

Chapter 11

Content Suggestion for Mobile Applications to Facilitate Student Life in Technical Universities: The ITU Mobile

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ABSTRACT

All sorts of products, technologies, and devices are obsoleted more quickly than ever nowadays. Special, mobile applications, which make human life easier in a lot of ways, should always be up to date to avoid falling into disfavor. Thus, they need to keep pace with customer expectations. This study aims to present a way to offer content suggestions for university mobile applications. For this purpose, two focus groups on separate campuses of Istanbul Technical University (ITU) were formed in order to determine student expectations on the university's official mobile application (ITU Mobile). In addition to the 14 currently available features of the ITU Mobile, 32 additional features were identified as expectations, and the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) was employed to prioritize them. Results indicate that when designing mobile applications, universities should pay attention to several dimensions such as refreshment, life, education, facility, integration with other applications, and transportation to better facilitate their students' campus life.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the sectors where the developments in technology can be observed in the easiest way is communication technologies. Products, new technologies, devices and applications, nowadays, are considered obsolete in a shorter period of time compared to the 20th century. The mobile phone sector is an innovation-based sector that uses advanced technology. Under this competitive structure, the market share of brands and their position in the market is constantly changing (Chan et al., 2006; Yıldız and Kurtuldu, 2013).

While the core benefit of mobile phones is expressed as mobile communication (calls, sms, etc.), it now has a use that is far beyond its core benefit such as socialization, information gathering, purchasing, and so on. Thanks to the advanced features of new mobile phones, different communication types such as voice messaging, text messaging, and multimedia have become easily portable from one point to another with technologies such as telephone signals, wireless connection, bluetooth and infrared. These developments have radically changed the structure of social networks, have led to a transformation in individual and social life (Mackenzie, 2006) and are increasingly playing an important role in our lives.

Mobile applications developed especially for Android and iOS operating systems play a major role in making smart phones multifunctional. According to Chun (2013), mobile phone applications are customer information systems that serve the purpose that consumers want to achieve, solve their problems, entertain and help them meet their needs. The process of developing these applications is based on the purposes and needs of consumers. Mobile applications can be used for professional purposes as well as for entertainment and communication purposes. According to Paoli (2012), users download gaming applications such as cards, puzzles, adventure and sports for entertainment purposes. They can also download functional applications such as calendars, calculators, notes, videos, audio and even banking applications.

Individuals, businesses, public institutions, military, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations along with many others, are developing mobile applications for different purposes (entertainment, education, alternative solutions to daily problems, convenience, efficiency, etc.) and some applications have global awareness and widespread use.

According to Chun, Chung and Shin (2013), a good mobile application should meet a requirement (if it does not meet the desired requirement, how appealing it seems does not matter), work efficiently (serve the purpose correctly for what it was made for), look attractive (users may consider non-appealing applications as poor quality), should focus on solving the current problem (should be free from unnecessary features that are not used), should be easy to apply (the application should be simple to use and install). Huy and Thanh (2012) listed the features that users

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