Social Interaction among Strangers: Boost by FriendFinder (FF)

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Abstract

This paper tries to explore that my designed software (FriendFinder) which I have done in my Design Project can be used to improve the social interaction rate among strangers. In today’s society human being make more interaction with technology in their daily life than before. It can be an easy way to use that technology to increase the social interaction among human beings. Many attempts were made and also some ongoing projects try to use the Smart Phone as a tool to increase the social interaction among strangers. In my designed project I also developed such software which will work along with the Smart Phone, to enhance the social interaction among strangers. In my designed application I have tried to design the functionalities which can be used in a public place i.e. café or bar and by using this application people can be able to interact with strangers easily, discover new people as friends and finally can be able to increase social interaction. To support the papers goal I have also conducted a field survey about my designed application’s possible demand and impact on mass people. In this paper I will also analyze the survey result.

Key Words Social interaction, Smart Phone, strangers, Design Project, FriendFinder.

Introduction

Technology and society are called co-dependence, co-influence upon each other. Both are incomplete without each other. This synergistic relationship occurred from the dawn of humankind. The relationship between technology and society started from the ancient innovation of fire and continues into modern technologies such as computer, internet and today’s smart phone [1].

Advanced technology like smart phone, internet and its supportive peripheral Facebook, twitter can influence social interaction. I have designed a mobile application named FriendFinder which can be used to increase social interaction among strangers. FriendFinder will use the smart phones platform and uses Facebook public profile as the startup of the interaction among strangers. This is a short range application which uses Bluetooth. The application allow its user to chat with the strangers who have the same application around him/her within a short distance and also allow them to send songs, files to them without knowing each other. It also allows its user to live chat via Bluetooth technology. The users will use the application as a startup of conversation and finally make friendship with the strangers. I thought this idea for that type of people who feel lonely. One can use this application in a café or in a bar while he/she feels lonely or want to make some new friends.

Background

Though we live in a social environment but we often find ourselves with non-acquaintances just because of our hesitation to start the first conversation, egoistic behavior. We also avoid the interaction with strangers because of the appearance and sometimes for the age gap. Most of the time, such incidents bear potential to trigger a conversation among strangers and is avoided because of a missing starting point. The hesitation to start a conversation is less if there is something common among strangers i.e. habit, appearance (style and body language), and that is known and observed by them at the first meeting.

Being in public spaces involves seeing and being seen by other people. According to Goffman [2], they will commonly seek to
acquire information about an individual entering their presence or to bring already existing information into play. Common interest, hobbies, and visual aspects have a significant influence in this process. These features help us to imagine other people automatically and trigger to start of the first conversation.

There are two ways of social interaction can be found, one is focused interaction and other is unfocused interaction. The focused interaction requires acknowledgment of each other’s presence involving not only face-to-face conversation but also non-verbal interchanges (flirting). The unfocused interaction does not require acknowledgement of each others, one checks the other without being noticed [3].

My designed application follows the first approach. It enables the user to view others public information through facebook and to send friend request who have something in common. My designed software kicks off the focused interaction among strangers. Hesitate to talk or interact with strangers at a first sight is a common problem for social interaction especially for focused interaction. Here comes my designed software to solve the issue. The software enables strangers to check their public facebook profile and let them choose whom to interact or not according to their visible public information, gesture and body language in the physical world.

**Research Goal and Contribution**

The goal of this research paper is to study the potentiality of using FriendFinder for increasing the social interaction among strangers. I arranged a field survey among 50 strangers regardless their age and location which I will discuss briefly in later section of this paper.

The friendFinder software will use the advanced platform of today’s communication, smart phone. I choose the smart phone for the software’s platform as people are very interested to smart phone and uses this technology in their daily life. Facebook is another service where most people share their feelings, experience, thoughts and many mores with their friends and family. I intended to tie both of them in my FriendFinder software to increase the social interaction among strangers and conducted a field survey to understand the possible demand and impact of FriendFinder on mass people.

The contribution of this paper to the research community is to provide the valuable data which I have received from the field survey, which shows the efficient way of using mobile phone for increasing the social interaction among strangers as well as shows the significant effect of it on social interaction.

