

# Phone call, SMS or perhaps a Whatsapp message?

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Smartphone users' communication habits have been studied in a doctoral thesis at Aalto University. The users' choices are affected, e.g., by the strength of the relationship with the other party and the context in which the phone is used.

Doctoral Candidate Juuso Karikoski explored the communication habits of [smartphone](#) users by installing a research application on their phones, and through additional research interviews and questionnaires. The data were collected from 140 - 200 users of smartphones mainly running the Symbian operating system. The sample was biased towards Finnish [university students](#) in their twenties - a group typically called early adopters, who like to try out new innovations.

'Most of the research material was collected over the years 2009 - 2010, when smartphones were used mainly by these early adopters. It is possible that the patterns of use displayed by the early adopters will be reflected in the future usage habits of the general population', says Karikoski.

## **At work and university, communication occurs mainly in writing**

The contexts of interest in relation to the results were the 'home', 'office' (the place the subjects spent office hours, e.g., a place of study or work) and 'elsewhere', i.e., places a person visited, or through which the person passed while travelling.

Regardless of the context, the phones were used mostly for [phone calls](#) and text messages. The most communication occurred in the office, where the most emails and text messages were also sent. On the other hand, outgoing calls from the office were the shortest in duration. The least calls were made at home, but the calls had the longest duration. Messaging services through social media and the Internet were used the most 'elsewhere'.

### **Texting to close contacts**

The strength of the relationship between the parties affected whether the contact would be made by [text message](#) or phone call. Both methods were used for close and more distant contacts. For people close to each other, texting was more common. It was also more likely to call a person to whom text messages were sent. The same did not, however, hold true the other way around. Many of those surveyed did not necessarily exchange text messages at all with people they called.

In the interviews, it was found that in addition to the context and strength of the relationship, the choice of communication method was affected by location and the availability of the person being contacted, the service price and terms of contract of the mobile service provider, the participants of the communication (whether between two people or group [communication](#)), and the status of the phone itself (e.g., battery status).

[Juuso Karikoski will defend his doctoral thesis](#) at the Aalto University School of Electrical Engineering on Friday, 6 September at 12.00 noon.

Provided by Aalto University

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