

Indonesians Using Smartphones to Connect to the Internet

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Twenty-three-year old Rio Safiyanto sells face masks, or coverings, for about 30 cents each in central Jakarta, Indonesia. He makes enough money to buy a cell phone that permits him to visit websites like Facebook and Twitter, as well as finding gaming applications, or apps.

Rio Safiyanto says every average person has a cellphone. He likes having one because he can talk to his family when he is away from home. And, he is especially pleased that he can use it to listen to music. Mr. Safiyanto’s phone has a keypad that makes it look like a Blackberry.

It is known as a feature phone or smartphone lite. That is because it is cheaper and cannot perform as many actions as more advanced phones like the Apple iPhone.

These devices make up the majority of cell phones sold around the world. They have proven more successful in places like Indonesia, where some smartphones cost 700 dollars or more. Although many lower-income users are new to smartphones, they are quickly learning to use the technology.

Eddy Tamboto is the managing director of the Jakarta office of the Boston Consulting Group. He explains the importance of having a mobile phone.

“It’s basically the way they get to know about employment opportunities, the way they get to know about entrepreneurial opportunities. So the phone and the smartphone is not just a convenience or indulgence, but, actually, it’s a big part of day to day necessity”.

Cell manufacturer Nokia offers a service called Life Tools. For a small monthly payment, the company sends text messages to farmers. The messages tell of weather conditions, crop prices, agricultural news and give other advice.

Local businessman Aldi Haryoprato has developed a way for small store owners to sell things like prepaid cellphone minutes and life insurance through text messages. Ruma is the company that developed the

technology. The company is working on a system that will notify people about jobs in their area.

At a recent digital technology show in Jakarta, banks offered no-interest financing for credit card purchases. Marina Luthfiani manages a mobile shop in the area. She said almost everyone can buy a smartphone because of competitive financing and credit choices. She says Indonesians like to buy the latest devices.

A report last June by SemioCast, a French internet research company, said Jakarta was the world’s top tweeting city, ahead of Tokyo and London.