A Social App that Combines Dating and Museum Visiting Experiences

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Abstract. The use of mobile apps has become a significant part of people's daily life. Mobile apps are used not only to share or have information on social platforms but also to socialise and meet basic human needs. Mobile apps have an incontrovertible potential to provide not only interpersonal communication among users but also help for cultural institutions to communicate and create an attraction for their target audiences. This paper presents the design process of a social mobile app, Acht, which aims to gamify a museum experience with a dating feature.

Keywords: Museum · Dating · Networking · Randomness · Gamification
Design thinking

1 Introduction

The project, Acht, aims to provide a social experience centred around dating by using museum atmosphere as a catalyst for emotional and creative exchange between users. Digital technologies, which shape our social life have changed 'what it is told' as well as 'how it is told' [1]. Dating, which traditionally requires mutual exchange and courtship has become a digitally augmented, fast paced activity. Online dating apps and websites have become a popular way to meet potential partners for around 70% of same-sex couples and around 20% of opposite-sex couples in recent years [2]. This project aims to combine dating with an intellectual and cultural activity—museum visiting. Museums, by definition, are culturally rich and creative places. However, like other cultural institutions they are having difficulties to draw the attention of new and younger audiences [3]. Mobile apps developed for cultural institutions have a high potential in creating attraction for these audiences. By adding a new layer of interactivity, they provide a new museum experience. The Acht project aims both to enhance the quality of dating initiated through mobile apps and to widen the visitor profile of museums. Acht suggests helping potential partners to meet and get acquainted with one-another by setting playful dates in museums and other cultural places.

2   State of the Art

There are many location-based dating apps such as Tinder, Grindr, Happn, and Bumble which are used by different target audiences (i.e. same-sex couples or opposite-sex couples) for entering different types of romantic encounters (i.e. long-term relationship or one-night stands) [4–7]. Despite their popularity, the design of most of these apps tends to dehumanise the romantic experience and underestimates the social expectancies of everyday human interactions [8]. Most location-based dating apps are designed for fast paced matching. The actual physical encounter and the dating process itself are usually left out of the apps' foci. In many cases they do not provide any option to surpass the cyber platform. In this regard Acht aims to provide a dating experience beyond matching.

Mobile apps providing additional information and experiences for visitors have gained immense importance for museums in recent years. While some museums choose to develop their own apps [9, 10], some commercial apps such as Smartify choose to combine different museums under larger digital services and to create wider knowledge pools in order to deepen and personalise the experiences of visitors [11, 12]. The main design strategy of these apps is giving extra information on museums and exhibitions and/or providing a gamified museum experience. However, most of these apps are not designed to create a social community or gather people in the museums. Acht aims to get people meet, share and experience in the museums.

3   Concept and Prototype

The core concept of Acht is to provide a playful date motivation in museums or similar cultural institutions to its users. The interviews conducted with dating app users during concept development of the project show that most of them are not solicitous enough to make the first move to meet in real life and indeterminate meetings put an extra stress on people. In this regard the project suggests a social mobile app that helps people meet, date and get acquainted to one-another in museums.

Target audience of Acht consists of people aged between 18 and 34. This was chosen according to the user statistics of dating, museum, and gallery apps [13, 14]. In addition, interviews with the museum representative of one German museum were conducted and it was pointed out that museums were seeking to increase the number of young and early adult visitors [18]. These findings are in line with US based studies which show drastic declines in art museum or gallery visits in the age group between 18 and 54 [17].

Acht has three phases: Matching through swiping, suggestions for meeting places, and a gamified feature in museums. Matching through swiping concept is a conventional design commonly used by contemporary mobile dating and other apps [15]. In this method, if both users swipe to the right of each other, they match and will be able to start a conversation. If a user swipes to the left, which means that user does not like the person on the screen, there will be no match. Potential matches appear on the screen according to the user's geographical location and their range preferences [16]. After this phase matches should decide at which museum the meeting will take place by choosing it on the map. With the intention of creating a positive experience for both

