Televisual Narratives in the Palm of Your Hand
Understanding Mobisodes

Scott Ruston

The last few years have seen an explosion in the capabilities of mobile phones for uses other than traditional telephony—email, text messages, pictures, casual and pervasive games, and, showing dramatic growth between 2006 and 2007, television and video. Lagging behind most of Europe and Asia, most of the major mobile phone companies in the United States began to offer mobile video/mobile television services by 2005. For example, Sprint PCS offers PowerVision and Verizon offers V*Cast, both services offering television and video content over these companies’ 3G networks.1 Similar to television, this content takes the form of news, sports, weather and entertainment programming, and a broad sample includes clips excerpted from well-known television shows and films, news summaries hosted by an in-studio anchor as well as amateur videos supplied by Internet video websites such as YouTube.com and Revver.com.

Much of the studio-produced content I’ve just described could be considered “repurposed” content—originally produced for use on conventional broadcast television and repackaged for distribution on mobile phone video services like PowerVision and V*Cast. However, a considerable amount of original programming for the mobile phone also exists. One of the more highly publicized examples: in 2005, Verizon partnered with Fox Television to offer V*Cast subscribers twenty-four one-minute micro-episodes, or “mobisodes,” of 24: Conspiracy, a spin-off of the popular Fox Television thriller 24 starring Kiefer Sutherland.2 An example of independent production, content aggregator Fun Little Movies supplies hundreds of videos to Sprint’s PowerVision service, including the made-for-mobile comedy series Love Bytes, a sitcom set at the corporate offices of an Internet dating website.3 These examples demonstrate the mobile phone’s increasing incorporation of existing televisual content and modification of televisual formats, as producers, network operators, consumers and artists all explore the possibilities of this developing technology.

These video content-to-mobile phone services, along with the growing number of video-capable Personal Media Player (PMP) devices, illustrate one way in which these new media technologies adopt aspects of prior, established media—a process Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin refer to as “remediation.”4 As Bolter and Grusin define
the term, remediation is a formal logic “in which [new media] refashion older media and … in which older media refashion themselves to answer the challenges of new media.”5 This essay investigates the exchange between television and mobile video, exploring the types of televisual narratives offered in this somewhat protean marketplace, how these narratives are constructed and how this shapes our understanding of both television and mobile media.

While there were only 8.4 million mobile video subscribers in the United States as of June 2007 (a figure that represents only 3.6% of mobile phone subscribers), this represents a 155% increase over the previous year.6 More intriguing than the rapid growth of the mobile video market, perhaps, is the slippage of terminology that occurs when discussing mobile video services. In the course of speaking with mobile video producers, industry professionals, handset sales personnel and customers, the term most commonly used to describe video content service on the mobile phone is “mobile TV.” In fact, the largest content aggregator and supplier to the mobile network operators, with 1.6 million subscribers, is called MobiTV, which offers both downloadable and live streaming televisual content to its subscribers. Sprint uses the “PowerVision” trademark to refer to its broad package of 3G services, including high-speed data, messaging, and Internet access along with its video service. However, to select the video service on a Sprint handset, the menu option is “Sprint TV.” Furthermore, the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences announced in November 2005 a new Emmy award for original programming for non-traditional televisual devices (be they mobile phone, personal media player, personal digital assistant, etc.).7 On both a subconscious level on the part of individuals, and on a strategic marketing level by mobile service providers, a link is forged between the dominant cultural force of the late-twentieth century, television, and this growing media format.8

From the outset, then, these mobile video services declare an association with television, rather than a more formally, technologically, and industrially accurate comparison to Internet video. But, as Jeffrey Sconce observes, despite the rapid growth and hype of the cultural influence of the Internet, television remains king:

[S]tatistics indicate that while hours spent on the net fluctuate, television viewership remains steady, suggesting that despite the interactive potential of the cyberage, most media viewers prefer (for better or worse) to be “captivated” by stories on the tube.9

While Sconce’s comment comes on the cusp of an explosion of Internet video and the advent of viable mobile video services, his emphasis on the audience desire to be “captivated by stories” is well-placed. He suggests that transmedia storytelling, a concept that includes web and mobile video content like the Lost Video Diaries and video games like 24: The Game, extends the narrative universe and contributes to television’s ability to draw in viewers. Whether as part of a broad transmedia strategy or individual stories, mobisodes offer an immersion into stories and extend our access to televisual narrative from the living room out into the streets. Therefore, understanding how the mobisode constructs its narrative, and understanding the relationship the mobisode has with its remediating counterparts of television, cinema and the Internet is important to understanding the broader implications of a media-interpenetrated lifestyle.

