

## **Analyzing the Impact of Cellular Phones on Cultural Beliefs & Social Values: An Exploratory Research of Quetta Baluchistan**

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**Abstract:** The focal rationale to execute this research is to investigate the positive and negative impacts of cellular phones on cultural beliefs and social values of the people of Quetta city with respect to local culture and traditions and to emphasize on the importance of cultural values. It is speculated that cellular phones have changed the way of communication of people around the world and it has shown vigorous growth during past few years. As these amenities are now assumed to be proviso and very intensely infiltrate into daily lives of people and extremely interfering cultural beliefs and social values. For that reasons an exploratory research conducted in accordance to local culture of Quetta city. For the problem in hand the existing research question provides solid background and then through the use of questionnaire primary data entails the impacts of cellular phones on the cultural beliefs and social values. It is imperative to understand cultural values and social set ups and how cellular growth has changed and affected the Pakistani culture.

**Key words:** Cellular phones, Culture, Values & Believes, Pakistan Telecom Sector and Quetta City.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. Background:**

World has become a global village and this is due to prompt, easy and accessible communication. Telecom sector has changed the shape of communication and this is a hot issue in Pakistan now a days. The telecom sector has revealed unprecedented growth during past few years this sector yet to be poised for more growth. Furthermore, statistical record shows that number of mobile phone subscribers has reached up to 40 million in these years. For that reason heavy foreign investment from different companies are being made or still paying attention in this sector. Since, Telecom Sector is passing through evolving phase as overall mobile phone subscriber base already hitting 40 million and registering a tenfold increase in the customer base. Due to the massive competition among different mobile operators and mobile phone providers, cellular phone is almost in reach of every common man.

It is suspected that, too many people don't realize the tremendous importance of making themselves familiar with a society's culture before trying to penetrate it. Looking at things from one's own perspective and to assume that everyone should understand your product or service wonderful is always easy. This thinking has lead to many blunders made by multinationals in the history. It is of extreme importance to follow a few steps when entering a market. Historical and cultural belongings affect the way of thinking of people. Even simple things like gestures and choice of colors can cause problems if they are neglected. Try to find out the interests of the society and what really attracts this society. It has become very common to say now that world is becoming a global village, but instead of this we can't take cultural values as global as each society has its different cultural and traditional values.

#### **1.2. Cellular Growth Trend:**

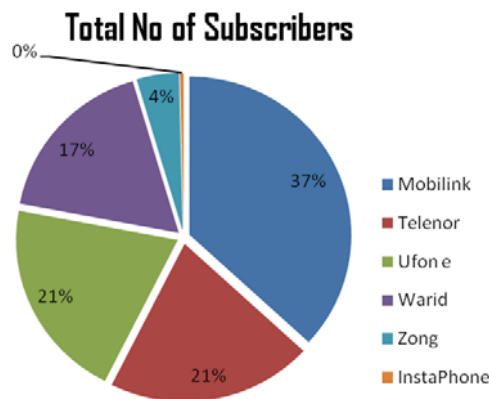
In Pakistan, first cellular mobile service provider was introduced in the mid 1990. It was InstaPhone. In the beginning, the use of mobile service was very limited in Pakistan. There were only few people, either rich or elite, making the use of cellular services. Mobile phone was considered to be the status symbol those days and only rich and elite could afford it. In the end of 1992, another cellular network was introduced. It was

Paktel. Gradually, many mobile phone service providers have started their operations. Currently in Pakistan, six cellular networks are in operations namely InstaPhone, Paktel which is renamed as Zong, Mobilink, Ufone, Warid and Telenor. With the advancement in technology and network services, and decreasing prices, the number of users of cellular networks has increased dramatically.

Cellular networks began to spread even in the villages of Pakistan. In this regard, Mobilink is the first network which promoted coverage culture in Pakistan. With drastic decrease in prices of cell devices and even in the prices of cellular network connections, the number of users of cellular mobile phone services has rapidly increased. Statistics show that there are currently more than 50 million (50,000,000) users in Pakistan. While in 1993, there were hardly 2000 users in all, using cellular services.

### 1.3. Current Statistics:

The companies' market share in terms of their number of subscribers is changing. The recent statistics of May, 2009, for the number of subscribers of each cellular network in Pakistan is given bellow.



### 1.4. Culture & Society:

Culture is defined as the collective patterns of activities and communications, cognitive constructs, and affective understanding that are learned through a process of socialization. Kotler *et al.*, 2004 stated that, "...culture is a set of basic values, discernment, desires and deeds learned by a member of society from family and other important institutions...". Moreover, the quintessence of a culture is not its artifacts but it reveals from collective assessment of members of the group. These collective patterns categorize the members of a group and make it unique from another group.

