Social Hobby:
an innovative original concept.

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Abstract
A common problem many children face during childhood
is connecting with other children. Although the
development of communication and social media apps has
allowed people from all over the world to communicate
with one another at any given time, it came at a cost of
giving away a great deal of privacy, placing the users at
potential risk. So far little has been done to accommodate
contemporary applications for children or to create
dedicated ones. The only solution is to make the users
completely anonymous, which in reality still builds a sense
of distrust and unease while using these applications. But
what if there was a way for children to make friends by
creating events which other children of the same age can
see and join, all the while filtering events based on user
characteristics such as specified hobbies and sports and
location? All the user data would be invisible to outside
parties, and accounts would be created and handled by
the educational institutions that the users are associated
with, the institutions merely acting as a verification for
the user accounts. Users can also communicate using a
real-time chat, the chat being regulated by a language
filter that prevents harmful and malicious behaviour.
Would this app encourage children to make friends, or will
it lead to opposite, harmful effects?

Keywords

Where all began

The idea for our application comes from the draws of the children of Istituto Elvetico in Lugano; the competition asked to create something which could help children to socialize and a remarkable part of them designed an application or a website which included the idea of sharing common sports and hobbies: hence we decided to hold this suggestion and develop something like this. Our main source has been this draw https://idc2018competition.wordpress.com/2018/01/12/social-hobby/.

We thought a lot about how the application should have been, considering how to involve children and how to make sure that using our app they would have been safe. Our final design takes into consideration many aspects for which our project can be considered original: it is mainly about the creation of events by users, children, based on their favourites hobbies and sports, and the possibility to join others event created by other users: everything in a completely safety. We can consider the most original feature the fact that the accounts for joining our social platfrom will be provided by the schools themselves in order to avoid the most part of problems related to the reliability and the safety of the application. We created this project keeping in mind that our users will be children and everything has been done in order to develop something that children could really enjoy.

A functional system

The main goal of the application is to have a simple and well organised tool to meet new friends who have the same interests in common such sports and hobbies. Before thinking to the key features, we focused on the security aspect, which is crucial especially when we are dealing with 12-13-14 years old children. We can say that the fundamental concept regards the identity verification: basically, schools will provide the children who want to use the application their accounts. Who wants to use the application must have an account provided by its school. In this way, we can be sure that all the users will be verified by the school, in terms of identity and of course, of the age.

After logged in, the user will see this homescreen: here are shown all the events created by the other users.
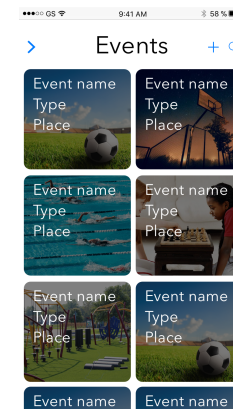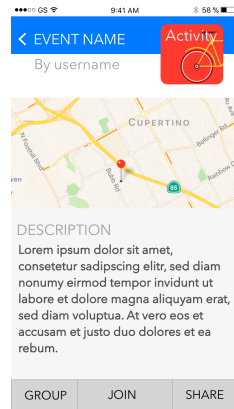

Figure 1: Homescreen of events.

If we click on an event, we will see the page of the event where we we find the details of the event like the name, who is the creator and a brief description including the place and the time. We can join the event and share it with our friends.
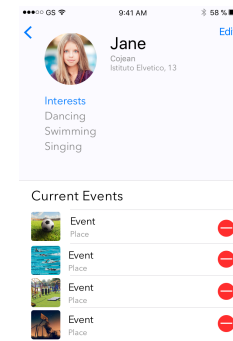
Figure 2: Page of the event.

If we go back to our homescreen, we can do a swipe from left to right - or click the blue arrow - to open the sidebar menu: let's click on the user pic in order to open the profile.
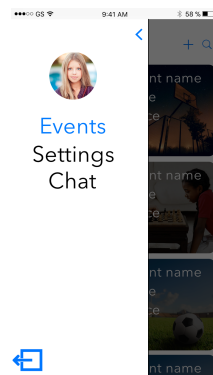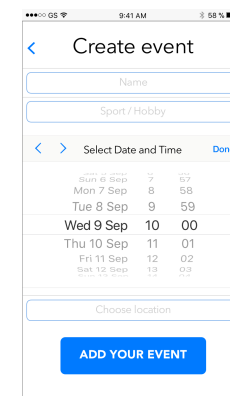

Figure 3: Sidebar menu.


Figure 4: Profile page.

From the profile page we can modify the picture and the sports/hobbies. We cannot change the name/surname, age and school.

This is the page for the creation. We have to insert the name of the event, the sport or the hobby, which will be the main topic of the event. Then we choose the time and the place.

Figure 5: Event page.

By clicking on the selection field for the place, a map opens showing also the suggested places regarding the activity we provide.

If we reopen the menu, we can go to the chat section.
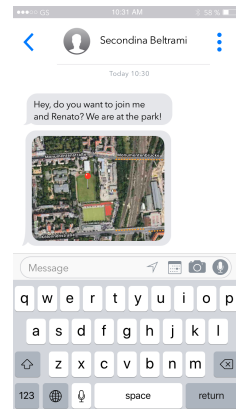
Figure 6: Chat page.

Our origins

Our application aims to be a secure, certified social network for children, used mainly to manage sports or other kind of collective activities. The underlying problem with most modern social networks is that they are not intended to be used by children. This is caused mainly by the impossibility to identify every user of the systems, making the rate of identity thefts and scams really high, and by the freedom of information. These problems may also concern adult users, but children are of course more easily influenced, and such cases may lead to really dangerous situations. As we verified in the interview, most children use social networks anyway, and they are also quite aware of the dangers.

Our application is a different, much more controlled and secure environment. The first point that makes our application more secure than other social networks is the fact that every user must be certified. We reached the conclusion that the most practical and at the same time secure way to accomplish this is to entrust the authentication step to the educational institutions. The other point that may differenciate the application from most social network is that it is not a general purpose system, but it can be used only for a specific group of functionalities, such as organasing meetups or writing to friends.

Finally, the application highly encourages social activities of any kind, and this is the main difference compared to other social networks, which seem only to drag people away from reality.

Conclusion

Social Hobby will change the way children relate to technology. It does not provide only feature which every common social network, i.e., Facebook, Twitter. In fact, the idea behind it is to use many elements which are typical of every normal social network not only with the aim of meeting new people, but the meetings are organized to share your hobbies with other children in your area. It will potentially help the children to meet new friends in the real world and not just in chats. In fact, this is really the originality of this application, you can meet new friends by searching events in which you can join in and you can really play with them, so it will develop their social skills because even shy children will have the opportuniy of meeting new friends to share their hobbies, even the strangest ones. Hence, in a near future it will be simpler for them to practice an hobby with new friends and they will spend much more time in the open air with their real friends instead of chatting with someone which maybe does not exist or is not a child.

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