

College students more connected than ever through their smart phones

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For the first time, more college students are using smart phones than traditional feature phones, reports a new study from Ball State University.

More than half of [college students](#) are using smart phones to send texts, access their e-mail, surf the Internet, and take and send photos, according to Michael Hanley, a Ball State advertising professor and director of the university's Institute for Mobile Media Research.

He has conducted 12 surveys since 2005 regarding the mobile behavior of about 5,500 college students.

To illustrate, Hanley said smart phones account for 53 percent of mobile communication devices on Ball State's campus today, up from 27 percent in February 2009.

"The growing use of smart phones by college students is increasing Internet access and the use of interactive mobile content," Hanley said. "With a standard feature phone, users primarily make calls and send text messages. Smart phones have larger screens, computer-like operating systems and high-speed broadband access. They give students the ability to more fully adapt to an always connected mobile lifestyle."

Hanley points out that text messaging via smart phones has become digital shorthand for college students. The study found that 99 percent of smart phone owners use text messaging (as compared to 96 percent for feature phones).

"Text messaging is quick, universal across all mobile phone carriers. It's also discreet and cheap," Hanley said. "It is how today's college students prefer to communicate."

And often to the dismay of college faculty, nearly half of respondents said they send text messages while in class, he said.

Better cameras

New smart phones also have better cameras that take high quality photos and video, allowing young people to document the world around them. The study found that 90 percent of smart phone users take and send photographs, up from 30 percent in 2005. Nearly half of smart phone owners take and send video, too.

Hanley believes marketers are paying attention to college students' ties to their smart phones.

"Students report seeing more advertisements and marketing messages on their phones, and they are not happy about it," he said. "Easier Internet access with [smart phones](#) is one reason for the increased ads. But students are growing more concerned about the amount of advertising. The study found that two-thirds said they were 'very concerned' or 'concerned a little' about getting mobile ads."

The study found that 39 percent of smart phone users would accept ads on their mobile devices if they got something free in return, but the trend to accept such advertisements with free offers has declined by 10 percentage points in the last two years.

Provided by Ball State University

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