Business practitioners' Perspective on Value of Mobile Technology

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Author's Biography

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Abstract

No existing research maps and discusses holistically values deriving from mobile technology use capturing both strategic and operational opportunities which are best to emerge in the B2B context. This empirical paper addresses this gap. Adapted grounded theory approach is applied to collect and analyse in-depth interviews with 28 B2B practitioners from advertising and marketing firms. Whether mobile technology is a simple mean to advanced communication with no physical boundaries of time and location or a business tool to boost creative thinking, this study concludes that mobile technology represents a novel and unique category of technology because of its core distinctive feature, 'being mobile'. B2B practitioners argue that the true nature of mobile technology lies in seeing it as a source of value that derives from using mobile technology. B2B practitioners view mobile technology not only as a purely technical tool (functional value) enabling effective communication (social value) but as a strategic tool driving balanced and flexible ways in managing business (emotional value) and enabling creative thinking (creative value).

Keywords: mobile technology use, mobile technology value, adapted grounded theory, business practitioner

Introduction

Mobile technology brings the possibility to transmit information irrespective of time and location via voice, text and audio-visual content (Balasubramanian, Peterson & Jarvenpaa, 2002; Jisun & Tugrul, 2010; Tribbia, 2006). But is this all? In reality mobile technology, comprising mobile devices, networks, mobile Internet and mobile applications, penetrated all the aspects of social and business existence (De Reuver, Bouwman, & De Koning, 2008). Technical features of mobile technology are visible and do not differentiate it from fixed network and stationary desktop information technology (hereafter, IT) substantially. Hence such technology enables an alternative format for communication with a traditional website and digital content (Hjorth, 2008). Having said that, true benefits and distinctive nature of mobile technology are visible in actual usage that offers unique experiences to a user. Such experiences are grounded in the fact that mobile technology allows interaction and exchange of data among individuals or systems anywhere and anytime (Ding, Iijima & Ho, 2004). Moreover, the reducing costs of mobile devices have increased the adoption rate of such devices democratising usage among individuals and boosting innovative solutions among businesses.

So far scholars have substantially explored a consumer context of mobile technology use focusing on understanding the consumers' acceptance of mobile technology and attitudes towards services delivered and consumed via mobile devices (Barwise & Strong, 2002; Gao, Rohm, Sultan & Pagani, 2013; Watson, McCarthy & Rowley, 2013). Additionally a number of studies (Hammed, 2003; Lee, Cheng & Cheng, 2007; Donnelly, 2009) looks at a business side of mobile technology use revealing that in education, healthcare and financial business-to-consumer (hereafter, B2C) firms mobile technology facilitates employees' mobility and enhances consumer experiences. The missing part in this chain of research evidences is the understanding benefits of

mobile technology use for business-to-business (hereafter, B2B) firms. An entirely new dimension of mobility drives new strategic and operational opportunities for individual and business users (De Reuver et al., 2008). Such strategic and operational opportunities are best to emerge in the B2B context. B2B practitioners similar to individuals in the consumer context use mobile technology for communication and data exchange purposes (Bolat and Kooli, 2013) but most importantly B2B customers are increasingly demanding products and services created by or for consumption on mobile devices (Molteni and Ordanini, 2003; Feijóo, C., Maghiros, I., Abadie, F., & Gómez-Barroso, 2009).

Despite becoming a common tool for everyone's use, to the best knowledge of the author of this article, no published research maps and discusses holistically values deriving from mobile technology use. Besides, a holistic mapping is mostly possible by studying mobile technology use in the B2B context where both operational and strategic in nature values are likely to emerge. Addressing the above gaps in existing scholarly work, this paper aims to answer the following research question, *what are the unique values of mobile technology in the B2B context?*

To address the research question the author applies an adapted grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) to collect, analyse and interpret in-depth interviews with 28 practitioners from advertising and marketing firms, which use mobile technology in daily operational data exchange and communication activities but also embed mobile technology in solutions offered and sold to their B2B customers.

This paper contributes to the domains of both B2B and B2C marketing by revealing that mobility is a distinctive feature of mobile technology and 'being mobile' underlines four types of values that mobile technology use creates, namely functional, social, creative and emotional. In line with

B2C studies (Barwise & Strong, 2002; Lee, Cheng & Cheng, 2007; Donnelly, 2009; Gao et al., 2013; Watson et al., 2013) research findings in this paper demonstrate that B2B practitioners experience functional, social and emotional values when using mobile technology. In fact, these three values result in operational efficiencies for B2B firms studied in this paper and for B2C firms discussed in Snowdon et al. (2006), Spiegelman and Detsky (2008), Chae & Yeum (2010), and Hislop and Axtell (2011). However, the forth value of mobile technology emerged in this paper, creative value is responsible for creative thinking and demonstrates directly that the use of mobile technology stimulates creativity and innovation in the B2B context. No similar results have been revealed in the B2C context. This paper's findings indicate that creative value is a unique value of mobile technology in the B2B context.

