Digital self helps in getting to know new people

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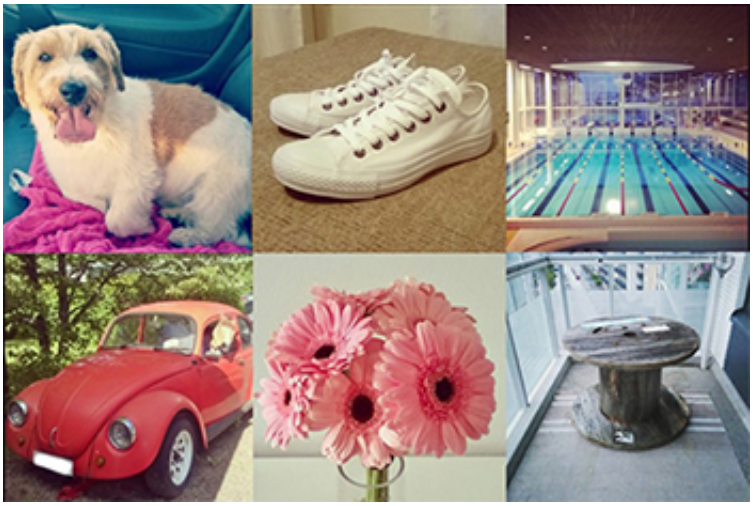


Credit: Aalto University

This Aalto University study explored augmented reality interactions between strangers in the same space using an HMD (Head Mounted Display). There were 23 participants in 6 multi-party gatherings each involving 3 to 5 individuals, as the previous studies have been focused on the interaction between two parties. Interaction HMDs were used to visualise the digital selfs of the participants.

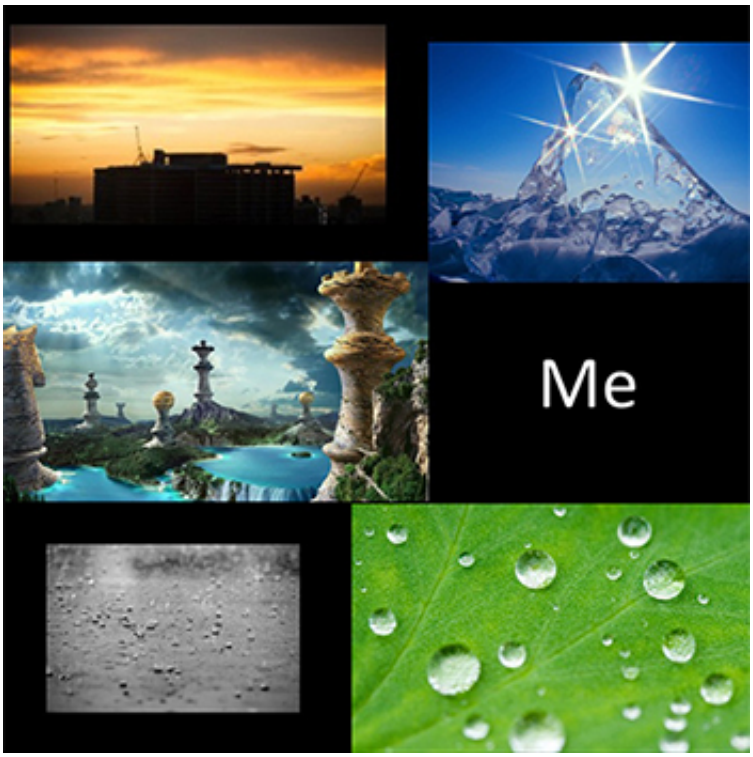
"The digital self is a digital presentation of oneself, to which an individual can include the desired personal information and which can be seen by other people in the same space. According to the study, the

participants primarily ended up adding information outside social media, with as much as 70% doing so through Google searches, for instance flags of different countries of general images representing the places they have visited" explains researcher Mikko Kytö.

"Google searching was in contrast to prior work using algorithmic matching that really assumes information can be directly mined from the social media", adds Professor David McGookin.

People are generally cautious about the personal information they want to share, which is why they tend to keep presentations on a more general level, using more ambiguous content. They do not want to disclose overly personal details - there is a desire to avoid being labelled and leave a sufficient amount of space for interaction.

The participants were able to choose whose digital self they wanted to approach, and they found this to be particularly useful in getting to know new people.



Credit: Aalto University

"Virtual and digital selves help in creating common ground for personal encounters. This can happen when simply meeting someone on the street, in a waiting room or on public transportation," explains Kytö.

Digitals selfs to support the everyday social encounters

Digital interaction using HMDs can produce a significant amount of added value in working life, where there are a lot of temporary, rapidly formed groups of people. Digital interaction helps to better understand the backgrounds of others, while making it easier to function together as a group.

"There is a wide practical value in this work. We could augment business networking events to support faster and more effective connections, or

support short, ad-hoc social interactions between strangers. In Finland, as with other places, loneliness is increasing. Digitization has made many things more efficient, but it has removed many of the everyday social encounters we have with people. Digital Selfs may act as a way to support those again", explains McGookin.

"Future studies might next focus on digital interaction in groups, where some people are strangers and others are familiar faces. The interesting thing about this is how personal information is used in a digital environment," adds Kytö in closing.

More information: 10.1007/s10606-017-9281-1 Mikko Kytö et al. Augmenting Multi-Party Face-to-Face Interactions Amongst Strangers with User Generated Content, *Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW)* (2017). DOI: 10.1007/s10606-017-9281-1

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