Chapter V

Impact of Mobile and Wireless Technologies on Developing Countries

Ran Neuman,Philip Morris, USA

P. Candace Deans,University of Richmond, USA

Abstract

This chapter discusses the impact of mobile and wireless technologies on developing countries. The new technological advances and capabilities allow developing countries the opportunity to "leapfrog" years of wired technology and infrastructure development. Based on this study, it appears that mobile and wireless technologies will not be enough to truly advance developing countries. In order to truly "leapfrog" and make up for years of technological advancements, developing countries must consider dealing with government corruption, violation of human rights and extremely low literacy rates. All those factors will derail the effort to "leapfrog" and gain economic benefits from technological advancements. The Village Cell Phone Program is an example where mobile technology

created a business opportunity while at the same time changing the role of women in society. Any implementation of mobile and wireless technology must be complemented with social and political reform in order to be successful.

Introduction

Today there are more mobile phones than fixed-line telephone access throughout the world, and the industry still shows a strong growth momentum. Wireless subscription is expected to grow to 1.3 billion by 2004.   The mobile technologies industry has experienced rapid transformation with the evolution of new standards and business strategies. In developing countries there is hope that the digital divide, the gap in technology and infrastructure, will be history once access to communication and the Internet is established and available to every citizen. Current studies and literature on the advancement of digital technology and its impact on developing countries allows us to witness just the beginning of this digital revolution (Aronson, 2002). The impact this revolution is imposing on developing countries is multidimensional:

- Traditional businesses such as Telecommunication Carriers will have to revise their business model and incorporate innovation as a core competency in order to succeed and survive this revolution.
- Governments will need to adjust their approach for taxation and revenue stream in order to compensate for the tidal wave of privatization and dealing with the freedom and evolution of the Internet.
- Dealing with illiteracy will become a main focus as it poses a barrier for success of this revolution.
- New laws and legal infrastructure will become a key necessity in order to lead and manage rather than control and suppress the digital revolution.
- Society will be transformed by changes in both social framework and inherently by changes in social structure, status and norms.

These are a few of the key elements surfacing in response to the digital revolution and the fast paced evolution of mobile technologies. Many organi-

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