What is a “Mobisode”?

The term “mobisode” is a portmanteau word drawing from “mobile,” as the mobisode is intended for viewing on the mobile phone, and “episode,” the common term for a single installment of a serialized television program. In this regard it shares etymological origins with “webisode” (episode for viewing on the World Wide Web), which itself replaced “intersode” (episode for viewing on the Internet), the latter term applied by Digital Entertainment Network in 1998 to describe its early foray into producing and distributing an Internet-based episodic televisual series.10

From its origins at Fox Television, the term “mobisode” has rapidly become an accepted part of both the wireless and entertainment industries’ lexicons. Between 2005 and 2006, telecom and entertainment industry press reports of mobile video content moved from using the term as a
marker of something new and different to a term no longer requiring explication. Reporting in January 2005 about the impending launch of Verizon’s first original video programming for its V*Cast service, Kevin Fitchard of Telephony announced the “new TV service using groundbreaking ‘mobisode’ content from News Corp.” and goes on to explain that the “one-minute ‘mobisode’ was written, shot and produced for distribution via the carrier’s 3G network.”11 By September 2005, the term requires no explanation or neologism-indicating quotation marks in the entertainment industry press.12

Daniel Tibbets, former head of the Foxlabs division of Fox Television, and Mitch Feinman, News Corp’s vice president of digital strategy, are the executives responsible for the development of Fox’s first original series for the mobile phone and are generally credited with coining the term. In an October 2005 interview in Wireless Review, Feinman remembers, “I made up the name ‘mobisode’…I think it was a name we were working with internally...we decided on the term as a way of describing [a short, original series] and we took it out there.”13 Between 2002 and the launch of Verizon’s V*Cast in 2005, Feinman and Tibbets oversaw the development of three original series: Love & Hate (a reality show), Sunset Hotel (a drama) and 24: Conspiracy (a spin-off of Fox Television’s popular thriller 24). Twentyfirst Century Fox holds a trademark for the term “mobisode,” but the rapid adoption by the press, mobile and entertainment industries, and fan community makes it likely the term will move quickly into the public domain. Fox’s trademarking of the term “mobisode” is indicative of the intense drive to monetize every conceivable component of the mobile entertainment arena, and indicates how unstructured the environment is with all potential players/contributors attempting to extract maximum value at every turn. Fox’s trademark, according to the United States Patent and Trademark Office, offers a broad conception of the term, covering:

Entertainment services in the nature of programs featuring action, adventure, drama, comedy, documentary, sports and children’s entertainment transmitted via wireless communication devices, namely, cell phones, personal digital assistants, computers and wireless handhelds.14

Specifically absent from this definition are news and weather, two of the most popular types of mobile television content, which concurs with common usage of “episode” in referring to television (rarely does one speak of an “episode” of news). The trademark definition also indicates an emphasis on the entertainment capacity of mobisodes, connecting this type of content to the vast array of entertainment television of the various genres listed in the definition. While this definition makes no mention of narrative per se, it is implied given the nature of most of the genres listed, and it is narrative mobisodes that build their own story world or extend the depth and breadth of a television program’s story world that are of interest here.

Common usage of mobisode generally refers to series programming, such as Fox’s 24: Conspiracy, Prison Break: Proof of Innocence, and Bones: Skeleton Crew. In fact, sometimes the term is used specifically limited to these Fox series, perhaps in deference to the trademark ownership. In my own usage of the term, I will remain truer to the definition submitted to the USPTO: entertainment programs specifically distributed on wireless communication devices such as mobile phones. This opens up the definition from a limited focus on specific series produced by major television studios to a broader cross-section of available televisual content that is entertainment oriented and exhibits narrative form (if only slight,
in some cases). Thus, I include everything from the independently produced sitcom for mobile phones Love Bytes to a collection of short films spoofing the popular Apple Macintosh commercials featuring Mac and PC characters to individual and unrelated narrative short films collected and provided by content aggregators such as Fun Little Movies and Blip TV. This makes the term mobisode applicable to the types of televisual content that fit my broader point of expanding the breadth and depth of program's textual reach as well as the mediascape more generally, as well as how this type of content forges connections between the viewer and the mobisode diegesis.

