

## A Sense of Multitouch

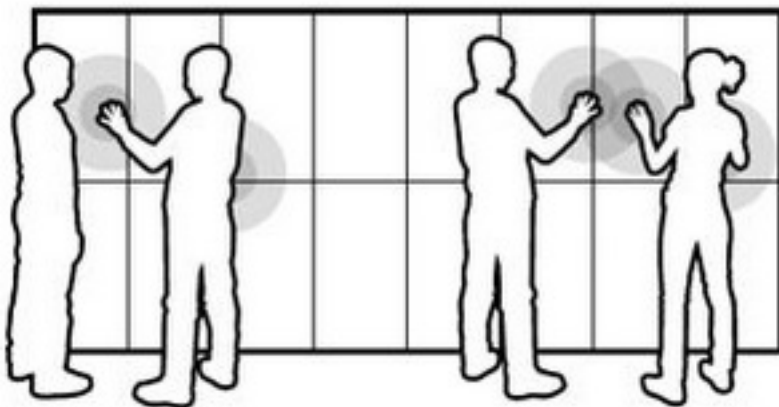
Written by Bob Snyder  
18 June 2012

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Touch is so obvious, yet so little understood that if was ice cream, most people would think it only came in vanilla. And the industry is in desperate need of jargon police to watch over the use and abuse of "multitouch" for the diverse emerging market segments.

Touch can be a single point of contact with a screen, multiple points like several fingers on a hand, full hands-on (with all 10 fingers), and even full hands with multiple parties (more than one person using full hands).

When someone tells you their product is "multitouch," you really need to ask "What kind of multitouch?"



The company MultiTouch Ltd. of Finland lives in the upper end of the touch business; let's call it "hypertouch" for lack of a better word. The world of hypertouch is the world of big touch screens in large, public fixed installations.

It's a world where you need to have more than 5 touch points to claim "multitouch." While other multitouch techniques merely see points of contact where fingers touch, MultiTouch Ltd. technology identifies even the hands. It can even distinguish between your hand and mine on the screen and tell which fingers belong to whom. Now that's hypertouch.

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For an example of MultiTouch Ltd.'s technology, at InfoComm 2012 you'll see their MultiTaction Cell 42" (introduced to U.S. market for the first time) showcasing industry-leading interactive displays features such as the...

- Ability to connect up to 24 displays together as a massive interactive wall or table
- Ability to read optical markers or see real life objects and react to them
- Ability to have unlimited number of people interacting with the display(s) at the same time
- Ability to operate in very bright lighting conditions

Hannu Anttila, MultiTouch Ltd. VP Services and Business Development, says "Finland is more known for its mobile expertise than anything else, but touch is bigger in appeal than even mobile. From our technology base in computer vision, optical readers and shape recognition, we asked ourselves *'What is the user doing on a display?'* The answer comes back that getting better info always goes beyond a single touch point. That's why we are promoting an unlimited number of similar touch actions on an unlimited display size."

What exactly do many people do with one application at the same time? "The collaborative and social aspects are the real drivers of multitouch," says Anttila.

**In one typical scenario in retail**, you place physical products on a tabletop to learn about any unique features and pricing. Products are identified via a unique optical code through the LCD.

In another retail scenario, it's a massive MultiTouch Ltd. display wall that enables the **first semantic retail shopping display system**

that lets content follow and respond to shoppers. The new system is the second-generation version of the

**uma SKIN**

(uma Semantic Knowledge Information Network) which incorporates a 2.2 meter wall of stackable MultiTaction Cell 55" interactive displays.

The latest features of uma SKIN let retailers connect their product databases directly via standardized connectors. The uma SKIN system then offers a feature-rich presentation of retailers' products offering automatic 2D and 3D interactive visualizations and playful ways to compare products.

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**Another scenario might be the museum application** where MultiTouch Ltd. serves numerous “touch-hungry” customers such the **Science Fiction Hall of Fame** in Seattle, USA. In the museum’s *Avatar* exhibit, MultiTouch Ltd. displays run an augmented reality application where users can find movie-themed content by placing coasters on the displays.



Or the **Mob Museum** in Las Vegas where an augmented reality application (running on MultiTouch Ltd.) uses coasters printed with a mobster’s face to show their connections within their crime families.

**La Biennale di Venezia** in Venice uses MultiTouch Ltd. for an interactive art installation where users can manipulate the original digital piece of art (which returns to its initial state after a timeout).

The hypertouch software and expertise of MultiTouch Ltd. comes together in its line of display products. All MultiTouch **MultiTaction Cells** can track unlimited touch points, including hands, fingers, fingertips, 2D markers, and even real-life objects. Let me repeat: unlimited.

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They can be set up as a wall or as a table or easily embedded in custom furniture. They come with a frameless thin bezel design with smooth edge-to-edge front safety glass.



MultiTaction Cells (third generation with completely redesigned technology) are displays in 55" and 42" and are less than 20 cm deep. They accommodate ultra-fast response time. Sensitivity to external lighting is eliminated. The MultiTaction Engine provides tracking output in all common formats and works with available software development kit to utilize all advanced features.

The MultiTouch Cell Advanced (46") is less than 30 cm deep. There are Standard and High Brightness models (500 nits) available.

Touch is so obvious that many people aren't clear about possibilities beyond a simple vanilla "multitouch" where a couple of fingers activate a screen. After that, opportunities come in far more sophisticated flavours, including the hypertouch Finnish flavour of MultiTouch Ltd. that obviously beats vanilla "hands-down."

Go [MultiTouch Ltd.](#)

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Watch [MultiTouch Introduces World's Largest Integrated Multi-user LCD multitouch Display, the MultiTaction Cell 55](#)