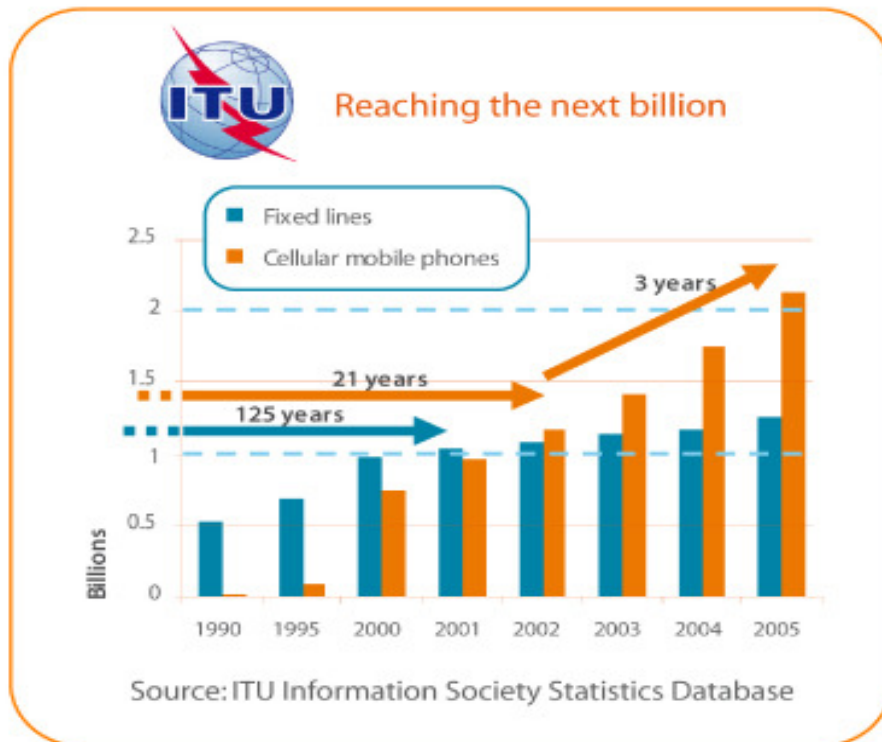
Source: International telecommunications Union

 The fixed to mobile substitution rate in Jamaica has mirrored the rate of change globally, as illustrated, despite efforts to slow consumer shift from fixed to mobile. The entry of a new fixed line provider in Jamaica in 2007 may however eventually slow the pace of substitution, but not the continuing growth of the mobile side of the network and its potential as a bridging innovation into wider and more popular broadband technology adoption, now at less than 15% in the population of users.

1.3.4 Techno-diffusion Factors

In concluding on the factor and issues driving technology diffusion, we must contend with not only the rapid and near ubiquitous spread of the mobile phone, but also the much slower pace of growth of broadband access in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean.

Massini ascribes the pace and effectiveness of mobile technology adoption in Europe to four factors explored in a comparative study of Italy and the United Kingdom. Seeking to avoid the temptation of a reductionist approach, she draws on not one but four interrelated factors which in line with Lyytinen, she suggests perform determining roles in mobile technology diffusion and growth in the sector. Following definitions and arguments in support of this 2004 multidimensional analysis, she concludes that:

"A holistic research framework, based on Lyytinen's and King's (2000) model, which incorporates the complex set of interactions between the innovation system, regulatory regime and the marketplace, all centrally co-ordinated by inter- and intra-system standards, is proposed as an alternative framework to analyse the complex set of interactions directly and indirectly impacting on the rates of innovation adoption and diffusion of complex services across markets." (Massini 2004)

While these factors emerged from a European policy environment which can be quite different from the context of the Caribbean, they are nevertheless found to be useful considerations in analyzing and understanding the Jamaican situation, where these factors have been significant.

PART 2: METHODS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

Against the background of a deeper grasp of regional, national and global patterns of development in mobile telephony, we now discuss the goals, objectives, methods and findings of the qualitative study, conducted in the first quarter of 2008.

2.1 Research Goal, Objectives and Significance

These provide guidelines and markers for the execution of the research projects. Care has been taken to ensure that they are clear and achievable.

2.1.1 Principal Goal

The goal of the study was to gain a clearer understanding of the usage patterns, thoughts, nuances, and experiences of Jamaica's urban and rural poor regarding the mobile phone, using a range of qualitative data-gathering methods.

In pursuit of this, we sought to probe respondents on their personal, household and community practices in using mobile telephone. We were interested in whether this innovation had made a difference to their social, economic and personal lives, including the impact on such variables as income, family life, friendships, personal moods, occupational activity, perceptions and reality of social status.

2.1.2 Research Objectives

Clearly defined research objectives were applied in the study. These were:

- To obtain a detailed understanding (nuances, thinking and experiences) about the usage of the mobile telephone by low income citizens across the targeted demographic groupings: school age children, adolescents, adults and the elderly
- Compare responses, usage trends and practices across variables of age, occupation, social status, lifestyle and work or residential location.
- Explore the implications of low wage earning or poverty for present and future mobile telephone usage.

2.1.3 Selected Research Questions

The following are some of the key sensitizing questions used in furtherance of the objectives and in the search for a deeper understanding of the motivations and practices of persons interviewed:

a. What is the impact of mobile telephony on the everyday lives of low-income earners? Has the mobile phone contributed to an individual's perception of social class and economic opportunities?
b. What are the perceptions, attitudes and reactions towards increased access to mobile telephones?
c. Have cell phones improved the livelihood and well being of individuals of the poorer classes? Has it strengthened the influence of these social groups?
d. How have the poor reconciled the need to use mobile phones with perceptions of expensive mobile telephony payment plans?
e. What are the more subtle patterns of mobile phone usage for income generation among low income earners?
f. What are the unique roles and uses of the cell phone in the communicative economy of poor people?
g. Are there differential usage patterns between different low income demographic groupings?
h. What are some of the unique ways in which the cell phone is used to cope with poverty in poor communities or households?

(See appendix 1 for more detailed schedule of questions)

2.1.4 Significance of the Study

The quantitative research study completed in the six months preceding this follow-up research exercise, gave a wide panoramic view in statistical term of mobile phone usage in Jamaica. This qualitative inquiry is intended to provide deeper and more personal insights into the topic. It will provide the answers to why those data emerged and how these respondents see the unfolding of the present and the future regarding the impact of mobile phones on individual owners, households and communities.

Many of the findings of the quantitative study were used as points of departure for our interviewing on cell phone usage habits of low-income people, in order to test the earlier findings. This report will provide a closer, more detailed insight of the impact the cell phone has on the lives of persons at the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid, perusing issues such as the cell phone as an extension of self, the integration of cell phone in critical economic survival activities, the cell phone as a device providing solace to the unemployed and poverty stricken among other issues.

The scope of the qualitative study is to "explore rather than to describe or explain in any definitive sense" (Babbie, 2007). The findings will not only add to the body of empirical data on this issue, but also provide a more informed triangulated

basis for policy decision-making in this expanding arena. It will explore opportunities for more effective use of the mobile telephone in improving the quality of life of users, whether socially, economically, recreationally or occupationally.

2.2 Design and Methods

Three major methods were used in data-gathering for this study. They are

- Focus Group Discussions,
- Research Diaries and Diary-Assisted Interviews,
- In-depth Elite Interviews

We discuss below some of the research and operational merits and constraints of the varied qualitative methods being employed in this study. Pseudonyms have been used for all named participants in this study.

2.2.1 The Focus Group Method

Focus groups are considered effective analytical conduits that can facilitate the in-depth understanding of behaviours and expressed attitudes that this mobile telephony study seeks to understand. They yield the "whys" to researchers on aspects of human behaviours and interactions through the benefit of observing reactions to ideas, suggestions and proposals related to usage and consumption patterns. As such it was felt that focus groups would be the appropriate method for probing the issues relevant to this study.

Seven (7) focus group discussions were convened with groups of differing age ranges. The composition of the focus groups is detailed in Figure 3.

The study employed skilled moderators for the group sessions, capable of stimulating and directing discussions without dominating them. The sessions yielded relevant life responses from all participants by balancing inputs and limiting the extent of more enthusiastic or dominant participants.

The selection of participants was done carefully in order to recruit the best possible range of discussants with both the necessary experience and willingness to articulate their thoughts and practices. Further to this, each focus group was designed to embrace features of both diversity and commonality, thereby generating both creative and discursive tension and integrative conclusions. Among the issues explored with discussants were the following:

- Ownership: including the reasons for owning a mobile and patterns of ownership.
- Status and Lifestyle: including the mobile phone's impact on everyday life, social status and interpersonal relationships

- Attitudes and Perceptions: including positive/negative implications of owning a mobile and the feelings associated with having one.
- Service Plan and Payment Options: including monthly spending and payment plan.
- Usage Patterns: including the primary uses of the mobile and usage that increases income.
- Other Considerations

2.2.2 Research Diaries

As research instruments, diaries are used to collect detailed personal information about moment by moment activities, noting significant behaviour, perceptions, events and other aspects of an individual's daily life.

Corti (1993) observes that "Biographers, historians and literary scholars have long considered diary documents to be of major importance for telling history. More recently, sociologists have taken seriously the idea of using personal documents to construct pictures of social reality from the actor's perspective". Continuing, he notes that self completion diaries have a number of advantages over other data collection methods:

i. Diaries prove a better method than surveys when dealing with events that are difficult to recall easily or accurately.
ii. Diaries can facilitate the collection of sensitive information, unlike interviews or other methods.
iii. Diaries are excellent complements to interviews to get information about individuals and their behaviour and experiences daily.

However, several challenges may be posed by this data-gathering method. Incomplete recording of information and under reporting pose a constant threat to the successful gathering of data from diaries. Participants may fail to remember to record the information on time or at all. This issue can only be circumvented to an extent by the careful face-to-face selection of participants. Diaries are also open to the reporting of erroneous information, and so verification and monitoring are important correctives.

The use of diaries requires participants who are functionally literate, in order to intelligibly record their activities. This introduces a bias into the study that may be detrimental to the conclusions and inferences. It excludes the illiterate, which make up close to 20% of the research universe for this project. However, the literacy bias can be counterbalanced, as in this study, by the careful selection of focus group or interview participants who do not have to qualify by literacy criteria.

Other challenges are methodological in nature, which are primarily related to the development of a diary template that is easily understood by respondents and easy for decoding and analysis. The careful development of the diary instruments

and selecting participants on a face-to-face basis can generate the necessary feedback.

2.2.3 In-depth and Diary Assisted Interviews

Face to face interviews are methods of direct investigation, and are well established in the social research community. Direct investigations are, in most cases, effective tools for the collection of accurate information, and furthermore some types of information can only be collected through this method, such as technical information from industry experts or key actors and stakeholders.

Interviews have several important characteristics. Among their utility is the face-to-face contact between respondent and the interviewer that allows clarification to be made or misconceptions to be resolved. Interviews also have the advantages that they are highly flexible, they have a higher response rate and offer the best opportunity to take advantage of hard to reach populations. The disadvantages are that they are time consuming, there is less anonymity, they are often expensive to undertake and they are sometimes difficult to follow up.

The ability of a respondent to make daily notations and then be interviewed on this record is a method of assisted recall that facilitates interviewing. Notations jog the memory and trigger narratives that may not have been recalled without the daily notations of a diary. Diary-assisted interviews provide qualitatively better responses to interview questions, with longer timelines and specific details not usually available from simple recollections.

Diary assisted interviews are a methodological innovation of this study and has proven to be useful for greater depth, but with the disadvantage that questioning can become intrusive and personal, requiring prior agreed limits being drawn.

2.2.4 Study Selection Strategy for Respondents

All the methods employed in the study brought together persons of a low-income profile in open discussion, providing an opportunity to deepen the understanding of poor people's mobile telephony usage by gauging their thinking, attitudes and perceptions on how the cell phone impacts on their lives. The participants were all drawn from low income areas utilizing the poverty map of Jamaica (see appendix).

We turn next to discussing composition of the respondent groups and the operational issues encountered in implementing the research strategy.

