

Needs and Gratifications of Mobile Internet: Case of South Africa

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Contents

- Introduction: Problem statement
- Conceptual back ground: Needs and gratifications framework
- Research methodology
- Findings
- Conclusions



Background

- Cellular technology is advancing rapidly.
- Newer generations of cell phone technology support the transmission and dissemination of numerous content types: graphics, text, video and audio.
- Cell phones have evolved from devices used purely for communication into multi-purpose devices
 - Communication, entertainment, business and academic needs



Background ...

- Cell phone adoption has accelerated rapidly.
- In Africa, mobile subscribers have increased by over 1000% between 1998 and 2003 (ITU, 2003).
- SA accounts for 1/5 of the growth.
- SA has over 35.9 million mobile subscribers (E-business handbook, 2006).
- Number of mobile subscribers exceed number of fixed line users.



Background ...

- “mobile technology has the power to drive the uptake of the internet” (ITU, 2004)
 - Fixed lines are partly to blame for the digital divide
 - SA has 10.1% penetration of fixed lines
- Wireless networks are “the most economically feasible solution to lack of existing infrastructure” in developing countries (Critical friends of technology, 2003)



Background

- Mobile Internet is a new innovation.
- There is need to investigate *how* and *why* people are using mobile internet.

Research questions

- For what purposes do people use mobile internet?
- What gratifications are received from mobile internet?
- Are there any particular motivations in South African mobile internet users that are different from those identified in previous studies conducted elsewhere?
- Is there evidence of a social dimension to mobile internet use?
- Is mobile internet a viable solution to bridge the digital divide in SA?
- Are there any factors that inhibit the use of mobile internet?



