Chapter 14
BlogWall: Promoting Social Communication through Mobile Technology in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT
Since the invention, the mobile phone is becoming more and more popular to lead the communication sector and it has been the spirit of personal communication from the beginning of 80s. Furthermore, developing countries which have always been on the search for affordable communication solutions found mobile communication the most popular method. Low cost communication, infrastructure, and maintenance are some of the key reasons that make mobile technologies popular in developing countries. Statistics depict that the usage of short messages is one of the main communication method found in most of the organizations in developing countries and most of the organizations are using SMS (Short Message Service) as a tool to assist people, especially in African and Asian continents. Sri Lanka, as a developing country, has a unique culture which has emerged scaling many centuries, mixing with various neighboring cultures. Recently the western cultural influence has dramatically changed the various cultural aspects of the urban population. The rapid economic growth, the changes in agriculture based economic environment, advances in communication and media, and globalization trends has transformed the cultural experiences of Sri Lankans. Taking into account the speedy progress of the mobile technology, especially the SMS, the evolution of the Sri Lankan way of living which has absorbed the culture that has developed with the use of mobiles, and the long literary history where poetry had played a major role in communication,
we are observing the suitability of the Blogwall system, an interactive system which operates on user SMS and provides opportunities for creative poetry by combining visual art and poetry.

**INTRODUCTION**

The rapid developments of science and technology during the 20th century transformed the world more widely than at any time in the past and the mobile industry has gone through successive waves of innovation later in the century (Browne, 2003). The trend towards low power consumption and hand held devices have increased the challenges and possibilities in the mobile industry. However, only the voice service was primarily available through mobile devices. After coupling short messaging service with voice service, subscribers started to acquire novel ideas for new mobile services (Siau & Shen, 2003).

At present, mobile phones have become the most vital part of our daily lives making it very hard to imagine a life without a mobile phone. They have become inexpensive, user-friendly, comfortable, and emerging with almost every latest elements desired by people. From children to senior citizens, mobile phones have become a fashion as well as a way of staying ahead with the technology. The express lifestyles of the modern public are making the communications with the loved ones intricate. Mobile phone technology, which connected people wherever and whenever, is allowing people to overcome this dilemma.

Even though there are many technologies available for connecting people nowadays, most of them are contrastingly expensive than the mobile communication (Grinter & Eldridge, 2001). Furthermore, in developing countries the access to technology is distributed unevenly. Demography, economical imbalance, political environment and social conditions are the main factors behind this irregularity. The unequal access to the technology has created a technological divide in developing countries which is being positively answered by the mobile technology. The use of cellular technology instead of copper wire, the inexpensiveness, the user friendliness, and the mobility have provide a greater flexibility in accessing area where the minimum infrastructure prevails, thus reducing the communication and technological divide.

There are numerous instances where mobile technology was applied to reduce poverty in developing nations by opening up new opportunities (Slater & Kwami, 2005). In most occasions, the mobile phone allows users to conduct businesses, exchange information, and many more activities. Developing countries such as Sri Lanka are using mobile phones as the support for services (Samarajiva, 2000; Designing useful mobile services for Africa, 2009). Health, banking, government, education, business, and many other sectors are using mobile services which would qualitatively improve the life of under-privileged populations. As of today, the most widespread way to provide such services on mobile phones is with SMS-based applications. The reasons for that are identified as high availability, easy to use, and low and predictable costs when using short messages. However, there should be a well structured preparation to ensure the increase on positive impacts when the mobile technologies are introduced to an already established culture.

Sri Lanka has an illustrious culture based primarily on Buddhism and agriculture which has developed over centuries. Social connections and collective behavior are two main elements of this island nation. The introduction of mobile phones during the 1990s has tremendously transformed the everyday activities of the Sri Lankans. There has been a unique communication using poetry which evolved from the ancient times in Sri Lanka (Pollock, 2003). In addition, Sri Lankans are mainly using mobile phones for communicating through short messages since voice calls are more expensive than the short messages. This phenomenon is common in most of the developing countries since people could not tolerate the voice

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