

INSTANT FAME: MESSAGE BOARDS, MOBILE PHONES, AND CLAY AIKEN

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I. Introduction

When pop artist Clay Aiken gave a concert in August 2004, Kevin Clapp of the *Press of Atlantic City* newspaper observed that those in attendance “weren’t the only ones enjoying the show.” Clapp explained that “[t]hanks to a new concertgoing trend...countless others could enjoy the show even if located thousands of miles away” (Clapp 2004). The writer was witnessing a new mobile phenomenon: the cellcert.

A. Defining Cellcerts

A cellcert occurs when a fan uses a mobile phone to transmit information from a live concert to a wider, usually Internet-based audience. The concertgoer contacts another fan from his or her mobile phone during the show. While listening to the concert from afar, the listener can post real-time updates for other fans on the Internet.

This study makes an important distinction between a cellcert and a simple phone call from a live event to a listener elsewhere. Is it a cellcert if a mother calls a grandmother from a graduation ceremony so the latter can hear her grandchild’s name being announced? What if a concertgoer calls a friend from a concert so he or she can listen to just a song or two, not the entire concert? For the purposes of this study, we will define cellcerts as sharing certain characteristics. First, the word “cellcert” will always refer to the transmission of information from a live event where the audience is composed of fans, such as a concert. An audience of family and friends, such as the crowd at a graduation ceremony, would not qualify as cellcert users. Second, a “cellcert” differs from a simple phone call made from a live event because of its connection to computer-mediated communication (CMC). The cellcerts studied here either were posted to an Internet message board or occurred between two message board users as the result of an agreement forged through message board communication. Third, unlike a casual phone call to let a friend hear a single song, a cellcert lasts for the entire duration of a concert, hazarding

physical discomfort for both the cellcert provider and the recipient, and the possible violation of conference-attendance rules for the provider.

B. Why are Cellcerts Important?

Cellcerting is an intriguing phenomenon in part because it challenges conventional classifications of computer-mediated communication. It represents an overlap between two distinct forms of communication: asynchronous, in which participants do not interact together in real-time, and synchronous or real-time communication. Posting to an Internet message board is an asynchronous form of communication, while talking on the phone is synchronous (see Baron 2003).

Another way to categorize computer-mediated communication is to examine the number of participants. Once again cellcerting resists simple classification. One form of CMC is one-to-one dialogue, an exchange with one sender and one recipient. A simple phone call or email exchange is one-to-one. The other classification is one-to-many dialogue, in which a single sender communicates with multiple recipients. Listservs, message boards, and chat rooms are all examples of one-to-many dialogues.

Lastly, communication can be tethered or mobile. Tethered communication requires the user to remain relatively stationary, such as using a desktop computer. Mobile communication allows the user to move amongst locations, such as using a mobile phone. Increasingly, wireless Internet access and web-enabled mobile phones are shifting our perceptions of how to classify certain forms of communication. Since cellcerting involves a provider using a mobile phone and a recipient who is usually tethered in some way (either to a landline telephone, a desktop computer, or simply stuck at home due to the necessity of a quiet place to receive a cellcert), cellcerts are just one of the many capabilities that continue to blur the lines between mobile and tethered communication.

A cellcert marries synchronous and asynchronous forms of communication, one-to-one and one-to-many dialogues, and tethered and mobile communication. Cellcerts combine the possibilities offered by mobile phones (synchronous, one-to-one, and mobile communication) with those offered by a message board (asynchronous, one-to-many, tethered communication). What at first glance may appear to be just a quirky piece of fan

behavior is actually an unusual amalgam of technologies. As the capabilities of mobile phones expand to include more advanced photo and video options, the cellcert may exemplify a unique moment in the recent history of communication.

With this brief definition of cellcerts and an understanding of where they fit – or do not fit – in the world of CMC, a few things should be quite clear: cellcerting is complicated and requires endurance on the part of both the cellcert provider and the cellcert recipient. So who or what inspired a fan-base to thread this technological needle?

C. Clay Aiken

At the heart of the cellcert phenomenon is the fan-base devoted to recording artist Clay Aiken. In December of 2002, Clay Aiken was a twenty-four-year-old special education major at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. By the following June, he was one of the best-selling recording artists of the year and at the forefront of an Internet craze. Aiken appeared on the second season of Fox's hit show *American Idol*, where amateur singers compete for a recording contract. The finalists perform live weekly. Viewers may phone in votes for their favorite contestant by calling a toll-free number within two hours of the show's broadcast in their time zone. Cingular Wireless mobile phone users may vote via text message. (Cingular is the official mobile service provider for *American Idol*.) Viewers may vote as many times as they like for any number of contestants within the two-hour window. The results of the nationwide voting are announced the following night. The lowest vote-getter is eliminated each week until the last remaining hopeful is named the *American Idol* and awarded the recording contract.

