THE SOCIAL CONTROLLER

by: Andreea Chelaru and Chia-Ying Lee

LUXURY IS POWER

The very essence of luxury is power. It's the power to decide over the fate of many people. The power to give and to withhold. And ultimately, the power to shape the course of events.

In a social context, luxury equates with the ability to have absolute control over all social interactions.

The social controller is a tool for the rich and the luxurious. It's the scepter of power that decides who will be let through and who will be denied access. Packaged as an innovative mobile phone, the social controller is a symbol of status and power.

We started off by thinking of concrete examples for our premise: luxury is power. An obvious example quickly came to mind.

A king is typically considered to have power. There are various ways in which he can exercise it. For instance, he can afford to go about his business (reading a book, enjoying a warm bath) without caring that the waiting room is crowded with people waiting to see him. When he eventually decides to give a couple of audiences, only a selected few will have this privilege. The king will delegate authority to his butler, who will go down to the waiting room, and will decide on the spot who gets to see the king in his quarters.

In this case, luxury means being able to grant access, deny access, and delegate dull responsibilities. By the same token, what if there was a way for people to decide who can access them and who cannot, and allow a device to exercise control over this process? Could it be that those who afford luxury can become kings for the day?

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WHAT IT IS?

The social controller is a phone that grants selective access. Looking again at our assumption that it is a luxury to go about your business undisturbed, and fully control outside interferences, we have created a phone that filters calls and messages.

The phone owner compiles a list of privileged contacts who are allowed to contact him at all times. All other messages are automatically transferred to the voice mail, ready to be checked at a later date. The user can further filter access by temporarily blocking contacts from his selected list. The selected list provides visual clues about the current status of his contacts, as well as his relationship with them.

HOW IT WORKS

Most interactions with the phone are gesture-based. The user compiles a list of selected contacts by squeezing the phone, and inputting the relevant information. Only these contacts can reach directly the phone owner.

The user can temporarily block some of his selected contacts by shaking the phone. These contacts will not be able to reach the phone owner until they are squeezed back into the selected contact list.

The phone interface shows the relationship between the user and its contacts. The user categorizes his connection types as intimate or professional. Also, the interface displays the contacts' status, updated in real time.

VALUE/POTENTIAL

The social controller secures the luxurious privilege of enjoyment without interruption. Also, it paves the way towards new interaction methods with mobile phones.

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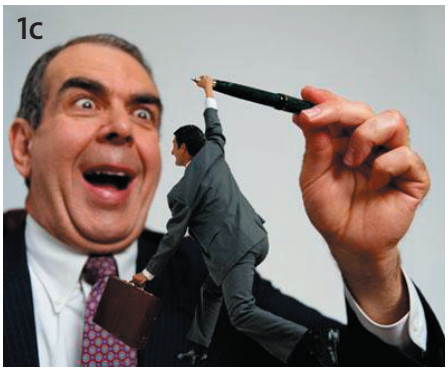
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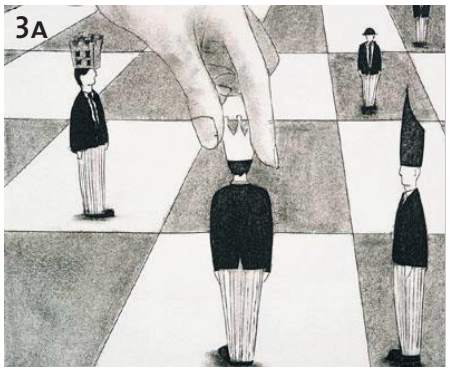
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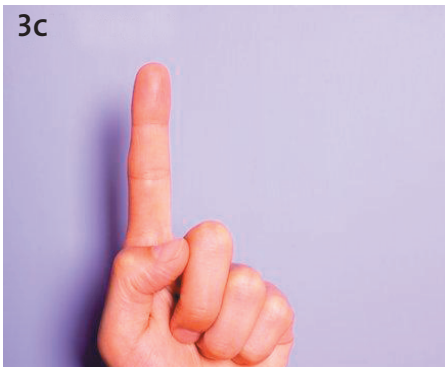
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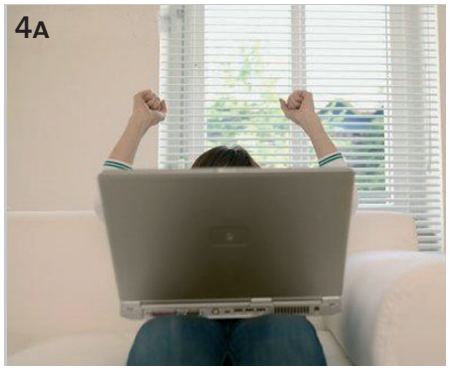
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DE_NITION OF LUXURY

