

Abstract

Missed calls – messaging for the masses

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“Missed calls”, also called “beeping” or “flashing” is a common form of signaling in developing countries. It refers to calling a number and hanging up before the recipient receives the call, leaving a “missed call”-notification on the screen. By varying the number of times successively this is done, different messages can be transmitted. We have explored this practice through analysis of focus group discussions in Dhaka, Bangladesh and call data extracted from the phone net.

We found that “miss calling” is practiced by people of all socioeconomic classes, middle aged people as well as youth. Economy is far from the only motivation behind sending “missed calls”. With “miss calling” norms for contact between genders are circumvented and social positions are skillfully managed. “Miss calling” is a form of signaling which supports constantly flowing communication that expresses community and sharing. We see this in relation to the Bangladeshi concept *adda*, which refers to certain kinds of conversation.