

Chapter XXIV

The Mobile Services Market: An Exploratory Analysis of Mobile Phone Usage by French Consumers

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the situation of the mobile services market in France, based on a survey conducted in the city of Montpellier, in November- December 2006. After a presentation of the existing research background related with mobile services, the article presents the research objectives and the research methodology applied to collect primary data for this project. The results of statistical data analysis are then presented and discussed, allowing an identification of the main consumer segments in terms of characteristics, attitudes and behaviours. The paper ends with a summary of the findings, and with suggestions for future research.

INTRODUCTION

The mobile phone technology provides users with a telephone connection anyplace, anytime. The main innovation that has facilitated mass adoption and use of mobile phones is the cellular approach in transmitting a radio signal (Layton, Brain, & Tyson, 2005). The introduction of digital technology (2G) has increased even further the number of communication channels. Finally, the current 3G technology represents the latest trend in mobile phones standards, offering increased bandwidth and information transfer rates to accommodate Web-based applications and phone-based audio and video files.

The use of mobile phones beyond the standard voice and data, and its use to access Internet applications, presents a number of challenges. Some of these challenges are related to the specific interface of mobile phones, and others with the existing Web protocols adapted for mobile networks. The screens of mobile phones are small and have a lower resolution in comparison with PC or laptop screens/monitors. Furthermore, the Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) does not always work efficiently on wireless devices with small screens as it also depends on mobile technology's bandwidth (such as GSM or CDMA) for access to information and services (Yeo, & Huang, 2003). There are also challenges related to connections

with the Web navigation and site structure, and with the input methods available for mobile phone users (Buchanan, Farrant, Jones, Thimbleby, Marsden, & Pazzani, 2001).

While mobile services provide opportunities for quick diffusion and diversification to the business, there are not many studies presenting the mobile market structure and evolution. This chapter attempts to present the situation of the mobile services market particularly with respect to France. The material in this chapter is based on a survey conducted in the city of Montpellier, in December 2006. After a presentation of the existing research background related with mobile services, the study presents the research objectives and the research methodology applied to collect primary data for this project. The results of statistical data analysis are then presented and discussed, allowing an identification of the main consumer segments in terms of characteristics, attitudes and behaviours. The chapter ends with a summary of the findings, and with suggestions for future research.

BACKGROUND: THE DEVELOPMENT OF MOBILE SERVICES MARKET

A specific characteristic of mobile-business is that a person using mobile services can conduct business anywhere, even when out of office, travelling between places, or visiting a different location (Kristofferson, & Ljungberg, 2000).

The technological features of 3G mobile phones permit the transmission as well as downloading of multimedia files. This facility has increased the range of mobile services that can be offered to consumers. In addition to the classical voice-based communication and SMS, the new mobile services add the MMS –Multimedia Message Service, and increase the web browsing capabilities.

Mobile communication technology is also used by enterprises – either to send adverts to individual mobile phone users (Spurgeon, 2005), or to use the mobile phone as a communication tool for the highly mobile employees/entrepreneurs (Donner, 2005). New business models have been already introduced in order to increase the effectiveness of specific mobile phone services.

These new areas of applications have triggered an interest among researchers regarding the consumer

profiles and how these profiles affect the evolution of the market for mobile services. Some researchers investigated the adaptation of advertising techniques to the interactive characteristics of the new communication tools (Spurgeon, 2005) while others investigated consumers' profile and their willingness to adopt and use various mobile services (Donner, 2005; Leppäniemi, & Karjaluoto, 2005; Mort, & Drennan, 2005; Suoranta, & Mattila, 2004), or the importance of mobile marketing in the promotion mix of companies (Karjaluoto, Leppäniemi, & Salo, 2004).

A consumer survey conducted by Jarvenpaa and Lang (2005) has identified a series of paradoxes perceived by consumers in their use of mobile phones, which provide possible explanation about the fears/concerns of the general public regarding the mobile technology. Mort and Drennan (2005) have attempted to identify and define the profile of various consumer segments, in relation to their propensity to adopt and use mobile phone technology. The gender of consumers seems to make a significant difference in the adoption of use of some mobile services: males usually express higher intentions to use m-services than females, but no statistically significant influence was found regarding age. Malhotra and Segars (2005) have focused on the pattern of wireless web adoption in the US, while Xiaoni and Prybutok (2005) investigated the specificities of the Chinese market, in comparison with US and Europe.

Despite the increased interest in understanding the mobile service market, until now the research was limited and fragmented, both in terms of geographical areas – there is more data for some countries than for others, and of research objectives – the research is rather heterogeneous, addressing specific elements of mobile service usage.

The present chapter attempts to provide a clear picture of the use of mobile services in France, proposing an analysis of the market based on gender and age categories. With the exception of official statistics (ARCEP, 2005) and professional studies (TNS Sofres, 2005), until now the academic research of the French mobile market is scarce.

Research Methodology

In order to identify and describe the profile of the French market for mobile services, the following research objectives have been defined in this project:

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