**Types of Mobisodes: Serials, Series, Short Films, Excerpts Serials/Series**

Fox’s 24: Conspiracy is perhaps the prototypical mobisode series. Launched in 2005, the approximately one-minute episodes were released weekly with each installment available for download and viewing for the following week. The series consists of twenty-four mobisodes set in the Washington, D.C. office of the fictional law enforcement agency Counter-Terrorism Unit (CTU). This series extends the narrative universe of its parent show 24 (which is set in CTU’s Los Angeles office), with new characters, a new setting and parallel plotlines. Over the course of its twenty-four-episode run, the lead character Martin pursues his lover (former CTU agent Susan Walker) for murdering a government agent, uncovers a conspiracy centered in the CTU office, and ultimately teams with Walker to thwart the conspiracy plot. Like 24, the mobisode show is a series/serial hybrid with each individual mobisode containing key elements of the developing narrative structure. In fact, the series’ structure distributes the component schema, explained by Edward Branigan in Narrative Comprehension and Film, across multiple installments. Thus, rather than having a complete set of narrative schema present in each episode, as most episodic television does (even the highly serial 24), 24: Conspiracy, owing to its very short episodes, offers only some schema in each mobisode.

Branigan suggests that our ability to comprehend a narrative results from the identification of elements of the text and assigning them roles in the narrative schema. He identifies these component schema as: abstract, orientation, initiating event, goal, complicating action, and climax/resolution. It is important to recognize that these components need not appear sequentially, nor does the viewer need to assure himself of one scene/component correlation before understanding the others. As I see it, the viewer constantly plugs in possible scenes or shots or sequences into the component schema in constructing the picture of the whole narrative. This process may require repeated reassignment of components until the viewer achieves satisfactory comprehension. While Branigan’s model was developed for a discrete text such as a film, the process of narrative structure and understanding can be applied to a more open text such as a serial mobisode program to help elucidate unique aspects of the form.

The first two episodes of 24: Conspiracy illustrate the interdependent nature of the narrative in this mobisode series. “Minute 1” opens with a couple entering a hotel room, followed by the woman murdering the man then scanning the dead man’s handprint into a computer. In typical thriller fashion, this narrative begins in media res leaving the viewer to wonder about why this murder has taken place and the identity of the mysterious woman. On a micro-level, this mobisode contains an initiating event (off-screen the couple has met...
in a hotel bar), a goal (for the man, a tryst; for the woman, the hand-scan, which the viewer doesn’t realize until the climax), a complicating action (for the man, his death; for the woman, the assumption of his reticence to submit to a hand-scan), and the climax/resolution of the murder. Thus, it is a self-contained simple narrative, which Branigan defines as an episode that collects the consequences of a central situation (murderer’s encounter with victim), shows change (from seducer to murderer), put together as a focused chain of the cause and effect of a continuing center (the mysterious woman). However, upon viewing “Minute 2,” this entire mobisode, becomes recognizable as an initiating event and as an episode in a larger focused chain.

This second episode consists almost entirely of abstract and orientation elements of the narrative structure of the whole series. The characters of Martin and Sutton are introduced, and the numerous close-ups of clenched jaws and disapproving scowls imply a tension between them orienting the viewer to their relationship and sowing seeds of suspicion. The episode (accurate with respect to Branigan’s model as the two men’s relationship becomes increasingly tense throughout the scene) concludes with the revelation of security camera footage of the woman from “Minute 1.” As no cause and effect has been illustrated, the “Minute 2” does not constitute a simple narrative in and of itself, but as it contains the abstract and orientation elements of the series narrative structure it plays a crucial interdependent role.

Episode “Minute 18” further illustrates this interdependent design of the series and increasing complexity. The episode opens with Martin and Walker (the murderer in “Minute 1” now revealed as a former CTU agent) walking down a hallway toward an office with a man sitting at a computer. This segment, consisting of three shots, serves as an orientation to the episode’s events, allowing the viewer to recall her pattern arrangement of story data so far. This orientation scene connects to the goal of this episode, which was revealed in Minute 17 when a decision was made to seek out a computer specialist to access some encrypted codes. Two complicating actions occur simultaneously: the discovery of the computer specialist assassinated in the office obstructs the agents’ goal of extracting the information; the murderer’s presence in the office shooting at the agents impedes the original goal and initiates a new goal (defend themselves). This second micro-narrative resolves itself with Martin shooting the unidentified assassin, which offers a small climax within the context of the single episode. The two complicating actions (dead computer specialist and now computers damaged by stray gunfire) create new goals to carry forward into subsequent episodes.

