

## **Mobile phones and what they mean to consumers: a comparative analysis between Angolans and Brazilians.**

### **Telefonia móvel e seus significados para os consumidores: uma análise comparativa entre angolanos e brasileiros.**

*Silvio Koiti Sato*<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract** *This article provides a comparative reflection about the consumption of mobile telephony in Angola and Brazil. Consumers were surveyed in Luanda and São Paulo, the largest cities in the two countries to evaluate practices related to the adoption of mobile information and communication technologies in different socioeconomic contexts. Based on the theoretical framework of the New Information and Communication Technologies (NICTs) and its developments in consumption and culture, it was possible to identify differences and similarities in each country regarding the benefits, risks, and conflicts associated with cell phones, and developing specific consumption rituals in relation to mobile technologies.*

**Keywords:** *Cell phone; Mobility; Consumption; Angola; Brazil*

**Resumo** *Este artigo desenvolve uma reflexão comparativa sobre o consumo de telefonia celular em Angola e no Brasil. Entrevistamos consumidores de Luanda e São Paulo, as maiores cidades dos dois países, para avaliar práticas relacionadas à adoção das tecnologias móveis de informação e comunicação em contextos socioeconômicos distintos. A partir do enquadramento teórico sobre as novas tecnologias de informação e comunicação (NTICs) e seus desdobramentos no consumo e na cultura, foi possível identificar diferenças e semelhanças, em cada*

<sup>1</sup> Fundação Armando Álvares Penteado – FAAP, São Paulo, SP, Brazil.  
E-mail: silviosato@yahoo.com

*país, no que se refere aos benefícios, riscos e conflitos associados ao celular e o desenvolvimento de rituais de consumo específicos na relação com as tecnologias móveis*

**Palavras-chave:** *Telefonia celular; Mobilidade; Consumo; Angola; Brasil*

## Introduction

This article was developed from the doctoral research conducted in conjunction with the PPGCOM of ECA-USP and was completed in April 2015. In it, we studied the cell phone industry from the perspective of the advertising production system and of consumption, where brands and consumers establish shared and continuously transformed significances, in a fast dynamic and characteristic of industries based in technology and innovation. We adopted a comparative perspective by choosing three countries that represent distinctive different stages in the adoption of mobile technologies, but which share common historical ties: Angola, Brazil and Portugal. The objective was to understand the evolution of the significance associated with mobile technologies and their appropriation by consumers and brands in a dialogical process which evolved with the experiences of the users and society.

For this article, we selected part of a research that was conducted and specifically highlights the reports of Angolan and Brazilian consumers regarding their consumption practices involving mobile phones.

We conducted in-depth interviews with 18 consumers of mobile telephony in the cities of Luanda (2nd semester of 2013) and São Paulo (1st semester of 2014), divided equally among young people (18-25 years of age) and adults (26-50 years of age), students and active professionals. The selection of the interviewees was done out of convenience and took into consideration the ability of the interviewees to bring forward different points of view, providing the desired amplitude to understand the issue. Using the interviews, we could do an in-depth investigation into the opinions and feelings of users, from the descriptions of routines and memories of the interviewees, which provided an evolutionary perspective of mobile telephony consumption.

The information collected in the interviews was arranged in a temporal dimension (past, present and future), from the first contact with the cell phone, the current impact on sociability, identifying specific consumer rituals (PEREZ; TRINDADE, 2014; MCCRACKEN, 2003) and future expectations regarding the consumption of this technology.

The analysis and interpretation propose a comparative perspective between the reports of the two countries, pointing out the similarities and differences, and articulating the referential lessons to the theoretical framework presented.

### **Mobility culture and a society in the mobile network**

Firstly, we contextualize the subject of mobile technology from a theoretical point of view, starting from the authors articulating the subject – especially in its developments – with the practices of communication and consumption. The mobile phone, with the use of mobile and wireless networks, is the form of technology that has spread the fastest worldwide (CASTELLS et al., 2007). It is estimated that there will be seven billion mobile lines in use on the planet by the end of 2015 (Source: ITU – International Telecommunication Union) and this ratifies the phone's ubiquity in one's daily life and in the contemporary landscape. A symbol of the connection with mobility, the cell phone is an object that has also evolved quickly from a functional point of view: used initially only for voice calls, it has become multifunctional and has gathered countless possibilities, such as sending and receiving instant messages, access to information and content on the Internet, as well as recording, editing and publishing of multimedia content. All this at anytime and from anywhere, generating conversations and sharing with acquaintances or anonymously, connected through large digital social networks that are available on all smartphones – an appropriate and alluring name for a device which purpose it is to provide more intelligence from a growing list of functions.