visitors and museums, museums on sensitive topics such as war and crime are excluded on the list of suggested meeting places. When two matches meet at the predetermined museum, they receive a welcome message which informs the users on how to start the gamification phase. During this phase, users receive questions to trigger communication and interaction among themselves. These questions create the spontaneousness of a date in a well-constructed pattern (see Fig. 1). "If this building were a part of your house which room would it be?", "What would you drink by looking at this art piece?", "Choose 3 parts of your body to express this art piece. You have to show". While users enjoy art pieces, they also have the chance to get to know each other with the help of digital question cards that are not directly related to the art pieces but the users' life. These questions are designed to encourage users' creativity, rather than dwelling on their intellectual background and in this way quality of experience is not related to a user's previous knowledge.
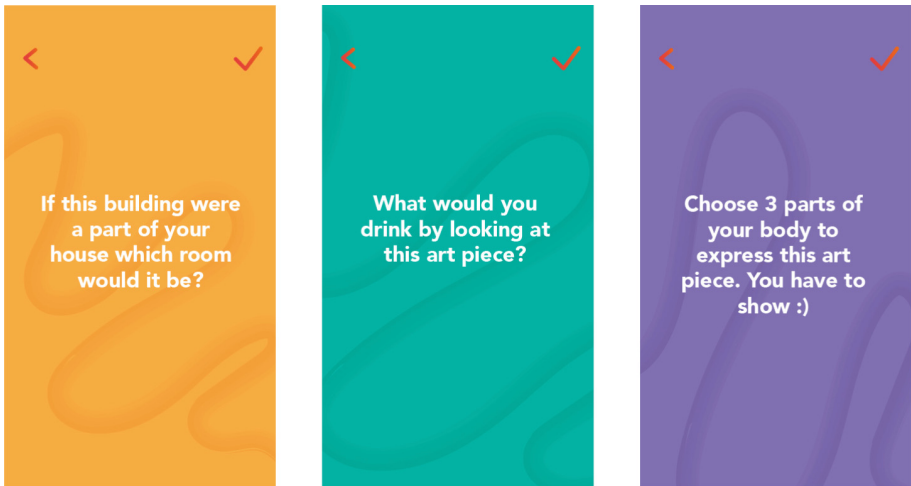

Fig. 1. Digital question cards

To encourage users to move freely and physically, randomness was chosen as the main concept for the digital question cards. Users have flexibility in the museum since these questions are not associated with a specific artwork. Questions are activated when two users shake their phones at the same time in front of the same artwork. This shaking gesture not only serves to make users physically active, but to give the feeling of chance by acting as a dice.

4   Application Scenario

Christina, 27 is a university student who wants to meet new people. She downloads the Acht app to her phone. She opens the app (see Fig. 2) and logs in with Facebook. Facebook takes her profile photo and academic information automatically from her

account. She sees a screen where she can change her settings and edit her info. She taps to the "Edit info" button to add more photos and complete her "About me" section. She taps the plus icon to add additional photos (see Figs. 3 and 4). The app asks for her permission to access her photos. She gives permission to the app and then Christina chooses her photos from her phone and she taps the "Done" button to complete her profile. Then, she taps the settings button to change the parameters about age, distance and visibility on Acht. She completes her settings and taps the "Done" button and sees the profile screen again. She taps the Acht icon and begins swiping to find potential matches (see Fig. 5). She can see details about another user when she taps on their cover photo. She swipes to the left if she does not like the person and to the right for the opposite. After viewing a few choices, she matches with Diego. She sees a screen that says she has a match and she is able to send a message to her match or she can continue to swipe. She taps to the "Message to Diego" button (see Figs. 6 and 7). She starts a conversation and Diego suggests to meet at a museum by using the map screen (see Fig. 8). She sees the notification. When they meet at the museum they both receive a welcome message from the app (see Fig. 9). They go to the exhibition hall and choose an artwork. They both shake their phones to reveal a random question card (see Fig. 10). Christina is the first one randomly chosen by the app to ask a question. After Diego answers and they start to break the ice, they shake their phones again revealing a question card on Diego's phone. This process continues as the couple takes turns conversing about different art pieces.
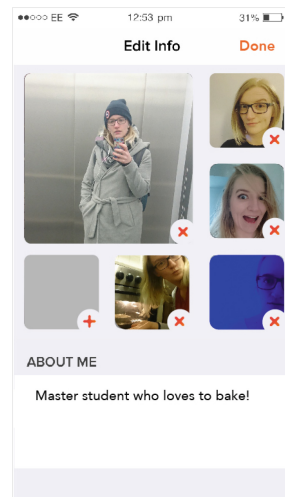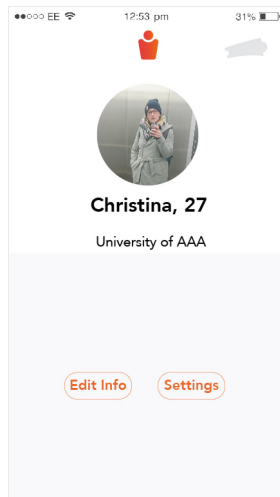

