"City guide - Corporate Group" was specified as part of the UbiCompForAll project in order to identify potential users of the technology that will be developed in the project and to generate design ideas for the services these users might compose.

Summary

"City guide - Corporate Group" is about letting a group of business people visiting the city of Trondheim to create their own mobile city guide applications.

Problem description

Visitors have typically different needs when visiting a city. They have different interests. They can travel alone, with friends, with family or in a group. Some visitors stay some hours in the city, others stay several days. Some have a low travel budget. The following scenario addresses the problem of tailoring the discovery of a city to particular needs.

We assume that visitors will get support from the tourist office to get access to UbiCompForAll composition tools and to retrieve the building blocks (and software services) composed in the scenarios. For instance, the tourist office provides information about services related to various point of interests in the city. The hosts at the tourist office can also provide help for the creation of tailored city guide services when visitors come to the tourist office.

Main actor (s)

Karla, Pierre and Sophie, and Eduardo are employees of Statoil's marketing offices in Germany, France and Spain. They have spent a week in Trondheim at a corporate meeting for the employees of Statoil's marketing offices around the world. Together with some other colleagues they have extended their stay to visit the city.

Activity scenario

It is Friday evening in June in Trondheim. The employees of Statoil's marketing offices around the world have just spent a week in Trondheim at a corporate conference. A group of employees has chosen to extend their stay and visit the city during the week-end. One of these employees is Karla, who works at Statoil's marketing office in Germany. She shares similar interests with some people in the group, and they all decide to walk the same basic route.

After the conference closes, they all join to prepare their tour on Saturday. They download a city guide composition tool from the tourist office web site, and together they tailor their visit using the tool. They agree upon seeing some of the most popular sights, such as the cathedral and the old bridge, but they also decide to see sights showing examples of the architecture in the city at different time periods. They decide to spend around 6 hours around the town, and to not necessarily always walk together as a single group. In any case they can keep in touch with each other at any time via chat or messaging, and visualise the positions of each other. Further they agree to meet for a common lunch. When all this is in place, they all install the tailored application on their mobile.

Saturday morning, it is time to go. Karla shows the way. She starts her mobile device and opens the "City Guide" application. She can see a map with directions to the first sight on their agenda, the newly restored middle-age church "Vår Frue". The group walks together to this first stop on their route, following Karla.

At this first stop there is no local guide. However, information services are available on Internet. As the members of the group speak different languages, they choose to use their own mobiles so they can get information translated to their preferred language. By getting the position, the City Guide automatically detects the current point of interest and retrieves the relevant information services.

After looking around for a while, Karla is ready to move on to the next sight. Some people in the group are still busy talking or taking pictures, but she decides to go on. She presses the "Next site" button, and automatically gets directions to the next planned sight. She enjoys having the ability to spend as much or as little time as she wants at the different sights, instead of always having to walk with the entire group.

Shortly before noon, Karla gets a reminder "it's time for lunch"! The City Guide shows her she needs around 20 minutes to walk to the restaurant near the channel. She is not yet finished with the current visit of the old district Bakklandet, so she decides to postpone the reminder and to send a message to another member of the group. She picks up her phone, and selects to display the restaurant and other people on the map. She sees that Pierre and Sophie are close to the restaurant. This is not surprising, they are so found of food! She starts the chat session with Pierre and tells him that she will be around half an hour late. Some time later, Karla gets a new reminder. The City Guide shows the restaurant on a map and a detailed description of the route.

During lunch, the group discuss their discovery. Eduardo has taken a lot of nice pictures. Trondheim is so beautiful in the summer time! He regrets not to have installed support for annotating and sharing pictures in the City Guide. Anyway he can do this in the evening.

After lunch, the group continues the sightseeing together, except for Eduardo who decides to split from the group to take pictures instead. The next site is the cathedral Nidarosdomen. Passing by a museum, Sophie wonders what the place is about. She picks up her phone and searches for point of interests nearby. Based on the location, the City Guide identifies "Trondheim Kunstindustri museum" and provides a short description. Sophie decides to postpone the visit to the cathedral that is open late and goes to the museum.