Mobile devices integrate the most visible aspect of the current communication environment, ubiquitous and fast, formed as well by wireless networks that enable the formation of new hybrid information and communication territories (SANTAELLA, 2003, 2004, 2010; LEMOS, 2007, 2009), when merging physical and virtual spaces. In these, there are business transactions, exchanging large volumes of data and services based on locative media, for example, with connected sensors

and machines that form what is being called the Internet side of things. However, we want to highlight herein the impacts of this worldwide connection to communication between people. Individuals from many different geographic places can come together around similarities, common causes and interests, developing communication flow practices based on the possibility of interaction, free expression and cooperation, a collaborative intelligence process that develops in virtual communities and sets up a cyber culture, formed by exchanges of knowledge, habits and discussion in different social practices. (LEVY, 1999; LEMOS, 2014)

The “Networked Society” (CASTELLS, 1999) described as a connected, global and digital environment, increasingly presents itself as a wireless networked society, in which the individual has the feeling of being independently safe, in other words, a freedom to come and go associated with safety of being able to connect to their reference groups when and if they want. The effects of this permanent connection are studied in various aspects, as in the political practices with the use of mobile networks, in mobilizations arranged worldwide (CASTELLS, 2010, 2013). Additionally, we have discussions about inequalities in digital inclusion, literacy and access to mobile technologies (LEMOS, 2009), a vision that reinforces the essentiality of technology for the development of individuals and society.

For many authors, the mobile phone reinforces the importance of mobility as a central concept in the contemporary environment, also in the study of social sciences, with the “paradigm of mobility.” (URRY, 2007). We live in a “mobility culture” (LEMOS, 2009), characterized by the stimulation of constant motion that is ever accelerating – as opposed to static –, that intertwines technological, social and anthropological questions. The informational-virtual mobility offered by a cell phone is added to, and, in a way, merges with physical mobility, potentializing informational travel through space and time, in an increasingly individualized and private manner. Paradoxically, the experiences are increasingly shared and divided in the connected network, in a process simultaneously individual and massified (CASTELLS et al., 2007).

In this regard, mobile connectivity integrates the identity processes problems that currently occur as an active and constant construction (GIDDENS, 1991, 2002), with the understanding that the contemporary individual is now facing a more streamlined and fast paced existence (Harvey, 1992), with mixed and blurry boundaries concerning identity and cultural patterns that previously seemed safer (HALL, 2000).

Consumption practices play a central role in the identity process, with the understanding of consumption as a symbolic dynamic, in which individuals appropriate themselves with meanings related to products and brands, in a transfer process accomplished by using systems such as advertising, and that also counts on the active participation of consumers (MCCRACKEN, 2003). The consumption of mobile telephony appears exemplary to illustrate the process of signification, by being something personal, intense and massified. By treating it as an asset related to information and communication, we can associate it simultaneously with issues related to individuality and sociability.

### **The context of mobile telephony in Angola and Brazil**

Generally, the stages of technology adoption in countries tend to repeat the inequalities that occur in indicators of social and economic development in the world. In developed and emerging countries, mobile technology was adopted in the 1990s, whereas in the less developed countries the process occurred a decade later, starting in the 2000s. This pattern is confirmed when we analyze the telephony markets in Angola and Brazil.

In the case of Angola, the cell phone industry was established in 2001. With a population of 24.3 million inhabitants (Source: National Institute of Statistics – Census 2014 – Government of Angola), and having more than 14 million lines, a number that quickly surpassed that of fixed telephony, which relies only on 281,000 lines because of the difficulties of physical cabling in the cities. In other words, the cell phone came to meet a pent-up demand that could not be satisfied by wired services in general, not only telephony but also fixed Internet. The penetration rate

– 70 cell phones per 100 inhabitants – is still low and represents great potential for growth (Source: Teleco – 2014).

Mobile telephony in Angola has gained importance due to the large concentration of population in a few cities; in the case of Luanda, the capital, which has more than eight million inhabitants. There are numerous additional difficulties related to public infrastructure, that impacts on the physical displacement within cities and to other provinces.

Cell phone services are only offered by two operators operating in the countries, which have clear market leader positions (Unitel) and the opposition operator (Movitel).