Fig. 2. Opening screen.   **Fig. 3.** Edit info and settings.   **Fig. 4.** Adding photos and info
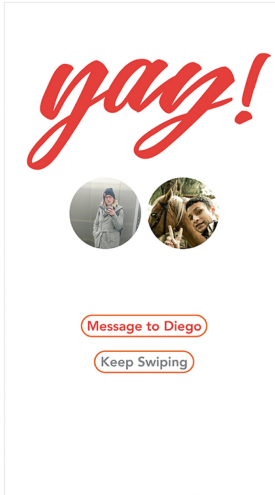
Fig. 5. Swiping screen.   **Fig. 6.** Match screen.   **Fig. 7.** Chat screen.
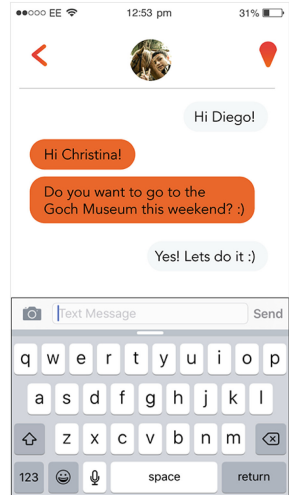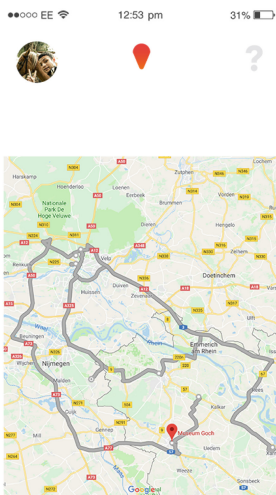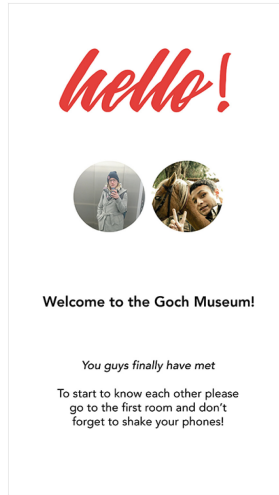

Fig. 8. Map screen.   **Fig. 9.** Welcome screen.   **Fig. 10.** Shaking screen.

5   Conclusion and Future Work

Acht was tested with a limited number of people by using a paper prototype and a prototype app—InVision app. The feedback of these formative tests has had a useful influence on the design process such as; users' reactions to question cards, way of socialising and interacting with artworks. And results were discussed with the museum representatives. The matching concept of this project could be built upon additional

selection criteria. For the further steps of this project, interviewees who are in a relationship suggested having an option to use this app with friends, instead of only dating purposes. Since this is an ongoing project to be able to increase the social experience, some other concepts will be included similar to the "shaking" feature which brings people and motivates to act together.

The idea which this project stands on is to create a social experience and a new way of museum visit. Moreover, this idea opens a creative way to use the potential of the museums. Taking this into consideration, this concept is not only for digital platforms and mobile apps, but also provides a unique idea for museums. Although this project seems to focus on dating, museum and experiencing art is the incontrovertible constituent of the project.

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