2.2.5 Conducting the Focus Groups

Seven specialized focus group sessions were conducted, consisting of a total of 67 participants. The groups consisted of school-age children with parental and

school permission, adolescents, adult respondents and the elderly, all drawn from poor inner city or low income communities of Kingston and one rural community in the parish of St Catherine. The location and composition of the focus groups are outlined below:

1. **YOUNGER SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN – TRENCH TOWN, ARNETT GARDENS AND JONES TOWN** (8-12 years old). These students were drawn from the Trench Town Primary, Iris Gelly Primary and Jones Town Primary schools. Eight (8) children participated in this focus group, most of them either owning or having regular access to a mobile phone.

2. **YOUNGER SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN - VINEYARD TOWN** (8-12 Years) This group was made up of eight (8) students at the Jessie Ripoll Primary School in a lower to middle class area of the Kingston conurbation. There was an equal mix of males and females. The students reported their residential communities as including Seaview Gardens, Old Harbour, Maxfield Avenue, McIntyre Villas and Nannyville in the Mountain View area. These are mostly low-income urban communities in and around Kingston.

3. **ADOLESCENTS - TRENCH TOWN AND CHARLIE SMITH HIGH SCHOOLS** (14-18 years old). This group consisted of students attending two inner-city schools near downtown Kingston. The students were drawn from the Trench Town Comprehensive and Charlie Smith Comprehensive High Schools. There were twelve (12) participants in all, eight (8) girls and four (4) boys.

4. **ADOLESCENTS – ARDENNE HIGH SCHOOL** (14-18 years old). Eight (8) adolescents participated, of which five (5) were females and three (3) males. This group was made up of youngsters attending a middle class urban school, but drawn from a variety of social backgrounds and communities. Students named their communities as including Harbour View, Molynes Road, Vineyard Town, Havendale and Above Rocks. These are mainly lower and middle class communities in the city.

5. **URBAN ADULTS - TRENCH TOWN /ARNETT GARDENS** (22-55 years old). This session was scheduled as a single focus group discussion of about twelve adults in the inner city community of Trench Town. However, some 20 residents turned up at the venue. As a result, they were divided into two focus group sessions, of ten (10) participants each, with equal distribution of males and females. The report from this dual session has been combined into a single narrative, given the similarity of opinions and the common demographic composition.

6. **RURAL ADULTS** (22 -65 years old). The seven (7) adult participants in this group came from the Charlemont/Ewarton community in the parish of St Catherine. As the only group from outside the Kingston Metropolitan Region, it was a combined male (3) and female (4) group with a diverse age range.

7. **SENIOR CITIZENS** (over 65 year olds). One session was conducted with a group of four (4) persons in this elderly age range. Although lower than expected, the size of the group was considered fair given the observed low propensity of people in this age group to turn out to discuss this topic. Participants were drawn from residents in the Jones Town, Trench Town and the Arnett Gardens communities. Figure 3 gives a graphical representation of the sample.

Figure 3: The Focus Group Sample

YOUNG CHILDREN	ADOLESCENTS	ADULTS
FOCUS GROUP 1 Age: 8-12 years Sex: Male and female Location: Urban Target Group: Students who lived in Trench Town, Arnett Gardens and Jones Town	**FOCUS GROUP 3** Age: 14-18 years Sex: Male and female Location: Urban Target Group: students who attended Trench Town Comprehensive and Charlie Smith Comprehensive High Schools	**FOCUS GROUP 5** Age: 22-65 years Sex: Male and female Location: Urban Target Group: Trench Town and Arnett Gardens communities
FOCUS GROUP 2 Age: 8-12 years Sex: Male and female, Location: Urban Target Group: Students who went to school in Vineyard Town	**FOCUS GROUP 4** Age: 14-18 years Sex: Male and female Location: Urban Target Group: students who attended Ardenne High School	**FOCUS GROUP 6** Age: 22-65 years Sex: Male and female Location: Rural Target Group: Ewarton and Charlemont communities
		FOCUS GROUP 7 Age: Over 65 years Sex: Male and female Location: Urban and rural Target Group: Jones Town, Trench Town and Arnett Gardens communities

2.2.6 Composition and Organization

Each focus group consisted of not more than 12 participants (some had fewer). Each was designed to capture significant individual thought and group consensus views on the topic. Essentially, it involved ascertaining how the group felt about the use and impact of the cell phone on their lives and on Jamaican society in general.

Each focus group session lasted about one hour. The sessions were conducted in an informal style with opportunity for free-flowing inputs and contributions from all the members of the group. Flexibility in conducting the sessions was important. Groups differed in terms of age range and so did the discussion format of the sessions. Sessions were recorded and detailed notes taken by a recording assistant. Transcripts were then produced of each session.

Each School Principal was sent an introductory letter from the research project director requesting their participation. In the case of the younger children, the necessary parental consent forms were obtained through the schools, with all forms duly signed by parents and deposited with the research team. Participants in most of the focus group session were provided with refreshments and a transport allowance. The exceptions were those held at Ardenne High School and Jessie Ripoll Primary School where the institutions assumed full responsibility for all aspects of the engagement with their students. As a matter of interest, while the interviewed students were pre-qualified by having some access to a mobile phone, it was the policy of all the schools contacted that students were forbidden from openly carrying and using cell phones during school hours.

While details of individual focus group sessions are available as Appendix 3 to this Report, the results as outlined below will be presented in thematic areas.

2.3 Focus Group Findings: The Mobile Experience in Jamaica

2.3.1 Widespread Utilization of the Mobile Phone

From the voices of the respondents there was a sense of pervasiveness in cell phone use among the respondents from low-income communities. Focus group participants expressed the view that everyone should have a cell phone, even children as young as 7 years old, as a means of personal communication, security or style.

The study confirms existing data on significant levels of ownership and widespread usage of the mobile phone in the country. Among adult respondents, all indicated that their friends and neighbours were owners of at least one mobile phone each. But in some inner city areas, the expectation is that each person should have at least two phones. One group member from the Trench Town focus group session remarked that it seems that if you did not have more than one phone *"yu nah say nutten"*.

The few persons who did not own or have access to a cell phone primarily came from among the younger age grouping (8-12 years old) in the study and they all have either used one in the recent past or expected to get one soon. The great majority of persons in any of the respondent groups were keen about owning their cell phones. Participants regarded owning a personal mobile phone as normal and inversely remarked on how abnormal it seemed for someone not to have a cell phone at all.

However, in the single rural adult focus group session conducted, a parent remarked that although her eight year old daughter had been at her for some time for a mobile phone *"I am resisting the temptation, as I don't think she is ready to have a cell phone. She is not at an appropriate age to [be given] a phone."*

There were strong social and media pressures on low-income persons and youth to acquire a mobile phone, despite the fact that the basic handset and prepaid credit costs are sometimes above their means. For many, the desire is even to move beyond a basic to a more advanced, attractive and expensive phone, or even a second phone.

2.3.2 Phone Acquisition

Based on our focus group and interview data, most citizens in poor urban and rural households buy their cell phones legally. Many sacrifice other necessities to save for a cell phone purchase, starting usually with low cost handsets. Several focus group participants also indicate that cell phones are popular gifts, from parents to children or from one to another friend or spouse. As usage becomes

more widespread and the pressure builds against 'cheap phones', the tendency is to acquire increasingly expensive handsets. These more pricey phones in turn become targets for cell phone thieves.

According to several participants in the adult urban focus group, this practice is more prevalent among some misguided urban youth for whom the pressure to acquire a phone can lead to extreme measures of illegal acquisition. There have been reports of school children or adults alike being attacked for their cell phones, with fatal consequences on some occasions. One case reported in the Jamaica Gleaner, the oldest newspaper in the British Caribbean, indicated that 14 year-old Percival Crew, a male student at the Albion Junior High School was walking home after his classes were dismissed. Having reached about 100 metres from the school he was ambushed by a man who demanded his cell phone, Percival refused the request and the man proceeded to stab him multiple times all over his body.

 The senior citizen Focus Group heard of a tragic incident in which a family member of a participant was gunned just because of a cell phone. *"Him is not the first to die over cell phone, but when yu see people losing dem life ova a phone, dem yu haffi stop and wonder what Jamaica come to. It is an example to us that some people take this ting to another level."*

As a confirmation of this incident, the research team noted the comments of an online contributor to a Tech Jamaica discussion group. This contributor alluded to a case he was aware of involving robbery of a cellphone in an urban Jamaican setting:

> *" You all won't believe this a sistren of mine who is like 6 months pregnant was walking to the shop a few days ago "spanish town" any way a car pull up man dem jump out of the car friskin her for her cell phone " which is a samsung slider that she did not have with her at the time " any way the man dem beat her batter and bruise up the chick is like the guys dem have been watching her with this phone for some time and decided it was time for them to tek it any way she did not have it so they beat her up..."[1]*

In common with many other countries, there are many such examples in Jamaica of robbery, abuse and even murder by thugs while stealing cell phones.

In one response to this, a major cell phone provider in Jamaica, Cable and Wireless Limited, reported in November 2007 that it would be taking steps to disable stolen phones. According to Tech News, " C&WJ will utilize an Equipment Identity Register (EIR), to "blacklist" stolen or lost handsets once the Company authenticates a theft or lost report from a customer. The blacklisted

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[1] http://www.techjamaica.com/forums/archive/index.php/t-20996.html

device will then be denied service on the network, rendering the instrument useless. The report said *"Cable & Wireless Jamaica will share its 'blacklist' with the other mobile operators in the industry so that they can make the necessary arrangements to prevent any blacklisted phones from working on their networks."* In explaining the basis for the decision, a spokesman for the phone company was reported as saying that *"Unfortunately, as mobile phones have become more sophisticated and expensive they have also become more attractive to thieves."*[2]

In support of this analysis, one focus group respondent in this study noted that among unemployed urban youth *"some of them go to the extreme to own one (a phone), whatever the cost, as they cannot do without owning one."* An interview respondent reported that she was not interested in buying any expensive phones, but only one, regardless of its age, that was at least capable of saying "hello". She said that as a self employed woman with a physical disability operating a stall in a city market, she recognized that she was vulnerable to cell phone theft and personal attack, and had taken the precaution against such risks by not exposing herself through having an expensive mobile phone.

Some focus group respondents reported knowing community members and even high school children who resorted to gambling to acquire a cell phone.

2.3.3 Multiple phones

It was noted that a significant number of respondents possess more than one phone. Just under a third of focus group participants in one session indicated ownership of two or more instruments, and there were instances of people having as many as four mobiles. Ownership of multiple cell phones (normally each would be from a different provider) was being done essentially as a means of saving, as calls across networks were more expensive than calling on the same network. The additional phone would sometimes be obtained through participation in promotions, obtained as gifts, 'found' or secured through giveaway programmes.

2.3.4 The Perceived Value of a Mobile Phone

The perceived value of the mobile phone is clearly linked to status for the inner city dweller whereas the rural respondents were more inclined to see it as a tool mainly for distance communication.

Among the adolescents, views were evenly mixed. The respondents that participated in the focus group among inner city adolescents were more strident in associating status with the phone type. They showed much interest in owning

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[2] http://www.techjamaica.com/content/view/1483/25/

a phone and some were very clear about the social benefits of owning a particular type of phone: it *"is all about being part of a crew or gang. Wid yu phone yu feel hype and yu gain respect."* This 'respect' would come especially if the instrument was considered new and expensive and if it had an array of features.

In comparison, the focus group conducted among more middle class high school students at Ardenne High School reflected more subdued views even though respondents came from communities throughout the city. According to one, *"having a certain [expensive] type of phone is not the real thing."* Their usage patterns primarily centred on sending low cost text messages and that was the feature that mattered most in the type of phone they obtained.

In addition, some felt that not only status but also identity was linked to the mobile: *"you can tell a person by the type of phone they have and the ring tone of their cell phone."* This is an interesting phenomenon as it shows that in the minds of some respondents, there is a direct link between your type of phone, how you use your phone and who you are.

In the case of adult respondents, it was evident that status was also clearly indicated in the type of phone one owns. This would even be reflected in the type of ring tone on their phones or the colour of the instrument. Many observed that this had to do with style, status and looking/feeling "*with it*".