Despite his second-place finish on *American Idol*, Aiken was offered a recording contract with RCA Records. His first single sold over a million copies in its first week. Since 2003, Aiken's debut album has achieved triple platinum status; he has recorded a second successful album and has had five major cross-country tours.

Thanks in part to the interactive nature of *American Idol*'s voting process, Aiken connected with a tech-savvy audience at the start of his career. In fact, Aiken amassed a fan-base known for exceptional enthusiasm channeled through collective web-based activities (see Corbin 2003).

A previous study conducted by the author on language usage unique to Clay Aiken fan message boards led to discovery of the cellcert phenomenon (Watkins 2004). The earlier research indicated that Clay Aiken cellcerts existed in an organized form as early as April 2004. Cellcerting enjoys an unrivaled prominence within the Aiken fan community. A standard Google search for “Clay Aiken cellcerts” on April 10, 2006 yielded 18,400 results. A search replacing Aiken’s name with that of pop superstar Britney Spears yielded only 56 hits. Close inspection of these results showed that all 56 were mentions of Spears within Aiken fan pages. The same held true of the 66 hits generated by a search for rapper “Eminem” and “cellcerts,” and for the 45 hits for pop diva “Beyonce” and “cellcerts.”

The argument that cellcerts are predominant within the Aiken fan community is bolstered by Aiken’s application to trademark the word itself. According to the United States Patent and Trademark Office, Aiken has applied for a trademark on the word “cellcert.” The application was filed on December 29, 2003 and to the best of the author’s knowledge is still pending. The application uses the definition “transmission of concerts via mobile telephones” (see Appendix A).

Aiken may be applying to trademark the word cellcert, but he does not claim to have created the term, which appears to have had its genesis on Aiken message boards. It is difficult to pinpoint when the term first came into common usage and nigh impossible to find a credible source to cite. Fan legend suggests that Aiken has used various fan-specific terms during concerts before affably admitting to audiences, “I know your words.” These distinct pieces of slang, acronyms, and, in the case of “cellcert,” invented words do not originate with Aiken himself. They emerge on Internet message boards, the watering holes of the fan community.

D. Message Boards

Online message boards are public Internet forums that facilitate discussion on specific subjects. They are accessible from any computer with Internet access. Membership in a message board is not usually required to read the discussions, though often it is a prerequisite for posting new discussions or comment on previous posts. Membership is typically free and available to anyone with a valid email address. Message boards usually

have moderators who monitor the board for questionable content and handle logistical problems. Each unique contribution to a message board is referred to as a “post.” A post can begin a new topic of discussion or reply to a previous post. A series of posts originating with a single message and dealing with a specific subject is known as a “thread.” Message boards discuss a wide variety of topics, including hobbies, academics, professional interests, entertainment, support groups, and much more (Danet 2001). This study focused specifically on fan message boards devoted to Clay Aiken.

E. Clay Aiken Fan Message Boards

Websites devoted to Aiken sprang up in abundance during his time on *American Idol* and have continued to increase in number. A website called *Finding Clay Aiken* offers one of the most complete listings of all Aiken-related websites (see Appendix B). *Finding Clay Aiken*’s directory contains close to 500 Aiken fan sites, including 66 message boards. These message boards vary widely in size and content. Boards have as many as tens of thousands of members or they may have just a few hundred. While most of these boards are open to anyone, some attempt to enforce minimum age requirements. A few require paid membership. Almost a fifth of the boards have a regional focus (e.g., Mid-Atlantic Clay Fans, Clay Aiken Northeast) or single out a certain social demographic (e.g., Clayversity, College Claymates). Religion Free Clay encourages fans to discuss the singer without mentioning his Southern Baptist background; ClayDawgs is a message board specifically for male Aiken fans.

Of the 66 message boards listed on *Finding Clay Aiken*, this study examined five. The five boards represent a range in terms of size of membership and number of posts. They are: Idolforums, The Clayboard, ClayAikenOnline’s Fan Forum, That’s The Clay, and Claytherapy. The statistics offered below were current as of April 14, 2006:

Idolforums (general *American Idol* message board)

Created: February 9th, 2003

Registered members: 48,365

Total posts: 9,045,494

Mechanics: Powered by: Invision Power Board v2.0.4, copyright ©2003- 2005 IPS, Inc. Licensed to: Neurox Media Network

The Clayboard (Aiken-specific message board)

Created: April 22, 2003

Registered members: 12,917

Total posts: 3,517,080

Mechanics: Powered By ezboard® Ver. 7.32, copyright © 2003-2005 by ClaytonAiken.com**ClayAikenOnline Fan Forums** (Aiken-specific message board)

[Statistics not available, as the website has not made this information public.]