Unitel was the first operator formed from the industry privatization process. The company emerged in 2001 from the union of four others: the state oil company Sonangol, Vidatel, Portugal Telecom and Gini. The operator started charging much higher operating fees per call than those in neighboring countries, such as South Africa (HODGES, 2002, p.186). Currently, the company is the market leader with 78% market share (Source: Teleco – 2014).

Movitel emerged as competitor in 2003. It was initially created as a subsidiary of state-owned Angola Telecom and in 2010 had 80% of its capital sold to a consortium of various private companies. The remaining 20% remain with the state. The company holds a 22% market share. (Source: Teleco – 2014). As it is the challenging company, it has as its main characteristic an aggressive commercial campaign to attract new customers. Additionally, it came up with a new innovative technology, especially in relation to data transmission, a pioneer in the 4G networks in Africa.

When analyzing the market, there are still many unmet needs by both companies. The price of handsets and tariffs impede the access or more intense use of cell phones among the population, especially for mobile Internet access. There are also limitations related to infrastructure, such as the deficit of network coverage in the rural areas within the country and the unstable electricity supply.

The marketing communication of the Angolan brands focuses on attracting new customers, encouraging experimentation by offering

promotions on tariffs and on the price of handsets. There is a predominance of visual elements in the communication of the operators, using didactic layouts and narratives, very little text and a lot of images.

We can say that the country is in a growth stage, as there is still great potential to incorporate new users, and the opportunity to add new customers to access the mobile Internet market, which is still very expensive in the country.

In Brazil, although the cell phone had appeared in 1990, still under the public system Telebrás, its real development and popularization started in 1997 with privatization of the industry. Currently, the country has the fifth largest mobile phone market in the world, behind China, India, USA and Indonesia (Source: Teleco – 2014). Regarding the extension of its territory, the country has shortcomings in the spreading of fixed telephony and Internet, which have in turn been supplied by mobile technologies.

Four major operators (Claro, Oi, Vivo and TIM) dominate the market in which they have a balanced participation. The current focus of the brands is to incorporate new converged telecommunication service packages (fixed and mobile telephony, fixed and mobile broadband Internet, cable television and long distance) in order to expand its operations.

Brazil can be classified as a country that is in the mature stage in regard to the adoption of mobile technologies. The key challenge is to continue to stimulate usage and consumption, restrained due to high tariffs or network coverage difficulties due to the territorial dimension. Another challenge is the high price of more sophisticated handsets, which distances a portion of the population from the services that need data traffic at high speed.

### **Angolan and Brazilian consumers**

After interviewing the Angolan and Brazilian consumers, we realized that the subject of cell phones mobilizes and generates interest, and everyone seems to have a lot of stories, memories and opinions in relation

to their cell phone. Remembering their first contact with technology, inevitably pleasant and emotional memories arise, especially for those who received their first cell phone as a gift from their family. Among those who bought their device, there is a predominant sense of achievement and the cell phone emerges as a symbol of freedom, individuality and belonging. On the other hand, among the elderly, there is nostalgia in remembering a time before the cell phone, when everything seemed to be slower and calmer.

Those interviewed recognize changes in mobile technology since its introduction such as the design of the devices, which at first were large and heavy. Consumers also remember that the cell phone has now replaced other communication devices such as the pager, landline and currently the desktop computer.

Another common aspect of the two countries are the references to impacts on sociality, with discussions on proper etiquette in public and collective areas and especially cellular effects on the interpersonal and family relationships (between parents and children) today. In other words, the relationship with the cell phone is not laid back, but characterized by benefits exploited by industry brands that are on the one hand recognized, and perceived as risks by consumers, associated with excessive and inappropriate use and dependency. In general, the present moment seems to be one of reflection, debate and attempts to find a more balanced and appropriate way to use the technology at the individual and collective level.

In this article, we will delve into a specific aspect: the story of consumption rituals in mobile telephony. We use the classification proposed by Trinidad & Perez (2014), from McCracken (2003), which defends the movement of significance of goods through the creation of rituals by consumers. The authors understand that there are four types of rituals: purchasing, possession, use and disposal. We organized the statements of the interviewees according to these four items, which will be described below.

The purchase ritual consists of steps involving the process of searching for an item, either before, during or after the purchase. We deal with

prior research and factors that influence the process of buying an item. We add rituals to this item related to the exchange (or repurchase), that is, the replacement of old items.

In both countries, the purchase and repurchase of devices is understood as something necessary and common. Considering that this is an industry based on innovation, obsolescence is high. In the utilitarian point of view, the renewal of devices is advocated because the usage possibilities are increasingly dependent on the device that one owns. Possession of a Smartphone type device may increase the frequency of use, “Before I did not use the Internet much because the cell phone I had before was not very good [...]. Now I have decided to buy a good phone for this purpose, for the Internet.” (K.E, 33, female, Brazilian, project coordinator).