This paper is organised into five parts. The first part reviews current studies around mobile technology adoption and use. Then, the research method used to answer the research question is briefly explained, followed by the presentation of main research findings. The final two parts of the paper conclude the discussion of empirical findings through evaluation of existing academic literature and reflection on implications for business practitioners and academia. Next, the review of scholarly work highlighting the nature of mobile technology adoption and use once more highlights the gap in the literature justifying why it is critical to map values deriving from mobile technology use by incorporating the B2B perspective.

Theoretical background

Despite the fact that mobile technology was around in the last ten years, academics cannot reach conclusion in what mobile technology actually is and how this type of technology differs from the fixed network and stationary desktop IT. Scholars distinguish two contrasting perspectives on

defining mobile technology. First (Tarasewich, Nickerson, & Warkentin, 2002, p. 43; Wiredu, 2007; Mohelska, 2010) considers mobile devices as *"an alternative way to interact with a traditional Web site, albeit in a different format or on a more limited or constrained basis"*. Herein mobility is a restraining feature because portability of mobile devices and, therefore, small size restricts mobile technology users to perform certain tasks that can only be completed on fixed network and stationary desktop personal computers. Hence, mobile technology represents a sub-category of IT. On the other hand second, opposing group of scholars (Jarvenpaa & Lang, 2005; Sheng, Nah & Siau, 2005; De Reuver et al., 2008) believes that mobile technology is a novel, unique concept. In fact, Jarvenpaa and Lang (2005) refer to mobile technology as a combination of communication and computing capabilities, not restricted contextually. Ding et al. (2004) emphasise techical essense of mobile technology defining and categorising mobile technology as a broad range of mobile and wireless networks, the mobile Internet and mobile devices that facilitate activities anywhere and anytime. Herein mobility is a distinctive feature that differentiates mobile technology from fixed network and stationary desktop IT because true ubiquity implies consumption of information and services anytime and anywhere regardless of connection to wireless network.

Growing number of studies (Jarvenpaa & Lang, 2005; Nah & Siau, 2005; Tribbia, 2006) looks at the use of mobile technology to understand uniqueness such technological platforms have in comparison to fixed network and stationary desktop IT. Vast majority of research about the use of mobile technology explores the B2C context with a particular interest to adoption of mobile marketing (Barwise & Strong, 2002; Gao et al., 2013; Watson et al., 2013) and few papers about mobile commerce (Barnes, 2002; Ghobakhloo, SH & Zulkifli, 2013; Kuppelwieser, Sarstedt & Tuzovic, 2014). In 2005 Jarvenpaa and Lang published results of their research that attempts to explore experience of using mobile technology through a process perspective. However,

Jarvenpaa and Lang (2005) end up outlining a list of paradoxes that envision strengths but at the same time challenging issues related to mobile technology usage. For instance, mobile technology is found to be a highly engaging platform allowing people to interact anytime anywhere but disengaging at the same time because it limits the nature of communication and depth of conversation that occur in face-to-face scenarios. On the contrary, a number of studies (Hammed, 2003; Lee, Cheng & Cheng, 2007; Donnelly, 2009) look at the business side of mobile technology use revealing that in education, healthcare and financial B2C firms mobile technology facilitates employees' mobility and enhances consumer experiences. Moreover, Rochford (2001), Hammed (2003), Sheng et al. (2005), and Donnelly (2009) highlight organizational benefits of using mobile technology, which are flexible communication, mobility of employees, cost reduction, and positive financial performance. In particular Sheng et al. (2005) adopt value-focused thinking (Keeney & McDaniels, 1992) in attempt to reveal values associated with organisational adoption of mobile technology. Ending with an outline of three organisational areas that mobile technology advances, namely (1) process, (2) communication and knowledge sharing, and (3) marketing effectiveness – operational opportunities, Sheng et al. (2005) fail to recognise distinctive values that the use of mobile technology creates in the form of strategic opportunities. In actual fact an entirely new dimension of mobility drives new strategic opportunities for individual and business users (De Reuver et al., 2008). Such strategic opportunities are best to emerge in the B2B context. B2B practitioners similar to individuals in the consumer context use mobile technology for communication and data exchange purposes (Bolat and Kooli, 2013) but most importantly B2B customers are increasingly demanding products and services created by or for consumption on mobile devices (Molteni and Ordanini, 2003; Feijóo et al., 2009).