While each installment of 24: Conspiracy is highly interconnected with regard to narrative components, a trait it shares with its parent 24, each episode does not necessarily offer the same degree of resolution and closure individual episodes of 24 offer. It also departs from the multiple storylines (utilized to an excessive degree in 24) that are identified by Sarah Kozloff as one of the defining features of television narrative: “The strategy of proliferating storylines diffuses the viewer’s interest in any one line of action and spreads that interest over a larger field.” We shall see later that a larger field of interest exists for mobisodes, but that it takes a different form than multiple on-going storylines. In 24: Conspiracy, only the CTU mole story is carried out, virtually ignoring the pursuit of a romantic storyline with ex-lovers Martin and Walker, the tension between Martin and Sutton, connections to the plotlines of 24, or any other of many possibilities. Each individual mobisode takes one small step in advancing the conspiracy story, and leaves the viewer with one lingering question as a hermeneutic incentive to download the next installment.

This smaller focus and more limited scope of the mobisode is one of the format’s defining features. Another series that exhibits the small scale, yet interconnected narrative strategy is the independently produced Love Bytes sitcom available on the Fun Little Movies Channel on Sprint TV. Love Bytes features the staff of a dating service arranging dates for a series of unusual clients, including God, the Dali Camel and Howard Stern. Love Bytes shares the common features of a television sitcom in that the characters seem to have no memory, finding themselves repeatedly making the same mistake of not listening to their clients and making bad choices of dating partners. The hapless staff matches up God with “May
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Phisto,” Howard Stern with nemeses Kathy Lee Gifford and Dr. Laura Schlesinger, and the celibate Dali Camel (punning off of the Dalai Lama) with a porn star.

Occupying a middle ground between a purely episodic series in which each installment stands alone and the highly serialized 24: Conspiracy example, Love Bytes develops a storyline with a single client over the course of three mobisodes, then introduces a new client. The three mobisode format neatly incorporates the component schema into a convenient three act structure, with each mobisode consisting of a resolved episode, itself part of the focused chain of the three act vignette. For example, “Oh My God-Part 1” presents an abstract of the situation (God pursues a date), an initiating event (God’s arrival at the dating firm) and orients the viewer to the situation, setting, and bumbling staffers. The first mobisode concludes with God proving his existence to a skeptical staff member. “Oh My God Part 2” contains the complicating event while pursuing the goal of companionship: the staff has arranged a date for God with the Devil. The revelation of their shared love of cheesecake in “Oh My God-Part 3” serves as the turn that resolves the complicating event and leads to the resolution of the narrative: God is happy and replaces the storms and calamities he invoked in Part 1 with an end to world hunger. Each mobisode is critically dependent on its vignette partners to create a complete narrative, but each mobisode also has a degree of resolution or closure like a traditional television series: in Part 1, God arrives at the dating firm; in Part 2, God discovers the identity of his date; in Part 3, God discovers love.

The narrative universe of Love Bytes is somewhat less intricate and extended than that of 24: Conspiracy, largely because it lacks the extra-textual connection to a broadcast television program. However, Love Bytes episodes are slightly longer, from one to four minutes in length, and along with a substantially less-complex plot, these longer mobisodes offer more time to develop the characters—a strategy common to television programs, particularly sitcoms. Kozloff suggests that because of the repetitive plot structure of most television programs, they shift audience interest “from the flow of events per se to the revelation and development of existents,” where existents are characters and settings. For example, in the “Dali Camel-Part 1” episode we learn that Rachel Reed, the leader of the dating firm, ironically has considerable trouble finding a date for herself. We also see a recurring motif of Rachel winning bets off of cohorts Leesha, Marcy and Fabrizio that also serve to enforce office rules; this motif develops over the course of the entire series. While this type of character and motif development occurs incrementally, it can be a source of pleasure and interest and immersion in the mobisodic series. Just as the exclamation greeting Norm’s arrival on Cheers comfortably settled the viewer into the friendly venue of the Boston bar where everybody knows your name, Rachel’s bleak social life and pecuniary office discipline, along Leesha’s snide commentary and dominatrix-inspired outfits, draw the viewer into the slightly quirky, slightly sarcastic world of Love Bytes.

Short Video/Short Film

Whether it be a brand new world such as in Love Bytes or the expansion of an existing story world such as in 24: Conspiracy, the series and serial mobisodes revisit the same narrative universe in each installment. Another type of mobisode, short films, exist as single texts, each one creating and resolving its own narrative problematic in its own unique story world. Owing perhaps to the extremely short nature of these mobisodes (ranging from less than one minute to slightly over three minutes), few, if any, short film
mobisodes are dramas. In almost all cases, the short film mobisodes are comedies, developing a set of conventions with the climax consisting of a rapid disruption of the conventional state and usually concluding with a resolution segment.

