

Location-based mobile experience: a balance between web and mobile applications.

“Where does the internet start?...On the homepage ...And where is the homepage? Wherever you start... So, just as we do not bind space, neither do we bind time... To whom are we telling our stories?”

Federman

Today web applications contain and provide a high information resolution (video, photography, etc.) and mobile brings the timely delivery of abbreviated information; both platforms will balance their strengths and weaknesses to provide a holistic and complementary location-based experience.

Nowadays there is a growing trend involving web applications called Web 2.0 as O'Reilly first coined: “Web 2.0 is the network as platform, spanning all connected devices; Web 2.0 applications are those that make the most of the intrinsic advantages of that platform: delivering software as a continually-updated service that gets better the more people use it, consuming and remixing data from multiple sources, including individual users, while providing their own data and services in a form that allows remixing by others, creating network effects through an “architecture of participation,” and going beyond the page metaphor of Web 1.0 to deliver rich user experiences.”

In many of the most popular and successful web sites the content is generated by communities (social networking) using adaptable web applications with dynamic content and functions. Then the content retrieval and categorization is made in a flexible way using tag based folksonomies that are adaptable to user needs. These websites enhance the community behaviors (communication, cooperation, endorsement, mediation) and they are device independent; meaning that they can access personal information wherever they are and whatever device they are using. Some examples of these websites are:

Flickr: is a digital photo sharing website and web service suite. It allows photo submitters to categorize their images by use of keywords ‘tags’, which allow searchers to easily find images concerning a certain topic such as place name or subject matter. Flickr provides rapid access to images tagged with the most popular keywords. Flickr also allows users to categorize their photos into ‘sets’, or groups of photos that fall under the same heading. However, sets are more flexible than the traditional folder-based method of organizing files, as one photo can belong to many ‘sets’ representing a form of categorical metadata rather than a physical hierarchy. (Flickr, 2006)

del.icio.us: is a social software web service for storing and sharing web bookmarks. A non-hierarchical keyword categorization system is used where users can tag each of their bookmarks with a number of freely chosen keywords. A combined view of everyone’s bookmarks with a given tag is also available. Its collective nature also makes it possible to view bookmarks added by similar-minded users (del.icio.us, 2006).

LinkedIn: is a social networking site, mainly used for business. It is used to find jobs, people and business opportunities recommended by the user’s direct contacts, or by individuals connected to a contact at the 2nd or 3rd degree. The ‘gated-access approach’ (where a contact with any professional requires either a pre-existing relationship or the intervention of a contact of theirs) builds trust among the users. Each individual strengthens his or her existing professional ties and enhances their reputation by helping their colleagues establish business contacts (LinkedIn, 2006)

Today there is a trend in community based sites or social networking sites (SNS) to go from a virtual, web-based, general, and massive approach (with a asynchronous way of communication, enabling participation and conversation to everyone) to a real world, mobile and specific (location, continuous way of communication, always on). Location based SNS are mapping programs that offer benefits of browsing and planning but they stay in the web realm, meaning that adding a new place or spot you have to enter the information on the web. Some examples of these sites are:

Rrove: Use Rrove to save the places that you’re visiting or have visited. More likely than not, you will want to revisit them in the future. Trust us, we’ve been there (pun intended). That’s not all. Rrove is a community - members share their locations with everybody else. Use Rrove

to recommend places to others, and get recommendations from everyone else (Rrove, 2006)

Plazes: adds physical presence to the web. The Plazes website automatically detects your location and connects you to people and places nearby. See people in your area, discover other locations and follow the whereabouts of your friends. Locations within Plazes are not just global coordinates they carry significance to you and your friends. You can name locations like “Home” or “My Office”. Represent your locations by how you relate to them and discover other significant locations (Plazes, 2006).

On the other hand there are mobile applications that are ideal for marking places or discovering new spots (location tagging), receiving in situ notifications or tailor search results. These applications are trying to match the virtual world with the real and physical world. Some examples of such applications are:

Geominder: allows you to create location-based reminders that stay attached to physical locations. A location-based reminder can be much more convenient than standard time-based reminders for example in situations such as: “When I arrive at the school, remind me to print my dissertation”, “When I pass the pharmacy, remind me to buy aspirins”, “At home remind me to email Alejandra”.

Socialight: Socialight lets you create virtual Sticky Notes anywhere in the real world and share them with others (Socialight, 2006).

Mobile devices are now entering a new medium in which they don't just receive information broadcasted to them or just gather information from the internet; now mobiles bring the context: place, time, people (community) around you, and events. SNS mobile applications will behave using the virtual to map the real, enhancing and keeping track of your daily life; a daily life in which you are always “online”, where the device is always with you, bringing some new considerations to take in account like: the people you will start meeting will be real, the places you are will be real, and the identities you choose have to be real.

Mobile also brings flexibility, passing from the “one device, one address” paradigm to a more “web-based” where multiple identities are able to co-exist. With the goal of MySpace to replace phone numbers with “MySpace usernames” the trend is clearly pointing towards the mobile device as less a delivery agent and more as a tool to extend your participation and access to the services that matter you. Other applications such as Jagnol apply screen name model (nickname) to phone numbers. Jagnol lets you give unique phone numbers to each person you know or meet, enabling per-person control over who can call you.

A mobile service is not the internet on your phone; a mobile experience is a personal, private, personalisable, private, intimate, interactive, and integrated with lifestyle experience (I-Mode Strategy, 2006). To define a true location-based mobile experience it is necessary to take in account the following layers provided by both web and mobile current existing applications: current id of the user, place and location, time, people and communities around, events, online stored data/media, and technology available.