1A POWER
Luxury is the *power* to decide over other people's destiny.
2A PRIVILEGE
Luxury is the *privilege* to go about one's business undisturbed by outside interferences.
3A CONTROL
Luxury is the ability to *control* every aspect of the world.
4A ENHANCED EXPERIENCES
Luxury is the ability to transform daily events into *enhanced experiences*.

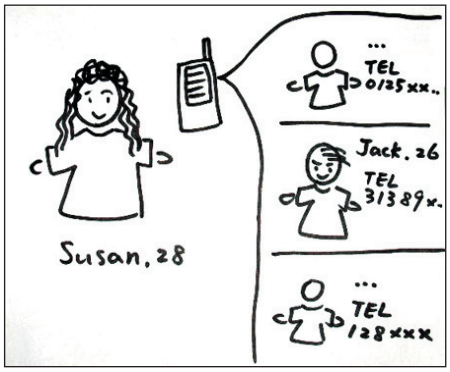
LUXURY AND MOBILE PHONES

1B ENHANCED CONTROL OVER SOCIAL INTERACTIONS
A luxurious mobile phone will be the user's emissary in his/ her *social interactions*.
2B GESTURE-BASED MANIPULATION
A luxurious mobile phone will allow a *novel way of interacting* with the device.
3B AMBIENT AWARENESS OF SOCIAL CIRCLE
A luxurious mobile phone will be *a keyhole* into the new developments of the owner's social circle.

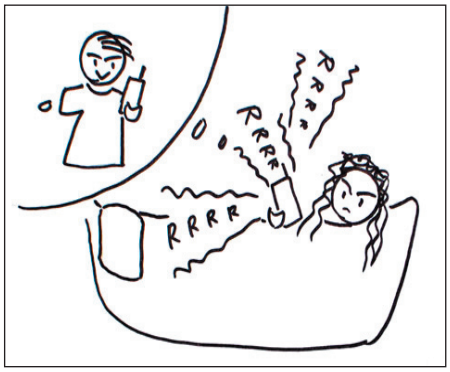
PHYSICAL INTERACTIONS

1C SHAKE
The social controller can be operated with simple, physical interactions. To block a contact, the only thing the user has to do is to *shake* the phone.
2C SQUEEZE
To add a contact, just *squeeze* the phone.
3C TAP
A *tap* will allow the user to edit existing information.

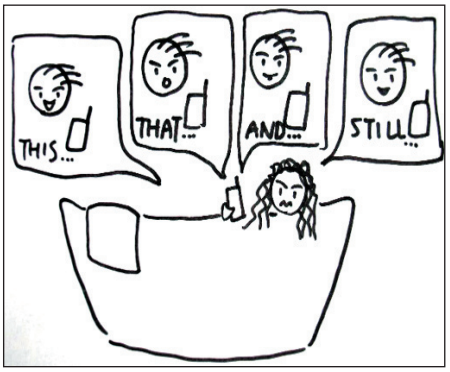
SCENARIO 1: BLOCKING A CONTACT



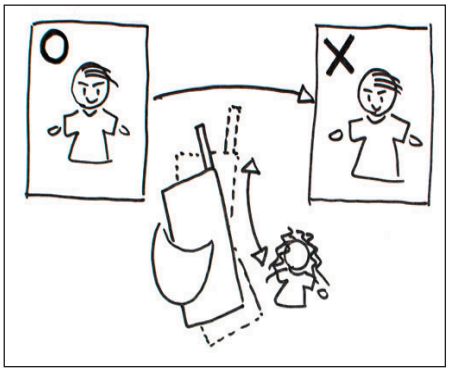
Susan, 28, has a small interaction design company. She has recently purchased the new hit on the cell phone market: Alcatel's social controller.
Jack, 26, is one of Susan's best friends. He is naturally in Susan's allowed contact list.