That's The Clay (Aiken-specific message board)

Created: March 4, 2003

Registered members: 7,065

Total posts: 544,942

Mechanics: Powered By ezboard® Ver. 7.32, copyright ©1999-2005 ezboard, Inc.**Claytherapy:** (Aiken-specific message board)

Created: October 8, 2003

Registered members: 468

Total posts: 166,878

Mechanics: Powered by Invision Power Board v1.3 Final © 2003 IPS, Inc.**II. Research Questions**

Using data from a questionnaire, this study asked whether fans who are already conversant in message board communication are more likely to participate in cellcerting than those who are not. Conversance in message board communication was determined through self-reporting. Questions examined three areas of cellcerting: providing a cellcert, receiving a cellcert, and either posting your own real-time updates or reading another person's real-time updates. Each respondent to the questionnaire was judged to be either conversant or non-conversant, and then evaluated in each of the three cellcert practices categories. The questionnaire also requested demographic information, allowing other significant variables to emerge.

We hypothesized that users who were conversant in other forms of CMC would prove more likely to participate in cellcerting than those who were not. We also anticipated that younger users would be more likely to participate in cellcerting than older users.

III. Methodology

A questionnaire was offered to the members of each of the five message boards described above (see Appendix C). The questionnaire appeared in a post entitled “Take My Survey, Win a Clay Button!” Respondents were invited to copy and paste the text of the questionnaire, fill in their responses, and either post their completed questionnaires as replies to the original post or send them directly to the author via email. The questionnaire was first posted in April 2005, then for a second time in July 2005. In both cases, respondents were given a one-week window to respond to the questionnaire with the incentive of a chance to win one of six Clay Aiken buttons in a random drawing. Responses received after the week had elapsed were still included in the study, though the respondents were not eligible for the button lottery. Twenty-one users responded to the survey in April 2005 and 16 more responded in July 2005, making 37 respondents in all.

The questionnaire was divided into five sections: demographics, cellcerts provided, cellcerts received, cellcert transcripts read/posted, and open-ended.

A. Section 1 of Questionnaire: Demographics

The demographic measures we explored were age, length of membership on an Aiken message board, and membership on any other message boards. Age was included to help determine whether younger users would prove more likely to participate in cellcerting than older users. Length of membership is one gauge of the users’ familiarity with the communication opportunities presented by message boards in general, relying on the rough assumption that the longer one has been exposed to the mechanics of message boards, the more conversant one becomes in their uses. Preliminary research by the author (Watkins 2004) indicated that many Clay Aiken message board users are not active on message boards dealing with other subjects and thus are not conversant with varied forms of message board mechanics. Asking about participation on other boards was used as a measure of familiarity with CMC.

B. Section 2 of Questionnaire: Cellcerts Provided

For this study, “providing” a cellcert refers to calling another fan from a concert. Only someone present at a concert can provide a cellcert; we did not consider posting impressions to a message board to be “providing” a cellcert. Instead, this is an optional component of receiving a cellcert, which we addressed in a separate section of the questionnaire.

Message board users were asked if they had ever provided a cellcert. If so, they were directed to seven sub-questions that investigated:

- (1) type of mobile phone used to provide the cellcert
- (2) special features on the phone (such as texting)
- (3) cost of providing the cellcert
- (4) changes in mobile technology that would make cellcerting easier
- (5) process of choosing the cellcert recipient
- (6) number of listeners to the cellcert
- (7) instances of the provider cellcerting for an artist other than Aiken

While we were interested in tabulating as much data on the mechanics of cellcerting as possible, we hypothesized that few of these variables would prove relevant to the over-arching question of whether a user engages in cellcerting or not. We anticipated that cellcert participants were likely to use a wide variety of mobile phones and providers, and that while the mobile phones used probably had features such as texting, these features did not play a role in the cellcert itself. We predicted that the question investigating the process of choosing the recipient would reveal that many cellcerts occur between two or more message board users, firmly anchoring the cellcert phenomenon in the world of CMC. Lastly, we were interested to see if the data supported the conclusion that cellcerting was unique to, or at least predominant in, the Clay Aiken fan community.

C. Section 3 of Questionnaire: Cellcerts Received

Receiving a cellcert refers exclusively to listening to a concert on a phone (landline or mobile). Posting impressions to a message board while listening is an optional

component of receiving a cellcert. Reading the postings on a message board does not constitute receiving a cellcert. Respondents were asked if they had ever received a cellcert.