The smooth camera movement and careful composition demonstrated in “Coming Home,” a BlipTV “Top Pick” category mobisode, distinguish it above the rest of the independent and amateur content collected by content aggregators like BlipTV. “Coming Home” offers a very simple narrative: a distracted and weary gentleman returns home from work, discovers the front door to his home ajar and unexpectedly finds a couple making love in the bedroom. However, the story reveals he has entered his neighbors’ house, resolving the narrative in a humorous commentary on cookie-cutter suburban architecture and Wisteria Lane inspired anxieties of marital infidelity.

As a single, stand alone, amateur-produced video, “Coming Home” has more in common with Internet videos on websites like iFilm.com and the iTunes Music Store (which sells films, television shows and distributes short videos for download to computer or iPod). Thus, while it is available for mobile device (both phone and media player), it lacks either a corporate, textual, or aesthetic connection to television, making the “episode” half of the mobisode portmanteau potentially in doubt. Why then do I include the short film as a type of mobisode, something that the Fox trademark doesn’t account for (it specifically mentions “programs” implying series and serials) and the entertainment industry press doesn’t use? Two reasons: first, including them expands the term “mobisode” to include both the television context of “episode” but also the narratological meaning of the term; second, the existence of a vast array of individual cinematic/televisual texts accessible via office computer, home computer or mobile phone constitutes a vast and omnipresent mediascape, one that the mobile phone keeps at our fingertips.

In its simplicity and its brevity, a short film like “Coming Home” fits Branigan’s definition of an episode, which collects the “consequences of a central situation” and, importantly, “shows change.” The change, of course, occurs in our expectations of the course of events and the realization on the part of the gentleman of his mistake. Branigan’s definition of a simple narrative strings episodes into a focused chain, but in the case of “Coming Home” and its siblings, there is no focused chain for this episode. As such, it is purely an episode, containing narrative components, understandable through application of component schema, but it is distinctly and individually an episode. As such it does not have the immersive reach of the textual octopus of television and its new media arms, nor does it have the recurring allure of the episodic series, but, as we shall see later, its short form, its existence in an array of hundreds or thousands of similar short videos, and its comedic tone make it as much a part of the mobile video phenomenon, and thus a “mobisode,” as any serialized program.

Clips/Excerpts

The final category of content that warrants description constitutes the vast majority of the branded content available provided by major television studios to mobile network operators—repurposed excerpts, clips and sequences. Tonight Show and Jimmy Kimmel Live monologues, The View excerpts, and clips and behind-the-scenes footage promoting popular series such as Numb3rs, NCIS, Lost, and The O.C. far outweigh original made-for-mobile programming such as 24: Conspiracy from the major networks. A simple economic reason explains the presence of so much repurposed content: it is very inexpensive for the studios to provide. In Visible Fictions, John Ellis describes the fundamental textual unit of television as “the segment, a coherent group of sound and
images, of relatively short duration that needs to be accompanied by other similar such segments.” Ellis comes to this conclusion based on an analysis of news and entertainment programming as well as a conception of the viewer as distracted and able to digest small bits of information at any one time. Since television programs already consist of short segments and the perceived mobile viewer has only a short time to watch, excerpting them and reformatting for the mobile screen presents little challenge to the studios for large potential value.

A short excerpt from the CBS program *NCIS* entitled “What Are You Wearing?” and available in early January 2007 on the CBS To Go channel of Verizon’s V*Cast service provides an example of this type of mobisode. The one and a half minute segment, part of that week’s broadcast episode, shows the tardy arrival of a young, junior investigator named McGee. McGee’s co-workers remark, both favorably and critically, on his odd choice of clothing (tweed jacket, turtleneck sweater and pipe). The segment concludes with a snide remark from Abby, suggesting they all return to work and presumably re-orienting the course of the show back to the plot at hand. The excerpt works as a self-contained unit for those fans familiar with the characters and McGee’s usual style of dress. But the segment is not important for its narrative qualities or lack of narrative depth. Rather, the segment represents an important feature of convergence-era television. Numerous scholars have illustrated that the television text extends beyond the individual program episode or series season. With websites, novelizations, fan fiction and product tie-ins, the textual universe extends beyond the television in the living room. This *NCIS* example illustrates two forms of the expanding televisual textuality that John Caldwell identifies in his discussion of the culture of production in convergence television. As an excerpt from the broadcast text edited and reformatted for mobile media, the clip is an example of “ancillary textuality,” the term Caldwell uses to describe repurposed content that the studios use to populate new media venues. This clip participates in “marketing textuality” as part of the branding function of the CBS To Go package of content. The slogan of CBS To Go is “Take it with you!” indicating a clear goal of CBS to extend their brand awareness and their product beyond the television screen, to be available at all times wherever you go.