2.3.5 Usage Patterns

Across all groups, respondents said they received more calls on their phones than the number of calls they placed. This perhaps has to do with the fact that many people have phones with no credit on them. There is also the well practiced tendency of using 'Please call me' messages in order to receive calls from contacts. Only the elderly group reported sending more calls than they received. According to one person in this grouping: *"nobody no call wi old people. Sometimes for days, mi no get no call pon mi phone"*. The elderly group testified to the fact that their ratio of outgoing to incoming call was 3:1.

While the primary reported use of the phone was personal – to 'keep contact' and to 'keep in touch', 'labrish' or 'gossip', there was some evidence that adolescents also used it for peer-to-peer or student-to-adult consultation about school-related work or homework. In the case of adults, it would appear from the focus group discussions that while advanced usage such as for m-government, m-banking or for other formal business transactions was still limited, there was some measure of income related usage. In the senior citizen group, one participant reported that "*the cell phone is a good thing. It makes us able to get in touch with a family member and through the phone, I get my little smalls (money) from mi son abroad."*

An adult member of the Trench Town focus group remarked that the phone was an integral part of the priority expenditure: *"Yes, it cost dollars to add credit to*

yu phone, to buy the phone or upgrade it as well, but dat is no big ting. Of course we concern bout wi children, food and other tings, all a dat affect we life. But mi phone is also part a wi lifestyle. Mi nuh know how people manage without it." On closer exploration of this comment, it became clear that it was the phone that enabled this user to 'manage' by facilitating contact about "*wi children, food and other tings.*" The reality is that the cell phone is vital in terms of poor people using it to also realize a tangible personal or family income benefit, to offer services or to seek employment.

2.3.6 Acquisition Patterns, Providers and Plans

More than half of the owners we interviewed both in the focus groups and in the diary-assisted interviews bought their phones for themselves. Just over a third of these persons reported that they got theirs as gifts, often from relatives abroad. Others especially in the younger age groups admit to stealing or 'finding' their phone while others gambled in order to own one.

The prepaid method of service was the dominant type of service used, although there were a few cases where respondents had post paid services. Respondents noted that with a prepaid plan they were better able to control how they spent their money as well as being better able to monitor and control usage. The overwhelming use by Jamaica's poor people of prepaid credit plans reflects the sporadic nature of their income patterns. This is highlighted by the fact that most of the prepaid clients in our focus groups had a zero balance on their prepaid accounts at the time we checked. While able to receive calls, most would not have been able to make a call.

2.3.7 Residential Anonymity

At the time of this study, one of the more popular Jamaican artistes penned a song that found resonance among focus group members, as it strongly reflected a topic on their minds in relation to one of the benefits conferred by mobile phones. The song, entitled 'Wrong Address' by an acclaimed 'best new female Jamaican artiste' Etana parodies in song the discriminatory practices visited upon poor people in their search for work by some prospective employers.

"Tried to get a job today but
When dem see the application dem say
If this is really where you reside
Please step outside
She asked them why
And they replied...

[chorus]
We don't want no trouble
We don't want no trouble, no day

Cause lady where you come from
People die there everyday
For our safety, that's where you should stay…"

[Verse 1 and Chorus – 'Wrong Address' by Etana 2007]

The lyrics of this popular song demonstrate the plight of the inner city dweller in having to deal with prejudices associated with the 'wrong address' at which they live. Inner city communities such as Trench Town, Arnett Gardens, parts of Mountain View Avenue, among other areas from which our focus group and diary respondents were drawn are associated with poverty and crime. This sometimes causes negative bias by potential employers and in uptown or other social settings.

One resounding message out of the focus group discussions was the revelation that possession of a mobile phone among persons from disadvantaged communities was regarded as *"a kind of passport to better opportunities".* For many of these persons, the cell phone accords them an 'address anonymity' which was advantageous in their telephone-based searches for jobs, schools and other upwardly mobile opportunities. As one female group member who does housework puts it: *"nobady nuh know wey mi live when mi gi dem mi phone numba."*

For her and many others, a cell phone contact number (unlike a landline which can disclose regions), helped them to avoid the residential address bias which many usually experience in their search for self-improvement. That hurdle, they argued, was being reduced somewhat by advertising their cell phone contact. Persons such as plumbers, gardeners, mechanics, household helpers and others were being contacted more frequently for work where otherwise they would not have been considered.

The residential address was not being raised frequently as an issue by their prospective customers, employers and business contacts. The sense of anonymity provided by the cell phone has the potential to serve as a useful entry point to new opportunities for people from the base of society and could reduce the instances of discrimination, bias and disadvantage about which Etana made her now famous song.

2.3.8 Overseas 'Links'

Many persons in our focus groups used their cell phones to get money from relatives abroad. According to the elderly focus group member referred to earlier, *"The cell phone is a good thing. It makes us able to get in touch with a family member and through the phone I get my little smalls [funds] from my son abroad."* Many Jamaicans are surviving on remittances and gifts from abroad which include both cash and modern highly popular cell phones. International calls figured prominently among the usage patterns of focus group participants,

with just under half of them saying that they have had to call a relative abroad occasionally for economic assistance. The phone itself facilitates receipt of credit from overseas; a feature relied on by many elderly or disabled persons who cannot go out in search of local credit outlets.

In every focus group, there were at least two participants who said they had either bought or obtained their phone from abroad (sometimes sent to them by a relative). This phenomenon could partly explain the abundance of some of the latest cell phone models, in the hands of inner city and low income persons. In the communities classified as poor that were visited, respondents reported that there was no shortage of the latest phone models such as the 'chocolate', the 'pebble', the latest 'slide', the 'pearl' or other brands of 'blackberry' and Internet capable mobile phones.

2.3.9 Economic Empowerment

Low income focus group participants indicated that the mobile phone was creating some positive economic opportunities for the poor. These include the selling of phone cards in the community and in traffic, selling phone cases, selling car chargers and other low cost attachments, operating cell phone repair shops and small business built around 'unlocking' multi-band phones. Still others derive income from the phone companies for the use of their property to house cell sites and equipment. Some persons were using the instrument for exploring work or seeking assistance from friends and relatives abroad. It did not appear from the group responses, however, that the more advanced economic opportunities available from mobile usage, such as mobile phone banking, multi-messaging, mobile broadband applications and digital photography were being fully exploited as economic activities.

2.3.10   "It's Just Money"

On the basis of the results of expenditure enquiries compiled in this study, it was clear that a significant proportion of total income was being spent on the phone. Respondents from both rural and urban settings gave indications of their level of expenditure on acquiring and maintaining cell phones. Younger aged participants were spending up to JA$400 (US$5.70)[3] a week on buying credit for their phones, while adults were spending between JA$1,000 (US$14.28) and JA$1,500 (US$21.42) a week. This amount equivalent to US$14.39-US$21.43, represents just below half the weekly national minimum wage in Jamaica. In the words of one of the adolescents *"It is just money and it has to be spent."* Similar patterns of consumption are reported in use of 'credit' for prepaid subscribers.

A rural housewife who was a member of the Charlemont focus group expressed amazement at the phone buying trends she had noted among urban youth in a phone store. *"Sometimes you are in the store and school children come in and*

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[3] US$ 1= JM $ 70.00

want a JA$20,000 phone to buy and yu wonder where they get the money from. They will go without lunch to live above their means. Personally, I just want to be in touch; I just want to make and receive calls"

In the case of the inner city poor, the acceptable cost to acquire a mobile phone ranged between JA$8,000 (US$114.29) and JA$26,000 (US$371.43). The cheapest of those phones would be three times the cost of the least inexpensive phone otherwise available on the market. For them, it was more about status, 'profiling' and being hip. In explaining the phenomenon, one adolescent respondent felt this was only a symptom of Jamaican consumer culture. *"You know us Jamaicans. We into image and fashion, and yes some people will spend too much, but the cell phone is a definite status thing, especially for people in the ghetto."*

For rural respondents, however, the purpose of owning a mobile was for *"being in touch and being able to make and receive a call"*. They spent far less both to acquire their phones (average was JA$2,000 or US$28.57) and on purchasing phone cards (about JA$200 or US$2.85 a week). 'Profiling' seems to be lower on the agenda for the rural residents we interviewed.

Given a national household poverty income index in the region of JA$65,000 per annum (US$928.57[1]), the amounts being spent by the poor on the cell phone habit are quite significant. This was justified in the eyes of one of our young group participants who succinctly observed that: *"Jamaicans like to talk"*.

Adult respondents (especially women) reported spending much more on phone cards. They also reported making more calls and staying longer on their phones. For most, it was about $1,000 a week on phone cards, which would amount to some $52,000 a year, and thus easily consume almost the entire national household poverty income figure of $63,000. Clearly, the cell phone usage in the inner city is being maintained by income well above the national baseline poverty figure. This raises questions about informal income that could emerge from 'hustling', remittances, and other informal sources of income. In the words of one urban respondent: *"mi phone is also part a wi life style. Me nuh know how people manage wid out it!"*

Inner city adults that were engaged in the study did not feel they were spending too much on phone cards or that it was impacting in any way on their household income, although some women did make it very clear that they would not use money for their children's education to buy phone cards. Overall, they did not feel that they were spending too much on this 'lifestyle', partly because they saw the benefits and possible returns from improved networking and social communication.

2.3.11 Mobile (In)Security

All respondents agreed the cell phone was a useful and positive addition to their life. Many raised situations in which they were able to alert the community or be informed about developments which could threaten safety and security. Women were especially vocal in embracing the cell phone as a device that assisted with personal security in their day to day lives.

At the same time, some participants also saw serious negatives from having a phone, both at the personal and community levels. From the very young to the elderly, concerns were expressed about negative aspects like the use of the phone to commit crimes to attacks and killings which may have been organized using cell phones.

Additionally, some participants found mobiles to be a threat to personal safety. In contrast to the words from an adult resident of Trench Town that "*the more expensive yu phone, the more respect yu get*", is the view offered by a lower middle class adolescent school boy in the Ardenne High focus group:

> "*You could say you are putting yourself at risk in having especially an expensive phone; you are not allowed to carry it to school; your life could be in danger; it can be a big distraction, and even your parents can get involved, but I still think having a cell phone is a good thing. I can't do without my phone.*"

Another perspective from a younger school age respondent was: "*It seems like these days when you have a cell phone … you attract danger to yuself.*"

A female student who is yet to acquire a mobile phone felt less secure for not having one but cited financial considerations and parental control as the main reasons that they are still without one.

2.4 Research Diaries - Process and Findings

2.4.1 Innovating the Diary-Assisted Interviews Method

This study innovated on the basic diary reporting method by introducing the concept of the **full-length diary-assisted interviews**. This goes beyond the ordinary diary assisted recall for debriefing of diary holder to intensive interview using the diary notations as points of departure for questioning. In this project, participants were given a pre-tested diary template on which they were asked to track their phone usage over a five day period. The diaries were then collected in a joint debriefing session as the first phase of the reporting-back process. This phase proved a success as participants were able to share details about their cell phone usage over the five day period assisted by the diary notations as a prompt to aid their recollection of events.

2.4.2 Diary Debriefing Process

The diary instrument revealed detailed patterns of usage among low-income respondents. They were each lead through a review that touched on all aspects of their phone usage. Initially, all participants were given the opportunity to express how they felt when deliberately observing and recording their own phone usage. For some, it was an enlightening experience as they did not realize how much money they were spending to recharge their phones, while for others, the sheer volume of calls or messages that they sent and received was surprising to them.

Some of the participants, particularly the unemployed, said the exercise gave them something constructive to do over the period. The five day period of deliberate concentration on their mobile phone usage, as the participants indicated, gave them a much needed mental escape and solace from their environmental realities, even if only for a short period.

2.4.3 Selections for Intensive-Diary-Assisted Interviews

The second phase of interviewing was much more intensive and selective. Respondents in this phase were selected on the basis of superior ability to articulate and expand on the diaried mobile phone usage experience and to share family, household and community experiences and observations in cell phone usage.

Only three of the original participants were chosen for this more detailed phase of diary-assisted interviews. The diary instruments were still used to jog the memory of the interviewees about their phone usage over the period, but they were given more latitude to respond to interview probes and to develop more in-depth and nuanced narratives about themselves and their telephone relationship with others at the bottom of the social and economic pyramid.

The findings presented combine what was recorded on the diary instruments and what the participants freely expressed in the detailed diary assisted interviews. A composite sample of the diaries, including entries and notations is at Appendix 3.

