Facilitating Social Networking Access for Elderly People

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Abstract

The aim of the European Ambient Assisted Living project Social Interaction Screen is to foster social interaction of elderly people with their family and friends. In this submission, we present the elderly interaction and service assistant (elisa) tablet solution providing integrated access to existing Social Networking Services.

Author Keywords

Ambient Assisted Living, Social Networking Services, Social Interaction Screen, elderly people

ACM Classification Keywords

H.5.2.User Interfaces: *User-centered design, Screen design*.

Introduction

Social Networking Services (SNS) have the potential to foster social interaction and create a feeling of connectedness [1]. Usage of private online communities is common among persons aged 14-19, but only every tenth person of 60 years and above make use of these services [2]. In the Ambient Assisted Living (AAL) project Social Interaction Screen (SI-Screen), we found that the reason for the low presence of older people in Social Networking Services is that older people encounter existing user interfaces of computer hardware and Internet platforms as usage barriers [3].

Related Work

Several contributions in the field of AAL and Ambient Displays address the issue of user interface (UI) barriers and aim at making SNS accessible for elderly users. The Go-myLife platform [4] provides users with an UI for external SNS through a social middleware. In contrast to our approach, the Go-myLife offers a web-based interface for mobile devices, limited in responsiveness and depending on online connectivity.
Both the CareNet Display [5] and the ePortrait [6] use digital picture frames to enable social interaction by connecting elderly people via SNS with their family and friends. However, the transportability and the social interaction support for elderly people is rather limited.

Social Interaction Screen

In our holistic approach, we combined a lightweight 10.1-inch tablet computer with a leather-covered frame and applied graphical UI concepts tailored to the needs and interests of the elderly. For social connectivity, the elisa tablet provides opaque access to activity and content streams of selected SNS unified by our mashup middleware [7]. Moreover, elderly users can delegate administrative tasks to a person of trust.

The final prototype was tested during field studies in Spain and Germany over a period of 12 days. Our findings suggest that elderly participants irrespective of their prior technical knowledge enjoyed the ability to stay aware about the activities of their family and friends as well as connecting to like-minded people.

Conclusion

On our poster, we present the final results of SI-Screen comprising of the elisa prototype and the mashup middleware facilitating SNS access for elderly people.

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