
Building Student Community Digitally Using HCI

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This is the historical approach.

Abstract

Human Computer Interaction (HCI) fundamentally involves people, technology and sharing information in a very interactive manner. They help build virtual connections between people and technology. In today's world, technology has risen and made all things humans had dreamt into reality. Through this paper, the author wants to show how HCI can be used effectively to help build a strong student community among university students and help them maintain these networks. The author has used 2 case studies on developing apps for students using HCI methods and studying if these are helping the students in creating a new community. Surveys and small focused group meetings with the target group (students) will help the author understand the current trends and needs of theirs. The author feels that through these surveys and studies, it will show that using these HCI methods and techniques, building a community online can be more effective and efficient.

Author Keywords

HCI; student; community; digital; online, building; networks.

Graph showing the growth of Social Media Use from 2012-2018

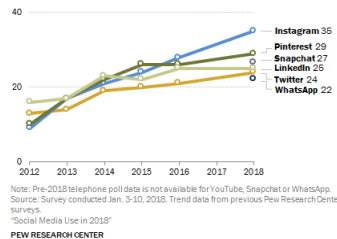


Figure 1: "Social Media Use in 2018" showing the growth of media users in America from 2012-2018 and the types of media sites they use and their individual growth rate. [5]



Figure 2: Survey used to get data for StudyLess case study

Introduction

In this era where technology brings new things every seconds, connecting with people has become so easy and very convenient. Technology plays a vital role in a person's everyday life. In a survey conducted by the Statista during the month April of 2018, it shows that over 4 billion people use internet actively and around 3.3 billion of them are users of social media [1]. This clearly shows the impact technology has on the people of the current generation. In this massive digital-loving population, students are the most happening and they are mostly considered as the early adapters of these technologies. There are many digital platforms already been used by students for digital socializing as well as for their studies and careers (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Tinder and many more).

"Human-computer interaction is a discipline concerned with the design, evaluation and implementation of interactive computing systems for human use and with the study of major phenomena surrounding them." [2] This engages people in an other level. Designs for the users, understanding the users, an in-depth study just on the users to understand their needs and wants. These characteristics makes HCI different. What would happen if we integrate this technique in creating a community among the future of the world (Student group)? They all are connected digitally, but that makes them unaware of their surroundings and also their real social skills of mingling and actually talk to each other using words rather than texts. The author feels that HCI can used to bring such a big impact on a very strong subject and target using small techniques used in HCI and better understanding of the users even during the initial stages of the design process

Background

According to McMillan and Chavis learning involves interaction and it is hence considered as a communal activity. "The traditional setting where communal learning activity occurs has been the in-person classroom; however, with the advent of technology that is no longer the case" [3]. Technology has brought a vast change in the concept of learning as mentioned by the authors of the above mentioned paper. They have studied about the growth and change in the learning activity. If they can use it to change the learning structure and build a community there, why cant we use HCI and bring another student community just for the sake of building humanity and helping mentality in them?

Students value and care about networking and building their connections. Robert and Howard has done a case study on LinkedIn and how it can be used for building networks among students. "Given the essential role that networking plays in obtaining job opportunities and potential professional development, the results of this study are very encouraging. We found that once students were introduced to the professional social media platform and provided an incentive to explore the various activities within LinkedIn.com, they used these tools to develop their online media presence, as evidenced by so many exceeding the connections mandate. Given the value of professional social networks, we believe it is essential that business students are introduced to this platform" [4]. Even from this paper its very clear as to how much change technology has bought to the student community and as to how big an impact it has on the building up of a community.

Method/Style

The method used by the author are surveys and other observation methods in HCI, which she had done for the past one year during her course of Masters in Human Computer Interaction and Designs. The data used here are fully done by her and her team mates for while doing their projects in different HCI subjects. The surveys were conducted online using Survey Monkey and Google Form. These were distributed using different social medias and focus group interviews, asking their interest and involvement in such a platform.

Case Study 1: StudyLess

Group of 7 students, including the author, came up with an idea of building a community among the students of KTH where they help each other out on any kind of learning issues and doubts using a platform developed by the team, but the concept of money was removed from the whole idea and incentives were given to the students who helped the other student like a cup of coffee or fika. The student who got the help will provide the incentive for the help they have received. This idea did not fully go through the concept the author was discussing about as one party or user did have to spend money for the help. But when you take the students who helped the others, they are doing it not for the money, but for the fact that someone else is getting small help from them and also a small incentive for it as well. When building this idea, the team conducted multiple surveys using various platforms and physical surveys to understand if this can be feasible and useable for them. Nearly 90 people responded back to the survey stating their interest in the platform.

Case Study 2: StockholmME

Group of 3 students, including the author, developed another application for specific target group of international students in Stockholm, helping them find the best pots in Sweden using their app and connecting with locals and other students. Semi-structured face to face interviews were conducted to do research on ideas. During the prototyping phase, a focus group workshop was conducted with target users to gather some input from them to avoid "self-referential design". The main reason for using these methods were so that feedback from the target group will be very transparent and will give the author a great insight into the mindset of the users and also if the application will be used effectively or will be useable by the target group. Around 70-90 people were interviewed throughout the whole process.

Result

From both the case studies, the positive responses from the students itself towards such a selfless (even in a small level) initiative towards other students were very evident. There is a huge scope in the field of HCI to make use of their technology and methodologies in bringing up a community without any materialistic intuitive even. The author hopes for such a time where students help each other selflessly, just for the humanitarian cause and strongly believes that HCI can play a very vital role in that.

Conclusion

Connecting people is something that has been done already using the technologies available in the current market. There are lot of social media sites that the students use that deals with connecting people and creating networks. But building up a society which

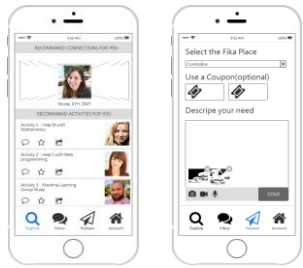


Figure 3: Screenshots of the prototype of StudyLess app.



Figure 4: Answers of interviewees distributed over different scales to find behavioral patterns.



Figure 5: Focus Group Workshop

connects physically and intellectually, being Human and sharing values and cultures, building a physical community digitally; this is what the author dreams for. And Yes! The survey does show that there is hope for people, especially students, as many of them are interested in these kind of socially relevant causes and building a community where people share and receive equally, for a good cause. HCI plays a very important role in this as they help in finding the most suitable way to attract the target group and help build these student communities effectively and efficiently.

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