2.5 Research Diary Findings

2.5.1 Phone Acquisition Patterns

Consistent with our earlier study findings, the diary assisted interviews also found that direct purchase of cell phones was the most popular acquisition pattern. However, this more detailed analysis unearthed a number of other unique ways in which members at the bottom of the pyramid are acquiring their cell phones.

One of these is through barter or trade. Chris, who acquired his current phone this way, gave an account of the process; "*My friend had an L7, that's the one to the Razr. I had a bmobile Silver. It ended up that my phone was damaged I said to him that, 'I'll take your own and you give me some funds on it'. He presents this phone to me and gave me some funds and said to just call it a trade and that's how I came by this phone*". Nickardo who is aware of the popular trend further expounded on Chris' point by saying that, "*Look, you have a phone that costs like 20 odd or 30 odd thousand and I have a computer game for dat price that you really want. Trade is no robbery*".

Consistent with findings from the focus group component is that many participants were depending on overseas relatives and friends to purchase their mobile handsets. While it could be argued that middle and upper class citizens also have this foreign link and acquisition pattern, it represents only one of the different ways available to middle and upper class people. However, for low income people this acquisition pattern is more of a heavy dependence on the foreign link as an important economic resource.

Finally, there is what we have termed 'below the radar' acquisition patterns. As the phrase implies, persons are acquiring their cell phones through means that are contrary to the law. Stealing is one of the popular methods to acquire mobile phones. Persons interviewed indicated that there were two dimensions to this. The first concerns drug addicts who must feed their insatiable appetite for drugs. These drug addicts from all social backgrounds have been stealing cell phones on a large scale particularly in the busy business districts in the capital city of Kingston. Nickardo who indicated that he knew of these cases, had this to say: "*coke heads[4] don't really hold you up and take away your phone. They would more grab it and run or break in your house and steal your things. That is how the coke head behaves*". From this it seems that either drug addicts trade their

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[4] Cokeheads is the Jamaican term for cocaine drug addicts

loot for drugs, or sell them for way less than they are worth to highly networked buyers.

 The second dimension of unlawful acquisition of cell phones our interviewees made reference to were related to criminal elements that are armed and dangerous and willing to hurt people in the process of taking away their phones. They generally target shoppers or commuters in busy town centres which act as hubs for the thousands of people moving to and from work all around the Kingston area. Unsuspecting women are the main victims as they are easier to subdue and to disarm of their cell phones. An interesting trend which some of the participants noted was that some of these attacks are done in such a manner as to pretend that there is an interpersonal or domestic tiff between them and their victims. The attacking gives onlookers the impression that it is an altercation between partners. Chris indicated what he saw in Half-Way-Tree, one of the busy urban centres: "A *man was boxing a woman and saying, 'Give me your phone. Is which man you make call your phone?' Is rob he was robbing her….. He gave her some good box and she was so shocked she just gave him the phone and started to cry…..he just walked away. He didn't run. When he was far she started saying that he was a thief"*

2.5.2 Prepaid Users

All the studies on mobile telephony and poverty in the DIRSI series have found that respondents, both in the quantitative and qualitative studies, prefer and are using prepaid phone cards to recharge their call credit (Dunn, 2007)[3]. Miller and Horst (2007) have similar findings in the pseudonymous district of Orange Valley, where people believe the prepaid credit give them more control over their expenditure. Exercising control over expenditure presupposes or indicates that one has some money in the first place.

 A close examination of the diary instruments suggests that many users had a preference for the prepaid modality not just for the control of expenditure it offers, but primarily that prepaid users can now transfer credit from one mobile phone to another. One mobile services operator has introduced this feature, which is a mechanism that allows customers to transfer a minimum sum of credit from their phones to that of another customer. Termed the 'Please Credit Me" feature, it has attracted quite some interest in the inner city communities. On the diary instruments a lot of these transfers were evident. For instance on Shawn's instrument he noted the following:

   …….(Thursday) 12:15pm: Received a call from Wendy asking for $25 credit

   …….(Friday) 11:02 am: Received a call from a girl asking for $25 credit

Stacy also wrote down:

   …….. (Friday) 4:20pm: Sent a message to a friend asking him for $ 50 credit

So, for these participants the prepaid feature not only affords them control over their expenditure, but as an offshoot capability, enabling them to tap into their social networks for call recharge. It is another example of the beneficial income or resources generating features of mobile phone usage that we have noted.

2.5.3 Call Frequency and Patterns

The diary participants received more calls than they dialed. Given the demographics of the participants, the outnumbering of dialed calls to calls received is understandable. Secondly, and as a corollary, an examination of the diary instruments did not reveal any call patterns in terms of usage intensity during peak or off-peak periods. People were merely using the phone when they happen to have, buy or receive credit.

In terms of the dialed calls and received calls, further probing of the diary instruments revealed that participants frequently spoke to two distinct categories of individuals: family members/either in the rural parts of the country or overseas and secondly close friends.

 The cell phone, it seems, has enabled these participants to deepen their ties with distant family members. Under normal circumstances, an individual feels warm, comfortable and loved when they are in the presence of their family. For these participants, whose lives are sometimes disrupted by rival gangs trading bullets indiscriminately and the psychological burden of unemployment, the cell phone bridges the gap between them and their family members who are residing elsewhere in the country. In these conversations they convey information about their safety and economic situation. For instance, Romain wrote on his diary instrument that he received a call from his brother to say "love": He understands love in this context to also mean advice to stay above board and not yield to the negative factors that seem to pull at young males in these communities. Many diary annotated conversations with family members also surround discussions on the economic well being of the participant. In these conversations, the participant generally asks family members for financial help. The following were recorded on some of the diary instruments:

> **Anita**: *Called daughter to ask about money to purchase items (Friday, 2:06pm)*
>
> *Called my baby father to get some money (Sunday, 9:05am)*
>
> *Called sister for some money to help son in jail (Sunday, 11:04am)*
>
> **Stacy**: *Received a call from mother to talk about money from dad who is abroad (Friday, 12:44pm)*

One of the essential characteristics of the cell phone, which these participants appreciate, is that it allows them to be a participant in a network of friends. These

networks and the strength of their links may be the difference between the life and death of an individual. For instance, one diary participant explained that these cell phone networks operated just like electronic tracking systems which monitor the development of storms and then warn unsuspecting residents about the impending danger. The cell phone in the network is used to quickly disseminate information about any altercations or impending disputes that might escalate into more dangerous warfare and ensnare unsuspecting commuters in its throes.

Romain, who shared the experience about the shooting of a close friend over the diary keeping period, strongly believes in the necessity of the cell phone to inner-city life as he wrote on his diary, a "f*riend called to inform me about a shooting death on my road*". He explained that this message could easily have been much more, ranging from a warning to avoid particular areas of the community because of a fresh outbreak of violence to threats made on the lives of family members or other friends.

2.5.4 Text Messaging

From what was recorded on the diary instruments, it seems that most participants were not keen on using the text message feature on their cell phone. Issues of age and literacy levels of their message receiveing counterparts may explain the low levels of text message usage

This result, confirmed by several interview responses, is both interesting and surprising. One would have expected that given the relatively low cost of text messages compared with voice calls, this would have been a widespread application among low income users. However, it may well be that in Jamaica at least, texting is not a widely used mobile communication method among the inner city poor, even among the youth. While the diary group may themselves be literate, texting to friends assumes that these friends or family members can read and knows how to access a text message, which is often not the case. A text message would be lost on such a recipient. Texting would appear to be a cost saving mobile application more prevalent among middle class or educated urban youth, whose literacy level is known to be higher than that of poor inner city residents.

Among these dispossessed residents, the most frequent forms of messages received and sent were 'please call me' a phone feature made available to customers of one network which works similar to the 'please credit me' feature previously mentioned. The 'please call me' is a message that a customer can send to another requesting to be called. The only limitation is that the person sending the message must have \$3 (\$US 0.042) or less credit on their phones to send a message. It is from this low cost and low literacy requirement that the 'please call me' feature has been colloquially re-named 'ghetto text' among low income members of inner-city communities themselves.

Frequently with no more than the three dollars on their phones, many frequently use the 'please call me' feature as the only form of 'text message' that they can use on a regular basis. Our informants indicate that this feature is seen as appealing mainly to poor people as members of the middle and upper classes in Jamaica invariably have more than three dollars on their phones and so rarely use this facility.

The 'ghetto text' plays a unique role in the communicative economy of the inner-city. In each network of friends connected by the cell phone, it seems there is an undeclared champion, whose status is determined entirely on the perception by members of the network that this person tends to have more credit, more frequently than they do. For the undeclared 'credit champion' this means countless 'ghetto texts' which are either asking him to relay messages to other members in the network or have support requests made of him. Nickardo and Shawn seem to have been two of these undeclared champions, as they received a number of ghetto texts throughout the period, even to the point where Nickardo called a member of his network to tell him to stop sending him these texts.

Romain, another of the participants quipped that "*I love to have credit because in the days when you have credit on your phone, you're like the man, you know*".

2.6 Diary-Assisted Interviews: Extended Narratives

2.6.1 Cell Phones: Unadulterated Blessings

Individuals from the bottom of the social pyramid view access to the cell phone as a blessing. This is what Chris had to say about telephony in Jamaica before the emergence of the cell phone:

We'd had to go to the call box to make a local call down by Sutton Street and when we go down there, it would take me 3, 4 minutes to walk down and then you wait about 2, 3 hours. You sit down there because the place ram [full], just to make a local call, but with the overseas [call], we would have to come all the way back up to the tank to make a call there and when we go up there, that lady's yard is always full because you have to pay to use her phone for a limited amount of time.

On Sunday you have to get ready earlier to………… "Go up there and wait" and when I go up there we see 10, 14 persons already. I'm talking about maybe 2 o'clock or 3 o'clock in the afternoon already there waiting. The people have to come from church and when the[y] come from church, their yard would be full with people and they would wonder. So they would take out the box and collect their money and you make your call and they make you sign. They put a sign on the paper saying that you have from that time to that time to talk.

Before the liberalization of the telecommunications sector in Jamaica, many poor people across Jamaica suffered similar obstacles to long distance communication as Chris. However, with the emergence of competitive acces to mobile telephony in 2001, many felt for the first time, what many upper class citizens long enjoyed - the comfort of long distance communication from the privacy of their homes.

2.6.2 Cell phones: Disputing Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs?

In orthodox thinking, the choice between a plate of food and a cell phone to a hungry man should be clear. Or is it? This scenario was provocatively presented to the participants, who all agreed that in such circumstances where they would be forced to choose between satisfying a basic need and having a cell phone, they would choose the latter. This is what Chris, an unemployed father of two, had to say on the matter:

You have friends you can pick up your phone and call your sister, call somebody and say, "You a hear me, me want some dinner". That person will say to you maybe dinner not enough and say they can help you with piece of meat so you just do what you have to do. You get piece of meat from that person, you call another person and say, "Me have piece of meat but don't have any rice or any peas or nothing". By the end of the day, you have a food in front of you. Everybody will say, "Come and get some rice", if you choose the plate of food over the phone, it won't work with me. I'll choose the phone.

Nickardo lost no time in following up on Chris' position, saying:

The technology of making a (cell) phone was one [of] the best things we ever did because before you had to travel go far to hear something. Now it's just a couple clicks away.

2.6.3 Cell Phones: Educational Tools

Chris pointed out that mobile phones can pull out the ingenuity in persons who may not even be skilled at traditional reading and writing. He cited a case in his household where the technical competences and game skills are evident in a member of the family not gifted with traditional literacy:

Watch the funny thing about it. It [cell phone] also helps persons who do not know how to read properly to use it. My nephew is an overall game freak but to put him in front of a book and say to read, you won't get him to because he's slow, but give him the phone and say, "Do this" or "Send this message". You don't have to write anything for him. Tell him what to do and in no time he does it. So it's like the phone to him is a learning process, even though he sees it as a game, it's a learning process so it really helps in a lot of ways.

While Chris sees one of the far reaching applications of the cell phone in terms of education, he and the other participants in the study believe that unrestricted

access to computers would be a greater asset to them than having full access to the cell phone. Stacey and Chris believe that being computer literate would give them a better opportunity of securing a job in the competitive labour market.