After three hours going around, Karla gets tired and decides to go back to the hotel. The City Guide shows the hotel is 3 km away by foot. This is a bit too far to walk right now, so she selects the "Taxi" button on her device, which orders a taxi to her current location. The City Guide informs her that the taxi will arrive within 5 minutes. Finally, she gets to the hotel. It is time for a swim and a sauna.

Alternative stories

As shown in the scenario, the service is flexible. Minor changes can be done after installation. For instance:

- An event can be postponed: Karla postponed the lunch time.

- A new point of interest can be inserted in a tour: Sophie decides to go to the museum, and insert this new point of interest before the cathedral.

In addition to these changes, done "on the fly", the composer might select other functionalities during the composition of the service:

- Support for annotating, positioning and sharing pictures might be added. Pictures might be shared with the group or friends depending on the needs of the user.

- The points of interests might be visited according to a pre-specified order or in a free manner. The city guide might provide help to select the next place according to opening hours, priorities, location, etc.

- The city guide can record the route walked by the visitors, so they can annotate and share this route later with their friends or "tag" the route with photos they've taken.

- Notification about events occurring near to the places being visiting can be sent. For instance, an organ concert that takes place in the church nearby will be notified if the user is interested in religious or classical music.

- Games, such as quizzes can be associated with the point of interests. Contests between the members of the groups or between sub-groups can be defined.

- Instead of visiting together as a large group following one route, the employees might be divided into smaller groups of 2-5 people which follow different routes, but still with the possibility to meet at common pints and to communicate between groups or group leaders.

- When people in a group split, the city guide might send a notification when other members in the group are nearby.

- A person might want to always be able to locate his friends or a sub-set of group members on a map.

- In the case of a student group, a group leader may wish to check that the students have visited all required points of interest as agreed.

Properties

That several alternative behaviours are possible makes the service interesting seen from a composition viewpoint.

The service provides information that visitors would usually search for in a guide book. In that way, the users are familiar with the type of support from a city guide can provide, and they also have expectations about what kind of support they personally need.

The City guide service can be built incrementally. For example, the officer at the tourist office may provide support to compose a simple service for locating some points of interest and getting directions. Next, more functionality such as specifying reminders about events, e.g. lunch, can be added. Later, support for communicating within a group and support for localizing other members on a map can be added.

External evaluation

To assess the scenario, meetings were held with the managing directors at the tourist information offices in Trondheim and Bergen. Their comments are summarized below.

The first comment from the tourism experts is that a City Guide application on a mobile device will never provide the same service level as a human guide. Human interaction, contact with local people, close dialogue, immediate feedback to questions are all important elements that can hardly be provided by a mobile service.

The target group for this kind of scenario is important:

- It would be unrealistic to use a mobile City Guide service in the case of a group of tourists participating in a package holiday. This kind of trips are planned in detail far in advance, they follow a tight schedule and do not allow for much individual tailoring.

- Business people would be a more appropriate group for this kind of service. They are often visitors to the city as part of business conferences or meetings. They often have spare time to explore the city, but not always during the opening times of the tourist office. They also often choose to explore the city in small groups for individualized experience. Many business people are comfortable with new technology and are eager to try out new innovative solutions.

- Individual tourists would also be a likely target group. They often visit tourist offices asking for recommendations on what to do, and are looking for suggestions tailored to their interests. They visit the city on their own, without using the services of a human guide, so a tailored mobile service would be useful.

Besides the question of target group, the issue of economical potential is also of interest to the tourist offices. Business meetings and conferences bring in a lot more money to the city (much more than regular tourists). New technology can work as a selling point when marketing the city as a conference location.

Related scenarios

The "City Guide - Corporate group" scenario is closely related to the "City Guide - Family"; the latter focuses on the needs of a family visiting the city.