

Multimedia Mobile Imaging

Ilpo Koskinen

Prof., Dr. (sociology)

University of Art and Design, Helsinki

Mobile communication: Current research and future directions

*International Communication Association Pre-Conference, THURSDAY, May 26, 2005,
9:30 AM to 4:30 PM, Sheraton Hotel, New York City*

Recent addition to Mobile Telephony: Multimedia

- Over 200 million mobile multimedia handsets sold in 2004
 - MMS common technology
 - camera (still and video), sound possibility, sometimes small animations



Typical multimedia messages, 1

Audio file:

“So, greetings from here, our hot summer garden, from Kesäjärvi. Having a glass of sparkling. Leena and Pate are visiting, lovely. See you tomorrow, welcome!”



Subject: Greetings from Kesäjärvi!

Text:

No text.

Typical multimedia messages, 2



• **Subject:** On a skiing-trip in Italy

Text:

Greetings from Italy, it was a good trip... The right top corner had by far the best attitude. Further report after I get over jet-lag
Jari

Typical multimedia messages, 3

Text:

Next time you should think twice before you leave your kid to just somebody.

(**Text in the paper:** “A drunken grandma forgot a two year old on the street”)



Four frameworks for understanding multimedia

- At present, there appears to be four frameworks for understanding mobile multimedia
 - The motivational argument
 - Multimedia in close-knit social groups
 - Genres
 - Interaction: gift-giving and images-in-interaction

1. What Drives Mobile Multimedia?

- *The motivational argument* starts from content analysis and asks which factors drive people to capture and share images and other multimedia
 - how to classify messages that are like John Searle's "complex speech acts"?
 - Whose categories we ought to use to classify images?

	Social			Individual	
Affective	Mutual Experience. Images used to enrich a shared, co-present experience (either in the moment or later as a memento). 103 (35%)	Absent Friends or Family. Images used to communicate with absent friends or family (either in the moment or later). 63 (21%)		Personal Reflection. Images used for personal reflection or reminiscing. 120 (41%)	
Functional	Mutual Task. Images shared with people co-present in support of a task (either in the moment or after the event). 11 (4%)	Remote Task. Images used to help accomplish a task by sharing with remote family, friends or colleagues (either in the moment or later). 23 (8%)		Personal Task. Images used to support some future task not involving sharing. 29 (10%)	

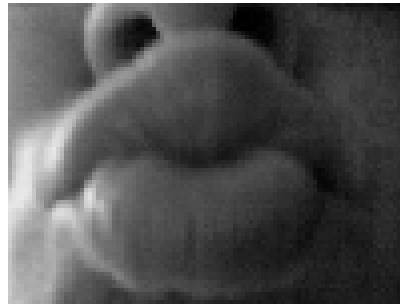
Kindberg et al. 2004

Text:

Good night D-E-A-R

Audio:

Kissing sounds

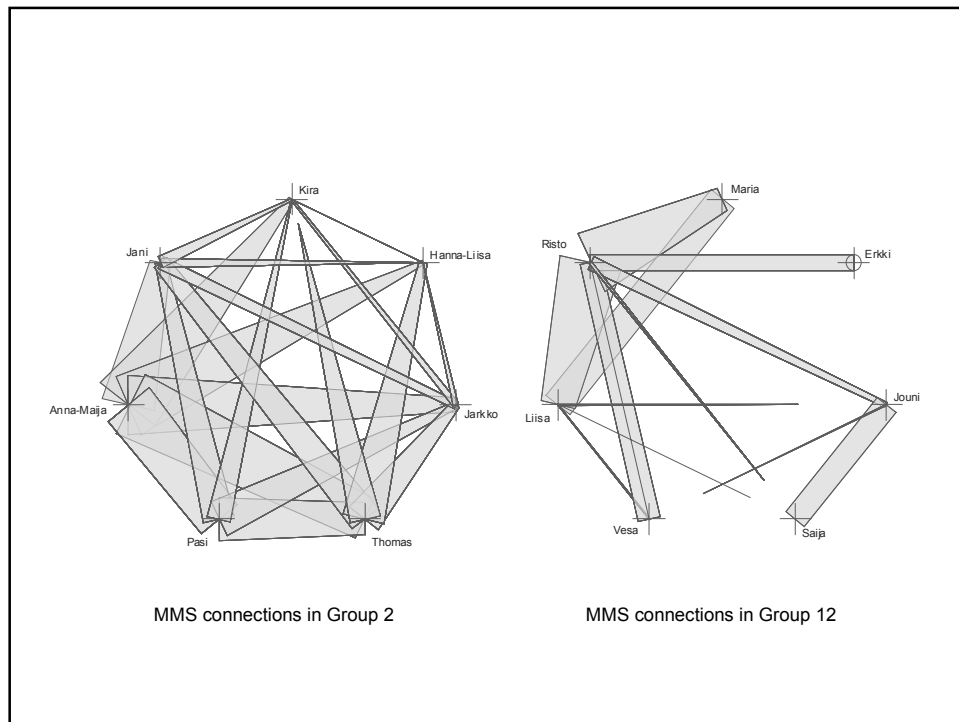


8.7.02 21:15

2. Domestication as a Small Group Phenomena

The sociologist Barbara Scifo (2005) argues in sociological lines: mobile multimedia

- roots experience back in physical and social surroundings, is linked to one's network of strong relationships, primarily nourishing sentimental bonds
- with it, people give others an access to places as well as individual and social situations and emotions. They share objects and people, one's private life (like objects, relatives, and haunted places), and one's social network
- also, mobile multimedia provides an extension of one's experience and memory in the form of shareable images



3. The Genre Argument

“...within the communication group the individual members have to have a shared sense of various communication forms. They can then draw on these shared forms of interaction in their ongoing communication. If, for example, one wants to send a joke, the context, timing, presentation and form of the communication combine to assure joviality... the context around the message and the way that it is mediated are also important.” (Ling and Julsrud 2005: 331-332)

Audio file:

“So, greetings from here, our hot summer garden, from Kesäjärvi. Having a glass of sparkling. Leena and Pate are visiting, lovely. See you tomorrow, welcome!”



