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EcoFriends – the non-guilt feeling mobile system for inspiration and engagement

Abstract

Many people have a strong will to do good and positive environmental choices, while they struggle to make this fit the needs of daily life. Our starting point is that technology that aims to help people be more environmentally friendly must also be designed in harmony with the way modern people live their lives. One prerequisite to achieve lasting attitude changes is that we are touched in the most basic level - where all our senses, bodily habits and norms are put into a social context and thus can form a whole. Only when the good, environmentally friendly habits also appeals to us aesthetically, physically and socially, can we fully embrace and maintain them.

The EcoFriends project will use the positive force of peoples growing engagement in social media and networks, that affects and changes people's attitudes and behavior as people appreciate to see how their actions have implications for other individuals and groups. Knowledge of what is a good or bad environmental option is complex and continually changing. EcoFriends will take another approach making use of the social dimensions and tapping into the knowledge that people in different groups have and develop themselves. Rather than giving an absolute truth of right or wrong, the EcoFriends application aims

to use the joint knowledge within a group of friends to engage and inspire to better environmental choices in our everyday life. The user and her friend's actions and decisions will be visualized in a rich, ever-changing and alive landscape. This is coupled with a social network like Facebook to develop a mobile application for iPhone with the aim to inspire and engage users to reflect on the basis of individual and social aspects. Through the knowledge that our social networks possess, we also get incentives to change our behavior together with our friends.

To achieve this, the project will explore and design for three situations where environmental impact often has to be balanced towards of our life-styles: 1) food and beverages, 2) leisure activities and sports, 3) daily transportation. Each situation will through innovative sensor-based interactions contribute to building a rich visualization within the user's social network. Sensors and actuators that most of today mobile phones contain (such as accelerometer, gyro, GPS, sound, vibration and camera) will be used to build a rich interaction and visualization that uses a variety of modalities.

Using humour, irony and unexpected contrasts the EcoFriends aspire to through a positive tone inspire users into a more environmentally sustainable behavior.