2.6.4 Cell Phones: Business and Social Networking Tools

The fact that cell phones have been adapted as business and networking tools by both low income and high income earning businesses is not surprising. After all, it was always the business potential that drove the development of telegraphy and then telephony in the first place. Low income unemployed people believe that members of the upper business class use their cell phones differently. For instance Chris believes that they talk far less on the cell because they spend most of their times in meetings. He feels that most of the conversations of the wealthy are related to business and ultimately aimed towards boosting the productivity of their businesses. He noted that while low income people also use the phone to conduct business transactions, particularly in seeking employment or seeking financial assistance from in-country and overseas relatives and friends, they are still dominated by social talk.

2.6.5 Cell Phones: Instigators of Criminal Behavior?

One of the negative externalities that have arisen in light of the rapid growth in mobile telephony in Jamaica is the number of cell phone related criminal activities that have been recorded. Two of the participants have witnessed first hand violent acts that originated with the cell phone usage. Chris witnessed first hand one such incident:

 "I remember I was across from there at Juici Beef eating and there was an incident about a phone. How the incident occurred, nobody really understood it until everything dissolve. A guy came and he sold a youth a phone. By selling the youth the phone he said, "Listen, give me 5 grand and go". It was a razr. That one looked like gold. It was the first I was seeing that that type. He said, "Give me 5 grand and go" and the youth gave him the 5 and when he was walking away the youth called him back and said, "Yow. Where you get the phone from?" and he said, "Mi brethren give me a phone and true I have so much I'm selling one". He said, "No my youth. Who you take the phone from?" and he wasn't explaining and the youth popped off his knife same time and the youth selling the phone popped off his knife [too] and he said, "Yow man is my baby mother phone and make sure you didn't do my baby mother nothing".

He said, "Yow ,man. I don't know what you talking". "This phone is my baby mother's phone because I bought this phone give her."

The crowd started drawing and a brother across from Juici Beef that sells cards just drew his 'lass [machete] and went around the crowd and said, "Anything a' anything, a whey you deh pon?" and he said, "Bad boy is my baby…" "Is all right" and he took out his phone and called and called and didn't get her.

About 15 minutes after she was coming from up a clothing store up top, a building named "Body Coming Down". It looked like the man cut her in har face just to get the phone. Everybody see the crowd and they were trying to move with her to reach Public [Kingston Public hospital] because it was a fresh cut and it's like when the woman came up, the brother with the cutlass said, "Yow. You baby mother a bleed" and it's like the man didn't hesitate. The man just move to him [read attacked phone seller]. He cut him, he stabbed him. The only thing left was for him to shoot him and that body became a dead body over just one phone and the funny thing about it, the youth that stole the phone, [who] did the cutting, his sister and brother came on because they heard and when they reached is like the guy still didn't feel satisfied. He just did something to them too. Just because of the phone because when the man sold him he looked at it and said, "Yow, where you get the phone from?" because right there and then when he bought the phone he knew it was the phone he gave her.

Nickardo also indicated that he knew and interacted personally with some of these individuals involved in the robbing and selling of cell phones and other forms of digital mobile technologies. He further shared that many of these perpetrators were undereducated young adolescents who have been hardened by the rigors of inner-city life:

I know a whole heap of people who take away phones. Right now I know a little youth. He's about 14, 15 and if that little youth ever buck you on the road and tell you to give him your phone and you don't give him, you're going to be sorry, because he has a knife long so…More time he comes with some camera (phone) and say, "I done have a buyer for this" and I say, "My youth, you see anytime them people catch up on you, you couldn't even buy back your life". That's all they do."

2.7   In-depth Interviews: Inez and Winston

 This study has focused intensively on the experience of poor Jamaicans and their relationship to the cell phone. The diary and diary assisted interviews have given a snapshot of what everyday life in Jamaican inner-city is like and further demonstrate the role of the cell phone by all these respondents. These two interviews are not based on the experiences of diary informants. They are presented in the tradition of elite interviews, with the respondents having been selected for their graphic narratives and experiences with use of the cell phones. Both show use of the mobile for work-related activities. But they are contrasting figures in terms of quality of phones acquired and in terms of their own levels of personal mobility. They are intended to deepen the analysis and to further probe

the extent of cell phone usage among low income earners, and to show how the cell phone is indispensable in particular bottom of the pyramid occupations.

2.7.1 Inez: Constrained Mobility but Global Reach

Inez is a 40-year old Jamaican fruit and tuber vendor operating her own small business in the Papine market, located in the capital, Kingston. She lives in an adjoining area of the city and commutes daily to and from the market. Inez is physically disabled and travels to and from work via a faithful motorized wheel chair, which she navigates in amongst the bustling traffic of the city. Given her disability, Inez finds it difficult to make personal contact with her suppliers and customers on a daily basis. The gadget that has come to her rescue is her ever-present very basic mobile phone. *"Yes man, I can get me business going by calling suppliers who deliver my goods right to my stall or at a location where somebody can pick it up for me. I don't know about anybody else but the cell phone is important to me"*

The cell phone is an integral tool in the lives of marginalized people like Inez, and having observed how integrated the instrument is in their activities, one questions how they managed before the emergence of the cell phone. *"Since cell phone came about, it has been more comfortable for me. For example, if my phone is not working now, I cannot eat because I am worried about it, because my business is going to go bad, because some people who are supposed to contact me cannot do so. Therefore, I must have a phone."* Asked how this has impacted her income stream, Inez makes clear that it has helped her to gain additional income and to procure and deliver her goods more efficiently.

For those constrained by the wheelchair, social networking means an entirely different thing to them than an able-bodied person. Likewise, other marginalized individuals, such as those with visual impairments and aural difficulties, the cell phone helps them to stay informed and help to meet their emotional needs to interact with their peers. For example, when Inez was asked if she could manage for one week without using a mobile phone, she indicated, *"No! No! That is boring; I cannot live without it because you must want to talk to somebody to know what is happening"*.

2.7.2 Phones and the Disabled

Following up on the interview with Inez, the researcher had a personal communication with a representative from the Jamaica Association for the Deaf (JAD), who informed us that the cell phone is now being used extensively by deaf and hearing impaired people. The texting feature was being especially used to communicate with each other. As an example, parents of hearing impaired and deaf children are now more relieved that they can communicate with them throughout the day thereby satisfying themselves that their children are safe. Prior to the arrival of the cell phone, they report that their lives were a state of perpetual worry and fear as they had no means to communicate with their

children during the course of the day. Poor parents especially value this capability of the cell phone, because compared to their wealthier counterparts, they cannot afford to arrange escort services for their disabled children. One of these low income parents concluded that these are indeed revolutionary, impacts of the cell phone in their lives and on the Jamaican society.

2.7.3 Winston: Connecting with Clients 24/7

Winston is a 47-year old Jamaican taxi operator from the rural parish of St Ann. He operates his taxi in the capital Kingston, but returns regularly to his home base some 60 miles inland. Winston says he has owned a mobile phone for more than a decade and relies on it as his most important possession after his taxi car itself. *"The cell phone is part of me now, so it's hard to leave it. It is part of my body, so if its not there, I wouldn't go any far distance without realizing that I don't have it. I don't work without my cell phone and I always make sure it is charged and have credit."*

 As a taxi operator, the mobile is commonplace among his peers and competitors, and provides a ready source of work from customers' business calls. The importance of the cell phone to a taxi operator, in so far as it helps him to get business is clear and straightforward. An increasingly critical dimension of how the cell phone is being used other than for business purposes is for personal security. Winston operates his taxi service all over the capital city of Kingston, where robberies and car theft are prevalent. He believes in the power of the cell phone to foil such attempts on him or to mitigate other forms of emergencies. *"Most of the time, I usually have my credit. If you have no credit, you can't get to anyone because if it's a case of emergency and you can't wait for someone to get to you, you have to get to someone, and you have to have something on your phone"*.

Winston also finds communicating much easier with the mobile. *"Previously when I wanted to make a foreign phone call, I would have to join a long line at Jamintel and wait until you hear your number and name and then you go to make a call, and you would pay for your time,"* he recalls. But, now, he says he can make his calls home and abroad from inside of his car. *"For instance, about 3 days ago, one of my friends died, and I just called my friend overseas to let him know. This technology is great man, I love it!"*

PART 3 - CONCLUDING ANALYSIS

If our prior quantitative studies gave us a sense of how many 'bottom of the pyramid' Jamaicans embrace the mobile phone, this qualitative study has helped us to better understand 'why and how' the inner city and rural poor engage with this fascinating communication tool. While the findings cannot be regarded as a definitive representation of behaviour everywhere, it certainly gives a nuanced and more profound grasp of citizen opinions, motivations, central issues and concerns in the use of mobile telephony by the poor in Jamaica.

This study relied on a variety of qualitative data-gathering methods to help paint a picture of people's usage patterns and responses: focus group sessions, in-depth elite interviews, user diaries and diary assisted debriefing interviews. The diversity in composition of the respondents, including the very young and the elderly, provide us with insights at both ends of the age spectrum. But the core of the groups consisted of grown adults wrestling with unemployment, urban violence and poverty. For them, the cell phone, as it is popularly called in Jamaica, is a new lifeline and a means of outreach to friends, family and to the prospect of jobs and better social standing.

3.1   Employment and Address Anonymity

All over the world, people from tough urban communities are subjected to preconceived notions based on the reputation of their communities. Among the most telling findings of this study is that the mobile phone confers a welcome degree of 'address anonymity' in the efforts of inner city residents to engaged with 'uptown' employers and associates, whether socially or in search of work. Many can now use the telephone without disclosing their location at what one artiste refers to as the 'wrong address'. While there should really never be a need for this disguise, the reality is that discrimination is prevalent and in circumstances where there are families to maintain and children to send to school the cell phone is a welcomed disguise factor.

The diary assisted interviews found evidence to support the argument that the cell phone is helping to break down such biases. It was found that participants were accessing chat rooms through their cell phones, a cybernetic environment where everyone is equal, in the sense that it drastically reduces the opportunity for stereo types and preconceived notions. In this respect the focus group participants believe the cell phone have allowed them to boost their social standing and income earning potential, as skilled workers such as plumbers, carpenters and masons who do not have to advertise their address, but only their cell contact.

3.2   'Texting' - Restricted by Literacy Levels

The study also unearthed the fact that assumptions about high usage of the cheap mobile phone messaging method of 'texting' by the poor, are not necessarily supported by reality and the experiences we document here. The factor of high levels of illiteracy among even young inner city residents means that a communication method requiring the writing even of coded symbols to other peers has not proved commonplace in Jamaica. It may well be an educated practice utilized more among the youth in the middle class or lower middle classes, where literacy and numeracy levels are higher.

As was pointed out here, even if a low income resident is able to send texts, there is no guarantee that many of his or her peers would be able to access them effectively and reciprocate. This is not to say that 'texting is absent from the inner-city or poverty-stricken areas of the country, but rather that in this study of mainly the inner city poor in Kingston, it did not appear to be prevalent, even among the young who are the putative champions of 'texting' globally.

3.3   Economic Not Just Social Networking

The study was also able to shed some light on the substantive question of what are the principal uses and gratifications of the mobile phone among the poor. On the face of it, the quantitative studies, both in Jamaica and elsewhere have offered the sometimes glib suggestion that its use is mainly for social chatter and interpersonal networking among friends. While there is every indication that this is part of the social purpose of mobiles, this study has fore-grounded the deeper understanding in Jamaica that economic survival and income generation are at the heart of the mass adoption of the cell phones as the communication technology of choice among poor people.

The cell phone provides an avenue through which people can maintain not just their social but their economic networks as well. The evident social chatter is often accompanied by requests, arrangements, suggestions, encouragement and planning as the subject of varied conversations and calls. The entries in the research diaries, though limited in number, clearly demonstrate and document this pattern of usage, which bears further study and examination. Many make calls to arrange assistance or to offer help to family and friends. While the majority of such calls are in-country or even in-community, some calls are received and made to overseas relatives and friends concerning remittances, the sending of phone credit, the long-distance payments to supermarkets for elderly relatives' food bills and to provide school fees. In general, it can be said that there is more to talk than idle social chatter among these economically deprived respondents.