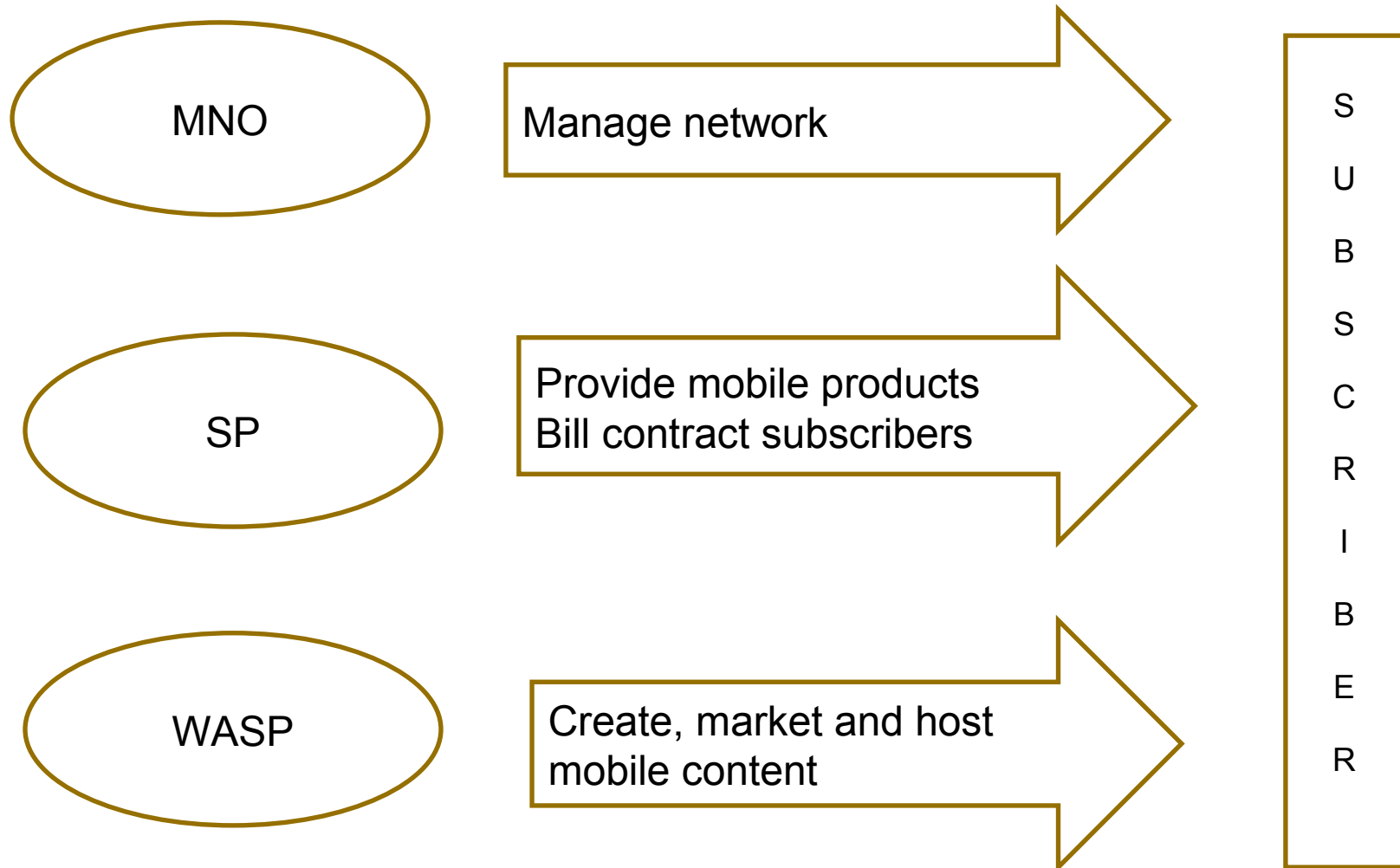
What this research is about

- Uses and gratification provided by Mobile Internet.
 - Communication, entertainment and information purposes
 - Focuses on mobile phones
- Excludes
 - M-commerce
 - Use of internet on PDAs, laptops