In overall extant literature around mobile technology adoption and use highlights that mobile technology is valuable for both personal and professional use. Nevertheless answers to *Why* and *How* are quite fragmented across academic papers and the missing part in this chain of research evidences is the understanding benefits of mobile technology use for B2B firms.

This paper treats mobile technology as a distinct category of technologies because application of mobile technology provides distinctive and unique experiences compared to business opportunities given by the use of fixed network and stationary desktop IT. As stated in the previous paragraph, mobility feature drives new strategic and operational opportunities for companies. Drawing on the above-mentioned concerns this paper aims to address the gap in academic literature, in particular to understand why mobile technology is truly different to fixed network and stationary desktop IT, why is it valuable to use mobile technology. In doing so this paper endeavors to map distinctive mobile technology values by incorporating the B2B perspective. Empirical data given by mobile technology B2B users who engage with mobile technology on both personal and professional levels is explored and analysed. Jensen (1996, p. 60) stresses that knowing *"consequences of consumer value can probably be considered as the most fundamental prerequisite for sustainable competitive advantage''*. Ultimately by mapping distinctive to mobile technology values this study endeavours to drive new ways in exploiting ubiquitous technology. The next section discusses the research method used to map distinctive to mobile technology values.

Research Method

To address the research question the author applies adapted grounded theory (GT) approach (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) to collect and analyse in-depth interviews with 28 B2B practitioners.

Adapted GT differs from classical GT approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in that existing theoretical knowledge grounds and directs profound exploratory process.

Contextually this study focuses on advertising and marketing industry, pioneers and advanced adopters of digital technologies (TSB, 2009), allowing in-depth exploration on mobile technology usage from both personal (individual) and professional (organisational) perspectives, capturing operational and strategic opportunities mobile technology use creates. Data includes 28 semi-structured in-depth face-to-face and web-based interviews with key decision-makers in 28 firms that employ mobile technology and operate in the B2B context by offering a wide range of marketing services such as consulting, branding, and digital content development to its business customers. Each interview lasts from forty minutes to one and a half hour. Most interviewees own and manage their businesses. However, few are responsible for particular area within a firm devoted to understanding technological advancements (creative director in one of the firms, an account manager, two new media / digital directors, and five strategic directors). To maintain ethical principles of confidentiality and anonymity of results each interviewee is labelled using [I] and adding order number. So interviewee 1 is labelled as I1. Value-focused thinking approach (Keeney & McDaniels, 1992) guides the interviewing process where interviewees are asked to share their accounts on attitudes towards mobile technology and overall experiences in using mobile technology for personal and professional purposes.

Employing GT procedures (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) simultaneous data collection and analysis maintains constant comparison approach that builds a rigorous theoretical conceptualisation of categories and concepts. NVivo 10 qualitative data analysis software is used to arrange, scan, systematically display and interpret data. Analysis is based on three-stage coding process. First, open coding exposes interview transcripts to data reduction through the determination of codes in

the form of a word, a sentence or a paragraph, which illustrates the relevance to research topic. To label codes, the author uses 'action' words to reflect on the nature of the subject under investigation, the use of mobile technology. 'Action' codes in comparison to 'noun' codes are more suitable for describing a process (Partington, 2000). Hence, codes such as *'being intuitive'*, *'being convenient'* and *'enabling creativity'* reflect the non-static active nature of these categories. Second, axial coding builds coding matrix to understand phenomenon under question – on the basis of similarities and differences between the interviewees' claims codes are classified and grouped together into categories to represent connections and relationships between codes. Hence the author identifies four categories, such as functional value, social value, creative value and emotional value. Third, final stage of the analytical process, selective coding, determines the core concept, values of mobile technology, and develops a storyline. The next section presents research findings emerged from the three-stage coding analysis.

Research Findings

This section reports on results of the adapted GT analysis by illustrating views of B2B practitioners on the nature of mobile technology and its unique values by including direct excerpts from the interview transcripts.