### 1.5. Pakistani Culture:

The culture of Pakistan has a great influence on the cultures of central Asia, India and the Middle East. Pakistan is a Muslim country, where Muslim population is far greater than the Hindu, Christianity and other minorities. People have strong believes in their religion and in absolute truth. This factor makes Pakistani culture as an uncertainty avoidance culture. Furthermore, Pakistan has an affluent civilization consists of strong cultural and time-honored background and it nurtures the cultural disparity amongst the diverse racial clusters in terms of faith, conviction, outfit and customary qualms.

### 1.6. Culture of Quetta:

There are five main ethnic groups in Quetta and these are Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashtun, Muhajirs and Baloch. Languages are the most common identity of ethnicity in Quetta. There are more than ten languages which are spoken in Quetta, but the most common languages are Punjabi, Sindhi, Urdu, Pashto and Balochi. Urdu is the official language and can speak and read all over the Pakistan. English is the medium of education in most of the schools and universities; therefore it is a de facto national language of Pakistan. In fact people are going far from religious believes and they have started believing on supernatural forces. Due to this people just start believing on rumors without any confirmation and justification.

### **1.7. Problem Statement:**

Cellular phone (GSM) industry has shown an immense rapid growth in Pakistan and it has become a sizzling concern in different perspectives like economic growth, foreign investments, a great no of newly ill paid jobs and new businesses and there has been a great research on all these areas. In contrast, it is observed that these cellular phones has become an essential part of one's life and people who are using these services can even not imagine living without these amenities. So, it has affected the ways of living of people has done a great deal with traditional cultures and social interactions of people.

### **1.8. Purpose:**

The main purpose of this study is to present positive and negative impacts of cellular phones on individual's life with respect to local culture and traditions and to emphasize on the importance of cultural and social values.

### **1.9. Objectives of the Study:**

The main purpose of this exploratory study is to explore the positive and negative impacts of cellular phones on individual's life. By taking this aim this research has following objectives:

- To explore that the cellular phones have lessened the gap between rich and poor
- To identify that the cellular phones lead to increase street crimes in the society
- To study that the rapid influx of cellular phone has inferred on our private life
- To investigate that the cellular phones become the status symbol of the society
- To find that the cellular phones are putting strains on our family relations

### **1.10. Significance of the Study:**

The underlying study is an attempt to find out the potential impact of cellular phones. It is manifested that the influx of mobile usage become an essential part of one's life and people who are using these services can even not imagine living without these technologies. Since, its usage has affected the ways of living and changed the cultural norms, values and believes and imposed positive and negative effects on the society.

## **2.0. Research Methodology:**

This study was based on primary data. Primary data collected from the members of the society in the Quetta city.

### **2.1. Selection of Universe:**

Population or universe is a complete group of entities sharing some common set of characteristics and the population element may be defined as an individual member of the specific population. The present study was confined to the members of the society of Quetta city and the members of society of Quetta city were the total population of study.

### **2.3. Selection of Sample Size:**

Sample is a subset or some part of the larger population. The process of sampling involves any procedure using a small number of the whole population to make conclusion regarding the whole population. Hundred members from the overall population were selected by using random sampling technique for the questionnaire. Furthermore, for the purpose of collecting primary data a self-administered "Questionnaire" was used as a tool for data collection.

## **3.0. Literature Review:**

### **3.1. Impact of Cell Phones:**

Cell phones are the easy way to stay connected with family and friends, access the Internet and in some instances, get into trouble. Pamela Gardapee articulated that the impact of cell phones on today's youth is exorbitant. She stated that, "... cell phones have become a problem, and there is no end in sight..." Richard Ling (2004) argues that, "...it is difficult to pin down the meaning of culture and how different cultural backgrounds influence the way people use mobile phones..." Moreover, mobile phones become a part of teenager's identity and a part of their emancipation from their parents.

### 3.2. Tightens the Social Sphere:

The mobile phone also lowers the threshold for interaction and tightens the social network. Richard Ling (2004) postulated that, the infusion of mobile phones will probably become the only communications device and include several more functions and it is no doubt fills the basic needs of most people and cultures in terms of interaction and communication.

### 3.3. A Set of Cultural Values and its Impact in Global Village:

Kotler (2002) argues that “...each culture has different sub-cultures and groups whose members share common beliefs and behaviors...” Historical and cultural possessions influence the way of thinking. Even minor things like gestures and choice of colors lead to create troubles if they are ignored. Ever since, it is awfully widespread that world is becoming a global village, but as a result we can't take into account the cultural values as global as each society has its different cultural and traditional values (Marques 2001). Each country has its own set of values and traditions. All the positive and negative impacts which a culture may cause must be acknowledged and most important to be seriously consider.

