

PMA – Personal Multimedia Assistant

A Simulation of a Multimedia Mobile Phone

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Mobile networks are developing rapidly. In Finland the next steps from the GSM network will be an extension of the GSM known as GPRS (General Packet Radio Service) and after that the so called third-generation (3G) UMTS (Universal Mobile Telecommunications System). These will enable more and more interesting and challenging mobile services especially from the point of view of the user interface. Multimedia services will be available, i.e. services using video, sound and animation.

In Sonera we are simulating multimedia mobile phones to be able to research and develop both the technology and the user interface. We call the multimedia mobile phone simulation PMA (Personal Multimedia Assistant). It consists of two devices available in the market: a mobile handset and a PDA (personal digital assistant) with a touch screen and colour display. These two devices are combined with an infrared link (or a cable). At the moment the transmission rate is 14.4 – 25 kbit/s when HSCSD (High Speed Circuit Switched Data) technology is used.

We provide multimedia content and services to be reached via the mobile phone and then to be accessed with the PDA. The services at the moment include e.g.:

- Movie Agent, where you can view movie trailers, personalise your own profile and get recommendations based on your profile
- Postcard, where you can take and send a photo (taken with a camera attached to PDA) as a postcard to a friend
- Video clips (streaming video technology) of music videos, news, sport clips, etc.

With the PMA concept and multimedia services, we will proceed with user trials to learn more about e.g. usability conditions related to multimedia mobile services. We had a pre-trial in June 2000 as a rehearsal trial. Users (20) used the services for 3 weeks, and during the trial we had usability tests and at the end of the trial a questionnaire and focus groups (group discussions). The questionnaire and focus groups included marketing issues as well as usability issues. The key usability finding so far is that the perceived speed of video is still considered to be too low (14.4. kbit/s).

The actual user trial with 200 users will start at the beginning of October 2000 with a further developed research methods portfolio and a greater transmission rate. The results of the trial will be available by the end of this year.