

# Moving Cultures: Mobile Communication In Everyday Life

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## Mobile Communications: A Study of Factors Influencing Consumer Use of m-Services

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New mobile digital communication technologies present opportunities for advertisers to capitalize on the evolving relationships of consumers with their mobile devices and their desire to access enhanced information services while mobile (m-services). Consumers already use mobile devices (cell phones, personal mobile digital assistants) for traditional phone calls and message handling (e.g., Kalakota and Robinson, 2002; Sullivan-Mort and Drennan, 2002). The combination of rapidly developing mobile digital technology and high uptake rates of mobile devices presents enormous potential for delivery of m-services through these devices (Biner, Brown, and Meuter, 2000). M-services encompass a wide variety of types including the ability to trade stock, to book theater and movie tickets while accessing seating plans online, to send and receive text and pictures, and receive personalized direct advertising such as alerts for shopping bargains. Marketing communications, and specifically advertising, may be delivered as an m-service and termed m-services advertising, forming part of the broader category of m-services. However, advertising research has not yet addressed the area of m-services and needs to do so to be able to take advantage of the advanced interactivity (Yadav and Varadarajan, 2005) of mobile communication devices. Such advertising research is likely to help develop open attitudes and responses to new business models as has been advocated for other new technology such as advanced television (Tauder, 2002). In this article, we model the factors influencing the use of m-services, in the context of consumers' existing relationships with mobile devices. First, we address the value propositions underpinning consumer involvement with mobile devices. Next, we canvass the types of involvement relevant to this consumption domain and argue that involvement, together with personal attributes innovativeness and self-efficacy, will influence use of m-services. Finally, implications for advertising delivered as an m-service are discussed, the potential for m-services advertising as part of m-commerce are canvassed, and directions for future research identified.

### MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS

The seamless integration of mobile digital technology with daily activities has a growingly pervasive impact on consumers (Sullivan-Mort and Drennan, 2002). Wilksa (2003), in a study of young people's use of mobile phones as part of their consumption styles, states that mobile communications are undoubtedly an important part of everyday life. As well as providing the core mobile "delivery of individualized/customised relationship based, timely and location specific" services to the user (Sullivan-Mort and Drennan, 2002, p. 17), it [mobile communications] enhances efficiency and entertainment as well as increasing spontaneity (Ankar and D'Incau, 2003). It is widely acknowledged that mobile digital devices and mobile communications have become integrated into personal identity, for example through personalization of mobile devices (color and design options, ring tones, screen savers, and carry cases) and through connectivity within reference groups (Pura, 2002; Wilksa, 2003). Indeed, the phenomenon of "grooming calls," the frequent mobile phone calls within friendship networks that have primarily a socio-emotional function of showing concern, solidarity and commitment, nearness and sympathy has been identified (Falen, Salzman, and Youngs, 2001). For many people, mobile devices are increasingly regarded as a necessity. Fitzgerald and Drennan (2003) have examined consumption practices surrounding mobile phones and found that some consumers express a strong sense of the embeddedness of mobile phones in their lives, both from a communications capability and from a security perspective.

Consumers internalize technology such as mobile devices, e-commerce, and the internet into their lifestyles (Forrester Research Group, 2001). This integration of technological change may provide an indication of why some people come to feel empowered through the use of technology, specifically their mobile devices (Funston and McNeil, 1999). This empowerment may result from freer communication without the constraints of physical proximity and geographic location, the ability to perform tasks more efficiently, both of a work-related and social nature, or the enabling of private communications (Lacoeche, Wakeford, and Pearson, 2003).

Increasingly, the lifestyles and consumption habits of young people are influencing the consumption patterns of many other markets (Wilksa, 2003). In other words, not only do youths manifest consumption styles, they also create them. For instance, the widespread use of text messaging was largely unforeseen by the mobile telecommunications industry. Nonetheless, it became very popular with young adults who even developed their own SMS language and abbreviations to make messages nearly unintelligible to outsiders (Lacoeche, Wakeford, and Pearson, 2003). Text messaging has subsequently become popular with many other consumer segments.

Despite the importance of the mobile device itself, we suggest the relationship between the devices and the services linked to the devices, m-services, must also be examined as important indicators of the way consumers are embracing mobile communications. Little reported empirical research is available that examines this connection and such a gap in the literature is surprising given the increasingly important role of mobile devices and services in the lives of many people and the growing potential of m-services as an advertising medium.

### FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER USE OF M-SERVICES

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