However, the buying process also has emotional aspects, such as the logic of fashion as an incentive for the renewal of devices, pointed out by interviewees in both countries: “In Angola we follow new trends a lot, fashion, the word fashion sells a lot [...] There are people who have two or three phones because they are fashionable.” (A.G., 29, male, Angolan, merchandising coordinator). The Angolan interviewees highlight the display of sophisticated devices as a symbol of distinction and belonging to a higher social class, in a country with great social inequality: “Angolans are known as flamboyant, it is a characteristic, you may not have the best steak, but will have the best phone when you’re on the street, you want to show that you have it.” (L.M., 35, female, Angolan, administrative employee).

Some interviewees emphasized their opposition to the constant renewal of devices, at least rationally: “My relationship is very pragmatic, I do not have much appeal to mobile phone brands [cell phone], I can keep it for ten years, as long as it works. It has nothing to do with fashion.” (A.M., 45, female, Angolan, marketing executive).

This critical view of the hedonistic consumption is complemented, in the Angolan testimonies, by another practical reason for the purchase or repurchase: robberies and assaults. The interviewees verbalized

concerns about the use and display of sophisticated mobile phones in certain areas of the city. Buying another handset, a lot simpler, to use on the streets, hiding the main handset for use only in safer places is one of the strategies used: “And there are thieves, we are aware of it, let’s hide the handset, a good cell phone draws attention.” (C.F., 35, female, Angolan, administrative employee).

It is also interesting to note an evolution in the decision process of handset purchasing over time, more frequently among Brazilian consumers: “Today, I choose for functionality, model... but previously it was for their color, I’ve had four pink cell phones... So it was by color, prettiness, for fashion!” (J.F., 27, female, Brazilian, secretary).

The handset acquisition process also appears to have generational differences in the two countries, reflecting the close relationship of young people with the cell phone: “The cell phones my children have are usually more expensive than mine, because they have more technology resources. They use them much more intensely than I do.” (M.D.T., 47, male, Brazilian, sociologist).

In both locations, we identified a hierarchy of value between brands and models of devices that can be used for boasting, differentiate and belonging. The Apple iPhone is cited repeatedly as an object of desire, especially the latest versions, associated with a logic of constant renewal and stimulating consumption: “[The iPhone] was something she desired [daughter] and when she started working, she put down a deposit. Now she wants the new one, because as she has an iPhone now, she doesn’t want to have an inferior one, wants to have the latest.” (A.J.M., 50, male, Brazil, driver).

On the other hand, when discussing the intangible part of the cell phone service provided by the operators, the reaction is very different. There is a more rational and detached relationship, and little loyalty, as many interviewees from both countries have experience with all of the operators. Migration between companies is common and also the ownership of more than one line (chip), so you can choose the chip that provides the lowest rate according to the operator used by the destination

number. In general, there are concerns about the prices (plans, tariffs and promotions) and the service (coverage, signal quality and speed). Thus the cost-benefit ratio is kept under constant review.

Among Angolan consumers, in relation to brand positioning, it is clear that there are differences between the two operators. Unitel, which is the leading brand, is mentioned as having a better quality connection and coverage, with higher prices and fewer promotions on handsets. On the other hand, the competitor (Movitel) is regarded as an inferior quality brand, but more commercially aggressive and accessible, with deals on handsets and more attractive plans, and it is more associated to the Internet. The interviewees verbalize the desire for a third operator, which could increase competitiveness and thereby bring better deals.

In the Brazilian case, the differentiation between operators is perceived as almost nonexistent. Some have the feeling that they are all similar and are of an unsatisfactory level of quality. For all the operators there are unfavorable points, even among loyal users, with reports of bad experiences at some point in time, particularly in regards to coverage, signal quality and speed. In a certain way, expectations are not completely met and users are critical: to be without a connection, even if only briefly, seems unacceptable. In addition, the relationships with the operators are frayed by problems concerning billing and customer service.

In relation to the use rituals, which include practices that insert each one of the goods into each particular sphere of the consumer – be it individual, family or professional – there are programmed routines in connection with the goods.

In the case of mobile telephony, initially, there is the determination of times and situations in which you need to turn on or turn off the handset, which generates reflection among the interviewees; an example of this is the use of mobile phones as an alarm clock in the morning, which is frequent. Besides this, before you leave home, it is necessary to check if the handset is with the user, a ritual mentioned on a recurring basis.