### 3.4. Impact of Social Factors on Consumer Behavior:

Social factors also affect the consumer's behavior. Every person has his role according to his/her culture and social setups. Understanding of these roles is important (Kotler *et al.*, 2004). It is observed that, people are going far from religious believes and they have started believing on supernatural forces. Due to this people just start believing on gossips without any confirmation and justification. In Pakistan literacy rate is very low and due to this people are superficial and they believe on these rumors without any proof and required authentication. Marketers have keen interest about to know the consumers psychology. As these beliefs affect consumer's behavior and a wrong belief about a specific product can even prevent the purchase of that product. As a result marketers will used to launch a campaign to correct these beliefs (Kotler *et al.*, 2004).

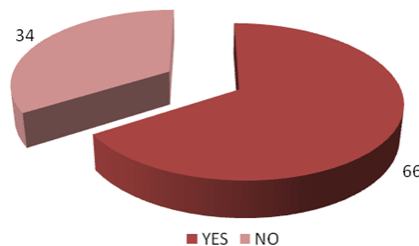
### 3.5. Cellular Phones have lessened the Gap between Rich and Poor:

Telecom also affected agriculture industry of Pakistan. Earlier the farmers had to travel to different urban areas to sell out their products through some middle man however, after mobile phones they get access to all the markets and sell their products. By the boom of telecom and development of the tele-centers in the rural area, farmers are getting more benefit than that of before. Now they can easily get market information, supplier's information, indigenous knowledge and better farming methods (Jung News 2006). We investigated that rapid influx of cellular phones has created immense opportunities for everyone and no doubt it lessened the gap between rich and poor.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We all know that when something becomes a part of our life, obviously it affects our living style, our ways of performing daily routine works or in other words it affects our Culture and Society. And of course every thing has positive and negative effects. We will see here that what positive and negative impacts are being faced by the people of Quetta with respect to their specific cultural and traditional values due to cellular phones. I have get hundred respondents from the different areas of Quetta anyhow that was not the easy task for me followings are the statistics of my respondents. Following tables and diagrams have been designed for each question in the questionnaire. The results that were found out are summarized and tabulated along with an in-depth analysis of each question after reviewing the results and data obtained.

### Do you prefer to sending greetings via cellular phones?



**4.1. Do you prefer to sending greetings via cellular phones?**

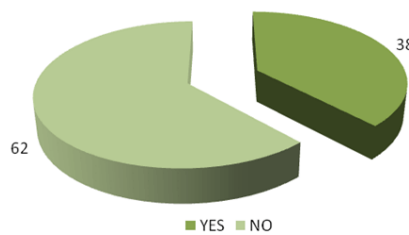
We observed people are interconnected with each other and they are living in a very strong joint family system. It is also reported that people used to send greetings through SMS on important events such as; “Eid-UL-Fitar”, “Eid-UL-Ezha” and “Eid Milad-Un-Nabbi (PBUH)”. On these occasions people used to send special electronic cards addressing the specific greetings to their beloved ones through cellular phones. The; mobile phones for sending the greetings on various occasion are used for greetings and sending other messages as well. The exploratory survey also confirms that the maximum people now prefer SMS for correspondence and greetings then the postal system as the traditional way of communication has been replaced with very fast, cheap and easy SMS (short messaging service) system.

**4.2. Is use of mobile camera beneficial or not?**

Every day new technologies are emerging in the world. First Cell phones were being used just to make and receive a call but mobile manufacturers are always in an attempt to give new trends and facilities in their hand sets to capture the maximum market share. One of these features is mobile camera by which one has always a camera with him. We asked our respondents about the use of camera are it good or bad? It was surprising for us to know that maximum people responded that it is bad because it has created many problems in our society. Of course it is a good facility that one can keep his memories with him all the times. We all know that the use of anything makes it good or bad and many people have misused this facility, so for the reason it is being counted as a bad impact on our society.

Many such events have happened in Pakistani society, due to which severe results were reported. A young female employee faced a problematic situation when someone made her snaps using mobile camera and then published it on the network after editing these photos using image modifying software and now these were nude pictures. So such mishaps have made the opinion of many people against the usage of mobile camera especially on public places.