South African cellular market

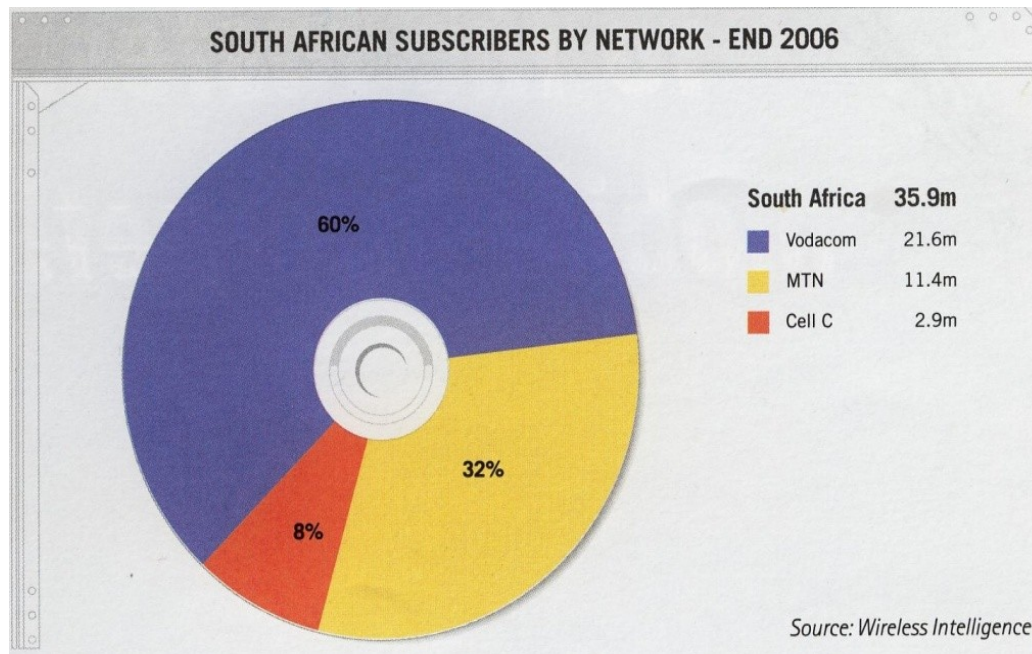
South African Mobile market



Three tier cellular industry model of South Africa

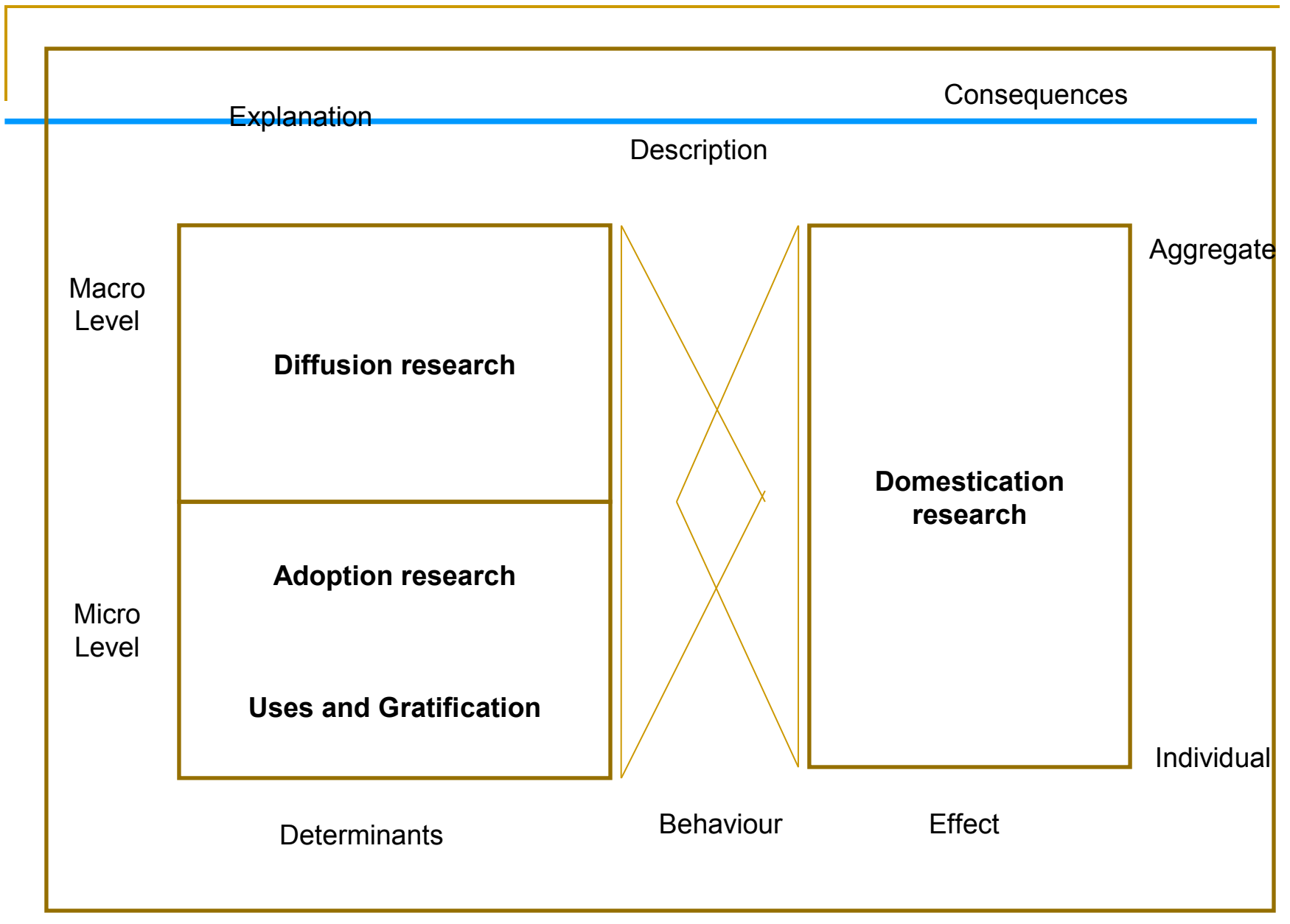


South African mobile market



Adoption research





Uses and Gratifications (U&G)

- U&G originates from media studies
- U&G seeks to examine the use of audience media in the light of social and psychological needs (Leung & Wei 2000).
- Centers on the motives for and consequences of media use.
- Focuses on what people do with the media as opposed to what the media does to people.



U&G ...

- To fully focus on the social and cultural impacts of new technologies could be premature until we have grasped exactly how and why people are making use of these media channels. (Perse & Dunn, 1998)



U&G ...

- Assumptions
 - Audiences actively participate in media selection and use.
 - Adopters seek gratifications in technology use based upon their individual needs or motivations
- Focuses on individual user or adopter as level of analysis.



U&Gs from literature

Mobile phone	Traditional internet
Personal safety	Resources
Financial incentive	People
Parental control	Searching
Time management	Controversy
Image/Fashion/Status	Surfing
Privacy management	Technology
Dependency	Websites
Information access	Education
Social interaction	Information
Immediacy	Learning
Mobility	Research
Pleasure	Chatting
Reassurance	Friends
Escape	Interactions
Relaxation	Clarity of purpose
Inclusion	Continuing relationship
	Purchase interest
	Personal involvement
	Personal interest

Research model

- Motivations are categorised into three:
- **Process** – Actual use and/ or enjoyment of the medium itself
- **Content** – Individuals use a medium solely for the content that is carried.
- **Social** – e.g. Chatting, friendship, interactions and people.



