

Tutorial: Designing and Evaluating the Sociability of Interactive Television

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ABSTRACT

In this tutorial, we will discuss how the social uses of television have an impact on how we should design and evaluate interactive television applications. We will focus on the concept of sociability, and explain how this can be evaluated by using sociability heuristics. We will also discuss how sociability can be studied by performing user tests, and which aspects of testing are different from studying usability. Although the guidelines and user tests are especially appropriate for designing and evaluating social television systems, parts of it are also suitable for other iTV applications.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

H.4.3 Information Systems Applications: Communications Applications, H.5.2 User Interfaces: Evaluation/methodology, H.5.1 Multimedia Information Systems: interactive television

General Terms

Measurement, Design, Experimentation

Keywords

Sociability, heuristics, evaluation, social television

1. INTRODUCTION

In past EuroITV conferences, as well as at uxTV2008, social TV has proven to be an important and exciting new topic of research in interactive television. Many social TV systems are currently being developed in academic as well as corporate research labs [1, 2, 4, 6, 7]. As is good practice in user-centered design, evaluating these systems early and often is important to create an optimal user experience. Although several guidelines for evaluating the usability of interactive TV exist [3, 9], and heuristic evaluation [11] as well as usability testing is a well-known and often practiced technique, for applications being used in a social context such as the social television systems mentioned above, evaluating only usability is not enough. Even if these applications are evaluated to improve their usability, it doesn't mean that the social interactions they are supposed to enable are well supported.

This tutorial wants to fill this gap by teaching researchers and practitioners how to design and evaluate social features of interactive television. Based on his extensive experience in performing user tests of social television systems for evaluating their sociability (e.g. [2, 5]), the presenter will explain the practical issues related to performing user tests with iTV focused on social interactions. Furthermore, he will discuss the sociability heuristics he has created based on these tests and explain how they can be used to evaluate social television systems or social aspects of interactive television in general.

The proposed structure of the tutorial is as follows: first, the social uses of television as documented by several media researchers [8, 10] will be introduced. They will be linked with the current state of interactive television services and applications, including a wide range of social TV systems, and the need for designing and evaluating sociability will be explained. Then, a detailed overview of twelve sociability heuristics the presenter has developed will be given, along with an explanation of how to use them to evaluate iTV. After this, practical issues when performing user tests focused on social interaction will be discussed, including tips of how to improve them. Finally, a practical hands-on session will be held in which the participants can apply the sociability heuristics to an online social television application such as Lycos Cinema (or another suitable application that will be available at the time).

2. SCHEDULE

- 1/2 hour introduction to the social uses of (interactive) television
- 1 hour overview of sociability heuristics
- 1/2 hour discussing sociability user testing
- 1 hour practical exercise

3. TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience for this course is researchers and practitioners that specialize in designing or evaluating

interactive television applications, and that want to increase their focus on social aspects of iTV. The tutorial requires basic knowledge of the different kinds of interactive television applications as well as of usability (either general or specific for iTV). No knowledge of social TV or sociability is required.

4. LEVEL OF THE TUTORIAL

The level of the tutorial is intermediate, as some knowledge on iTV applications and usability is required.

5. PRESENTER'S BIO

David Geerts has a master in Communication Science at the K.U.Leuven and a master in Culture and Communication at the K.U.Brussel. He was project leader of the Mediacentrum of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Belgium) for several years, and now leads the Centre for User Experience Research (CUO). He is involved in several research projects on user-centered design and evaluation. Furthermore, he acts as content manager for the post academic course Usability Design. David has over ten years of experience in teaching for a diverse audience: e.g. introductions to new technologies for secondary school children, practical seminars in web design for university students and in-depth courses on usability topics for practitioners. Currently he teaches a master course in Human-Computer Interaction for communication scientists, economists and industrial engineers, as well as usability design courses and workshops for practitioners. David Geerts has organized workshops and SIGs at CHI2006, CHI2007, CHI2008, EuroITV2007 and EuroITV2008. He finished his doctor's degree on Sociability of Interactive Television, for which he has developed twelve heuristics for designing and evaluating social television interfaces. David Geerts is co-founder and board member of the Belgian SIGCHI.be chapter, and is program chair of EuroITV2009, the 7th European Interactive TV Conference.

6. REFERENCES

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