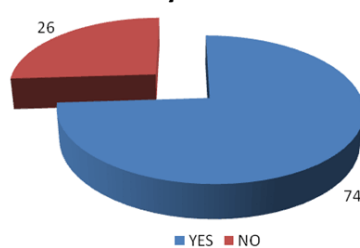
**Is use of mobile camera beneficial or not?**



**4.3. Do you think mobile become a status symbol?**

There was a time when having a mobile connection was thought to be a luxurious item but with the passage of time it became the necessity of people. Of course for having a mobile connection, you need a hand set as well and this purpose can be fulfilled by a simple and cheaper set. It is investigated that mobile set become a status symbol in our society and almost all of our respondents are of the opinion that people prefer new and latest models over old and practical ones.

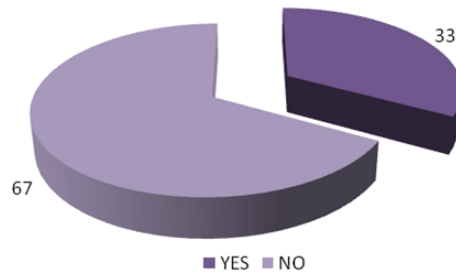
**Do you think mobile become a status symbol?**



**4.4. Do you think mobile is good for children?**

People from different communities also do not want their children to have their own mobile phones. They feel insecure about with whom they are in contact with. For this thinking of the parents about the security of their children, Mobilink (Country's largest cellular phone service) and Disney announced the launch of a parental-controlled mobile phone especially for children. This mobile phone will meet the communication and security needs of parents. Survey indicated that 67% parents are of the opinion that the separate mobile phone is bad for their children. It also analyzed that many people also check the call records and text archives of their children and this is against anyone's privacy and may lead to create a guilt and anxiety.

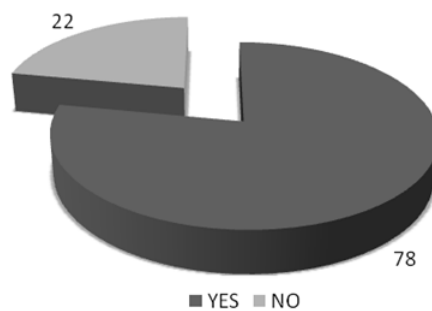
**Do you think mobile is good for children?**



**4.5. Do you think cells phone are increasing street crimes?**

The mobile set has become the status symbol and people prefer to have expensive handsets. It has caused many problems one of which is mobile snatching and theft. If you own a mobile, you are always at the risk of your life. Street crimes especially the incidents of mobile snatching are becoming a routine in our country. We find such news on daily papers that someone was killed in a mobile phone snatching event and this ratio is increasing day by day. These stolen and snatched mobiles phones are then sold to shopkeepers who buy them at low prices and then sell them with minimum of Rs 500 to Rs 1,000 profit. It is reported that, such crimes were committed by unemployed people who wanted to earn money by hook or by crook (Daily Times 2004). This is a very big problem which our society is facing and it must be overcome by making some safety strategies by the Authorities. We came across the result from our survey as well that cell phones are increasing the street crimes as maximum people have the same opinion

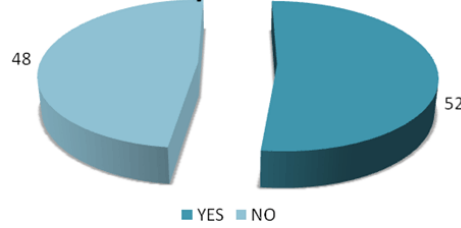
**Do you think cell phones are increasing street crimes?**



**4.6. Do you think cell phones have lessened the gap between rich and poor?**

Cellular phones also lessened the gap between rich and poor. As it is observed that the telecom sector created a lot of new mode of doing businesses and also this sector created a lot of job opportunities and helped in reducing the unemployment in Pakistan.

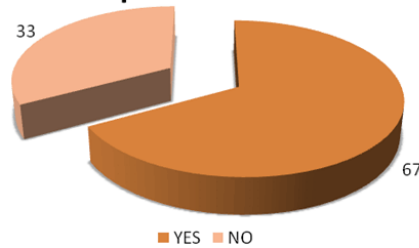
**Do you think cell phones have lessened the gap between rich and poor?**



**4.7. Do you think the rapid influx of cellular phones has interfered with your private life?**

Through cellular phones, you are almost in reach of every one at any time. Sometimes you may want just to relax and dislike the disturbance of anyone. Then these cell phones become the hell phones on some occasions. Many people have faced such a situation when they think that they were not using these telecom services. Like you can be accessed by your boss or client at any time when you would be enjoying your holiday with your family. We admit that these telecom services and especially cellular ones are blessings of God which we are enjoying in different ways, mainly by living in contact with our dear ones but sometimes we feel uncomfortable with these services as well. So, these services have interference with personal life.