Those who answered affirmatively were asked to expand on the following points:

- (1) other activities engaged in at the same time as the cellcert (such as posting on an online message board)
- (2) whether the provider offered the cellcert unasked or the recipient requested it
- (3) if the respondent had ever received a cellcert for an artist other than Aiken
- (4) what kind of phone the cellcert was received on

These questions investigated several aspects of cellcerting, including the technology that allowed the cellcert to take place, and whether cellcerts are indeed unique to Clay Aiken concerts. We hypothesized that a majority of cellcert recipients were posting to a message board while listening to the concert, that the provider probably offered the cellcert unasked, that few if any respondents had ever received a cellcert for an artist other than Aiken, and that once again the kind of mobile phone the cellcert was received on would prove irrelevant.

D. Section 4 of Questionnaire: Cellcert Transcripts Read

Respondents were asked whether they had ever read cellcert transcripts on a message board. Those who responded positively were asked to respond to questions examining:

- (1) if the transcript was read as it was continually updated or when it was complete
- (2) if they preferred cellcert transcripts to reviews by professional critics
- (3) if the user perceived cellcert transcripts to be accurate

If message board users generally read transcripts and posted replies as the transcripts were being continually updated, then these users were judged to be participating in synchronous communication. If users waited to read completed transcripts and then perhaps post on a message board, the communication was judged asynchronous.

E. Section 5 of Questionnaire: Open-Ended

In this final section, respondents were asked if they have ever heard the term “cellcert” outside the Clay Aiken community and where they believe the word originated. Respondents were also asked for any additional comments they wished to make, along with any anecdotes they had about cellcerts.

IV. Data

Thirty-seven questionnaires were analyzed. Fourteen of these questionnaires were submitted to the author via email. The remaining 23 responses were posted on the various message boards. Twenty-one message board users completed the questionnaire in April 2005 and 16 more responded in July 2005.

A. Data for Questionnaire Section 1: Demographics

All 37 respondents were female. They ranged in age from 13 to 62. Twenty-three (62%) were between the ages of 15 and 19. The full age distribution appears in Table 1.

Table 1: Age Distribution of Questionnaire Respondents

Age Range	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total
10 - 14	4 of 37	11%
15 - 19	23 of 37	62%
20 - 24	4 of 37	11%
25-29	1 of 37	3%
30-34	0	0%
35-39	1 of 37	3%
40-44	0	0%
45-49	0	0%
50-54	3 of 37	8%
55-59	0	0%
60-64	1 of 37	3%

Most of the questionnaire respondents were older teenagers (15 to 19 years old), with small populations of younger teens and women past the age of 50 also represented.

Respondents hailed from seventeen U.S. states. Six of the 37 respondents (16%) lived in Canada and 1 was from Australia. Table 2 displays the full geographic distribution.

Table 2: Geographic Distribution of Questionnaire Respondents

Number of Questionnaire Respondents from Each State or Country	State or Country
1	Arizona, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Wisconsin
2	Illinois, Maryland, Michigan
3	New Jersey, New York
4	California, Ohio
<i>International</i>	
1	<i>Australia</i>
6	<i>Canada</i>

All of the 37 respondents had been posting on a Clay Aiken message board for more than a year. Twelve of 37 respondents (32%) posted exclusively on Clay Aiken message boards. Twenty-five respondents (68%) posted regularly on other message boards. Seven of the 25 who posted regularly on other message boards (28% of the subtotal) mentioned fan sites devoted to the fictional character Harry Potter and 6 (24% of the subtotal) mentioned message boards discussing Kelly Clarkson, *American Idol*'s season one winner.

B. Data for Questionnaire Section 2: Cellcerts Given

Fifteen of the 37 respondents (41%) indicated that they had provided a cellcert. When asked what features were on the mobile phone providing the cellcert, 12 of the 15 respondents (80%) indicated that their phones had text messaging capabilities, 6 of 15 (40%) had camera phones, 3 of 15 (20%) had web browsing capabilities, 2 of 15 (13%) mentioned speaker phones, and games, mobile instant messaging, and video capabilities were mentioned by 1 respondent. Table 3 summarizes these data.

Table 3: Special Features on Cellcert Providers' Mobile Phones

Special Features on Phone Providing the Cellcert	Users who Reported Phones with Feature	Percentage of Total Cellcert Providers
Text Messaging	12 of 15	80%
Camera	6 of 15	40%
Web Browsing	3 of 15	20%
Speaker Phone	2 of 15	13%
Games, mobile IM, video	1 of 15	7%

Readers are reminded that these data were collected in April and July 2005. It seems likely that today, 100% of mobile phones on the market have text messaging capabilities. On a similar note, *owning* a phone with a certain technology does not always imply *using* that technology.