Being mobile as a key distinctive feature of mobile technology

All 28 interviewees view mobile technology as being different to fixed network and stationary desktop IT. The difference is seen as the fine line between mobile technology as an extension to fixed network and stationary desktop IT provisions and in particular understanding the benefits of using mobile technology. Interviewees 23, 24 and 28 say that from a "*technical evolution point of view*" [I23], mobile technology is "*extended functionally from stationary computers*" [I28], but

"*in terms of the way people are using mobile technology, it is quite unique and different*" [I24]. Interviewee 1 reinforces this thinking:

> *I think if you put it in a box next to desktop information technologies, mobile technology seems quite similar to ICT, but it is mobile. I think it is a tool, and I think how it is used is important. It could be an extension of other ICT and it could not be. It is very similar to other stationary desktop ICT, if it is used in a similar way. For instance, you have four offices but you don't have four computers. You have one laptop, which is used for four offices, four days a week. Or you don't have one office where you are based. You travel all around the world and you are in the different countries every month. You have been doing that for two years, but one thing constant about what you do is that you have satellite connectivity and your laptop. Now that is completely different. I think it is really depending on how it is used.*

Interviewee 11 describes mobile technology as "*unique*," and interviewee 24 adds that he "*cannot see a great future for desktop technology, when mobile devices become so intuitive, so easy, and so portable.*" Interviewee 28 enthusiastically proclaims that the "*world is in my pocket; I am so free; I am so occupied; I am so connected*," thereby stressing that mobile technology allows flexibility and freedom but at the same time demands engagement on both the personal and the business levels.

The managing director in firm 21 integrates contradictory views on the differences between mobile technology and fixed network and stationary desktop IT by stating that mobile technology as well as all existing ITs come under one catch-all phrase – "*tools to communicate*" – albeit with different purposes and therefore experiences in using IT:

There is a big difference in sitting at the office when it is quiet and you having this big screen in front of you. Then you are sitting at a coffee shop with a coffee machine distracting you, and people talking. You cannot find a power point to plug in your laptop. You cannot log in to their Wi-Fi. There are all of these scenarios. With Blackberry you can go online, but it is very fiddly, it is slow… I do not see mobile technology as revolutionary but as a natural step forward. And this is two-fold, technically and in terms of the experience you get.

Being mobile is highlighted as a differentiating factor of mobile technology, underpinning essence to mobile technology functionality and application. Interviewee 25 states that mobile technology "*is about mobility and the ability to take your work wherever you go,*" while Interviewee 4 postulates:

Mobility is the ability to use technology on the go, anytime, anywhere and the ability to do things from anywhere, anytime, being connected to the world constantly and ready to respond to challenges and activities.

Except for interviewee 26, B2B practitioners emphasise that the opportunity to move around with a device that enables interaction with people and the Internet results in freedom and flexibility for a user to organise their workload and personal life - "*no limitations in terms of your age, lifestyle and character*" [I16]. Interviewee 13 adds:

Experiences that you have online on a desktop can be very immersive. But different with mobile is the fact that, firstly, it is personal to you; and secondly, you move around with it.

Interviewee 7 reinforces the previous statement by adding "*I no longer think about my working day as 8 to 5... mobile technology means that I don't have to be at the office.*" Logically, being mobile implies both location and time independence:

Being mobile like travelling, doing all the things when you are anywhere and not sat at your desk... being anywhere, is what is different to being sat at your desk and using a personal computer. [I28]

Interestingly, interviewee 11 suggests that being mobile means the contextual transformation of an individual's surroundings:

There is a transformation of mobility in a sense that before you had a tool that made you mobile, but now you have a tool that makes everything mobile around you. It is not that something carries you to places – you carry everything to places.

Mobile technology is powerful in moving life of an individual with them:

You can conduct business, your social life, your shopping, your buying; you can pretty much do your life on the move on your phone [I20].

On the other hand, interviewee 11 states, *"Mobile technology brings an opportunity to integrate a variety of values as long as there is more value in being mobile".* Hence, technology being mobile leads to a number of benefits for the user of mobile technology. It is important to understand what underpins the mobility of technology, but what is more critical to increasing usability is the evaluation of value (benefits, if any) that mobile technology creates in comparison to fixed network and stationary desktop IT. The next subsection explores this question further.

Value of mobile technology: understanding the benefits of mobility

As stated in the previous subsection technology 'being mobile' leads to a number of benefits for the user of mobile technology. These benefits are obviously what creators need to evaluate when thinking about applying mobile technology. Interviewee 11 thinks that mobility "*creates new value... opportunities that create innovation and distinct communication*" and lists the following benefits, *"values of using mobile technology"* in his words:

So, these values to me would include (I have got a model for this) social value, location value, entertainment value, utility value, information and personal value. All of these six values are inherent in a mobile. Other stationary fixed technologies or communication channels do not have all of these benefits. Mobile technology is unique... Mobile is intuitive, in that location value is not achievable with stationary ICT, and other values are taken on to the next level with mobile technology.

Table 1 integrates similarities in the views of what 28 interviewees think constitutes the value of mobile technology. Collectively interviewees identify four types of mobile technology value, which imply goal-based satisfaction with tasks:

When I think about mobile technology, it is all about how it is going to affect me in my life, work, activities and the tasks I do. [I10]

These values are functional, social, creative and emotional. Next, the author discusses all four values in details.

