

Local environs explained, and marketed, in a click

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

An innovative application for mobile phones that identifies places and objects by comparing photographs of them with reference images in a remote database will not only provide unprecedented amounts of information about them to customers, but also create an array of new marketing opportunities.

Based on software called Snap2Search that was developed at the A*STAR Institute for Infocomm Research, the Singaporean start-up company Pfliq (pronounced ‘flick’) is harnessing the image-recognition, classification and retrieval capabilities of the software to construct a new world of convenience. A tourist, for example, who is armed with a smartphone sporting the Pfliq application and wandering an unknown city, would be able to snap a series of [photographs](#) and send them off to Pfliq’s remote database. In an instant, the application would return the tourist’s location, as well as information on buildings, points of interest and events in the area. Promotions from local traders, offers of tours and special deals can all accompany this information.

“For consumers, Pfliq will mean convenience, information and discovery,” says Pfliq CEO and co-founder Kelvin Ng. “With the growing popularity of smartphones, the possibilities for advertisers and marketers are endless—from sending consumers a coming event for their phone calendar, through to putting relevant contact details into their phone and allowing companies to keep track of consumer preferences,” he says.

Pfliq uses the features and power of smartphones to provide information to people on the move, with image-recognition technology that is close to 100% accurate. Users will also be rewarded with redeemable credits for helping to expand the reference database with their own high-quality [images](#).

On the marketing front, Ng and cofounder Sam Tang from Temasek Polytechnic believe that Pfliq will appeal to brand owners, advertising agencies and networks, as well as publishers. It can provide online advertising that directs users to a specific website and services based on analysis of usage data, such as reports on the attractiveness of products to particular consumer groups.

The concept behind Pfliq came to Ng just before he undertook a Traineeship for Technology Transfer Management (T3M) program run by A*STAR's marketing and commercialization arm, Exploit Technologies. He subsequently developed the product with Tang, and before graduating from the T3M program the two fleshed out the business. "While I was in the program, the team built the basic prototype, resolved licensing issues with A*STAR, and so on," Ng explains.

The two-year T3M program allowed Ng to specialize in 'technopreneurship', combining a structured curriculum of relevant knowledge and skills with on-the-job training in Exploit Technologies and other A*STAR facilities. Graduates emerge with a Professional Traineeship Certificate for Technology Transfer Management and are assisted to find appropriate placements or, as in this case, to establish their own companies. "The program exposed me to all the opportunities and capabilities available in the [technology transfer](#) industry in Singapore."

[Pfliq](#) has developed a service prototype and is now seeking S\$500,000 in funding to allow it to develop a better user experience and launch an open beta of the service.

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