When asked how much providing a cellcert cost, only 2 of 15 respondents (13%) quoted exact figures and then cited “pay as you go” style mobile phone plans. One respondent estimated that providing a cellcert cost her \$5, the other \$3. Eight of the 15 cellcert providers (53%) indicated that the cellcert was “free” due to free nighttime minutes, 4 (27%) mentioned free weekend minutes, 2 (13%) free calling between two mobile phones using the same service provider.

For 10 of the 15 respondents (67%), the concertgoer offered to provide a cellcert to the non-concertgoer. In the other 5 cases (33%), the non-concertgoer approached a concertgoer and asked for a cellcert. Nine of the 15 respondents (60%) indicated that when

they provided a cellcert, only one person was on the line receiving it. In 6 other cases (40%), more than one person listened to the cellcert. One respondent explained that 12 people listened to the cellcert she provided as a “listening party via enhanced speaker phone.”

Only one respondent had ever provided a cellcert for a musical artist other than Clay Aiken.

C. Data for Questionnaire Section 3: Cellcerts Received

Twenty-three of 37 survey respondents (62%) indicated they had received at least one cellcert (that is, receiving a phone call from the live concert that lasts for the duration of the concert). Of those who had received a cellcert, 6 respondents (26%) indicated that they were posting their commentary on an online message board during the cellcert. Five of the 23 (22%) noted they had received cellcerts for other artists. Two of these five mentioned Kelly Clarkson. Eighteen of 23 respondents (78%) received their cellcerts on mobile phones, as opposed to landline telephones.

D. Data for Questionnaire Section 4: Cellcert Transcripts Read

Twenty-five of 37 respondents (68%) indicated that they had read cellcert transcripts online. Of those 25, there were 15 (60%) who liked to read cellcert transcripts as they were being continually updated, 6 (24%) who liked to read transcripts once they complete, and 4 (13%) who liked to do both. Table 4 summarizes these findings.

Table 4: Modes of Reading Cellcert Transcripts

Mode	Users	Percentage of Total
As the transcript was continually updated	15 of 25	60%
After transcript was complete	6 of 25	24%
Both as it was continually updated and once it was complete	4 of 25	13%

Most respondents enjoyed using cellcert transcripts in the way that most closely approximates real-time updates, reading as the transcript is continually updated, rather than waiting for the entire corpus. This preference nudges cellcerting toward the synchronous end of the CMC spectrum.

Nineteen of the 25 respondents who read cellcert transcripts (76%) noted that they preferred reading cellcerts to reading concert reviews by professional critics. Our question did not specify whether these professional reviews appeared online or in print. No one preferred professional reviews to cellcerts, and 4 respondents (16%) indicated they enjoyed professional reviews and cellcerts equally. Although our question did not ask respondents to elaborate on *why* they might prefer cellcert transcripts to professional concert reviews, the overwhelming preference for cellcert transcripts (76%) speaks once again to the insularity of the cellcert phenomenon. Cellcerts are created by fans for fans. Not only do fans enjoy consuming cellcerts, but they would rather consume cellcerts than mainstream alternatives. Why purchase a newspaper the next day to read a static review by a professional when you can read real-time updates by enthusiastic and knowledgeable fans for free?

Twenty-five respondents reported that they had read cellcert transcripts of concerts that they had attended. Interestingly, these were the same 25 individuals who read any cellcert transcripts at all. This overlap supports the thesis that message board participation is often used to augment live experiences, not replace them. On the one hand, some transcript readers enjoy a vicarious experience, spending concert night in front of a computer, reading updates as they are posted. Other concertgoers log on hours or days after the concert has finished to read the description of an event they attended. Of the 25 transcript readers, 14 (56%) found cellcert accounts to be “accurate” and 11 respondents (44%) found them “very accurate.” No one responded that cellcerts were “not accurate.”

Twenty-three of 25 respondents (92%) had never heard the word “cellcert” used outside of the Clay Aiken online community. Two respondents (8%) indicated that they had seen the word “Kelcerts” used on Kelly Clarkson message boards, and 1 respondent indicated that she had read the word “cellcert” on a fan site devoted to Josh Groban, another pop singer.

V. Discussion

This study explored where cellcerting fits within the larger spectrum of computer-mediated communication and mobile phone usage, as well as examining the specific parameters of cellcert practices. We hypothesized that conversant users of message boards would be more likely to provide cellcerts, receive cellcerts, and read cellcert transcripts than those less conversant. We also hypothesized that age would be a relevant variable.

