

An app to help you zero in on summer fun

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Credit: EPFL / Alain Herzog

An app developed by an EPFL doctoral student suggests outings you're sure to like – from sporting events to culture and outdoor fun. How does it work? The app is linked to a huge database of events and powered by a machine-learning algorithm that learns from your choices.

Looking for something to do this summer? You can put away the movie listings and event calendars, because there's a new app that indexes all

activities in your area and highlights the ones you're most likely to enjoy.

The app – called Flyerz – was developed by Thibault Asselborn, a PhD student at EPFL, with the help of two other people. "The idea came to us when we were on vacation with friends and looking for something to do. We thought it would be good to have an app to do the legwork for us," says Asselborn. Flyerz now covers all of western Switzerland and the major French cities. It is available for both Android and iOS and has been downloaded more than 4,000 times. The activities it indexes include concerts, outdoor movies, sporting events, after-work events and public seminars.

More than 21,000 events

This pocket social coordinator has two major strengths: a very large database, and [machine-learning algorithms](#). "It would be impossible to manually enter all the events that show up every day: there are more than 21,000 at the moment," says Asselborn. The system combs through open-access databases, like those on Facebook and Google, from which it extracts events. The events are then processed by artificial neurons, which use [machine-learning technology](#) to categorize them. Finally, the events are published on the app in the appropriate category.

But that's just half the story. A special algorithm selects events that align with the user's profile, i.e., their hobbies and interests. The more the app is used, the more it learns from the user's choices and favorites, and the more relevant the suggestions become. Although their profile contains some highly personal information, users are guaranteed total anonymity – they don't even need to provide an email address.

Flyerz is thus a simple yet exhaustive search app that lets users find something to do at the last minute. "What we have going for us is that we can offer a huge amount of content on all types of [events](#), so users no

longer need to search for – and sort through – the information themselves," say the app's creators.

Tourist offices are interested

Flyerz has a high retention rate, which refers to the proportion of people who keep using it over time. So the app's creators think it has real potential for further development. And it turns out their app is appealing to more than just people who are at a loose end. Local communities and tourist offices have shown an interest, and partnerships have already been set up with several French cities.

More information: For more information: www.flyerz.ch

Provided by Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne

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