

84% of South Africans *cannot live* without their phones

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84% of South Africans 'cannot live' without their cell phone. This is according to latest findings by market research company, Synovate.

Synovate interviewed metropolitan South Africans from the ages 16 and older, falling into LSMs 4 upwards about all things mobile: attitudes towards them, use (and abuse) of them, their mobile wishlists; as well as attitudes and knowledge about RICA and lastly Telkom's anticipated entrance into the cell phone market. Respondents were interviewed face-to-face in the metropolitan areas of Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town.

Highest dependency on their phones was reported in the 25 - 34 year old age group - 91% of which declared that they could not live without their cell phones, followed closely by 87% in the 16 - 24 age category. The older segment (50+) broke some stereotyping by falling close behind with 84% not able to live without their phones.

"With the never-ceasing increase in functionality of cell phones, phones have gone far beyond calling, texting and taking photographs," states Andries Lombaard, Client Services Director at Synovate. "They serve communication and information needs and definitely appeal to the need for expression and individuality amongst the younger generations.

"I can stop anytime...?"

Just how far does the dependency on cell phones go? Dependency being the key word, 86% of South Africans state that they can understand how some people are addicted to their phones. 58% agree that they would like to turn their cell phone off more often but are afraid they will miss something - certainly understandable how it can become a compulsion then.

Cell phones have acquired much popularity amongst marketers due to the fact that cell phones have become almost an extension of one's person - 88% of respondents stating that they never leave home without it and 89% state that their cell phone even goes to bed with them or is not far away when they go to sleep.

"Marketers have seen the advantage of the availability offered by this device and there has been an exponential increase in mobile websites, push advertising and MMS campaigns," states Lombaard. "With mobile you also have the opportunity to be more interactive and, if you have sufficient information on your customer database, to customise content accordingly... making it a far more personal and relevant message for the receiver."

Of those interviewed 82% stated that they own one phone and 16% had two phones. Ownership of two phones is more popular in the Indian and White population groups. Only 2% reported having more than two cell phones.

When asked which would be more difficult to replace - cell phone or wallets - 54% of respondents indicated that the cell phone would be a greater loss. This is especially so in the younger generations; whereas those above 50 indicate that their wallet would be harder to replace.

"It might be difficult to believe for some of us that cell phones are so difficult to replace," states Lombaard. "But cell phones these days carry much more information and media than they used to. Firstly you have all your contact information, birthdays, addresses and so on. And secondly they hold photographs and music that would be a big pity to lose. Wallets hold less personal, or sentimental, significance."

Smartphones

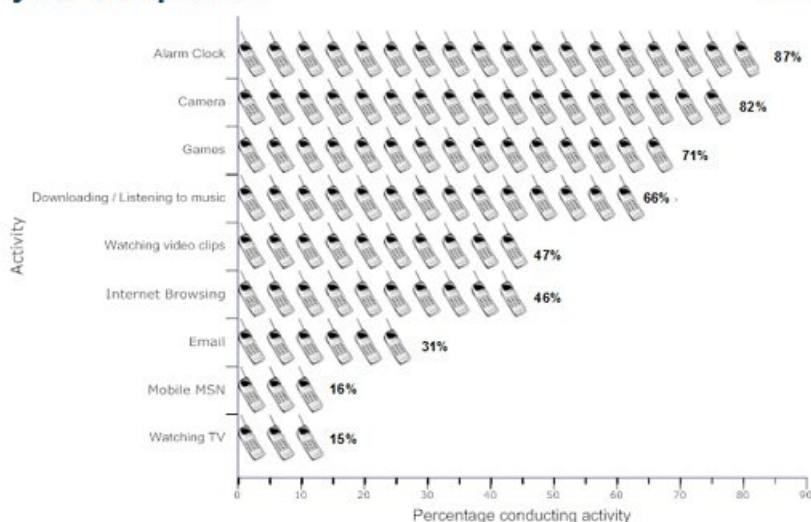
One in five of those interviewed own a smart phone; being more popular among males (24%) and those between the ages of 25 - 34 (23%). Smartphones are most popular in Johannesburg (25%) and then Durban (27%).

“Competition between the smartphone brands has become fierce,” states Lombaard. “While the complex functions may be a barrier to some, the fact that the younger generations are showing a preference for them is a sure-fire sign that these are only set to grow in popularity. As the functions become more standard, and consumers more comfortable with them, I think we will battle to find phones that are not what is now termed as ‘smart’ in the future.”

Multi-tasking

Being a device with many uses, Synovate asked respondents what they use their cell phones for, beyond from the obvious function of making calls. Perhaps explaining the need to have their cell phones close to their bed, 87% of respondents use the alarm clock function. 82% use their phones to snap pictures with the camera and 66% listen to or download music on their phones. 71% play games on their phones, having access to online games as well as the games preloaded onto their phones. Almost a third send and receive email, while 46% use their phone for Internet Browsing. Social networking is conducted by 45% of those interviewed and 16% use mobile MSN to chat to their friends. 47% watch video clips and for those lucky enough to get TV on their phones, 15% watch TV.

What functions do you use on your cell phone?



© Synovate N = 500

Top of the wishlist for desired new functions is television - a quarter of respondents saying that this is what they would like to see most on new cell phones. A fifth said that they would like more memory and 11% would like a faster internet connection. 10% hope to see a movie function and 8% more music functions. Despite the pocket-sized phones on the market, 6% say they want to see phones getting smaller. 3% are looking forward to interactive gaming some time in the future.

Phone flirt and dirt

The cell phone not only makes communication easier in terms of the functions that it offers, but also for those who are reticent about face-to-face communication. Text messages make the delicate parts of communication easier... 61% stated that they had used SMS to pass on a difficult message; while 56% had used SMS to lie about where they are or why they are running late. 68% have used SMS for the usually tough job of saying no to something that they didn't want to do or to decline an invitation.

36% of those interviewed have used SMS to set up a first date and for those fearful of courting and dating, SMS offers a “safe” option for the more daunting aspects of a romantic relationship. 49% had used SMS to flirt with their partners while

37% confessed that they had used SMS to flirt with someone who was not their partner.

Unfortunately “hiding” behind your phone makes breaking up not-so-hard to do. Nearly a third of respondents had broken up with someone over SMS and 27% have been broken up with using this method of communication. Men are more likely to do the dumping over SMS - with 36% having done this compared to 27% of women interviewed.

Is the cellphone market ready for Telkom?

With Telkom gearing up to enter the cell phone market, Synovate quizzed respondents on what they thought of the new competition for Vodacom, MTN, Cell C and Virgin. 77% agreed that Telkom's offering would have to be unique for them to change from their current service provider. This sentiment was most pronounced in Pretoria (90%) and Cape Town (88%).

However, 68% do agree that there is sufficient space for another provider to enter the market. 71% believe that Telkom has the infrastructure and 68% believe they have the sufficient sales and distribution channels to sell their products.

Half of those interviewed indicated that they were likely to purchase a Telkom SIM in the future.

“It is encouraging to see that South Africans are always open and receptive to new entrants,” concludes Lombaard.

RICA

97% of those interviewed were aware of the Rica law and what it is.

72% have registered already.

Registration is highest in Durban (81%) and Pretoria (79%).

When asked if their network providers should send them information on the RICA Act, four-fifths agreed that they should.

Agreement was particularly high amongst the black population (89%) and in Johannesburg (87%) and Durban (85%).

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