**Related product and extra feature of FriendFinder over others**

Social applications such as weblogs, social networking websites or internet forums are popular tool to communicate with each other [4, 5]. These applications are connected through personal computers, laptops or smart phones via Internet and they are therefore missing face-to-face communication. Mobile applications which work in a short distance and enhance social interaction in the daily life are still an emerging field. Most of the software applications are running on the smart phones or laptops, communicating via W-LAN or Bluetooth.

The Nokia-Siemens has a Nokia Sensor [4] which enables the mobile phone users to communicate within short-range distance.
(up to 20 m) via ad-hoc Bluetooth connections. This sensor enables its user to discover the profile of each other and let exchange message in order to meet in person or further communication. Although Nokia Sensor is intended to be used in any situation, its use is limited by the prerequisite of matching profiles and the necessary effort to find the other person.

Another almost similar product is LoveGety [5]. It is a matchmaking device available only in Japan, which allows users to find potential dates that match their personal preferences in the surrounding area. 600,000 units of LoveGety sold in Japan at an approximately price of $21. There are three modes of LoveGety and users can pre-select those moods on their device that reflect the mood they are currently in and hence what kind of partner they are looking for. The three moods are “let’s just chat”, “Let’s go sing some karaoke” and “get2” modes. The device can send message to a potential mate within a short range distance (approximately 15 feet) or to simply notify a user of others who are currently set to the same mood. Different from Nokia Sensor, LoveGety triggered automatically when it detects its mate (same mood) within its range.

There is another product named DIOUI [6] and is develop by a company located in Argentina with an office in USA. The concept of Facebook discovery is similar but unlike this company I offer extra features that increase the user experience. My designed software (Friend Finder) enables it users to chat with other people around them. Also, FF offers the possibility to exchange files, music and video.

There are some other applications which are similar to Friend Finder; these are Foursquare, Loopt and Gowalla. But these applications don’t allow the users to investigate new persons to make friendship and chat with strangers. Again these applications don’t allow its users to send date files to the strangers which my designed software can provide. Below I will describe their characteristics in shortly to distinguish them from my designed software.

Foursquare is a location-based mobile platform that makes cities easier to use and more interesting to explore. By “checking in” via a Smartphone app or SMS, users share their location with friends while collecting points and virtual badges. Foursquare guides real-world experiences by allowing users to bookmark information about venues that they want to visit and surfacing relevant suggestions about nearby venues. Merchants and brands leverage the foursquare platform by utilizing a wide set of tools to obtain, engage, and retain customers and audiences [7].

Loopt offers a location-first view of the world, shining a bright spotlight on the world around us when we are out and about. While some technologies isolate us behind computer screens and virtual worlds, Loopt helps you discover more, experience more and connect with others in the real world. It helps us to find our friend. Loopt is also great for making decisions about the next place to go [8].

Gowalla helps to meet up with friends, discover local hot spots and share your favorite places, photos and events [9].

Below table shows the comparison among the software described above with FriendFinder.
### Field Survey

To measure the impact of my designed software in the real social settings and for future development of my designed project I conducted a field survey and interviewed 50 people from regardless the coherence of geographic location, gathered data and analyzed them. My main target user are people who visit bar, pub and café regularly. I choose bar, pub and café for my field survey because I intended to use FriendFinder in a social meeting place where people will normally meet with unknown people in a regular basis and have more chances to get know each other with the help of FriendFinder software.

### Data Collection

The survey consisted two main questions and five supporting questions. I selected few but vital questions for making the survey simple. I was also not intended to get the interviewer personal information i.e. age, name, job or living place. I did so because if I collected the personal information the survey may become biased. Interviewer (here interviewer is me) may have some choice to some different group of people i.e. student, own countrymen.