3.4   Perceptions of Luxury or Necessity

One critical observation arising from the study is that the perception of the cell phone, whether as a luxury or necessity, is dependent on one's social class and economic status. For the unemployed youth in a depressed community their

activities are so interlinked and dependent on the cell phone that the marginal utility that they derive from food consumption has been given a lower value than the marginal utility derived from the consumption of cell phone services in instances where only a single choice exists between the two. For them, the cell phone is essential for their survival as it can always be used to generate more resources to tide them through a difficult period and through its utility in assisting with personal safety.
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3.5   Mobile Status Symbols

A very strong motif coming through the different data gathering methods is the importance of the cell phone for social prestige and the affirmation of self. Whereas in the upper and middle classes, the car, SUV or clothes are often used to announce one's social status, in the ghettos of Kingston, it is the cell phone that currently functions as one primary status indicator. Many of the young and not so young owners are in constant search of the latest and most flashy mobile handset. Whether they have expendable amounts of credit on these 'hype' phones appear to be secondary, though not unimportant. The symbolism of a 'blackberry' or a flashy 'slide phone' with appropriate 'bling' tones is a source of great social prestige in these urban settings, as they are in many other social classes.

One of the diary participants pointed out that when he has credit on his cell phone he feels like 'the man'. In one of the focus group sessions members from the inner-city expressed their belief in the ability of the mobile instrument to indicate status and to elevate its holder to new experiences previously reserved for the wealthy. Evident in this statement and findings is the notion of technology as the extension of self. Many residents in the low income communities, as in other social classes, do believe that particular types of cell phones bestow prestige, admiration and honour, and a concomitant respect from members of the community. For many, the cell phone represents the closest they will ever get to what they believe is the good life.

3.6   Phone Acquisition

The study unveiled a plethora of methods by which these and other cell phones are acquired. It would seem that most people buy their own handsets, even at great personal sacrifice. This is equally true for small school age children, who save up their allowances or prevail on parents to buy or match funds to buy a mobile phone. But the increase in the theft of cell phones and the existence of secondary markets for these products all over the country also indicate that many young persons regarded by the adults as 'misguided youths' will resort to any method for securing a phone or the income from selling a stolen one. Several incidents of muggings and even murder have been witnessed and reported by participants in this study. Other underground methods of phone acquisition include swapping phones for other valuables, 'finding' a phone, gambling to win a

phone. Many phones are sent by relatives and friends abroad, sometimes for resale.

3.7   Prepaid Calling Dominates

As confirmed in other studies, the most common payment method for mobile service is the use of prepaid method. Most of our informants indicate that this method provides them with greater control in the expenditure of limited resources. Many of the inner city users know from experience that calling via this or any other method is not cheap, and that there is a constant search for 'credit' to be sent or paid for by friends and relatives. Yet, sections of these communities report relatively high levels of personal expenditure on calling, sometimes even exceeding more than half the minimum wage. This is explained by the fact that calling is not a purely social activity, but can provide valuable economic and financial returns from networking.

3.8   Youth and the Mobile Phone

 An important segment of the study was devoted to schoolchildren at the secondary and primary levels. We have learnt that children as young as seven years are being given cell phones, and that most younger Jamaican children have access to a cell phone at some time in their pre-adolescent life. This is the training ground for future users who are being actively coached and targeted by parents and marketers. Among the younger ages, the application of choice is the game feature on some phones as well as the appeal of ring tones. Parents often indulge children with phone ownership as a means of maintaining parental contact and for reasons of security. Yet, ownership of phones by the young is reported to make them target for attacks within and outside of school. As these children get older they aspire to owning a flashy and expensive new phone, ideally with ample prepaid credit for indulgence in voice calls and other features. It is this teen range and young adult demographic group that is the target of heavy phone company marketing as the young are faster adopters and grow into adult customers with a greater spending power.

3.9   Perceptions of New Opportunities

While competition, privatization, new technologies and the impact of globalization have resulted in lower cost and increased access to telephony, there are concerns among a small but vocal number of the respondents that mobile telephony may be doing more harm than good for low-income groups, by causing them to allocate scarce funds to 'idle chatter'.

"All we are doing," one respondent noted, "is making the cellular companies richer", showing his perspective that large corporations are making a lot of money from the propensity of Jamaicans to talk. This highlights the need to transcend this perception of low end use to one of using the mobile phone more

for self-improvement and as a transition opportunity to use even more advanced mobile and other digital applications such as for online education, telework, e-banking   and   e-government.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Detailed Research Focus Group Questions

Ownership

a.   Why did you obtain a mobile phone?
b.   How many phones do you have / which service provider
c.   What features do you like most about your mobile phone?
d.   How does having a mobile phone make you feel (important/ secure, etc)
e.   Do you know any person in your target group who does not have a mobile phone?
f.   What do you think of persons who do not have a mobile phone?
g.   How would things be in your life if you did not have a mobile phone?
h.   Has owning a mobile phone improved/made your life worse? How?

Status and Lifestyle

a.   What is the impact of a mobile telephone on your everyday life?
b.   Does having a mobile phone contribute in any way to improving /enhancing your social status/ or brought you economic opportunities?
c.   How has having a mobile telephone improved your livelihood/well being?
d.   Has it strengthened/weakened the influence of persons in your social grouping
e.   How has it impacted on your interpersonal relationships?

Attitudes and Perceptions

a.   Is increased access/use of mobile telephony a good or bad thing?

b. What was your life like before you had a mobile phone?
c. How does having a mobile phone make you feel?

Service Plan and Payment Options

a. How much do you spend a month on mobile telephone service?
b. Is this a reasonable amount? How do you balance use of the phone with your payment plan or the amount of money you have to spend?
c. What kind of payment plan are you currently on?
d. Which plan do you prefer (prepaid/ post-paid) and why?

Usage Patterns

a. On a typical day, how do you use your mobile phone?
b. Is use primarily for social, work or other purposes?
c. Is your usage pattern any different to that of your closest friends/ persons in your household/ persons younger or older than you?
d. How do you manage use of your phone?
e. Primarily, what do you use your phone for -- work, job/business, etc?
f. What are the ways in which you have used your mobile phone to increase your income?

Other Considerations

a. Do you have your phone with you at all times?
b. When is your phone not with you?
c. How do you feel when you do not have your mobile phone?
d. Do you take your phone everywhere -- to church, funerals, school – is there anywhere you would not take your phone?
e. Does your mobile phone help you to save money or are you spending more money?
f. Has your mobile phone helped you to find a job/work opportunity?
g. In your opinion, is a mobile phone a necessity or a luxury?
h. What positive/negative impact do you see the cell phone having on the society?
i. Does use of a mobile phone differ in rural as against urban areas?
j. Do you think having a cell phone has improved the lives of Jamaicans?
k. How do you feel knowing that so many people now have mobile phones?

Appendix 2 User Diaries – Composite Table of Entries

Categories		Anita	Clover	Romain	Chris	Shawn	Nickardo	Stacy	Day
	Age Range	38-50	38-50	21-26	21-26	21-26	21-26	38-50	
Call Activity: • Friends • Family • Others				11:00 am (Incoming): Candy called to say she loves me 1:30pm (Incoming): I called mom to say I love her 2:15pm (Incoming): Got overseas calls informing about my money transaction	7:49am (Incoming): From friend about fish fry 7:30pm (Incoming): from Stacy saying dinner is ready 9:02pm (Incoming): From church asking for help with the fish fry	9:28am (Outgoing): To find out about fish fry 12:05 pm (Outgoing): Ask about money owed to me 12:15pm (Incoming): Girl asking for $25 credit 12:21pm (Outgoing): Ask a girl to meet me Friday 12:45pm (Incoming): From brother overseas, he was just saying hi 1:03 pm (Outgoing): Asking about money owed to me 4:35pm (Incoming)	9:02am (Outgoing): I called Cavan in response to his please call me 9:20am (Incoming): My mother called me asking me to stay with my sister 9:33am (Incoming); A friend called to tell me to meet her at 2:00pm I received a call reminding me about a video work next week.	10:49pm (Incoming): My mom called about some personal issues	**Thursday**

Categories		Anita	Clover	Romain	Chris	Shawn	Nickardo	Stacy	Day
	Age Range	**38-50**	**38-50**	**21-26**	**21-26**	**21-26**	**21-26**	**38-50**	
						From friend asking about cash pot number 4:40pm (Outgoing): Asking friend about money owed to me			
Messaging • Friends • Family • Other					7:50 am (Incoming): Three messages from church		12:09pm (incoming): I received $30 from Kelly		
Other Phone Activities						9:13 am: Add credit to my mobile 9:50 am: Used camera to take pictures of my friend singing	8:42am: Used my phone to send photos and music to a friend		
Nature of Call: • Friends • Family • Other		2:06 pm (outgoing): Called daughter to ask about money 3:27pm: (Incoming): spouse called talking about his car 6:24pm (Incoming): Uncle called to talk about her son in	11:04am (Outgoing): Reminding coworker of her meeting 3:09pm (Incoming): From son, saying that he is stuck in traffic 3:08pm (outgoing): Coworker regarding matters at the office	9:00am (Incoming): Friend call to inform me about a work 12:00 noon (Incoming): Friend overseas call saying that I should get my passport	8:33am (Incoming): From pastor saying I should come and start the fish fry 10:51am (Incoming): From pastor wanting to know how I don't reach as yet 1:38pm (Incoming): From head office want	11:30am (Incoming): From Myrie about money owed to me 2:19pm (Incoming): From Myrie asking for money to borrow 4:30pm (Incoming): Shakira asking for credit		9:44am (Incoming): I got a call from a friend just to talk 9:58 am (Incoming): Call from church brother just to talk 12:44pm (Incoming): From mother to talk about money from my	**Friday**

Categories		Anita	Clover	Romain	Chris	Shawn	Nickardo	Stacy	Day
	Age Range	38-50	38-50	21-26	21-26	21-26	21-26	38-50	
		jail. 8:08 (Incoming): Call from Chantal asking for her $3,000	5:43pm (Outgoing): To supervisor to arrange meeting 5:45pm (Incoming): From supervisor saying the meeting is cancelled 5:51pm (Outgoing): To supervisor to confirm new date for meeting 6:22pm (Outgoing): To friend to arrange prayer meeting		me to come board meeting immediately 7:13pm (Incoming): From Stacy saying honey your dinner is ready 7:23pm (Incoming): From friend who wanted to borrow a movie			dad who is abroad.	
Messaging • Friends • Family • Other					10:51am (Outgoing): To Stacy saying I love you and how is your day going	11:02am (Incoming): A girl asking for $25 credit 6:27pm (Incoming): Wendy asking for money	11:13am (Incoming): I received a please call me from my special friend	4:20pm (Outgoing): Sent a message to a friend asking him for $50 credit.	
Other Phone Activities					7:13pm : Took three new pictures with my daughters and mother		5:41pm: Play music		

Categories		Anita	Clover	Romain	Chris	Shawn	Nickardo	Stacy	Day
	Age Range	38-50	38-50	21-26	21-26	21-26	21-26	38-50	
Nature of Call: • Friends • Family • Other		8:49 am (incoming): Call from Terrace, that he is coming in from the US 10:10 am (Incoming): Call from Terrace asking how far I am from Montego Bay Airport	10:56 am (Incoming): from contract worker regarding using me as reference	10:30am (Incoming): Girlfriend called to see me 11:45am (Outgoing): I called mom to see how she is doing		10:21am (Incoming): From Wendy asking for money 9:01pm (Incoming): Wendy asking me for money	11:07am (Incoming): KK asking me to take some pictures for her birthday party	9:13pm: Receive a call mom about personal issues	**Saturday**
Messaging • Friends • Family • Other					6:17pm (Incoming): voice message from boss calling to apologize for what happen in office			11:50 am (Incoming): Message about youth service	
Other Phone Activities					37 Missed calls	9:17am: Had a missed call because the number was private			
Nature of Call: • Friends • Family • Other		8:177 am (Incoming) Call from mother to find out how are things going 9:05 am (Outgoing) Called my baby father to get some money 10:11 am	3:26pm (Incoming): From coworker saying hi.		1:05pm (Incoming): From Pastor, he wanted to know why I was not in church	2:05pm (Incoming): Flava asking for a charge for his phone 3:49pm (Incoming): Grand-ma ask if I was doing alright 7:11pm (Incoming): Myrie		10:29am (Incoming): Mom called about some personal issues 10:38am (Incoming): My friend call to tell me some good news 3:32pm (Incoming):	**Sunday**

