



2-2-0

“Culture” Overview

Background to the theme

The mobile phone has been swift to spread among the Japanese population, even in comparison with other items of mobile equipment. Right from the start, people have sought more diverse functions than simply the voice calls offered by fixed landlines, and mobile phones have long offered a tool to send mobile e-mails over the internet and enjoy a range of contents. This has led to them being referred to in Japan by the generic term “keitai” (“mobile” or “portable”) rather than “phone”.

The concept of culture covers a wide scope of activities, from people's daily actions and customs through to artistic creation. Over the past 10 years, it would appear that the “keitai” has also informed culture. This chapter considers the influences of the “keitai” on popular culture, from two aspects - (1) the enjoyment of culture, such as mobile contents in the form of music and literature produced by professionals and (2) the creation of culture, such as amateur cultural content, which in some cases has the power to influence the behavior of others.

Attributes of the theme, and specific topics

The purchase of packaged contents in the form of books and CDs from specialist shops is still the main way in which such contents are distributed, but acquiring such contents not from a shop but via mobile phone is gradually becoming more popular. The most obvious example is that of music downloads, which have grown into an estimated annual market of 50 billion yen through services such as “Chaku-Uta Full”. According to the results of the 2006 survey into general mobile phone use, music downloads are widely used by people under the age of 40, and famous musicians sell many copies of new songs in this way. Electronic books have yet to really spread in popularity across all age groups, but are undergoing a boom of sorts among girls in their teens. Regarding video contents, the foundation for such service is now being laid, following the beginning of one-segment broadcasting in April 2006.

With mobile phones, everyone in Japan is starting to use them casually and easily as a tool for self-expression; this has also led to growth in the area of creating culture and providing information. The most common form of this is photography. Mobile phone photography is the third most popular activity after voice calls and mobile e-mail, among users across a wide range of ages. People commonly attach a photograph to a mobile e-mail and send it to a friend, and there are currently contests that offer prizes for

the best photographs taken with a mobile phone. The filming and attaching to e-mails of short video clips is also popular, although not so popular as photography.

Authors are emerging who have written “keitai novels” on their mobile phones, and in particular, a group of “keitai novels” have emerged which became popular among teenage girls, some of which have gone on to be published and become million-sellers (according to figures released by publishing companies).

Mobile phone straps are the most common means of self-expression relating to the appearance of mobiles phones, and as a noticeable phenomenon, there has been increasing demand among teenagers of both sexes for mobile phones designed by famous designers and uniquely designed “Only One” mobile phones.

In general, women use cultural applications on mobile phones more than men, whether this represents paid-for music downloads, purchase of electronic books or use of photography function. It could be said that women are leading the “keitai” culture. The 2006 survey into general mobile phone use shows that men tend to use their personal computers more than mobile phones, whereas women are not using computers quite so much. (31.5% of men and 58.4% of women responded that they “use a mobile phone to send e-mails more often than a computer”, while 37.3% of men and 16.0% of women responded that they “use a computer to send e-mails more often than a mobile phone”.) This indicates that for many women, a mobile phone acts as a substitute for a computer, offering them a convenient information tool.

Analyzed by age, similarly to any cutting-edge equipment, we find that young people in the age groups of 10's and 20's seem to be most proactive in using mobile phone contents. There is a fairly significant generation gap, however, and older people are slower to take up the use of these functions.

Future predictions

In terms of cultural enjoyment, music downloads have led the way in permeating the market, but it is thought that video and electronic book contents will follow this lead and continue to become more popular.

In terms of cultural creation, mobile phones have given ordinary people a tool for literary composition, photography, video and music creation, allowing them to distribute them across the internet. Further developments in “consumer-generated media” are highly anticipated.

2-2-1	Music and Video Distribution	Key Words
The most popular type of mobile media content among young people is music. For mobile phones, “Chaku-Melo” and “Chaku-Uta” have become more high-definition through “Chaku-Uta Full” service, and the increasing popularity of portable music terminals such as the iPod have further stimulated this market. Video downloads are not quite as popular, but it is thought that the one-segment broadcasting technology will lead to growth in this area.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ “Chaku-Uta Full” ■ iPod ■ Mobile contents ■ The elderly ■ Music services ■ Mobile video players ■ One-segment terminals

2-2-2	Electronic Books and Magazines	Key Words
The electronic books market has been led by the success of electronic comics. However, there are new types of novels called “keitai novels” emerging, especially among young women, who enjoy not only reading novels written by professional writers but also writing “keitai novels” by themselves. Many “keitai novel contests” are being held. “Keitai novels” are thought to be a new form of print media culture, which sometimes are created through collaboration between the main writer and the readers. Such new culture, distinct from the conventional print media, has come into fashion by the mobile media.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Electronic books ■ Electronic comics ■ “Keitai novels” ■ Electronic magazines

2-2-3	Photo and Video Taking	Key Words
Photography is a popular function on mobile phones, ranking next to voice calls and mobile e-mail. As the quality of the components of mobile cameras improve, it has become more common for mobile phones to also feature video cameras, and now companies are offering printing, storage and photograph swapping services, indicating that the market is continuing to diversify. Sites such as YouTube, which allow video files to be distributed and shared for free, are also expected to influence further developments in the future.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Camera (photography) function ■ “Sharemail” ■ Video capture ■ Video exchange sites

2-2-4	Self-expressing	Key Words
Mobile phones represent a tool for self-expression for many people. The demand for concept-based or individually designed “Only One” mobile phones also indicates a desire among users to distinguish themselves from others. Consumer-generated media such as SNS (social networking services) and blogs, which allow free self-expression, are also starting to become popular on mobile phones, and will be worthy of monitoring in the future.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Concept-based mobile phones ■ Blogs ■ SNS ■ CGM ■ “Mob Log” (Mobile blogs) ■ “Homupe” (Home pages)

