

Cellular annoyance

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Annoying mobile communications abroad

The results of a multi-national survey to be published in the *International Journal of Mobile Communications* reveals some surprises about cell phone use that have implications for organizations that rely on mobile communications. The study was undertaken by Robert Nickerson and Brenda Mak of San Francisco State University working with Henri Isaac of the University Paris-Dauphine.

We've all been annoyed by the noisy cell phone user on the daily commute telling their loved one at the other end, that they are "on the bus" or the ubiquitous and irritating ring tone. But, did you know that the French don't mind if you send a text message while walking and the Finns think that using your cell phone while driving should not be banned. People in Turkey are quite happy for people to use their phones

in class but Italians are the most annoyed by people taking on their phones at the theatre, although Americans mind that the least.

According to Nickerson and colleagues cell phones have become to represent truly portable and individual communications and computing, they can be used any time, any place, any where. Cell phones in many ways are making fundamental changes in the way we communicate and compute, say the researchers, by studying them we have an opportunity to understand the different ways that new technologies affect society.

The flexibility of the cell phone for holding conversations, sending and receiving email and texts, listening to music, watching videos, and carrying out various computing tasks makes them at once very useful for the user and correspondingly annoying and even hazardous in some situations for other people.

Cell phones are widely used in diverse social settings from commuter transport to out on the street, from restaurant to restroom, and even in class. The researchers point out that cell phone conversations, ringtone sounds and device key clicks are some of the annoyances that other people near the user may perceive. In a medical setting or on air transport there are also issues of safety to consider.

The researchers have surveyed hundreds of individuals in Finland, France, Italy, Turkey, and the USA and have found that peoples' perception of cell phone use is strongly affected by age, gender and employment status, and even by country.

One final question the team asked in their survey was whether the user would feel lost without their cell phone for making calls. Italian respondents reported that they would be the least perturbed by the loss, well below the all-country average, while Americans and Turks would be the most concerned about such a loss.

Cell phones have become universal devices that provide many capabilities, the researchers conclude, organizations that utilize mobile communications with employees, business partners and customers must understand the social impact of cell phone use and how it varies in different social settings and from country to country to avoid a negative impact on goodwill. For the rest of us, it would be useful if the researchers could pass on their wisdom to the noisy cell phone user with the annoying ringtone who is still on the bus.

Source: Inderscience Publishers

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