Subject: Greetings from Kesäjärvi!

Text:

No text.

4. Mobile Multimedia as Interaction

“...the teenagers who were observed and who took part in the interviews appeared to use their mobile phones to participate in the social practices of exchange. Specifically, their phone-mediated activities sometimes resembled the patterns of *gift-giving* described in the anthropology and sociology literature...” (Berg et al. 2003: 434).

“Our belief is that practices such as gift-giving are age-old, “immortal” practices – the “great recurrences of ordinary society”... Our goal is thus to determine systematic ways in which to uncover the relationship between social practices and the properties – or social affordances – of a technology. Underlying this research is a belief that successful technologies are ones that afford the accomplishment of particular enduring cultural practices.” (Taylor and Harper 2002: 446)



2004/04/13 16:50:46

Text:

What an adorable baby!
In exchange you get an
Easter Bunny postcard.

The driving vision in studies in Helsinki: following ethnomethodology, situated interaction, we argued that multimedia messaging

- is ordinary activity
- proceeds on a message-by-message basis. We answer questions, return greetings, guess when we see riddles, and tease when friends do something ridiculous (see Koskinen et al. 2002)

I'm on the Esplanade! Cool!



STOMP! What was that?
STOMP! Run for your lives... it's... it's...
The Giant Green Sociologist!
STOMP!



Mobile Multimedia as an Independent Variable

- Previous arguments have mostly tried to “explain” multimedia messaging
 - What are its consequences?
 - The French sociologist Carole Anne Rivière (2005) says that it leads to intimist and sensational, spectacular communication
 - “Being multimedia tools, they increasingly use intimate play context, which have no rational purpose but rather aim at sensations, and in which the search for immediately shared pleasure is more and more visible” (Rivière 2005: 212).

- The “age-old practices” argument presents much less somber view:
 - mobile multimedia is just another extension of human activity more generally: it restructures human action a bit
 - mobile telephony maybe more affected, getting in less serious, entertaining, banal (as I’ve argued elsewhere) -- or perhaps more fun and affective
 - most actions seem to happen among friends (Scifo), although this may be a methodic artifact

Discussion

- Mobile multimedia is occurring in society: if nothing else, it is a success to handset manufacturers
- There is a small, but growing body of research on this phenomenon
 - however, most studies have focuses on trying to understand what drives and shapes messaging
 - also, research is clearly technology-driven, focusing on new technologies when they arrive

- It is time to turn our eye towards its consequences:
 - How does multimedia change telephony -- or society? The press and policy makers have mostly focused on regulating camphones as cameras. Porn industry is already there. What else is out there, say, at an interpersonal level?
 - Theory on these consequences is needed. Should we follow Rivière, or build on earlier frameworks?

- Towards theory..?
 - Rudiments of theory exist
 - each argument presented have merits, but no debate exists; how to specify variables..? How to compare countries..?
 - it is time to get from the context of discovery to the context of justification (Katz and Aakhus 2002: 315)

Literature

- Berg, Sara, Alex S. Taylor, Richard Harper 2003. Mobile Phones for the Next Generation: Device Designs for Teenagers. *Proceedings of Computer-Human Interaction CHI 2003*, April 5–10, 2003, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, USA.
- Kindberg, Tim, Mirjana Spasojevic, Rowanne Fleck, Abigail Sellen 2004. *How and Why People Use Camera Phones. Consumer Applications and Systems Laboratory*. H&P Laboratories Bristol, HPL-2004-216, November 26, 2004.
- Ling, Rich and Tom Julsrud 2005. The Development of Grounded Genres in Multimedia Messaging Systems (MMS) among Mobile Professionals. In Nyíri, Kristof (ed.) *A Sense of Place*. Vienna: Passagen-Verlag.
- Katz, James E. and Mark Aakhus 2002. Making Meaning of Mobiles - a Theory of *Apparatgeist*. In Katz, James E. and Mark Aakhus (eds.) *Perpetual Contact. Mobile Communication, Private Talk, Public Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Koskinen, Ilpo, Esko Kurvinen and Turo-Kimo Lehtonen. 2002. *Mobile Image*. Helsinki: IT Press.
- Rivière, Carole 2005. Seeing and Writing on a Mobile Phone: New Forms of Sociability in Interpersonal Communications. In *Proceedings of Communications in the*

- Scifo, Barbara 2005. The Domestication of the Camera Phone and MMS Communications. The Experience of Young Italians. In Nyíri, Kristóf (ed.) *A Sense of Place*. Vienna: Passagen-Verlag.
- Taylor, Alex S. and Richard Harper 2002. Age-Old Practices in the “New World”: A Study of Gift-Giving Between Teenage Mobile Phone Users. *Proceedings of Computer-Human Interaction CHI 2002*, April 20-25, 2002, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA. Pp. 439-446.