

Mobile Social Media for Groups

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Abstract. In this poster, we discuss initial results of ICT use practices in a campus setting, both in relation to studies and other student activities. Furthermore, we present a new mobile group-centered social media service developed for campus settings.

Introduction

Staying in touch with both groups and individuals, and knowing what is sizzling around, are essential activities in campus life. Communication technologies play a significant role in these activities (see e.g. Quan-Haase, 2007). In this poster, we discuss initial results concerning ICT use in a campus setting and present a new mobile group-centered social media service that is currently in beta phase.

During the academic year 2008-2009, we conducted an exploratory study with mixed methodology, following a freshman class in a university of technology. The initial results reveal that the participants preferred a particular medium, Internet Relay Chat (IRC), despite the availability of hyped social media and IM services popular among their peers. The medium was considered particularly important when communicating with fellow students. While our technology-savvy participants were motivated to use IRC with a textual interface in mobile settings, too, others are likely to prefer a more easy-to-use service with a graphical user interface. We believe that a possibility to use group communication tools in a mobile setting would bring added value to the users, especially in coordinating both social and academic activities on the campus.

Ossi – Group-centered Mobile Social Media

In the scope of our project, we have developed a mobile group-centered social media service to be used on campuses. The service, Ossi, is a simple mobile online social interaction service for high-end mobile phones (e.g., Nokia N95, N97, iPhone). The service aims at facilitating study activities, creation and maintenance of social relations and the following of on-going “sizzling” in one’s study environment. Currently, Ossi is in beta phase - we develop new features continuously based both on research objectives and end-user feedback. The service provides facilities for creating social networks and exchanging messages between users in public and friends-only channels. Functionalities for sharing location information in status messages and channel posts, and for creating and managing groups are being developed.

Future Directions

In September 2009, we will launch a large-scale user study with students from three campuses. We study privacy and publicity management, by focusing on the use of group features and on the sharing of location information: How and for what kinds of purposes are different group features adopted? How do users manage the sharing of information when privacy settings are not available? Once privacy controls are introduced to the service, we will study their use and their effects on the use of the service, from the point of view of managing group relations and of sharing location information. In addition to conducting focus groups and questionnaires, we will analyze logged usage data. To understand it properly, we will, additionally, carry out usage scenario experiments in the style of Razavi & Iverson (2009). The work is a part of a research project that develops new mobile social media services for urban communities and studies their adoption and use in everyday life.

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References

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