

Synopsis draft

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Questions for Winnie

- *This synopsis is build upon an concept we observe between people in general. That people use a lot of time on the social medias, and the fast speed of the media has changed our expectations of how fast things should happen. But we haven't grounded this in a text from the curriculum, so we want to know whether or not we have to build upon a problem from a specific text?*

Introduction

What we perceive as valuable in our own lives and between our self and our social relations has changed over time. One concept in regard to this is the concept of time, which we assign a big value. Our perception of time has changed during the last century where computation has had a great impact on how we live our lives. What we understand as valuable is no longer only things you buy for money or information, but time has acquired maybe an even greater value today. Today we live in the Digital Age where we have access to all kind of information and to transfer information freely between individuals. Information as resource has become so accessible that we don't assign as much value to the information as before, but instead the value of our society becomes the attention and time we give to News, advertisement, social media, television, politics and our social relations in real life. A new economy is created build upon attention and time as value.

How we came up with the idea

Our program evolved from a conversation that we had in our study group one day. We had started a conversation about temporality and specifically temporality in relation to social media. An example that was brought up was time in relation to waiting for a response. When we message someone over Facebook we expect an immediate answer. We talked a lot about how this almost elimination of time in communication has influenced the way we interact with each other in our digital society compared to when our parents were young. Things such as a snap-streak on snapchat is very successful in taking advantage of the human need for interaction with other human beings. A snap-streak is successful when two people are snapping every day, and each day a counter adds a number to their streak and the higher streak the better. This talk about snapchat and communicating with friends over social media let us to the idea that we wanted to make something that could help us balance our time between being on social media, but also spending time with people in real life.

When we were kids almost all of us had a Tamagotchi which is a little device with a virtual pet that you have to keep alive by feeding it, playing with it and so on. What we found interesting about the tamagotchi and also partly about the snapchat-streak, is that people are really motivated to keep these things alive. We wanted to take the idea of how the tamagotchi as well as the snap-

streak is effective at keeping people engaged, and try to use this to create a program that would encourage people to start thinking more about how they spend their time online as well as offline.

Intention of our idea

Our goal is not to try and get people off social media, instead our aim is to try and help people to get better at balancing their time on social media, by creating a program that allows online interaction on the condition that they also spend time offline.

The intention of the program is that you quest to do a physical activity with one or more of your friends for example to drink coffee, share a meal, take a walk or be cultural. The purpose then is, that you are gaining more time as a currency - time is value. If you don't feed your profile, we were thinking of some kind of consequence that would motivate you even more. Our idea of a consequence is that you are connected to your facebook account, if you use the social medias to the extent that you lose all of your time/value on your profile, your applications such as, facebook, instagram etc. will be filled with throbbers and your connection will become slow as a consequence to this.

Time and temporality

With the introduction of real-time web a new way of understanding time was introduced. A development of the speed of our web applications and how the web works made user's understanding of time change and created expectations towards a nowness.

"These streams are computationally real-time and it is this aspect that is important because they deliver liveness, or 'nowness' to the users and contributors. Many technologists argue that we are currently undergoing a transition from a 'slow web to a fast-moving stream.. (...) our now is getting shorter." (Berry, 143- 144).

Both the speed of the web, and the way in which the web functions in general has an affect on how we use applications and what we expect from them. A standard user start to see that results appear faster, this is how the speed is presented, and this is what the user focus on. As long as they get an output quickly after they themselves have given an application an input, they don't question the process happening behind. Which makes their understanding of time something unreal and an illusion of what is really going on. This illusion contributes to the users expectations of fast responses and continually updating of information on the web.

We want to make a design that respond to these problems critically. With this approach we will with design fiction and speculative design try to challenge the way people perceive and structure time in their everyday life. We want to let a new way of understanding time come into existence and with this goal maybe increase people's awareness about the attention economy we somewhat unknowingly is a part of.

Thesis

With this program we would like to investigate the development of how real time web has influenced the way people perceive and structure time. Furthermore we would like to look into the possibility to challenge people's behavior through the use of our program.

Technical aspects

The technical aspect of the program is simple at first sight. At first you will be asked to log in. Initially we were thinking that it might be the best to log-in with Facebook, as a lot of other applications do. For this we would need a Facebook API to access the profiles used for log-in. Two of us experimented with the Spotify API where we managed to create a log-in page as well. For this we would need to use node.js, as we did with Spotify.

The interface would be different segments, which is the place where we were inspired by Tamagotchi. We sketched an idea where on the left side we would have a health bar, which wouldn't be interactable. It would be bound to the points that you earn by your social interactions, where the bar would be filled using a variable. On the right side of the interface the different buttons for the social interactions would be. Here we would use HTML and maybe CSS for styling of the buttons.

The trickiest part in the technical aspect would be connecting your device with another one for registration of the interaction. We had a lot of discussions about how this could be done. We were thinking about a location API of some sort, like the Snapchat map uses. A user's location is very precise and the map will group people who are in the same location. When considering this we realised that it would not work with our program, because it would group people who were in the same location, but not interacting. The decision now is between Bluetooth or Wi-Fi. We would need to use Node for this and sockets.io would be helpful for setting up servers that could connect. We are still not sure how either would work since we would have to go more in depth with this to decide what ways to use.

Another technical problem that we will try to find a solution for is the registration of a user and how to store the data. We do not know if this is something we would be able to do, because we would need to create our own server to save the information and progress of a user.

Discussion

Since our design has a critical approach towards an already thoroughly implemented part of our (social) life, it will be interesting to consider what kind of effect our design could have. As it is stated in the introduction, our perception of time has changed and that this is also changing our behavior and perception of time/reality. We would like to discuss how and why this phenomenon of liveness and nowness means so much to us and what it does to our everyday life and interactions with other people. What could scenarios look like if our design actually was implemented? Would people even see the relevance of balancing your online and offline life?

With an implementation of our design we definitely foresee both pros and cons in relation to how people receive a reality check like this. For example we see that people have to have reached some kind of sense of self, according to their use of social media before they would feel motivated to interact with our program. If they don't see any concern in spending too much time online and too little offline, why should they then bother? On the other hand, the program could function as a way of challenging yourself. We see similarities in this and an app that for example makes sure that you get enough water, calories, exercise etc. The motivation is driven by the user's desire for improving upon something. An important aspect of a discussion then could be about people's attitude towards a concept like this, and how we as designers could possibly have an impact on this.

In Real Time Stream David Berry addresses the notion of how data streams are affecting our lives and the fact that we as users are a big part of this real time flow. Technical devices are developed to keep us in this flow and this calls for some kind of solution to cope with these new social structures affected by our relation to the data flow.

"Information management becomes an overriding concern in order to keep some form of relationship with the flow of data that doesn't halt the flow, but rather allows the user to step into and out of a number of different streams in an intuitive and natural way."(Berry, 2011).

Could our design be a way of allowing/motivating the user to step in and out online streams in a natural way? That would for us be the ideal function of our program.

References

- Soon, Winnie. ["Executing Micro-temporality."](#)*Executing Practices*. Eds. Helen P, Eric S and Magda T. C. Autonomedia, 2017. 89-102.
- Berry, David. 2011. "Real-time Streams", in Berry, op. cit., pp. 142-171.
- Soon, Winnie. [Executing Liveness](#). PhD dissertation. Aarhus University, 2016.