Categories		Anita	Clover	Romain	Chris	Shawn	Nickardo	Stacy	Day
	Age Range	38-50	38-50	21-26	21-26	21-26	21-26	38-50	
		(Outgoing) Called mother about my big son in jail. 11:04 am (Outgoing) Called sister for some money to help son in jail. 1:15 pm (Outgoing): Called brother to talk about son in jail.				asking how much money he owes me 8:17pm (Incoming): Myrie says he will pay me Tuesday evening		I called a school mate to discuss something about computer class	
Messaging • Friends • Family • Other					4:53pm (Incoming): From Stacy, wondering why I have not come home as yet 6:23pm (Incoming): From Sister Keisha, she wanted to know where I am and why I have not come to church 8:51pm (Incoming): from Sister Keisha still want to know why I don't come to church				

Categories		Anita	Clover	Romain	Chris	Shawn	Nickardo	Stacy	Day
	Age Range	38-50	38-50	21-26	21-26	21-26	21-26	38-50	
Other Phone Activities						9:30pm: Received a ring tone from my friend combs			
Nature of Call: • Friends • Family • Other		10:26 am (Incoming): From bus driver asking when I am coming to work 12:08 pm (Incoming): From Sandra telling long time we don't see other	9:47am (Incoming): From contract worker regarding promotion 1:57pm (Outgoing): From garage regarding completion of vehicle 5:45pm (Incoming) From Sandy asking to look at last year payment plan to help plan new one for this year	8:30am (Incoming): From friend talking about missing camera. 8:45am (Incoming): From friend saying the camera has been recovered 9:00 am (Incoming): From brother calling to tell me 'love'	5:50pm (Incoming): Get invited from a friend to come to his church crusade			8:00am (Outgoing): Called a friend about personal issues 8:30am (Outgoing): Called a friend to ask him about a job opening. 8:45am (Outgoing): Called a friend telling him to come and buy my gas 10:00am (Outgoing): Called a friend about some computer sheets. 10:05am (Outgoing): Called a man about gas being delivered to my apartment	**Monday**

Categories		Anita	Clover	Romain	Chris	Shawn	Nickardo	Stacy	Day
	Age Range	38-50	38-50	21-26	21-26	21-26	21-26	38-50	
Messaging • Friends • Family • Other									
Other Phone Activities									
Comments/Significant Observations:									

Appendix 3: Focus Group Reports

Focus Group Report: Rural Adults (22 – over 60 years)

Venue/Location: Charlemont Community, St Catherine
Date of Session: Sunday, February 12, 2008
Moderator: Lincoln Robinson
Recording Assistant: Barbara McDermott

a. *Group Profile*

The group comprised seven persons -- 4 female and 3 male. It was a mixed aged group of youthful, matured adults and the elderly. All were residents of the Charlemont/Ewarton areas of St Catherine. They included a retired pensioner, university student, a housewife, two persons not working, a public sector employee and one person who operated a business. The session began with participants introducing themselves after which the Session Moderator gave a brief summary of the project, the purpose of the gathering and encouraged their full participation. The discussion was civil and informed. Noticeably, there was far less use of the vernacular by participants when compared with groupings in inner-city Kingston. They did appear to be of a higher educational and even social standing although rural.

b. *Ownership/Usage*

Everyone in the group owned a mobile phone. Two had access to a landline. Most got their cell phones within the last 5 years, with two persons indicating they have had their phones for at least the last 10 years. Three participants had two phones.

They said this was because the phone was provided with their job, or that it was obtained as a present.

Everyone in the group used the same service provider saying it provided a better quality service in the St Catherine area, especially going through the Gorge. (Interestingly enough, that very service provider had a commercial emphasizing that very point) For the group, the poor service of one provider was the reason enough to go with the other.

Group participants all purchased their own phones (three persons did so overseas) mostly in some kind of special promotion. The housewife respondent clearly remembered her first phone being bought on a 'Mother's Day' special promotion. All used phone cards (pre-paid) type of service.

c. *Spending Levels*

Those buying their phones abroad spent between US$220 - US$300 but argued that a comparable phone in Jamaica would cost them over Ja$ 30,000, so they were satisfied with their purchase and still felt they were "ahead of the game".

Those purchasing locally spent between $2,000 - S5,000 (Jamaican dollars). *"I don't want to carry around an expensive phone,"* said a young member of the group, adding*" it doesn't influence me whether my friends have an expensive phone or not. In fact, I feel safer with a cheaper phone."*

The group felt that overall, Jamaicans were spending "too much" on their mobile phone habit, although admitting that they themselves were *"responsible"* in their spending and usage. *"Sometimes you are in the store and school children come in and want a $20,000 phone and you wonder where they get the money from. They will go without lunch to live above their means. Personally, I just want to be in touch; I just want a phone to make and receive calls,"* said the housewife.

"Owning an expensive phone could be a threat. Sometime even the 'tief dem' will say to you: 'hey gal, yu nuh 'ear yu fone ah ring' because they would like you to take it out so they can see what kind of phone you have and how expensive it is.

In addition to the cost of acquiring the phone there is the cost of maintaining it. This group was a relatively low spending one with only the business operator saying he spent up to $1000 a week on purchasing phone cards. The group's average was $400 a week. *"I think I manage my cost because I don't stay long on my phone and I don't make a lot of calls either",* remarked the young participant. It was a sentiment expressed by the group. *"At work I will check my phone from time to time, or use it during my break time,"* while for another: *"The phone facilitates convenient talk and Jamaicans like to talk so I would say that as far*

as how people manage the use of their phone, that could be a problem for most Jamaicans."

    d. *General Concerns*

The group firmly believes the mobile phone is here to stay and has impacted positively on the lives of Jamaicans, and that the 'good' of the mobile phone far outweigh the 'bad'. They expressed concerned at the early introduction of the mobile phone to children, with one female participant remarking that her 8 year daughter has been at her for quite some time now to get her a phone, but "*I am resisting the temptation as I don't think she is ready to have a cell phone. She is not at an appropriate age to give her a phone.*" The group backed her position stating age 12 as a reasonable starting age for giving a child their own mobile phone.

Another concern expressed by the group was on the matter of proper disposal of old phones. Interestingly, this concern never did surface in any of the other focus group sessions. It felt centralized collection/drop-off points could be set up where persons could return old phones, as well as having some kind of public education programme to encourage responsible use, management and disposal of the mobile phones.

    e. *Mobile Phone and Poverty*

The group's first response was that this was not a problem. They saw the cell phone as having a positive and favourable impact on poverty, in that the quality of life was improving, and that the cell phone had created business opportunities such as the selling phone cards, the setting up repair shops and 'unlocking' services. When pressed further however, like all the other groups, they did see a down side, in terms of the amount of money people were spending to acquire and maintain the cell phone habit. For the group however, this was not an overwhelming concern and a particularly disturbing development.

Focus Group Report: Senior Citizens (over 65 years)

Venue/Location: Trench Town Community Centre
Date of Session: December 11, 2007
Moderator: Lincoln Robinson
Recording Assistant: Barbara McDermott

    a. *Group Profile*

This was a smaller than expected group. Only 4 persons turned out, all of whom were well over 60 years old. The group consisted of three women and one man. It was a quiet, generally reserved group which did not engage much.

    b. *Access/ Ownership*

All owned a cell phone; none had more than one; and the phones owned were of the cheaper, older models. The pre-paid (phone card) service was the preferred choice. Only one member of the group had purchased her phone while the others acquired theirs as a gift, from a relative. The elderly gentlemen specifically mentioned his was a gift from his son. All had their phones longer than five years. Despite being older person, none had a land line, and their service provider was not the long established player in the market.

c. *Status and Lifestyle*

The group felt that the cellular phone had become a kind of *"status symbol for young people"* and part of their everyday lifestyle. *"Some of them go to the extreme to own one, whatever the cost, as they cannot do without owning one,"* remarked one of the elderly women. She went on to tell the group of a tragedy that occurred involving a family member, who was gun down, just because of his cell phone. *"Him is not the first to die over cell phone but when you see people loosing dem life over a phone, den yu ha fi stop and wonder what Jamaica come to. It is an example to us that some people take dis phone ting to another level."*

d. *Usage*

For this group, the cellular phone was essentially used for personal reasons and primarily for getting in and stay in touch with relatives. All participants said they had relatives living abroad on whom they called frequently and maintained on-going contact. *"The cell phone is a good thing. It makes us able to get in touch with a family member and through the phone I get my little smalls from my son abroad."*

Strangely enough, the pattern of usage among the elderly reflected a greater number of calls made compared with calls received. One woman jokingly remarked: *"nobody nuh call wi ol' people. Sometimes for days, me nuh get one call pon mi phone."* Across the group, the ratio of outgoing to incoming call was 3:1

e. *Lifestyle Improvement*

There was an overwhelmingly positive response from the group who saw possession and use of the cell phone as representing a marked improvement in the quality of life of these senior citizens. Despite the tragedy to a family member of one of the participants and the fact that everyone was aware of some negative development involving the cell phone, the group was still in one accord that possession of the cell phone did represent an improvement in their quality of life.

f. *Financing the cell phone habit*

As a group of seniors with no steady source of income, and given that for them the cell phone is a necessity, participants all felt it was very important for them to

have a functioning phone. For them it was not about any hype or status but having a functioning phone. With their modest usage levels, this group not only spent less on acquiring their phones, but also on purchasing credit for use on their phones. Members say $100 credit "*can last me for up to two weeks. People need to live within dem means and stay within dem credit.*"

Focus Group Report: Adolescents (13 – 18 years)

Two group sessions were conducted among this target age – one in the Trench Town community and in which mostly students from the Trench Town and Charlie Smith Comprehensive High Schools participated along with a few other students who live in the area and attended schools outside the community. The other focus group session was conducted among students at Ardenne High School. Here again, although that school was the venue for the session, the participants were drawn from different communities throughout the city.

The Trench Town Focus Group Report (Adolescents)

Venue/Location: Trench Town Community Centre
Date of Session: December 11, 2007
Moderator: Lincoln Robinson
Recording Assistant: Barbara McDermott

a. *Group Profile*

This lively and expressive group of 12 adolescents (8 girls and 4 boys) could hardly wait to get going on the subject, underscoring the importance attached to the cell phone. In the process of articulating their views they also taught us a thing or two about themselves as inner city youths. The group was drawn from students attending the Charlie Smith and Trench Town Comprehensive High Schools in the community, along with a few other students who attended schools outside of the area. It would definitely appear from the nature of the discussion that these young people seem a lot more interested in cellular phones. They certainly show little consideration for the cost of maintaining the habit or some of the risks and dangers which they face in possessing the instrument.

b. *Access/ Ownership*

Two-thirds of the group owned a mobile phone. Those without can hardly wait to get theirs. Excited and eager, ownership was all about hype and fashion, as one young lady remarked: "*For us, it was all about 'the hype' and fashion. You can tell a person by the type of phone they have and the ring tone of their cell phone.*"

Half of those with phones got them from their parents. Two respondents acquired their cell phone by stealing or gambling. Naturally, this revelation called for

further discussion, from which it emerged that an 'underworld' gambling racket is part of the school environment whereby almost anything, including cell phones, (usually the more expensive, up to date and trendy models) are acquired by such means.

c. *Usage*

What do these young people use their cell phones for? Mostly to connect with friends and family and for idle talk! Some use is also made of the instrument for important things like collecting or passing on homework and other useful information.

d. *Feelings Towards Ownership*

There is a sense in which these youngsters are attached to their phones and will take it wherever they go, including school, despite the rules. For them *"It is a fashion thing – the pebble, the slide, the chocolate, whatever",* referring to some of the more expensive phones on the market. *"You know us Jamaicans. We into image and fashion, and yes some people will spend too much, but the cell phone is a definite status thing, especially for people in the ghetto."*

There is the feeling of attachment, status and importance. All these combine to make these youngsters generally reluctant to lend their cell phones to others, whether friend or parents. But there are other issues. They expressed concern about people 'stealing' credit off their phones, if they lend it to them. *"When dem borrow yu phone dem no kno' when to come off and dem usually use up all yu credit. If me borrow mi friend phone, me nuh do dat."* They also regard lending out their phone as an 'invasion of privacy' as some people will interfere with your phone when you lend it to them.

e. *Cell Phone Positive vs Negative*

The group saw clear benefits to having a cell phone. From being able to contact and keep in touch with families and friends, it can be used to respond to emergencies or developments within the community. But the youngsters also see a 'nuisance factor' whereby *"people get into fights and envy one another over phone."* On balance though, all agreed that while there are negatives, the cell phone presented more good than bad. As one of them put it: *"we might be getting a new friend and have a hype attitude but on the other hand it is pushing some students to go to the extreme of owning one by engaging in stealing or gambling."*

f. *Financing the habit*

How does a high school inner city student maintains a cell phone and at what cost. This group of students was big spenders, using anywhere from $500 to $1,000 every two weeks on purchasing phone cards. How do they do it? Again

gambling seems to be one of the options. Gamble with peers at school can provide some rewards and seems quite popular. Some do save up their pocket money, while for others, help comes from the parents.

