

ABSTRACT

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Finnish summary

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This study argues that mobile social software (MoSoSo), a product of digital convergence and emerging paradigm of social computing, may have an enabling role and an emancipatory function for digital communities by representing a general purpose social platform for the creation and development of community-generated services (CGS). Digital communities are introduced as the most recent evolution of the community concept, which is characterized by a networked structure and by the integration of the offline, online and mobile dimensions in a hybrid social space. Because of their networked structure, from the perspective of MoSoSo interaction digital communities are experienced as mobile social networks.

So far, the potential of MoSoSo and mobile social networking have not been realized. The theoretical foundations of MoSoSo are not clear, as both academic and commercial approaches present diverging trends. Studies are typically exploratory and have not yet produced findings that can be generalized. MoSoSo suffers also from a scarce user adoption influenced, among others, by the limited conceptualization of MoSoSo as an urban and exclusive entertainment gadget. Not relying on a common view of the technology, MoSoSo does not possess an own identity. These shortcomings were addressed by applying conceptual analysis and design thinking to develop a conceptualization and a conceptual model of MoSoSo design.

The findings highlight that MoSoSo can be defined as a class of mobile applications whose scope is to support informal mobile social networking. In this way, MoSoSo design can be enhanced by grounding MoSoSo on the three main building blocks, namely the user profile, mobile social network and social algorithms. The individual level of the user profile concerns the inference and representation of user psychological knowledge; the social level of mobile social networks deals with the sensing and processing of their evolving structure; finally, the interaction level of social algorithms uses the input of the other two levels to dynamically personalizes MoSoSo for contextual interaction, supporting user's management of incoming and outgoing flows social information, and facilitating social interconnections on the basis of homophily and heterophily protocols. To act as an emancipatory tool for social change, proper conceptualization and design of MoSoSo need to be assisted by adequate support policies agreed by all relevant stakeholders.

The study provides a theoretical contribution to the current understanding of MoSoSo and offers a research agenda for developing MoSoSo research both theoretically and practically in the wider area of digital community design.

Keywords: mobile social software (MoSoSo), mobile social network, digital community, digital convergence, design model