Research model

Process gratifications	Content	Social
Privacy management Parental contact Ease of use Speed Dependency Search Mobility/ Convenience Immediacy Financial incentive Fashion/status/image E-mail/Info access Surfing Time management	Knowledge/ research Information seeking Entertainment / fun Education / learning	Chatting Interaction Friendship Escape

Methodology

- Qualitative approach
- Semi-structured interviews
- Sample
 - A diverse population of University of Cape Town students
 - Convenient
 - Students are likely to be early adopters of mobile internet
- Analysed using Thematic analysis



Findings (1)

- South African Cellphone market
 - Most of the respondents are Vodacom customers
 - “Vodacom is a monopoly, you just have to accept them” RES02
 - It is “the most reliable network in Cape Town” RES09
 - Users subscribe to multiple networks
 - 6 respondents are on prepaid. Most of the contracts are on top up



Findings (2)

- General findings

- No difference based on gender, age and faculty
- 70% use mobile internet every day, 20% every week, 10 ad hoc
- Mainly use mobile internet off campus
- Majority have no alternative internet access off-campus
- It's preferred over internet cafes
 - It's perceived to be cheaper than other access forms



Findings (2b)

- “It’s there, part of life ... like a finger” RES02
- “... makes life simpler” RES03
- “... mobile internet is probably the best thing that’s come out on cell phones so far” RES04
- “It’s the future man! You’ve got the internet in your hand” RES09



Findings (3)

■ Process motivations

□ Financial incentive

- Majority believe its cheaper than the alternatives
- Chatting is cheaper than SMS

□ Dependency

- 90% would feel disoriented without mobile internet.
- “buy airtime just to access the net” RES06

□ Fashion/Status/Image

- All believe is trendy and fashionable to have and use internet enabled phone
- It's the “in thing ... would be embarrassed if I didn't have”RES04
- “keeps in touch with the generation” RES01



Findings (4)

- Process motivations ...
 - Mobility/Convenience/immediacy
 - One of the main motivation
 - “You can do it anywhere at any time” RES06
 - “... I think the mobile one is very mobile, like go there all the time, any minute I wanna use it ..” RES06
 - Information access/Email
 - Almost 50% use internet to access email
 - Most of those who don't- find it difficult to check email
 - Search capability
 - All respondents *google*



Findings (5)

■ Content motivations

□ Information seeking

- Find definitions (60%), check weather forecast (40%), news, financial information, sports

□ Education/learning

- Download lecture notes
- Renew library books
- But “UCT website difficult to use”

□ Research and knowledge

□ Entertainment

- Ring tones, music, games, video clips



Findings (6)

- Social motivations
 - Online chatting
 - The main motivator for Mobile Internet
 - It's cheaper than the other alternatives
 - “I log in [mixIT] like during the night ... I don't sleep without going to Mxit]
 - Friendship/Interaction/People/Relationships
 - “need to stay in touch”
 - Avoidance/Escape
 - To avoid direct contact with people



Findings (7)

- Inhibitors of mobile internet use
 - Ease of use/Experience
 - “It would have been difficult to use if I hadn’t experienced before” RES09
 - Awareness of differences amongst technologies
 - Speed
 - “It is only fast at the most obscure times” RES02
 - Reliability
 - Information not formatted for mobile phones
 - Hardware
 - Cost



FACILITATORS/MOTIVATORS

- PROCESS
 - Dependency
 - Fashion
 - Financial Incentive
 - Mobility/Convenience/Immediacy
 - Usefulness
 - Searching/ Browsing
 - Email/Information Access
- CONTENT
 - Research
 - Education
 - Entertainment
 - Information Seeking
- SOCIAL
 - Chatting
 - Relationships/Interaction/Friendship

MOBILE
INTERNET
USE

INHIBITORS

- EASE OF USE / EXPERIENCE
- HARDWARE
 - Memory
 - Screen size
 - Button size
- DISPLAY
 - Brightness
 - Formatting of Content
 - Navigation
- RELIABILITY
- SPEED
- AWARENESS OF TECHNOLOGIES



MOBILE PHONE

MOBILE
INTERNET

TRADITIONAL INTERNET

Personal safety
Parental control
Time
management
Image/Status
Privacy
management

Financial
Escape
Mobility
Dependency
Fashion
Immediacy
Information
Access

Ease of use
Experience
Speed

People
Searching
Surfing
Technology
Education
Information
Learning
Research
Chatting



Conclusion

- “ ... my mom got me this phone for my birthday present. My mom got me because it got Vodacom live, she said ‘there is internet for you to use’, ‘coz we don’t have internet at home” RES09



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