

Young people in emerging countries – are ICTs as necessary as food and drink?

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To paraphrase Francisco de Quevedo, we are people who are glued to our mobiles, and these phones have to be exceptional, with an infinite Internet connection. This image, which can be applied to all information and communications technology (ICT), is especially evident among the young, those known as digital natives, both in Spain and in the developed countries around us.

Is it the same in the rest of the world? A [recent BBVA Research study](#) shows that having a mobile phone is increasingly important among young people (aged 18-24) in developing countries, albeit with certain regional nuances. Mobiles are a necessity in Africa. For example, in Tunisia, Nigeria and Kenya, owning a mobile phone is more important than having a good job or money for one's old age. In some Asian countries, such as India, China and Malaysia, it would be more necessary than having free time for yourself. This does not happen as intensely in Latin American countries like Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Argentina and Chile, although having a mobile phone is seen as more important than other priorities, such as owning your own car.

There are also generational differences in the value placed on ICTs in comparison to other needs, especially in the case of Internet access. Consumers aged over 55, a group that tends to adopt technology later than others, feel that Internet access is the least essential requirement, while young people in countries such as Poland, Thailand, China and Chile prefer it to being able to travel. The speed with which these technologies are implemented allows plenty of room for expansion in emerging countries. Internet access is therefore valued lower than mobile phones, a more mature technology with higher penetration levels.

The level of economic development is a relevant factor where a technology has not been generally adopted, as is the case with Internet access in these countries. Young people from countries with a higher per capita income, such as Turkey, Russia, Malaysia and Chile, find Internet access more necessary than their peers in other countries where earnings are lower, such as Nigeria, Egypt, Nicaragua and Colombia.

From a consumer perspective, ICTs in the widest sense of the word come on-stream at a different pace in each country, adapting to the idiosyncrasies of the society in question, and yet with a common aim worldwide and especially among the new generations - to be as much of a necessity (or almost) as food and drink.

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