Table 1. Values of mobile technology use

Value type	Representation Quotes
Functional value	
Being cross-functional	Abilities of mobile technology to perform variety of activities at the same time: communicate, find you location, and search web. [I8]
Being intuitive	Using mobile devices is very, very useful, and they are so easy to adopt and use. [I24]
Being convenient	Mobile technology for me it is a *convenience* of being able to communicate across a multitude of platforms... The transfer of information is faster [I7]
Social value	
Being immediate	It is revolutionary in terms of speed and business efficiency really [I9]
Being relevant	Relevance!.. it is one-to-one communication. [I2]
Being engaging	All of this is: "We are contacting you and you need to contact us". So, you can do it while people are driving a car or walking. [I3]
Epistemic value	
Enabling creativity	There are much more things facilitating the mobility of the technology, which means more things can be created. I think it is much more to do with people's freedom, allowing people to do more through being mobile rather than being in one place, remaining stationary. [I1]
Emotional value	
Balancing work and personal life	It brings to me a lot of flexibility in managing personal and work life; although I head my own small business and have a control over the business. In that case it is even more effective tool to manage. [I10]

<u>Functional value</u>

Functional value comprises possibilities that mobile technology creates due to, firstly, technical competencies such as the transmission and exchange of data in different formats, ease of use of technical features, multitasking when voice conversation can happen simultaneously with texting and browsing the Internet – all of which are shared between various mobile categories, devices, networks (cloud computing) and applications. Hence, mobile technology is a cross-functional type of technology:

> *Because of cloud computing and hardware that you can access it through, it does not matter where you, as you can collect everything on any device. [I11]*

> *Mobile technology is great because it is all in one place… You can update content between different devices very easily. [I5]*

Secondly, although mobile technology is considered to be complex in nature, interviewees 3, 6 and 7 see it as intuitive. Interviewee 3 states:

> *Mobile technology is intuitive, and I can go straight to the heart of what I am planning to do with it. I do not think about how to do it. Mobile technology is so easy to use, so there is no question on how.*

"*Easy to use*" [I28] is something that relates to the intuitive level because of the functionality embedded in a mobile device *("I just look at my mobile phone, I say my name and I say my number and it does the rest for me*" [I7]) that allows a user to personalise it and *"become more intuitive and almost empathetic in terms of proactive responses to an individual's requests*" [I7]. Interviewee 6 emphasises that mobile technology is an extension of a person; simultaneously being personal and being intuitive, it is implanted into a user's life:

My view of mobile technology is when you don't know whether you are using technology. So a lot of it drives us to remove that feeling of it and it just becomes as natural as possible. So the benefits are that it feels real and not through an interface…. The advantage is that I don't have to commute, I don't have to have travel costs and all of those things, and you can organise your time around your life. So, there are a lot more blends and splicing of a normal expectation of time.

Thirdly, cross-functionality and an intuitive interface collectively make mobile technology convenient in terms of functional benefits such as "*speed and flexibility of interaction and exchange of information*" [I24], portability, ease of use and the ability to communicate on demand.

Social value

Social value covers the purposes of communication whereby the immediacy of a response, and therefore the relevance of timely engagement, is a consequence of mobile technology 'being mobile'. Firstly, the speed of information exchange has already been mentioned when discussing the functional value of mobile technology. However, "*speed of gaining information at fingertips*" [I10] facilitates instantaneity that "*allows you to interact more easily in the real world*" [I14] and "*to react to things quickly*" [I17]. It is about being reactive – albeit instantly and immediately – by "*speeding up the communication process and transmission of data*" [I5]:

Immediacy is something that clicks with me when I think about mobile. Immediacy in speaking to these who I want to speak right now. Immediacy in accessing something what I need right now… I am mobile with opportunities to get immediate access to information. I can do it when I am meeting with my clients. I can do it when I am drinking my coffee in the morning at the local coffee shop. [I26]

Secondly, immediacy makes conversation relevant, according to interviewee 2:

> *So, when I send you a message, that message is just for you. When you look at the message I am delivering to you, it is relevant to you; it means something to you.*

Reactive behaviour can be transformed into a proactive trait because of the increased level of relevance. Interviewee 4 claims that he gets "*information from clients immediately, when needed, and then there is an opportunity to impress them by adding an extra proposition.*"

Ultimately, relevance and immediacy take mobile communication to a different level of engagement with the world. It is about opportunities to engage with people and brands that could not reach or be reached before:

