



new paths: exploring mobile-centric internet use in Cape Town



Jonathan Donner
Microsoft Research India

<http://research.microsoft.com/en-us/people/jdonner/>



Shikoh Gitau
University of Cape Town

UCT workshop on mobile media

15 April 2009



Microsoft Research India: The Technology for Emerging Markets Group

Research Group Goals

Understand potential technology users in developing communities

Design and **evaluate** technology and systems that contribute to socio-economic development of poor communities worldwide

Collaborate with development-focused organizations for sustained, scaled impact



Computer-skills camp in Nakalabande, Bangalore
(MSR India, Stree Jagruti Samiti, St. Joseph's College)

beyond the statistics

	South Africa	India
Population	47	1,147
Mobile Subscribers	43	320
Mobile Internet Users	9.5	88
Fixed Internet Subscribers	4.7	12

2008, millions

- What does internet use look like for “mobile only” users?
- What new “paths to the internet” does the mobile enable?
- Do all mobile internet users know they are users?

methods

In-depth qualitative interviews with mobile-only and mobile-primary users

Assistance from Learn to Earn, a livelihoods NGO in Khayelitsha, Cape Town

Drawing on youth, immigrant, low & middle income communities

17 exploratory and 22 full-length interviews

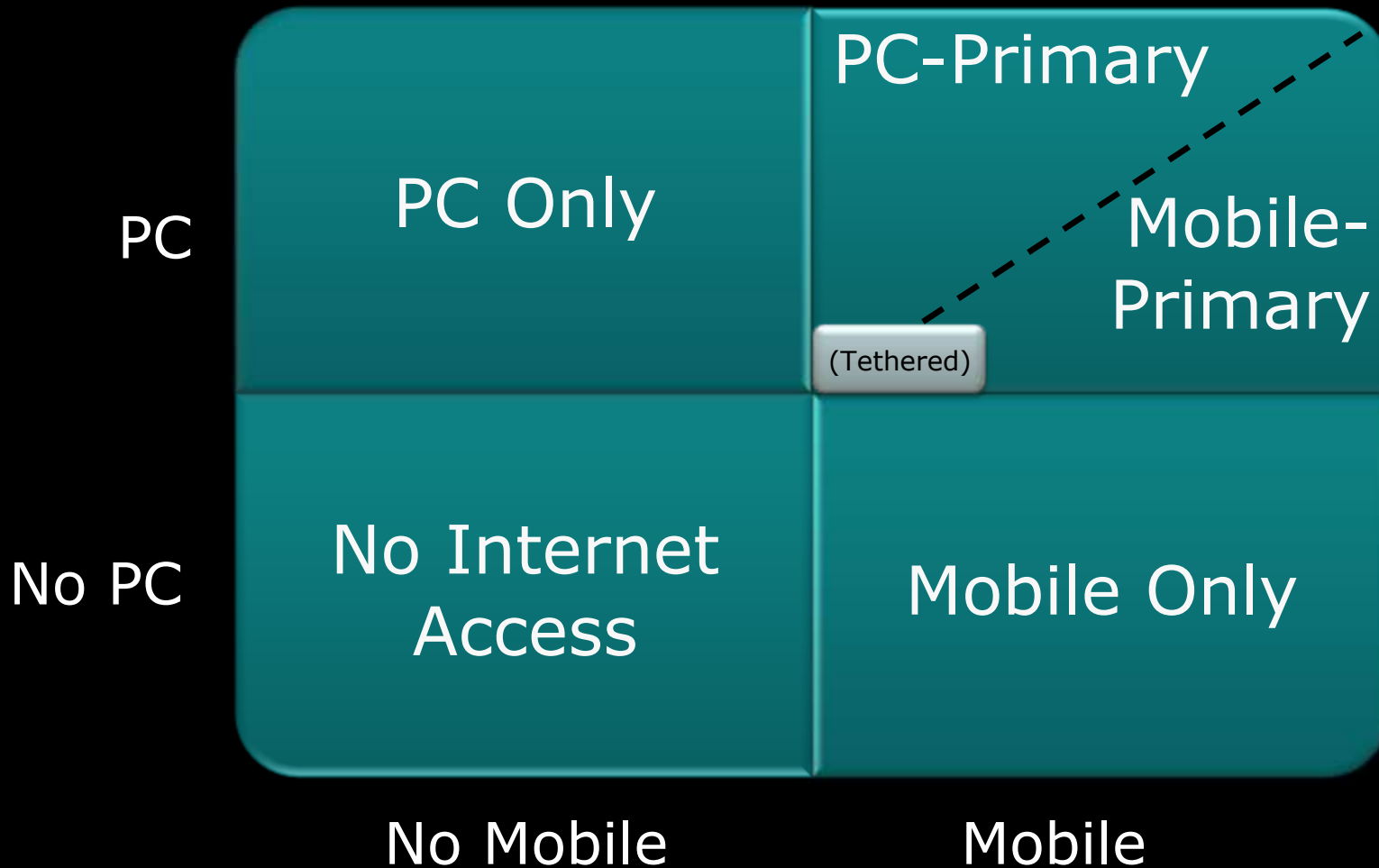
archetype: sbusiso

- 25 year old, South African hair dresser
- barely finished high school and has never used a computer
- discovered mobile internet while exploring his phone, followed **URLs on ads and given by radio presenters**
- has an email address, Facebook, and MXit profile, initiated through his phone

