Chapter XXI

Multi-Channel Services of the Future

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Abstract

We need to understand people’s needs to use technology and what kinds of services, technological infrastructure and legislation are needed to build an open, balanced information society. Future research (i.e., current research aiming at learning about the future) provides the tools for preparing visions and future scenarios and making the future. As an example of making the future, we will present the idea of communication camps, which aim at making multi-channel services more common. In addition, we have written three short stories to illustrate the multi-channel services that arise from people’s needs. The stories are based on the use of disciplined technological and sociological imagination (Mills, 1959), and we use them to illustrate the opportunities that multi-channel services offer to everyday operations.
Introduction

The basic infrastructure in Finland is so advanced that it enables multi-channel services. Technology would not stand in our way if we only knew how to use it. The term *multi-channel services* most often seems to be used to refer to content services, such as news delivered and received in various ways. The multi-channel services provided by operators have attracted far less attention. In this article, the term refers to the opportunity of producing, transmitting and receiving various contents through multiple channels.

Demand for a national media culture requires that people know what they need (or want) and also know how to demand it. This, in turn, requires the ability to make one’s own productions. It is like the ability to write: only when you learn to write can you understand what you read and demand and appreciate better literature and better texts. Not until multi-channel services become an everyday part of life can we utilize the best, unparalleled opportunity provided by information networks—everyone can be a writer, a cameraperson, and a producer for their own contents. The freedom and joy of speech that does not offend others is everyone’s irrevocable right and technology now makes it possible.

Creating a new living and working environment for everyone requires also that we pay attention particularly to the services for small enterprises in order to enable technology to be utilized in full for making everyday life easier. These services cannot be created solely on the terms of the market forces, as it is impossible for small companies to develop the services by themselves. It is also impossible for small, mainly micro companies to do all the background work and to compare and learn to use various new technological applications; that is, to put the technology into full use. They simply do not have enough time. What is also needed is new lines of business and occupational groups (e.g., “IT road service” and network secretaries, who, for instance, attend to the information management, administrative, marketing and information retrieval services of several different micro companies).

We need to understand people’s needs to use technology and what kinds of services, technological infrastructure, and legislation are needed to build an open, balanced information society. Future research (i.e., current research aiming at learning about the future) provides the tools for preparing visions and future scenarios and making the future. As an example of making the future, we will present the idea of communication camps, which aim at making multi-channel services more common. We have written the following three small stories to illustrate the multi-channel services that arise from people’s own needs. People are the subjects, and the content services have been provided for these subjects. An opposite approach would have resulted in stories about how people use...
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