A. Conversance in Message Board Communication

To determine conversance in message board communication, we asked users how many message boards they regularly posted on. Users who posted on more than one message board were considered conversant. Twenty-three respondents were identified as conversant and 14 as non-conversant. Conversant users proved slightly more likely to take part in each of the three stages of cellcerting, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: How Conversance Affects Cellcerts Provided

Conversance of Cellcert Providers	Users	% of Total by Conversance
Conversant CMC Users Who Have Provided a Cellcert	10 of 23	43%
Non-Conversant CMC Users Who Have Provided a Cellcert	5 of 14	36%
Total Users Who Have Provided a Cellcert	15 of 37	40%

Responses provided only weak support for the hypothesis that conversant users are more likely to provide cellcerts than are non-conversant users. Forty-three percent of conversant users had provided a cellcert, but so had 36% of non-conversant users. By our definition, conversance in message board communication is not necessary to be able to provide a cellcert.

We also looked at the relationship between conversance and receipt of cellcerts. The results are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: How Conversance Affects Cellcerts Received

Conversance of Cellcert Recipients	Users	% of Total by Conversance
Conversant CMC Users Who Have Received a Cellcert	15 of 23	65%
Non-Conversant CMC Users Who Have Received a Cellcert	8 of 14	57%
Total Users Who Have Received a Cellcert	23 of 37	62%

Once again, conversant users were only slightly more likely than their non-conversant counterparts to participate in an aspect of cellcerting, in this case, receiving a cellcert. Again, following our definition, conversance in message board communication is not necessary to receive a cellcert.

Note that the overall number of respondents who had received a cellcert (62%) was considerably higher than the number who had provided a cellcert (40%). With more people receiving cellcerts than providing them, we might infer (1) that a single cellcert provider is likely to provide cellcerts to diverse people on several different occasions or (2) that a single cellcert provider is providing cellcerts to multiple people at the same time through three-way calling or similar technologies. There is a final point to consider: since receiving a cellcert is a fairly passive act – just answering one’s telephone, it could be that conversance plays less of a role in determining who receives a cellcert than in who provides one.

Table 7 summarizes our findings regarding message board conversance and cellcert transcripts read.

Table 7: How Conversance Affects Cellcert Transcripts Read

Conversance of Transcript Readers	Users	% of Total by Conversance
Conversant CMC Users Who Have Read a Cellcert Transcripts	17 of 23	74%
Non-Conversant CMC Users Who Have Read a Cellcert Transcripts	8 of 14	57%
Total Users Who Have Read a Cellcert Transcript	25 of 37	68%

Most survey respondents were involved in this third component of cellcerting. Twenty-five out of 37 (68%) respondents had read a cellcert transcript, a larger population than those who have provided or received a cellcert. More than half of both the conversant and non-conversant populations have read cellcert transcripts, though once again, conversant users were more likely than non-conversant to engage in this practice.

B. Age

Age also emerged as a relevant variable in cellcert practices. Conventional wisdom suggests that younger users are more likely to be familiar with new and cutting edge uses of technology than older users. The current study found a preponderance of teenage users on Clay Aiken message boards, with 25 respondents under the age of 18 and only 12 respondents aged 18 or older. The questions, now, for each of the two age cohorts are how many provided cellcerts, how many received them, and how many read cellcert transcripts? Tables 8, 9, and 10 summarize the data.

Table 8: How Age Affects Cellcerts Provided

Age of Cellcert Providers	Users	% of Total By Age
Users Under the Age of 18	11 of 25	44%
Users 18 or Older	4 of 12	33%
Total Users Who Have Provided a Cellcert	15 of 37	40%

Message board users under the age of 18 are more likely than their older counterparts to provide a cellcert. Almost half of the young respondents had provided a cellcert, while only a third of older users had. These findings support the hypothesis that younger users are more likely than older users to engage in cellcerting.

Table 9: How Age Affects Cellcerts Received

Age of Cellcert Recipients	Users	% of Total By Age
Users Under the Age of 18	15 of 25	60%
Users 18 or Older	8 of 12	67%
Total Users Who Have Received a Cellcert	23 of 37	62%

When it came to receiving cellcerts, age did not appear to be a factor. Nearly two-thirds of both groups received cellcerts, with the proportion marginally higher for those 18 years of age and older. Given that older users may have more disposal income to purchase concert tickets than people under 18, this finding seems puzzling. One possible explanation is that for the older users, receiving a cellcert may be preferred to physically attending a concert. Perhaps experiencing the concert from the comfort of one's home, without having to jostle in a large crowd, has more appeal to the older cohort.

