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Title of project : Platform

Brief Description:
A series of SMS (simple messaging system) interventions on board train journeys
on specific routes throughout the national rail network. This project uses the
platform of the mobile phone within a very specific context - the train journey.
A series of playful messaging scenarios will make the relation between mobile
phone and train network as communication systems.

This communication structure will take privatised, proprietary networks - the
train and the mobile phone - and invert them into opportunities for public and
group interaction. It offers moments for train culture and SMS culture to
integrate, taking advantage of a journey's incidental nature (delays etc) with
unknown consequences.

The primary theme for these messaging scenarios will be dictated by the train
network itself i.e the connections between cities across the UK, particularly
London and its relation to Northern UK cities.

At this stage the project emphasis is on turning the private space of the train
into a more public one by creating a common gateway between train traveller and
static web user and including them both in a narrative along a particular route.
The narrative at this stage is dictated by the route from South to North and the
contiguous cities and landscape.

The two main public interfaces are
1) a website
2) sms messages to travellers mobile phones on train

The website will track the journey of a particular train which will have a
graphic representation online. Web users will be able to pinpoint the exact
location of the train and will also be able to see how many train travellers are
subscribed. They are given an opportunity to send a message to the train
passengers but they will not be able to compose the message themselves. The
most important thing is where they are - not who they are.

The routes chosen are London to Glasgow, London to Bristol.

The project will be presented as Director movies which simulate the experience
of the sms interface on board the train.

The 4 movies depict 4 different interventions:

1)Train Drivers Perspective
The SMS interventions function as punctuations at certain points in the journey
that make up a narrative relating to visual elements in the landscape.
The narrative is directed by the train drivers instead of me and relayed to
traveller subscribers via an automated time-coded script.

2)Non-travelling web users perspective
SMS msgs are sent from web interface to London-Glasgow train passengers and
published on an LED display on board in response to where web users believe the
boundary between North and South exists.

3)Travellers perspective
A group message board system for travellers to text to each other and to a
public web page.

4)TRUST perspective
TRUST is a system that tracks the train's movements to monitor and attribute
responsibility for delays. Signal boxes are used to capture data. Here SMS
alerts are sent to the subscriber at these signal box points.

Audience considerations

We effectively have two different audiences defined by location:- 'onsite passengers' and 'online web surfers'.
Onsite passengers are subscribers who are 'onsite' and effectively become the artwork.
The train subsciber is part of a privatised community of passengers and are a community only in the sense that they share the same space and time of a particular train journey, heading in the same direction.
The question is wether it is possible or desirable to cultivate a temporary community for the duration of the train journey.

The majority of the audience will be the 'online web audience' accessing the project through the website which logs and archives all SMS communication.