> *Holding something small and interacting with the world every single minute through that technology is really fantastic. [I10]*

> *It is far easier to collaborate with people. We don't have to be in one location to do something… The use of mobile technology allows that collaboration much better. [I6]*

Creative value

All the interviewees claim that mobility "*pushes forward creativity in terms of idea generation and setting up business objectives*" [I9] and helps to develop new services for B2B customers. Creative processes are not constrained by time and specific locations, thus allowing freedom in thinking:

> *Creativity is based on flexibility that the use of mobile devices allows. But then having this new platform makes you think of new ways to attract customers and offer different products to your clients. [I26]*

Interviewee 19 comments that creativity is particularly related to the creative sector context, where curiosity and the search for novelty are commonplace:

> *I think the technology is only really driven by our ongoing development as a society. It is just kind of pandering to our needs… In terms of creative delivery and mobile technologies and things like that, mobile technology really allows brands and companies to find another avenue for people.*

Emotional value

The final type of value, emotional, really differentiates mobile technology from fixed network and stationary desktop IT, where teleworking is not only possible but also more flexible. In the case of fixed network and stationary desktop IT, work is still location-bound. Mobile technology, on the other hand, balances work and personal life, thereby allowing flexibility and empowerment in managing a workload. Interviewee 10, a working mum, states that mobile technology is a powerful tool that allows her to be a mum but also pursue a career and earn a living:

> *I am an archetypal working mum trying to do everything. So there is a whole world of how mums do have it all. They are trying to juggle with all as much as they can. For me, only because of the way mobile technology allows us to work on the go, I can juggle… When I am waiting for my child coming out of school, when they [children] are playing on the playground, I can deal with important things on my mobile phone. To the world it appears that I am working… Mobile technology allows me to have that flexibility that I could only have dreamed of. [I10]*

Two issues derive from the opportunity offered by mobile technology to balance various activities in people's lives. On the one hand, enabling creativity is linked to flexibility. The chance to be creative, irrespective of location but also time, is enabled via mobile technology. It also has a positive impact on wellbeing, as, in an attempt to retain business, active individuals still have the opportunity to have 'breaks' and holidays:

> *I am not stuck in one place; I can do my things, travel and do the job at the same time. Mobile technology is convenient for me to balance my lifestyle and to balance work and personal life. My business still keeps getting new clients and serving existing ones, even when I am on holiday. But what is most important with mobile technology, I am aware of the progress of the work from primary sources like emails and documents sent to me via email, not through someone's interpretation of the situation. [I28]*

On the other hand, balance is a controversial concept when it comes to mobile technology, because expectations of customers and other social groups that they can approach an individual anytime, anywhere is inconsistent with how much time is spent on working:

> Excessive work (workaholism): *I went on a trip not long ago, and my boss and I were working while we were waiting for a plane… When I went to Egypt on holiday, I was desperate to get online because I just wanted to see what was going on at work. My girlfriend was, 'Please, stop working, we are on holiday'. I am constantly working and desperate to be in tune with what is going on at work. What for? [I13]*

> The effect of laziness: *I think the only thing that is not acceptable is using your mobile phone within business hours for sending personal texts, taking personal phone calls. Spending most of the time on the phone and actually not doing any work is not acceptable.*

It is a distraction in some ways when you are connected to the outside world, when you should be efficient and concentrate on your work. [I21]

Next, the author reflects on and discusses the research findings presented in this section against results and arguments found in the current academic literature.

Discussion

This study highlights two main findings. Firstly, in line with existing research (Balasubramanian et al., 2002; De Reuver et al., 2008) mobility or 'being mobile' is seen as a core distinctive feature that differentiates mobile technology from fixed network and stationary desktop IT. Balasubramanian et al. (2002, p. 353) conclude that all mobile technology *"can relax both the independent and mutual constraints of space and time for many activities."* In the organisational context the mobility of mobile technology facilitates real-time services and content which in convergence with location tracking competencies lead to proactive and reactive responsiveness to market demands (Tarasewich et al., 2002; Tribbia, 2006). Sawhney, Balasubramanian, and Krishnan (2003) state that 'being mobile' enables the spatial expansion of services and content that were once traditionally consumed through fixed network and stationary desktop IT, as well as the creation of new and unique products such as mobile TV and mobile location-based advertising. The majority of authors (Balasubramanian et al., 2002; Ding et al., 2004; Liang, Huang, Yeh, & Lin, 2007; De Reuver et al., 2008; Yuan, Archer, Connelly & Zheng, 2010) refer to the independence of time and location as 'ubiquity'. However, ubiquity implies the independence of time and space but it does not reflect the flexible and agile movement which 'being mobile' truly means. Hence, 'being mobile' implies the ubiquitous exchange, communication, creation and delivery of information on the go.

Secondly, in response to the main research question of this paper, *what are the unique values of mobile technology in the B2B context,* findings for this study indicate that 'being mobile' creates a set of four main values. These four values distinguish mobile technology use from benefits of using fixed network and stationary desktop IT. Collectively, interviewed B2B practitioners from advertising and marketing firms believe that mobile technology leads to the following benefits or values: functional, social, creative and emotional. Woodruff (1997) uses similar labels to name a system of values which describes goal-based satisfaction linked to tasks and purposes. However, there is no existing research that maps values or benefits resulting from mobile technology use holistically, by incorporating the B2B perspective.

In turn, some researchers (Wu & Wang, 2005; Snowden, Spafford, Michaelides & Hopkins, 2006) by adopting the technology acceptance model to study mobile technology adoption conceal the benefits behind the terms 'ease of use' and 'usefulness'. Perhaps the functional values of convenience, the cross-functionality of devices and the intuitive interface of mobile technology might result in easy to use mobile technology categories. Usefulness of mobile technology lies within its creative, social and emotional values. On the other hand, Varnali and Toker (2010) provide a summary of research on mobile marketing and list four main values that contribute to consumer acceptance of mobile marketing. These are utilitarian, hedonic, functional and emotional values. However, no details are given on what constitutes each value. Hence, this study is not only the first to map the unique values inherent in 'being mobile' but it also specifies what each value entails.

In the marketing literature the concept of 'value' remains an abstract phenomenon (Zeithaml, 1988; Lai, 1995; Woodruff, 1997). Having said that, value intrinsically implies an analytical process the customer or consumer goes through in understanding products and services he or she

wishes to consume (Zeithaml, 1988; Sweeney and Soutar, 2001; Gounaris, Tzempelikos and Chatzipanagiotou, 2007). Interviewees in this study also analyse their experiences of using mobile technology for both personal and professional purposes and identify some of its benefits.

Past studies proclaim mobile technology as being convenient to use (Chae & Yeum, 2010; Nysveen, Pedersen & Thorbjornsen, 2005; Wu and Wang, 2005); cross-functional in integrating and exporting data across various technologies (Snowdon et al., 2006), thus enabling relevant and immediate communication and the exchange of information (Snowdon et al., 2006; Spiegelman and Detsky, 2008; Tribbia, 2006); and as tool that balances personal life and work, in that it allows flexibility and enables teleworking on the go (Hislop and Axtell, 2011; Rochford, 2001; Spiegelman and Detsky, 2008). This paper reports similar findings, with the exception that all of these benefits are grouped under certain categories of values.

Convenience in use, cross-functionality and intuitive functionality are all seen as descriptive values derived from mobile technology's functional or technical characteristics. Social value focuses on the speed and quality of processes performed using mobile technology, such as immediacy, relevance and engagement in communication and the exchange of data. In comparison to fixed network and stationary desktop IT, immediacy, relevance and engagement levels increase exponentially when it comes to technology that is mobile and implies consumption, the creation and delivery of services and products on the go anytime and anywhere.

Furthermore, B2B practitioners interviewed in this study see the balancing of personal life and work as a contribution to emotional wellbeing. This is in line with Spiegelman and Detsky (2008) and the study by Battard and Mangematin (2013) who found that mobile technology allows unplanned interruptions within working hours meaning that business practitioner use mobile

devices to manage personal life commitments whilst working. Hence, mobile technology erased the boundaries between personal life and work. However, Spiegelman and Detsky (2008) and Hislop and Axtell (2011) add that simultaneously with balance mobile technology can actually create imbalance when separating personal life from work. In this study, the interviewees refer to imbalance between personal life and work as 'workaholism' (Hislop and Axtell, 2011) and the effect of laziness. Teleworking, a flexible way of working with no attachment to physical office space, is possibly one of the most well-addressed research topics in relation to mobile technology use (Battard and Mangematin, 2013; Hislop and Axtell, 2011). However, to the best knowledge of the author of this paper, no existing studies explicitly state that mobile technology is a tool for emotional balance or imbalance.

The creative value is not mentioned by previous studies as one of the benefits of using mobile technology. Lu, Yao, and Yua (2005) and Aroean & Michaelidou (2014) looked at personal innovativeness as an antecedent to the adoption of mobile services, which is seen as helping individuals to use mobile technology functions and perceive mobile services as useful while not actually affecting the adoption of mobile services. This study finds that mobile technology is a tool that helps to boost creativity by breaking down organisational constraints of time and location that commonly restrict creative thinking (West, 2002). Mobile technology is claimed by B2B practitioners to facilitate flexibility in managing workload, and according to Menzel, Aaltio and Ulijn (2007) flexibility leads to more creative results in organisations. This paper's results highlights that creative value is a unique value of mobile technology in the B2B context.

As a final point, Jensen (1996, p. 60) stresses that knowing *"antecedents and consequences of consumer value can probably be considered as the most fundamental prerequisite for sustainable competitive advantage"*. Ultimately, by mapping mobile technology values and factors that form

these values, this study endeavors to help business practitioners to find new ways to exploit ubiquitous technology.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study concludes that mobile technology represents a novel and unique category of technology. Whether it is a simple means toward advanced communication with no physical boundaries of time and location, or a business tool which can be employed to boost creative thinking, this study concludes that mobile technology is different to fixed network and stationary desktop IT because of its core distinctive feature, 'being mobile'. The existing literature (Balasubramanian et al. 2002; Jarvenpaa et al. 2003; De Reuver et al. 2008; Jarvenpaa and Loebbecke 2009; Tribbia, 2006) and this study are united, in that researching mobile technology through reflection on its technical features limits any understanding of its true nature. Therefore, the true nature of mobile technology lies in seeing it as a source of value that derives from using it in the first place.

This study found that mobility is a distinctive feature of mobile technology and 'being mobile' underlines four types of values that mobile technology use creates, namely functional, social, creative and emotional. Past studies (Barwise & Strong, 2002; Wu and Wang 2005; Snowdon et al. 2006; Lee, Cheng & Cheng, 2007; Spiegelman and Detsky 2008; Donnelly, 2009; Gao et al., 2013; Watson et al., 2013) have discussed the social and functional values of deploying mobile technology in the B2C context. However, in addition to that B2B practitioners interviewed in this study indicate that mobile technology use allows balancing their personal and work life; hence resulting in an emotional value which has two side effects for the mobile technology use, (1) workaholism and (2) the 'effect of laziness'. Teleworking, a flexible way of working with no attachment to physical office space, is possibly one of the most well-addressed research topics in

relation to mobile technology use (Battard and Mangematin, 2013; Hislop and Axtell, 2011). However, to the best knowledge of the author of this paper, no existing studies explicitly state that mobile technology is a tool for emotional balance or imbalance. This particular finding indicates an area for further research, potentially from a psychological perspective.

Finally, the creative value is responsible for creative thinking and demonstrates directly that the use of mobile technology stimulates creativity and innovation in the B2B context. No similar results have been revealed in the B2C context despite the fact that consumers who are considered to be early adopters of technological innovations are more likely to accept new solutions and services delivered via mobile devices (Lu et al., 2005; Aroean & Michaelidou, 2014). In fact, this paper's findings indicate that creative value is a unique value of mobile technology in the B2B context.

In overall results indicated in this paper are specific to marketing and advertising firms. Exploring and testing whether the four values derive from the use of mobile technology in different to marketing and advertising contexts will enable generalisation of the findings. The data in this study were largely cross-sectional, thereby presenting a snapshot of an individual's opinion at the time. The adoption of different qualitative methods to either conduct a longitudinal study via the grounded theory method, with the aim of developing a process model and understanding creative value composition in particular, or cover a longer span of time via ethnography would help to build even more detailed information on mobile technology use and its values in the B2B context. Ethnographic study applying the psychology perspective would also enable building a more comprehensive picture of the emotional value derived from the use of mobile technology. In addition, this study looked at a number of perspectives by interviewing 28 B2B practitioners. Focusing on a few cases by applying a case study method would likely

generate more detailed insights into all four values of mobile technology discussed in this paper. Moreover, this paper addresses the value of mobile technology from a B2B supplier point of view. A key limitation of the current paper is that the B2B customers' perspective on mobile technology values is not investigated. Studying multiple perspectives would require a different research method, i.e. a case study (few cases investigating B2B supplier and B2B customer perspectives). Last but not least, this paper presents sub-categories within each category representing a separate mobile technology value (Table 1: functional value includes being cross-functional, being intuitive, and being convenient). This could potentially help in operationalising the mobile technology value construct with further statistical verification and refinement.

This study reinforces the distinctive nature of mobile technology so that B2B practitioners can see the real value in embracing and using mobile technology. Ultimately by mapping distinctive to mobile technology values and factors that form these values this study endeavors to transform B2B practitioners' view of mobile technology as a purely technical tool (functional value) enabling effective communication (social value) to viewing mobile technology as a strategic tool driving balanced and flexible ways in managing business (emotional value) and enabling creative thinking (creative value).

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