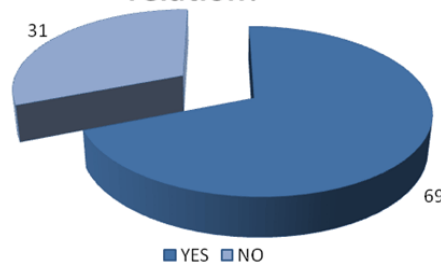
**Do you think the rapid influx of cellular phones has interfered the private life?**



**4.8. Do you think cellular phones are putting a strain on your family relation?**

Some people also think that cellular facilities are putting a strain on their family relations. It is observed that this is the case with young generation especially who spends most of their time on talking and chatting on their mobile phones. Most of the young people spend more than 60 minutes per day on their cell phone talking to their friends, relatives, clients and other people. They prefer to call or send an SMS despite of meeting with their colleagues and relatives. This habit is disturbing our cultural values and norms.

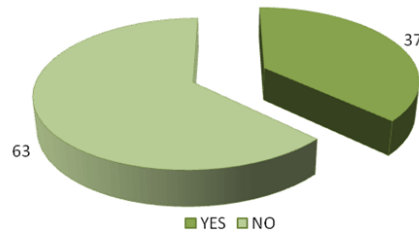
**Do you think cellular phones is putting a strain on your family relation?**



#### 4.9. Do you think mobiles are necessary for girls and women?

We have a male dominant society and females are suppressed by their parents, brothers and husbands subsequently. People from different communities also do not want their young girls and women to have their mobile phones they feel insecure about with whom they are in contact with. The people of Quetta city do not like and even do not allow women and young girls to have their own mobile. They are very conservative and do not like the interaction of girls with other boys and people who are not a part of their family. If some girl has a mobile phone, then it is an open chance that she may come into contact with other boys which is thought a very bad thing in the society of Quetta.

Do you think mobiles are necessary for girls and women?



#### Conclusion:

The results showed that the use of mobile phones affected the culture of Quetta city. The users of these services became more conscious regarding value which they are getting from these services in terms of changing behaviors and ways of interactions. People have become more connected through these services than ever before. Near about all kind of businesses is being benefited through the use of these services. For example, a farmer selling his commodities to traders can now discover prevailing prices from all sources.

These services have facilitated our life and their utilization has become permanent part of our life even an essential part in performing the routine tasks. It presumes that when something becomes a part of life, then it generates many affects on personal life as well and one cannot be imagine living without them. These services have also affected culture of Quetta city in many aspects which we came to know through our survey. These services have changed our traditional ways of communication and people now prefer to communicate through these services instead of face to face meetings.

In contrast, other features of cell phones such as; camera and video have also created immense problems in our society its values and believe. The main purpose of having a mobile set is just to be in contact with others which can be fulfilled by a simple and cheaper hand set. But, it has become a status symbol in our society to have the latest model of the mobile set and people prefer style over features and like to have fleshly, glitzy and expensive sets.

Moreover, prior one's social status, values and believes were judged by goodness, integrity and uprightness however in a post knowledge economic set-up it is explicitly devastated. The increasing number of mobile phones its use also increase street crimes, mobile snatching and theft as well. Since, people of Quetta have conservative thinking and have fears about the possession of cell phones by females especially young girls. So, they do not like and allow girls to have their own mobile connections. These services have interfered with our private life and sometimes we feel uncomfortable with these as well. But it is up to us that we should use these services in certain limits so that our personal life would not be disturbed.

#### Recommendations:

Few recommendations that we have concluded from our research are as follows. Companies spend a lot of money on advertisement of their product just to catch more and more customers. Similarly mobile phone companies are giving their advertisements on televisions and different media channels. But for catching more customers, they should study the culture of the country where they are selling their products.

In Pakistan as we have discussed in our research that people are religious and mostly abide by the Islamic laws. Similarly it is a culture where people are very curious about their spouse and especially about their females and children. Keeping in mind these things, cellular companies should be careful in advertising their products. They should not use the notions like girls are talking to their boy friends and students using mobiles in colleges and the situations in which girls and boys are getting close to each other. However they should



show that people are using mobiles in villages like farmers and typical persons are using mobile to talk with their families and stuff like that.

As we have discussed in our thesis that most people in Pakistan belong to the poor category and they can't afford the new mobile sets. So the repairing of old mobile sets and business of old mobile sets is very vast in Pakistan. Our suggestion regarding this context to different mobile set providing companies is that they should open the repairing centers in different cities of Pakistan where people can repair their hand sets in economical price even after the warranty of the hand set. This could be very beneficial both for the customers and the mobile companies.

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