

A medium for short-distance lovers that exploits an obstructive function to draw them back to face-to-face communications

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Abstract: Currently, in Japan we often see couples in cafes or restaurants who use mobile phones and do not speak to each other. By using mobile phones, we can enjoy communicating, gaming, and web browsing with people in remote places. However, as a result, the couples might become lack of communication and it becomes difficult to make good memories even though they are together. Whereas the related research efforts have attempted to mainly support long-distance couples, there are also such issues to be solved for short-distance couples. Accordingly, we have been studying a medium to encourage communications of the short-distance couples. This medium exploits an obstructive function to move their interests from the mobile phones (online) to the partner (offline) without negative feelings. Firstly, we conducted a field research and designed a communication medium that exploits the couple's obstructive behaviors. Then we conducted user studies of the media with couples in a restaurant. As a result, we confirmed that our idea is useful.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Recently, we often see couples who individually use mobile phones and do not speak to each other even though they are dating at cafes or restaurants in Japan. Dating is important time for lovers to enhance their intimacy. Therefore, we think couples should communicate at a real world when they are together. According to M. McLuhan (1964), media have a strong influence with people and society, and change their life style irreversibly. Because of that, even a person says “Do not use mobile phone during our date” to his/her partner, it is not effective panacea. People cannot get rid of implicit influence of media such as the mobile phones even while they are dating.

In order to draw them back to face-to-face communications from individual use of the mobile phones during the date, this paper proposes a novel communication medium named “TInComm” that conveys teasing behaviors using the mobile phones to achieve the abovementioned objective. We describe the concept and setup of TInComm as well as report results of user studies to investigate its usefulness.

2. TWO TYPES OF BEHAVIOR TO CONVEY COZY AFFECTION BETWEEN LOVERS

Isamu Saito (2005) reported “Acting cozy” is important for lovers to feel happiness and to improve their relationships much better. There are two types of behavior to convey cozy affection between the lovers (Figure 1). The first one is a

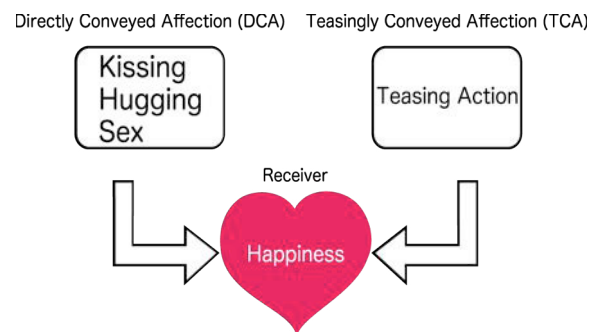


Fig. 1. Two types of behaviour to convey cozy affections

straightforward behavior such as kissing or hugging, which is naturally used not only by the lovers but also by everybody. The second one is a paradoxical behavior that does not originally have cozy meanings like teasing, which can be used to convey cozy affection only by very intimate people such as the lovers. For example, we sometimes see a situation where a person of a couple pretends to feed some food to the partner, but he/she actually eats it by him/herself.

We developed TInComm mainly focusing on the second type of behavior to solve the communication problem of the dating couples.



Fig. 2. A medium for conveying cozy actions in a straightforward manner. Left side: sender, Right side: receiver. (DCA)

3. RELATED WORKS

There is much research for the conveying of cozy affection: see Hye Yeon Nam et al. (2010), H. Chung et al. (2006) and Hitomi Tsujita et al.(2008) . Most of which is for long distance lovers. The couples cannot express their affection because of distance. In comparison, close distance couples can see and act cozy easier. Because of this, there does not seem to be a communication medium for close distance couples except we did, see Takuya Iwamoto et al. (2015).

Although many couples can communicate during the date, we guess that some problems happen like communicate loss from mobile.

4. FIELD RESEARCH AND PROTOTYPE SYSTEM

4.1 Field Research on Couples' Behaviors in Public Spaces

We researched the behaviors of couples in theater and the rest area of a department store. 18 couples were observed on a Saturday during the hours of 16:00-19:00.

We observed that what they grab and did while sitting in and leaving their chairs (Table 1 and 2). 16 couples used mobile phones. 14 males used the phone earlier than female used. Especially the males used a phone and the females got bewildered. This does not happen only at the place where we researched but also other places like restaurants or trains.

4.2 Prototype System

The medium using obstructive function is assumed as the obstructive action make his/her partner's consciousness from online (mobile) to offline (partner). We focused on this action and developed a system for Android mobile. Conveying cozy affection is divided into Directly Conveying Cozy (DCA) and Teasingly Conveying Cozy Affection (TCA). We developed a system for both DCA and TCA and experimented with which prototype is better for lovers' communication.

System for DCA: Saying "I love you" is an easy way to directly convey cozy affection with a mobile phone. Conveying cozy affection with people around is hard to do for lovers. There is a system for conveying cozy affection over a

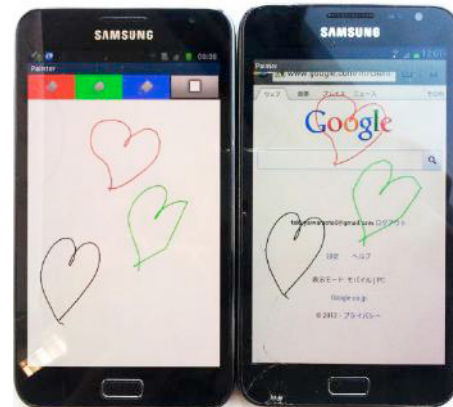


Fig. 3. A medium for conveying cozy actions in a paradoxical manner. Left side: sender, Right side: receiver. (TCA)

Table. 1 What a person holds when he or she has a seat

♥	Empty handed	Foods/ Drinks	Mobile Phones	Others
Male	11	3	3	1
Female	16	2	0	0

Table. 2 What a person takes up when he or she left

♥	Empty handed	Foods/ Drinks	Mobile Phones	Others
Male	2	3	16	0
Female	11	0	7	0

long distance. We can follow a similar way. Therefore, feeling like it is "only you and me" is important. A secret where no one else notices the conveying of cozy affection in addition to originality like the lover's personality are required for developing a convey cozy medium.

The DCA system is a shared painting system. The lovers can express their own feelings by painting or writing text (Fig. 2). There are 3 colors (black, red and green) and an eraser on the canvas. Images that a lover has painted are sent to the other lover's mobile phone. Then the lover can originally and secretly convey cozy affection outside of the house. System for TCA: Acting teasingly can be a method of conveying cozy affection among couples. The system uses sabotage for acting cozy. Preventing from using the phone perfectly sometimes makes the lover anger. To avoid that anger, our system instead gradually makes the mobile display difficult to see. The user whose screen is painted would be surprised but the lover can still use the phone because the lover can see the display. This TCA system is also a shared painting system. However, the canvas background is the other user's display (Fig. 3).

4.3 Pre Experiment

Both of the systems were experimented by 3 couples. The couples sat face-to-face and spoke while using the system.

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