Thus, the cell becomes a constant companion throughout the day. Several interviewees commented that the handset must always be in sight to provide certain psychological security: “I never turn off the phone, it is always on, I can’t be without it. I go to sleep, it is turned on, I use the alarm to wake up. At work, it’s always on my table, so I can see it clearly...” (C.N., 24, female, Angolan, university student).

Another concern of the interviewees are the rituals to ensure that the phone is always ready and available for use. You have to recharge it, maintain a full battery or have accessories available for charging it. In addition, one must take extra batteries and chargers in your bag and in the car, as recalled by one of the interviewees: “I always bring a charger too, because as I am using WhatsApp, on the Internet, I consume a lot of battery. I charge at night, when I get to work I charge again, I come home I charge.” (M.R.O.S., 34, female, Brazilian, civil servant).

Another aspect mentioned by interviewees of both locations is the association between the cell phone and work. There are those who have two handsets (a personal and another professional), with a physical separation of meanings. The professional cell phone seems to bring only one possibility of use – the utilitarian, professional, as if the person was working the whole time. So there is some rejection to its possession, and the consequent establishment of times for connection and disconnection.

Regarding the reasons for cell phone use, in both cities, difficulties related to daily physical mobility (journeys between home, work and school, for example) are the main reason it is so important to have a means of communication at hand.

In this regard, the Angolan interviewees strongly value the cell phone for bringing solutions that mitigate everyday local problems, arising from the precariousness of paving, the lack of public transportation and the chaotic traffic. The difficulties in the collective sphere contribute to the importance of mobile telephony in individual life.

In this case, the virtual-informational mobility works, mainly, as a substitute for physical mobility. That is, the cell phone not only serves to accompany people in their physical displacements, but also to replace

this type of movement, restricted by the local context. This occurs not only in the city, to avoid unnecessary physical displacements, but also in access to inland provinces: “The war is over, people are in the city, unable to get around because of the costs, so they talk on the mobile phone...” (L.M., 33, female, Angolan, administrative employee).

In a nutshell, the cell phone can have a fundamental role in the routine of users, to save time and reduce risks and physical wear and tear. Their importance can be large enough to cause fascination, in a fetishism process associated with the goods: the mobile phone is seen as something magical, which provides the user with special powers: “I live in a 16-story building, I live on the 14th floor, with no elevator, no one will visit me without contacting me, they have to call ahead, otherwise they get there and I’m not there. This here [cell phone] is magical.” (A.M., 45, female, Angolan, marketing executive).

Additionally, there are uses related to leisure and entertainment: access games, browse the digital social networks, post videos and photos, for example. These practices seem inferior and less “noble” than the more practical and rational functions. Perhaps because they are related to leisure and moments of rest, non-productive from the work point of view, entering into the logic of superfluous consumption, and are affected, in some way, by the production bias (BARBOSA, 2010) accompanying the traditional and critical look at consumption. Verbalizations, in general, try to repeatedly enhance the usefulness and reject idleness: “For me the cell phone is for work, to communicate with the family. This relationship thing and socialization are not my objectives; it is more for the professional side really.” (A.J.M., 50, male, Brazilian, driver).

In the Angolan case, a more rational use appears to be justified by the high mobile Internet access costs by cellular networks: “For voice and SMS’s is what it is mostly used for [the cell phone]; there are very few people who use data, people connected to information technology, that work with it. It is still too expensive, they use it for professional reasons because otherwise it’s too expensive.” (J.E., 33, male, Angolan, administrative officer).

In Brazil, the cell phone is increasingly associated to the Internet, due to the decreasing costs of access. There is recognition that the popularization of mobile Internet has increased the usage intensity of the device. In this sense, the most common uses are to access social networks (like Facebook and Instagram), downloading, uploading and streaming of video content, games and photos, and apps for various purposes. There is also the mention of various forms of direct communication (Skype, Messenger and WhatsApp mainly) without the use of calls and text messages, using the data networks of mobile operators or, preferably, Wi-Fi networks.

Finally, there are also rituals associated with disconnection, with the realization that there are times when the cell phone should stay turned off. They are family situations, social or individual moments that require concentration and dedication. But the disconnection can create tension with people trying to make contact during these intervals, which causes internal conflicts among the interviewees: “I’ve often wanted to be without my cell phone. [...] But I get irritated when I call my husband and he does not answer, sometimes he is in a meeting. He also gets angry when I do not answer.” (F.C., 35, female, Angolan, administrative employee).

The third type of ritual that we have described are the possession rituals, involving cases in which consumers insert personal and unique meanings when taking possession of their goods.

Overall, the ownership of the asset may occur by creating a more visible customization, using a simple outer casing, pendants or by choosing a specific musical ringtone for calls. However, device customization also occurs internally, by gathering information in the device memory, with proprietary data, their activities and social circles, which may or may not be shared: “I take a lot of pictures of myself. I leave some on the phone, I post some on Face [Facebook], it’s very practical. [...] I always want to register the moment. Everything in life is moments, nothing comes back, I want to keep them.” (M.R.O.S., 34, female, Brazilian, civil servant).

This exhibitionist side of digital imagery and social networks, as in the case of networks totally based on photographs like Instagram, are

often criticized for overexposure, but they seem to have a very strong appeal: “Instagram is totally exhibitionist, it’s just pictures! Just photos, many people use it to post selfies, and so on... It’s not really my thing, but sometimes I take them...” (K.E., 33, female, Brazilian, project coordinator).

For the fourth type of ritual, disposal, we realize that it has great prominence in contemporary media, in processes such as recycling, reuse, packaging with refills or any procedure for disposal. However, in both locations, the interviewees don’t seem to have any knowledge of specific disposal systems for cell phones or used batteries: “It ends up staying with me, I do not know if there is any site [place] for this [disposal].” (C.F., 35, female, Angolan, administrative employee).

The interviewees say that the old handsets are often passed on to family members when new phones are purchased. This is primarily as a way to take advantage of the financial investments made previously and, in a way, justify the new purchase: “I give [the used device] to someone, it has been my children. And theirs will go to other people who need to change.” (J.E., 33, male, Angolan, administrative officer). Among the Brazilian interviewees, there are reports of parents who buy new phones for their children and then begin to use the replaced handset themselves, reusing and renewing their phones this way.

## **Final considerations**

This article presents aspects of the consumption of mobile telephony in two countries, and although they share intertwined cultures, symbolized by the Portuguese language, they experience different socioeconomic contexts and also distinct stages in the development and adoption of mobile telephony. In this sense, we can better understand the relationship between the individual, society and technology, in which we identify a dynamic and evolving learning process, which models the use and transforms personal and collective meanings.

We can say that during the initial introduction time, technology tends to be seen as something unknown, transformative and magical

in relation to the new possibilities while using it. Accordingly, it can also be used as a symbol of distinction and higher status for those who initially adopt it. In Angola, in the context of social inequality and after a long period of civil war, the cell phone has positive meanings of digital inclusion, as an indicator of citizenship and a landmark development, a source of pride and a way to insert and to bring the country closer to the rest of the world.

Over time, with established experience and the popularization associated with the decline in prices, consumption tends to be naturalized, meddling in daily life, as in the Brazilian case. The large mobile market in the country has developed amidst the climate of optimism that has taken place in the domestic economic environment over the last decade, with the insertion of a less favored share in consumption. Mobile Internet access has expanded the possibility of communication and sociability for much of the population that uses a Cell Phone in an intense and ordinary way.

There is, therefore, situational differences, related to the market environment, such as distinctions in the competitive landscape and pricing, which can suppress or stimulate the frequency of use and transform the relationship of individuals with technology.

On the other hand, we identify common significances related to mobile telephony, such as autonomy, freedom and expression of individuality, resulting in extremely close relationships between people and their mobile devices. The interviewees initially present functional and rational justification for their use and consumption, but also recognize symbolic and emotional aspects, such as ostentation of devices and the ease of socializing.

Additionally, through the use of rituals connected to the virtual-informational mobility, the individual incorporates, transforms and expresses his subjectivity in current or virtual processes. These rituals involving the mobile device may be sporadic or seasonal (such as the purchase and exchange of devices or recharging values for the operators), but there is daily maintenance, it is continuous and is repeated every day.

This is the case of cell phone routines such as using the device to wake up, to not forget it at home, or to keep it charged. These daily rituals are in tune with the essentiality of the cell phone as an organizer and daily companion that unites rational and emotional aspects in its consumption, sometimes requiring too much attention, which makes one reflect and realize that there are times when disconnection may be the best alternative.

We conclude that because it is an area of high technology and great economic importance, evolution in mobile telephony is constant, with new technological possibilities in the form of networks, devices and applications. Therefore, their significances are quickly renewed, with constant consumer assessments of benefits and risks, individual and collective, associated and brought with every technological innovation.

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