The first two questions were used to determine the characteristics of the target group. By asking the interviewed person about their having a smart phone, basically I tried to determine the size or amount of possible users market. My second question is also very important for my survey because it will give me the idea of the FriendFinder’s successful impact on the users. And the last

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Name</th>
<th>Support short range</th>
<th>Support Bluetooth</th>
<th>Exchange Data</th>
<th>Message</th>
<th>Automatic search</th>
<th>Including in mobile</th>
<th>Facebook profile</th>
<th>Support chat features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nokia Sensor</td>
<td>Yes, 20 M</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LoveGety</td>
<td>Yes, 5 M</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIOUI</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foursquare</td>
<td>Location discover software</td>
<td>Support all range</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loopt</td>
<td>Location discover software</td>
<td>Support all range</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gowalla</td>
<td>Location discover software</td>
<td>Support all range</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend finder</td>
<td>Support only short Range</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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five questions were used to determine the impact of my design in the real world, in other words how the design can effect on social interaction. From the field survey I also got additional information i.e. how I can implement new features in future, what should get more attention, what can be postponed for later development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you have smart Phone?</td>
<td>Yes 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you access facebook through your cell phone?</td>
<td>Yes 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you like to interact with strangers in a café/bar/pub via mobile?</td>
<td>Yes 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you like to be able to discover new people around you and see their Facebook profile with your cell phone?</td>
<td>Yes 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think, is it interesting to discover new people within a limited area around you?</td>
<td>Yes 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which of the following functionalities is more important for you?</td>
<td>File Sharing 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chat 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you like to interact with strangers?</td>
<td>Facebook 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Twitter 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of the Data

![Pie chart](image)

**Figure 2. Survey pie chart result Do you have Smart Phone?**

The pie chart indicates that 75% of the interviewed people which in numerical number is 38 among 50 uses the smart phone and 12 do not have any smart phone or do not use smart phone. The pie chart also indicates that the penetration of Smart Phones in our focus group reaches a significant 50% which in numeric number is 26. Swedish people are impressively using up to date technology. This fact combined with the expectancy of the Smart Phones market growth, provides a solid foundation to my product’s launch to the market.

![Pie chart](image)

**Figure 3. Survey pie chart result Do you access Facebook through your mobile phone?**
The survey gave a satisfying 50% of persons (25 person among 50 person) that access their social accounts through their mobile. Taking into account the percentage of Smart Phone owners, I roughly estimate that about a quarter (13 persons among 50) of users is familiar with browsing Facebook through Smart Phone devices.

The above pie chart describes that 98% (49 persons among 50 persons) people are interested to discover new people within a short range. Almost everyone whom I asked question liked the concept of limited area. I made them understood about the live chat service and file sharing which will work in a short range using Bluetooth. It means that people are very interested to know each other in a short range also indicates that they are concerned about the social isolation as well (that’s why 49 people liked the concept).

I proceed to the core of my survey as I asked people to express their interest towards my concept. The above illustrated chart shows that the percentage of people that are supportive towards the product’s main idea reaches 70%. 35 persons among 50 persons would like to interact with strangers as a startup using Facebook in a limited range. Though I exposed the product’s concept and people have no hands-on a real prototype, this result signifies in theoretical level a warm welcome to my product.
After explaining the above displayed features in detail, participants were asked to assign a priority to them. The pie chart shows that 90% which in numeric number is 45 persons among 50 persons would like to chat with strangers with the help of FriendFinder. Those who liked the file sharing feature (5 persons among 50 persons) also liked the chat feature of FriendFinder software.

I have also asked how they like to interact with strangers and gave them some options so that they need not think more and waste time and I asked to assign priority. The pie chart shows that the highest priority goes with the others option which combines the interaction via mobile, facebook with mobile and later on face to face interaction.

**Conclusion**

People are very busy with their own life and concerned only about them. It is the nature of 21st century’s life style but this makes the human being more unsocial and alone. To connect the busy life with the social life, developers are trying to invent many software, services and devices with the help of engineer of different fields.

The primary goal of FriendFinder software is similar with their efforts; increases the social interaction among strangers with the help of Facebook, chat and file sharing features in a short distance. During the field survey it was found that 70% of the smart phone users who use facebook through their smart phone want to discover new people around them with the facebook profile ID, 90% want chat facilities into the designed software and 98% showed positive interest to the idea of discovering new people around us with the help of technology. The conducted field survey results support and fulfill the goal of the paper that FriendFinder can be used to boost the social interaction among strangers.

**References**