Table 10: How Age Affects Cellcert Transcripts Read

Age of Users Who Have Read a Cellcert Transcript	Users	% of Total By Age
Users Under the Age of 18	16 of 25	64%
Users 18 or Older	11 of 12	92%
Total Users Who Have Read a Cellcert Transcript	27 of 37	73%

Older users were also more likely to read cellcerts than the younger cohort. Once again, the data do not support our age hypothesis. As we suggested regarding receipt of cellcerts, perhaps older users find it more enjoyable to read cellcert transcripts than to participate in live concert venues.

VI. Further Questions

This pilot study invites several further questions. While the data indicated that CMC-conversant users are somewhat more likely to participate in all three steps of cellcerting, studying a larger population of subjects would be necessary before drawing firm conclusions. A closer study of age and cellcert practices is also warranted. While older users in the present study were more likely to participate in the more passive forms of cellcerting (receiving cellcerts and reading cellcerts transcripts) than younger respondents, the older cohort was still less likely than younger users to participate in the most active form of cellcerting: providing a cellcert to another person. Does this finding speak to enhanced technological savvy in younger users? Future studies would also benefit from a more sophisticated means of determining a user's conversance in message board communication as well as conversance in other forms of CMC such as instant messaging and texting.

More broadly, this study invites questions about why cellcerts exist and why they appeal to such a narrow fan-base. Cellcerting rarely occurs at other live events such as professional basketball games or political rallies. Perhaps this is not surprising. It *is* surprising, however, that cellcerting is not taking place at concerts featuring other pop stars with fame and numbers of fans that match or exceed Clay Aiken's fan-base. What explains this variation?

Perhaps most importantly, as technology improves, how will cellcerts change? As more mobile phones are capable of recording both audio and video, which can then be uploaded to the Internet, will cellcert transcripts in their written form be replaced by actual concert footage? Will cellcerting (though perhaps not at Aiken concerts) eventually come under attack by artists or concert venues as a violation of intellectual property rights?

VII. Closing Summary

This pilot study presented a quantitative analysis of the blending of mobile and tethered communication by users of Clay Aiken fan message boards. We examined a three-step process known as cellcerting, which allows a mobile phone user to transmit

information from a live concert in real-time to another user, who then posts her impressions to an online message board. The data suggest that both users' conversance in message board communication and user age correlate with cellcerting behaviors. Conversant users were more likely than non-conversant users to provide, receive, and read cellcert transcripts. Younger users were more likely to provide cellcerts than older users, while older users were more likely than younger users to receive cellcerts and read cellcert transcripts.

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Appendices

A: Trademark Information on “Cellcert”

A search on the US Patent and Trademark Office’s website: <http://www.uspto.gov/index.html> on April 9, 2006 yielded the following information on two trademark applications:

Application 1:

Word Mark	CELLCERT
Goods and Services	IC 038. US 100 101 104. G & S: Transmission of concerts via mobile telephones
Standard Characters Claimed	
Mark Drawing Code	(4) STANDARD CHARACTER MARK
Design Search Code	
Serial Number	78346147
Filing Date	December 29, 2003
Current Filing Basis	1B
Original Filing Basis	1B
Published for Opposition	January 4, 2005
Owner	(APPLICANT) Aiken, Clay INDIVIDUAL UNITED STATES Greenberg Traurig 3290 Northside Parkway, Suite 400 Atlanta GEORGIA 30327
Attorney of Record	Robert A. Rosenbloum, Esq.
Type of Mark	SERVICE MARK
Register	PRINCIPAL
Live/Dead Indicator	LIVE

Application 2:

Word Mark	CELLCERT
Goods and Services	IC 028. US 022 023 038 050. G & S: Game pieces for a board game
Standard Characters Claimed	
Mark Drawing Code	(4) STANDARD CHARACTER MARK
Design Search Code	
Serial Number	78346145
Filing Date	December 29, 2003
Current Filing Basis	1B
Original Filing Basis	1B
Published for Opposition	October 12, 2004
Owner	(APPLICANT) Aiken, Clay INDIVIDUAL UNITED STATES Greenberg Traurig 3290 Northside Parkway, Suite 400 Atlanta GEORGIA 30327
Attorney of Record	Robert A. Rosenbloum, Esq.
Type of Mark	TRADEMARK
Register	PRINCIPAL
Live/Dead Indicator	LIVE

Appendix B: *Finding Clay Aiken's* Alphabetical List of Fan Message Boards

The data below were collected on April 9, 2006 from *Finding Clay Aiken* at <http://www.findingclayaiken.com/FCA2/Clay%20on%20web/clayonweb.htm>. There were 66 message boards, listed below in alphabetical order.