"...I am now addicted to the Internet and I use it every time when I am bored"



Repertoires of mobile and PC-based internet use



Mobile-only internet users

Self Expression

“it started off when my friend downloaded Mxit for me on my first phone—she even taught me how to get new contacts and stuff” -- 19f

Entertainment

“my friend would always come with some news about Man-U and he would always tell me what they are doing...and I also wanted to be able to know that, so I bought a phone with internet” -- 24m immigrant

Utility

– George checks Foreign exchange rates at Standard Bank before sending money home to Kenya

- Price matters, and drives browsing behaviors
- Word of mouth drives to non-operator resources:
waptrick.co.za.
wapking.net
- Friends often configure the MI, email, etc
- Countervailing tensions around youth, sexual/adult content, strangers

archetype 2: james



- Small scale trader, 33rs, Kenyan immigrant.
- A high school graduate, attended technical college
- Learned about mobile internet and WAP from reading a booklet on ringtone downloads
 - Sets up at least one phone per week
- Referred to as 'fundi' Swahili for expert

"...talk to fundi he knows everything there is to know about the internet and phones..."

Mobile-primary, PC first

“I do not need to have a fixed line now, as I can access my fax on my email which I read on my phone. There is no point of having those telecoms lines anymore...**I now can use my phone to run my business**”. – Miguel

“it is generally easier to use (mobile internet) as you are not stationed in one place; no modems, no problems. The **PC's in schools have a lot of websites blocked** [e.g. Facebook] so they are not that helpful. Lwazi, student

“we do have computers at work, but I do not use them to go to the internet, because **it easier to do on my phone** and I will not get into trouble with anyone” - Kasheifa

- Exposed at school or by friends
- Have a more nuanced vocabulary around PC use, more likely to be aware of internet
- In repertoire, tradeoff big screens for private control

Mobile-primary, mobile first

“I was not computer literate when I started using internet on my mobile phone so it was quite an eye opener. **Now I want to learn everything**, my uncle bought a computer two months ago and his wife has been teaching me.”
- Patience, 21yr

“I cannot stand computers because of the many upgrades requiring more learning...the mobile phone is the new computer, and it has the advantage that I have it on me all the time. ***It is even easier to type on it***” - Ebrahims

- Kids getting internet exposure before internet training begins at school
- Some pull to learn more
- Mobile exposure will influence impressions and patterns of PC use

Implications for today's discussion



Consider a fluid ICT **repertoire**, rather than substitutes

Cost can be a driver **to** the mobile internet, reflecting evolving locally negotiated norms of communication optimization

- But metered use drives choices about how it is utilized

Important draw of **social/expressive functions**

- Sometimes it's soccer, not health
- Guidance from within social network
- Moral panics reflect interweave of technology into daily life

A reminder to the PC-primary (and PC-only):

- It is a different internet if you've *only* ever seen it in 2.5" slices

respondents

<i>Mobile Only Internet Users</i>	<i>Mobile Primary Internet Users</i>	
	<i>PC First</i>	<i>Mobile First</i>
Nantembeko, 29F, Till Packer	M.C, 36M, Microentrepreneur	Crispen, 42M, Microentrepreneur
Ziyaad, 29M, Driver	James Daniel, 33M, Curio Seller	Edmund, 26M, Driver
Asanda, 25F, Unemployed	Collin, 31M, Supervisor	LeiLah, 25F, art curator
Sbusiso, 25M, Hair Dresser	Salim, 30M, Microentrepreneur	Ebrahim, 23M, Call Center Agent
B.M, 24M, Microentrepreneur	Karim, 29M, Microentrepreneur	Patience, 21F, Cosmetic Sales
Zainoo, 23F, cashier	Collins, 28M, Microentrepreneur	Mandle, 20M, Unemployed
Mzwamadoda, 22M, Unemployed	Lovemore, 27M, Microentrepreneur	Evuya, 18M, Unemployed
Wandisile, 22M, Unemployed	Tarique, 27M, Phones Sales	Zukiswa, 17F, Unemployed
Lulama, 21M, Unemployed	Kasheifa, 27F, admin work	Amile, 13F, student
Touffeq, 21M, Merchadiser	George, 25M, Microentrepreneur	
Waseema, 19F, sales assistant	Miguel, 23M, Microentrepreneur	
Gaarieth, 20M, student	Cindy, 21F, Teacher	
Solomzi, 18M, student	Laura, 19F, Waitron	
Carlo, 11M, Student	Taohir, 19M, Student	