

Newspapers in the Display – Mobile Media Cultures in Germany and Japan

Outline

With the change over of European mobile telephony suppliers to the faster and more powerful UMTS-service a trend towards media convergence that could already be seen in the stationary technologies also emerges in the field of mobile communication. Apparently, the mobile phone will be viewed less in its literal sense as a mobile telephone but rather as a universally applicable communication platform – as a mobile ‘all-round medium’. These processes pose new challenges to the field of media and communication science: first of all, the technically shaped differences between media applications merge and moreover, traditional mass media that were formerly tied to locality can now, due to multifunctional and mobile appliances, be used independent of their local contexts.

The study at hand seeks to look at the use of the mobile phone in two different cultural contexts (Germany and Japan), especially with regard to its role as a communication technology that incorporates other mass media. How a traditional medium is being integrated into a mobile technology and how it is then being picked up and integrated into the users’ media repertoires will be examined on the example of daily newspapers.



Japan as point of reference

- advanced developments in mobile multimedia
- known to be in the vanguard of mobile communication due to sophisticated user routines and affinity to popular consumer trends
- significance of the mobile internet (i-mode) and mobile written communication
- *Asahi Shimbun* among the first newspapers that were already able to make profits by selling newspaper subscriptions to mobile phone users

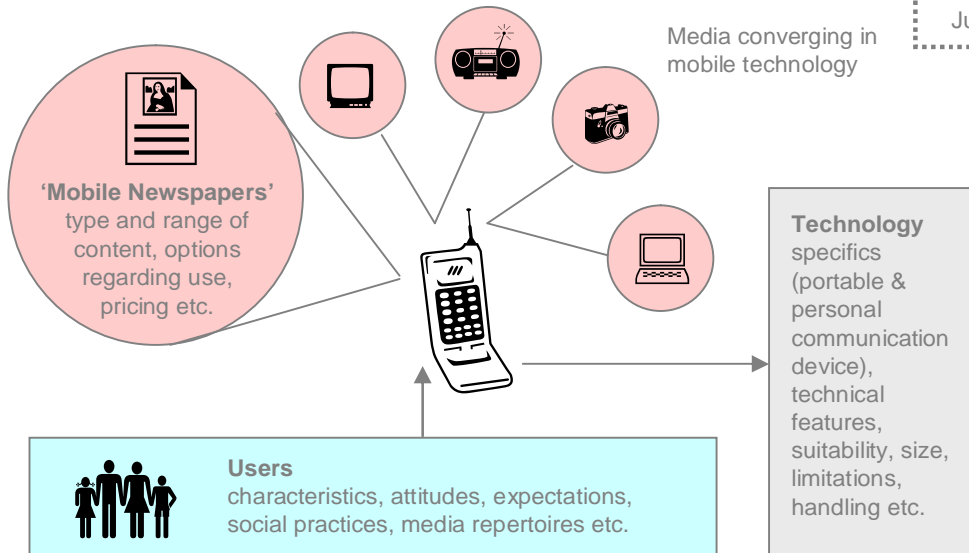
⇒ Japan is not used as a template for a mobile future in Germany >> rather the study attempts to look at the interplay of technology, culture, and society within a comparative perspective between Germany and Japan.



Methodology

- multi-method design
 - ⇒ users (early adopters): communication diaries; in-depth interviews
 - ⇒ communicators: interviews/ questioning in two survey periods
- empirical study both in Germany and in Japan (University of Tokyo, April to June 2006)

Three dimensions of ‘mobile newsreading’



The overall objective of the research project is to trace the process of introduction and adaptation of mass media within mobile technologies in two different cultural contexts. Thereby, a special focus will be laid on the ‘mobile newspaper’, as shown in the graphic. There are three dimensions of interest to examine the nature of ‘mobile newsreading’: the user’s perspective, the technological properties of the mobile phone and the specific characteristics of the medium that merges in mobile technology.

Access to the field of research

- the European mobile communication platform MINDS (Mobile Information and News Data Services for 3G) aims at defining a common European standard for mobile publishing
- publishing houses involved in MINDS seek to find a way out of the current newspaper crisis via the potential of technological progress
- a standardized questioning of twelve enlisted press houses in Germany will serve as a starting point for the study

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