It never did occur to them that spending this amount of money or using their phones in an essentially non-productive manner amounted to a waste which could affect them financially, in the long run. In discussing the matter however, it was clear that while it might not be uppermost in their minds, they were not completely unaware of such considerations.

There is a clear need for more education along these lines to help change current usage practices.

The Ardenne High School Focus Group Report (Adolescents)

Venue/Location: Ardenne High School
Date of Session: January 14, 2008
Moderator: Lincoln Robinson
Recording Assistant: Barbara McDermott

   a. *Group Profile*

While the gathering was at Ardenne, the group of adolescents came from communities as far away as Above Rocks (St Catherine), Harbour View, Molynes Road, Vineyard Town and Havendale, representing a mix of middle income and lower middle income areas. Eight students participated (5 female and 3 male). They were an expressive and bright group and if anything appeared less engaging, perhaps because of the time of day that the session was held (3.30 in the afternoon after school and with so many distractions).

   b. *Ownership and Usage*

Everyone in the group owned a phone and again it was the newer service provider that dominated. Two of the participants owned more than one phone and again too, better rates and service quality was given as the reason for the choice. One student remarked that getting and keeping his phone was dependent on how well he kept up his grades and did in school *"If I have half the money and I am doing well in school, then my parents will help me out,"* while for another male student *"owning a cell phone was not important."*

   c. *Financing The Habit/Type of Service*

These young people were spending between $5000 and $10,000 for their phones, which they all considered to be reasonable. All wanted to have a modern phone with features. For them *"It is just money and it has to be spent,"* was how one student responded. In addition to the heavy purchase price, this group of

students like their counterparts in the Trench Town community focus group was also heavy spenders in terms of maintaining the cell phone habit.

All of them had the prepaid service (phone cards) and the majority was spending up to $300 a week on buying credit for their phones. The practice of having someone send you credit is widespread and commonly practiced. During the holiday period, their spending on phone cards doubles. Some of the 'conversation driven adolescents' say they spend as much as $1000 per week on buying credit!

d. *Managing Cost*

To help hold cost, students are spending more time texting (which is cheaper) rather than making calls. Texting also allows for them to disguise the use of the phone especially at school, where it is not allowed. By sending/receiving text messages, they can hide their phones. Texting is about half the price of making a call.

e. *Attitude to Ownership*

While recognizing the risks young people face and even sharing personal first-hand account of some of these risks which they know of, the group remained positive about owning a cell phone. *"Yes, you could say you are putting yourself at risk in having especially an expensive phone; you are not allowed to carry it to school and you life could also be in danger; it can be a big distraction, and even your parents could get involved, but I still think having a cell phone is a good thing. I can't do without my phone,"* were the words of a female student.

f. *Sticking to their own advice*

The youngsters shared their own advice on how to better manage cell phone costs. These include: limiting the time spent on cell phones; stay within their credit limit, stick to a budget for cell phone spending each month and reduce the number of waste calls made each day. At the end of the session, they all agreed that it was possible to own a cell phone and use it wisely.

Focus Group Report: Adults (22– 55 years)

Venue/Location: Trench Town Community Centre
Date of Session: December 11, 2007
Moderator: Lincoln Robinson
Recording Assistant: Barbara McDermott

a. *Group Profile*

This group was more than you could ask for. Vibrant and talkative, this group could easily be regarded as displaying tendencies of recklessness in their ownership and usage patterns of the cell phone. The numbers that turn out were

too large and we conducted two back-to-back sessions. This report incorporates the views of both sessions. In all, 21 adults participated in the two focus group sessions.

b. *Ownership/Usage*

Everyone in the group owned a phone with 8 persons having more than one cell phone. One female participant had four phones – a phone from each service provider. Usage patterns were 'wild', with spending on maintaining the habit at its highest, of all the groups among whom the study was conducted.

All the various means of acquiring a phone was reflected in this group, from purchasing to getting it as gift, to winning it in a promotion, to 'finding' a phone. It was as though if you did not have more than one phone *"yu nah sey noting'* .

There is a definite convenience factor to having a cell phone and people use the instrument predominantly for making contact -- for getting in touch with friends and family. Some say having a cell phone gave them 'peace of mind' and a sense of safety and security. While recognizing the positive uses, the instrument was blamed for encouraging bad behavior, especially in inter personal relations "*with people trying to get themselves out of a situation by even lying about where they are, whom they are with and what they are doing."*

Two individuals say they used their phone in a direct and positive manner to conduct business. For the majority, usage was essentially social – it was about getting in touch or making a link.

c. *Why Own More Than One Phone*

Having a phone from the different providers was not just about 'bragging rights', a cost saving measure in that rates are lower for calling on the same network and there are special rates too for frequent calling circles. Some persons have also gotten the additional phones from promotions and giveaways, while some networks provide attractive packages for overseas calls.

d. *Maintaining The Habit*

Spending by the group on phone cards for their mobile phones varied from a low of $500 to over $1,500 per week. Within the group eleven (11) persons said they were spending $1000; six () persons said $500, four (4) persons mentioned $1500 and one person said she spent over $1500 a week on phone credit. These are considerable sums especially among a group that comes from the base of the pyramid, and even more so, when it is considered that such expenditures are not being directly channeled into any productive undertaking.

e. *Lifestyle Perspectives*

When asked whether having a cell phone represented some kind of improvement in their quality of life, everyone answered in the affirmative. The group shared their views on the importance of the cellular phone which is why they also see the need to have an expensive phone: *"These are modern times and the different types of phones are for different lifestyle. The more expensive yu phone, the more respect yu get."*

f. *Finance*

Even though this group represented the heaviest spenders of all the focus groups, (they buy expensive phones and spend more on purchasing phone cards), the group did not consider their actions excessive, and certainly did not agree they were spending too much on maintain the mobile habit.

"Yes, it cost dollars to add credit to your phones, to buy the phone or up-grade it as well, but dat is no big ting. Of course we concern 'bout we children, food and other things, all ah dat affect we life, but mi phone is also part a wi life style. Me nuh know how people manage wid out it!"

g. *Other Considerations*

It was instructive to hear members speak about how people should better manage their cell phone habit, when they were not heeding their own advice. *"Cut down on the 'waste' call dem. Everyday yu get and mek calls that nuh really serve no purpose. Mi friend wi call an' just ask "weh ah gwan, weh yu a wear go out tonight" and stuff like dat. Dat nuh necessary. Me can definitely cut back and save pon dem kin' a call deh"*

Other words of wisdom from the group to *"stick to one network and budget the amount of money you have to spend on cellular phones."* They also saw savings resulting from cutting back on call time and the amount of time spent talking on the phone. *"Is like we all addicted to cellular phones. We no know how fi cut di conversation short."*

h. *How Owning A Phone Makes You Feel*

It is amazing how people have become attached to the cell phone. One young man in the group puts it bluntly: *If I am on my way to work one morning and realize I left my phone at home, I'm pretty sure I would go back for it. Having a phone makes me feel mobile"* For others, it is status which comes from owning a phone that nobody else has, or not many people at least.

Focus Group Report: Children (8 – 12 years)

Two group sessions were conducted with this target age – one in the Trench Town community with children from the Iris Gelly Primary and Trench Town

Primary schools while the other session consisted of students attending the Jessie Repoll Primary School.

The Trench Town Community Focus Group Report (Children)

Venue/Location: Trench Town Community Centre
Date of Session: December 10, 2007
Moderator: Lincoln Robinson
Recording Assistant: Barbara McDermott

a. *Group Profile*

Being an eight year old back then and now presents marked contrast. Back then, for example, it would have been unthinkable to imagine an eight year old with a cell phone; today it is a privilege enjoyed by many. Among this group of tender aged inner city children, there were some already walking around with their own cell phones and very familiar with the 'lingo' of fancy ring tones; picture messaging, MSP players and music.

b. *Access/ Ownership*

Within this group of 8 young children, one child had her own cell phone on her (courtesy of her mother) while two others say they had access to a phone. They all said their parents gave them the cell phone so they can keep in touch in the event of any emergency. All the other children in the group long for the day when they too can have their own cell phone. At some schools, permission is granted for having a phone at school, but in such instances, the instrument is kept in the office until after school, as children are not allowed to have the phones on their person during school hours. The parents of all the children owned cell phones.

c. *Usage Patterns*

The predominant reason given for having a mobile phone is for contact and keeping in touch with friends and family. The instrument is seen as a necessity, especially in the event of an emergency. For these young children, use of the phone was primarily confined to receiving calls, rather than making calls.

d. *Risks of Ownership*

Members in the group are aware of and concerned at the risks which children faced as a result of having a cell phone. They have either heard or know of situations of threat, injury and loss of the phone. They are fearful young children like themselves could be at considerable danger, simply because of having a cell

phone. When asked if they would want to have an expensive phone, all except one child – the one with the phone, said 'no'.

e. *Finance*

In terms of credit, it is the parents who provide them with the phone and the credit to make calls. The child in the group who had her own phone on her did admit to saving and buying phone cards some times.

The Jessie Ripoll Primary School Focus Group (Children)

Venue/Location: Jessie Ripoll Primary School
Date of Session: December 12, 2007
Moderator: Lincoln Robinson
Recording Assistant: Barbara McDermott

a. *Group Profile*

Eight very bright and articulate young children participated in this focus group, held in the Library at the school. The children came from different communities across the city – Trench Town, Seaview Gardens, Old Harbour, Maxfield Avenue, McIntyre Villas and Nannyville in the Mountain View area. This school also does not allow students to have cell phones on the premises, although permission can be obtained in special circumstances, e.g. if a child lives in a particularly volatile area. The group comprised four boys and four girls.

b. *Ownership/Access*

The majority (five out of the eight participants) owned a cell phone, although strictly forbidden from taking the phone to school. Although youngsters themselves, they were of the view that children should at least be 12 years old to be given a cell phone. One child said the age should be as low as 7 years. Their cell phones were either gifts from the parents or some relative. All had prepared (phone card) service access.

c. *Feelings About Having a Phone*

They all said that having a phone made them feel important. Those without a phone insist they did not feel any less important. What was striking for them is that *"not having a phone made me feel safer."* For the group, issues of risk, attacks on children with phones, even cases of death, could all be blamed on possessing a cell phone, and so not having one meant they felt safer. They did think it necessary to own an expensive phone, as this could place you more at risk.

d. *Attitudes*

The overall attitude was generally positive. The youngsters all felt the cell phone represented an improvement in the quality of life and that it had a positive impact on people, by facilitating connect with friends and family, getting important news and information. It even helps to save time and keep the community on the look-out.

At the same time however, these young children were also quick to point to some of the negatives. *"Some people use the cell phone to do bad things and often the cell phone is involved in most of the crimes committed. Every time yu hear news about some crime, a cell phone is always involved. People are fighting over cell phone and they are doing bad things with it."*

Two of the children in the group reported instances of family members being held up and their phones taken away!

Appendix 4: Poverty Map of Jamaica

POVERTY MAP OF JAMAICA, 1991