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Lifeloggng: Just a Technology-enabled Behavioral Fad or an Enduring Form of Human Behavior in a Computerized World?

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ABSTRACT

According to Dodge and Kitchin (2007, p. 431), lifeloggng can be defined as “(...) a form of pervasive computing consisting of a unified digital record of the totality of an individual’s experiences, captured multimodally through digital sensors and stored permanently as a personal multimedia archive.”. Hence, lifeloggng can be understood as a form of self-tracking that could present researchers from various disciplines, such as HCI and IS, with valuable individual-level data.

Against this background, in this paper we discuss whether lifeloggng is just another technological and/or technology-enabled fad (see, for example, Steininger et al. 2009), or whether it is more of the sort of an enduring form of human behavior.

A way to structure the discussion on the state of the art of emerging technologies has been presented by Moor (2005). In his framework, he discusses criteria that should be considered when assessing the societal impact of information technologies. The framework consists of three main stages, two of which a technology has to move through (i.e., “Introduction” and “Permeation” stage) until it becomes widely accepted (i.e., “Power” stage), and seven criteria are used to assess the stage in which a technology is. In this paper, we use Moor’s (2005) framework to determine the current stage of lifeloggng. Our assessment is based on evaluation of the seven criteria. However, as some criteria overlap in their content, we grouped these criteria into three wider categories.

In the first category, we focus on current lifeloggng technology, combining the criteria “devices” and “costs”. In the second category, we discuss acceptance of lifeloggng technologies and combine the two criteria “usefulness” and “understanding” (Davis 1989). In the third category, we discuss the prevalence of lifeloggng technologies in society and for this purpose combine the criteria “users”, “integration into society”, and “societal impact”.

Based on our brief discussion of the technical components of lifeloggng, the acceptance of these technologies, and

their prevalence in society, we conclude that most points indicate that lifeloggng is in its “Permeation” stage at the moment, but might become a more established activity for a wider range of individuals in the future. The main reasons why we do not feel that lifeloggng is capable of reaching the “power” stage, just yet, is the challenge that is related to managing the amounts of data that are collected on a daily basis (Wang and Smeaton 2013), and the social issues related to collecting one’s daily experiences (e.g., privacy, Jacquemard et al. 2014).

Hence, though the technological developments in this context are stunning and seem to be more readily accepted by an increasing share of people, having control over one’s personal data and the ways to collect them is a crucial aspect of lifeloggng that needs to be handled carefully, in order for lifeloggng to also be accepted by a wider public. Therefore, at the moment lifeloggng is well characterized as a technology-enabled behavioral fad, but one that has the potential to become an enduring form of human behavior in a computerized world. Whether or not such a goal state is a desirable one is another question. We hope that both academics and practitioners contribute to this discussion to exchange arguments on its benefits and drawbacks.

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