This extension of the television landscape from the television to the mobile device is precisely the function of these mobisodes that is of particular interest and importance. The CBS To Go clip brings a piece of the *NCIS* universe to the viewer no matter his location, and not only injects the *NCIS* story world into the space of the viewer, but also keeps him connected to the entire menu of CBS story worlds and the mediascape of television in general.

Appropriate to a nascent media form, this analysis is far from comprehensive, but it both illustrates the close relationship television has with new media forms and forces us to reconsider what constitutes television. Is television a particular type of device receiving broadcast, cable or satellite signals? Or is television what we watch? The answer lies in between and is both at the same time. Thus, it behooves us to understand the technological side of the medium as well as the content. This article has been centered on the latter, influenced by the former. Is *24: Conspiracy* ‘television?’ It wouldn’t exist without the original *24*, in the same way Fraser wouldn’t exist without *Cheers*—the mobisode builds from the same diegetic universe and uses some similar formal strategies. And while the mobisode series shares some traits with the original television series, it also pursues different strategies. Not only is its narrative structure different, as illustrated here, but so too are its business model, production considerations, and other aesthetic features, each of which are productive avenues for further consideration. As the technological medium of the mobile device and the cultural form of mobile video/TV develop, I think we will see first a chaotic array of genres, delivery methods, and content choices. But slowly, through a combination of economic influence, viewer preference, and artistic experimentation, a cultural form suitable to our always-on/always-connected twenty-first century lifestyle will become evident. Paying attention to how formal and narrative characteristics engage in this lifestyle and how industrial patterns and influences shape both production practices and viewership will help us understand how our culture produces the next dominant media form, whether we continue to call it television or something else again.
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Notes
1 “3G” stands for third generation digital cellular network technology capable of near-broadband quality data transfer rates.
3 By way of a television industry analogy, Fun Little Movies constitutes its own “channel” on service provider Sprint’s lineup of channels, just like TNT would be one of cable service provider Cox Cable’s offerings.
4 The proto-typical example of a PMP device is the video iPod which allows users to download television episodes, movie trailers, amateur videos and soon full length movies to a handheld, portable device for on demand viewing.
7 Carey and Greenberg, 3.
8 For those unfamiliar with mobile video services, a brief summary of the Sprint TV service: The service includes a combination of free and premium subscription downloadable content and live streaming television. A Sprint TV compatible handset offers a menu of options: Sprint TV, Music & Radio, Sports, Cartoons, News & Weather, Stylez, Movies & Shorts, and Entertainment. Each category contains both free channels as well as channels available with an additional subscription (usually between $4 and $6 per month). The Entertainment category, for example, offers for free a Warner Brothers Channel (previews of movies) and a Broadway Channel which contains clips of plays and a Tony Awards recap; premium channels include El-Wild On!, Comedy Central, Hollywood Insider and a channel containing amateur content called Varsity Mobile. The Movies & Shorts category consists primarily of premium channels, branded by content aggregators (companies that collect and package content from a variety of sources for distribution on Sprint’s service). Fun Little Movies and BlipTV are two examples, each channel containing eight to ten folders of content. The BlipTV lineup includes sub-categories such as Flipped Blip (spoofs and remixed television clips), Blipisodes (episodic material) and Top Picks (indicating some degree of editorial oversight.) Fun Little Movies offers slightly more clarity in assigning sub-category names with choices such as Fun Funny Films (six different comedy oriented series), Romantic Antics (three romantic comedy series), and Lampoons Dorm Daze (an episodic comedy series from National Lampoon).
13 O’Shea, 32. See also, Fitchard, “The Making of the Mobisode,” 42.
15 All 24 mobisodes of the 24: Conspiracy series are available from Fox Home Video on DVD in the Bonus Materials disc of the 24 Season 5 collection.
19 Ibid.
20 Branigan, 19.
22 See, for example, the work of Will Booker, Henry Jenkins, and Jeffrey Sconce, among many others.