Aikens Angels	Got Pins
All About Aiken	Heartful House
All About Love	Just Clayton
Arkansas Clay Fans	MIClaynation
Around the Clock	Mid Atlantic Clay Fans
Best of Clay Message Board	Neurox Idolforums
The Birth of a Legend	Northwest Clay Fans
Bolt - Clay area	OK Clay fans - EZ board
The Brotherhood and	Oregon Claymates-EZ board
Sisterhood of Clay	Our Man Clay
Central Ohio Clay Fans	PA Clay fans Message board
Chautauqua	People's Republic of Clay-EZ
The Clack House (PRoC)	Board
Clay N Company	Rebels for Clay Aiken
Clay Aiken Forums	Red Hot Topic
Clay Aiken Messageboard -	Religion Free Clay
official site	Rowdy Unleashed
Clay Aiken Northeast	Simply Clay
Clay Aiken Pictures	Simply Clay Fans
Clay Dawgs	That's The Clay
Clay Hideaway	Touch of Clay, Touch of
Clay is a Perfection	Truth
Clay Pins and Friends	UsenetNews-alt.music.clay-
Clay Therapy	aiken
Clay Time	Warriors4Clay
Clay Unwrapped	Weapons of Mass Seduction
Clay's Corner Cafe	Wrapped up in Trouble
The CLAYBOARD II	
ClayDream Believers	
Claymaniacs	
The Claymate Forums	
The Claymate Woodshed	
Claytime	
Claytastic	
Clayton's Paradise	
Clayton's Place	
Clayversity	
College Claymates	
Command-O-Clay	
Connecting Clay Fans	
Everywhere	
Crazy Kiwis for Clay	
Debacle	
Dorks 4 Clay	
exCLAYmation	

Appendix C: Clay Aiken Cellcert Questionnaire

Section 1: Demographics: (Note: all responses in this section were optional)

1. General Demographic Questions

A) Name:

B) Age:

C) State or country of residence:

D) How long have you been posting on a Clay Aiken related message board (can include Idolforums, Bolt, That's the Clay, Red Hot Topic, The Clay Board, or any other message board community devoted in part or entirely to Clay Aiken)?

E) Do you post on any message boards not related to Clay Aiken? If so, on which topics (ie, Harry Potter, Ruben Studdard)?

Section 2: Cellcerts Provided

2. Have you ever given a cellcert (i.e. let a friend listen to a concert where you were in attendance over a telephone line)?

If yes, please answer questions A through G, if no, proceed to question 3.

A) What kind of mobile phone do you use? Please include model type, service provider, and approximate year of manufacture.

B) What special features does your mobile phone have? Texting, camera-phone, video?

C) How much does providing the cellcert cost you approximately? If nothing, please explain why (night time minutes, etc).

D) If mobile technology were to adapt to make cellcerting easier, what changes would you like to see?

E) How did you choose who would receive the cellcert?

F) How many people were on the line listening to the cellcert at a time?

G) Have you ever given a cellcert for an artist other than Clay Aiken?

Section 3: Cellcerts Received

3. Have you ever received a cellcert (i.e. listened to a concert that your friend was attending over a phone line)?

If yes, please answer questions A through E, if no, please proceed to question 4.

A) Were you doing anything at the same time as listening to the cellcert? If yes, what?

B) Did you ask your friend to provide the cellcert or did he or she offer?

C) Have you ever received a cellcert for an artist other than Clay Aiken?

D) What kind of phone did you receive the cellcert on: a landline or a mobile phone?

E) Have you ever listened to a cellcert and posted what you were listening to on an online message board?

Section 4: Cellcert Transcripts Read

4. Have you ever read some or all of a cellcert transcript on a message board? If yes, please answer A through C. If no, please proceed to question 5.

A) Did you read the cellcert transcript as it was continually updated or did you wait until the thread was complete to read?

B) Do you find cellcert transcripts preferable to concert reviews either by professional critics or board members? Explain.

C. If you have ever read a cellcert transcript of a concert after attending the exact same concert, did you find the information in the cellcert transcript to be very accurate, accurate, or not accurate?

Section 5: Open-Ended

5. Have you ever heard the term cellcert used outside of the Clay Aiken online community? If yes, where?

6. Please explain where you think the word “cellcert” originated:

7. What was your reaction upon finding out that Clay Aiken’s Jukebox Tour will include an interactive format, especially text messaging to Clay and members of the band? If you are attending a concert, are you looking forward to participating in this phenomenon?

8. If you have any other insights into the cellcert phenomenon, a question you think should have been included in this survey, or an anecdote about cellcerting, please include here: