

Fernweh - Prototype of an IPTV-Community for Travel and Language

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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines a prototype developed to demonstrate a casual learning and social meeting platform for travel, countries and languages in an IPTV environment.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

K.3.1 [Computer and Education]: Computer Uses in Education - Distance learning

H.5.3 [Information Interfaces and Presentation]: Group and Organization Interfaces - Computer-supported cooperative work

Keywords

t-learning, casual learning, social platform, travel, languages, countries, community, individualization, personalization, IPTV

1. BACKGROUND

The audience expects more than passive reception of TV content from digital television. Among other investigations, a survey about BSKyB's well-established interactive TV services shows that about 60% of all customers already used the applications, 40% regularly and intensively [1].

Most viewers use the offerings a) to request additional information about the currently watched program, b) to customize the program to individual interests and c) to receive information about commercial products that currently appear. So mainly for services which satisfy the need for further information and personalization.

The same survey points out that viewers who already gathered experience with digital interactive media, e.g. user of VoD services or VCRs with time-shift features, are much quicker thrilled by other interactive services. A current study about German TV reception also shows an increase of interest in information and infotainment content [2].

These key facts essentially point to an increased users' interest in challenging interactive scenarios, especially in the field of information and infotainment.

In addition a better part of the target group also uses the Internet frequently, thus has experience in handling interactivity and modern cross-linked offerings. Web 2.0 services have become more and more popular over the last years and the vast user majority use collaborative websites regularly. A huge group of frequently used Web 2.0 applications are social platforms, e.g. communities and forums [3].

Another study shows that "travelling" (right behind "watching TV" and "meeting friends") is a very important topic regarding German leisure behavior [4]. That is one reason why documentaries about expeditions and travel programs rank

among the most favorite TV contents [5]. After "health", "learning languages" was the second most important educational topic in Germany in 2007 [6].

According to a worldwide survey "learning a language" and "developing basic reading and computational skills" are interactive services that could be delivered to any household connected to digital television. 95 to 99 percent of all European homes own a TV set, therefore "t-learning" (learning with digital interactive television) could become an important method and open new ways for homelike learning in the near future. Another survey result is that there is a middle- to long-term potential in the use of digital television for distance learning, especially with personalized services [7].

Adequate to the possibilities of interactive television, with a remote control as the only input device, "t-learning" is mainly not about complex issues or audit proof facts but about aspects of motivation, stimulation, repetition, short exercises and support at finding solutions and information. Learning should take place in a pleasant, exciting and (TV) conformal atmosphere.

Media didactics research proves that learning becomes interesting, is enjoyable and effective if the learning process a) has a real value for the learner, b) is closely connected to a real situation, c) actively involves the learner and d) allows the exchange with other learners or the teacher [8].



Figure 1: Main menu and entry portal

2. FERNWEH

Fernweh is a concept and prototype for an interactive TV application to meet the described interests in travel, languages and information/infotainment content. The audience can gather customized data about geographical regions, go on virtual journeys and participate in exciting language exercises, all at the same time and within the same user interface.

At first the user edits a personal profile (e.g. name, age, sex, languages, favorite destinations, countries of interest) and receives a personalized entry portal to the relevant topics – language, travel and community.

2.1 Language

With a short optional test the personal language skills can be determined. The viewer browses through various multimedia exercises and receives a matching recommendation. Either a serious learning path can be taken or playful challenges lead to the aspired goal. Even if learning is only an entertaining matter, solving the exercises continuously leads to an improvement of the language level, but at the end it is always the learner's ambition that decides about the level of success.



Figure 2: Language menu with several modules

The learning paths use short video clips, pictures, audio files as well as (simple) interactive games to tap the full potential of the medium. Strong situational elements (e.g. daily experiences, funny short stories related to a specific region) should motivate the audience by personal interest and bind in the long term.

2.2 Travel (and Countries)

The application also delivers content that has a direct connection to travel and countries. The viewer can search for certain places or regions and receives initial suggestions that match previously gathered interests. Thereby every user gets an individual “virtual” program.

In addition, the area “Travel” gives access to user generated travel reports from a connected community and travel enthusiasts can share their personal experiences, find interesting travel groups or plan future journeys together.

2.3 Community

Beside its formal connection, “Travel”, “Language” and “Countries” are linked with several community features. The users' profile is the administrative centre for all personal data and all deposited information influences the “Member” area, a communication hub to other interesting members. Viewers can exchange personal information or find learning/travel buddies here.

In addition there are several services that are directly related to travel or language. Among other offerings the user has direct access to news, weather and country specific information or can look for interesting travel groups, always depending on the users' profile.



Figure 3: Community menu to join a travel group

3. CONCLUSION

To gain the aspired interconnectivity of services and achieve a high level of individualization and personalization, it is necessary that providers of audiovisual and print-based contents (e.g. media houses), educational institutions and travel operators work hand in hand, to create a uniquely new format for interactive learning and virtual travelling.

4. REFERENCES

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