One peaceful Sunday morning, Susan was enjoying her jacuzzi appointment. When Susan was feeling that her day could not have started better, Jack started calling...

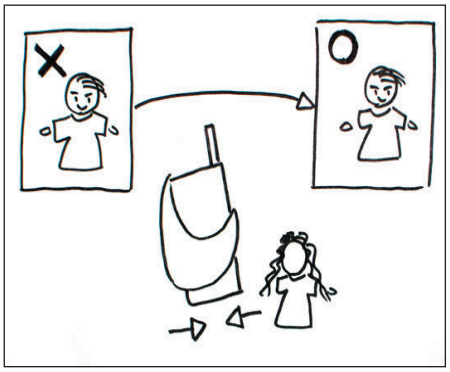


Jack just couldn't stop talking. Even after Susan hung up the phone, pretending her phone couldn't get the signal, Jack called her again after one minute. Susan suddenly regretted that she had a cell phone...



Susan decided to block Jack's calls by shaking him into the blocked list. Jack's calls were automatically blocked, and he could no longer bother her.

Later the same day, Susan remembered all the happy times she had had with Jack. "Oh well, he is a good friend after all, although sometimes he talks too much..." she thought.

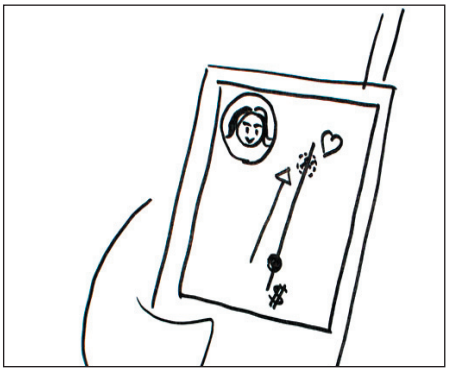


So Susan sent Jack back on her allowed list by squeezing the phone. Jack could now call Susan again.

SCENARIO 2: RATING A CONTACT

Catherine, 31, is one of Susan's business partners. They have worked together on a couple of occasions, but never really got to know each other very well.

One day, they met for a business lunch. During lunch, they had a great conversation, and found they had many common interests.



After lunch, Susan thought Catherine might become one of her good friends. On her phone, she changed Catherine's rating from professional to more intimate. Her social controller now allows her to broadcast her preferences for Catherine, the same way a king would show his favor for a subject.

CONCEPT

The social controller is a phone that will ensure a royal treatment for its owner. Using the social controller, the user will be able to better control his social interactions, and also experience new ways of operating a device.

Our concept revolves around the duality of granting vs. denying access. We wanted to create a device that on one hand, mirrors the user's ability to grant or deny the privilege of being contacted, and on the other hand, acts as a reinforcer of the user's preferences.

The social controller is a phone that would only allow certain friends to call directly. All these privileged friends are compiled in an "allowed list" on the phone. All other calls will be automatically transferred into the voice mail.

The social controller takes the metaphor of the waiting room one step forward, by allowing further selection of the allowed list. A contact from the "allowed list" can be temporarily blocked and sent to a "blocked list." Until reinstated, he will not be able to call the phone owner directly.

We called the allowed list Today's Friends and the blocked list Yesterday's Friends, to suggest the social whims of the rich and the luxurious. Also, we allowed other small details that would support the eccentric behaviors of rich people within their social circle. The social controller allows you to rate your contacts, and then broadcast this information to other contacts. This way, social relations can be strengthen or destroyed. Social controller users can also broadcast their "status" as a way to show off about their new achievements.

Follow the scenarios below for more details about the interactions with the social controller.

THE ALLOWED LIST

This is the main screen of the social controller: the "allow list." Each dot on the string that stretches across the screen represents one contact. The color of the dot shows the relationship between the user and this contact. Red means a more intimate relationship; blue means a business-oriented relationship. Each contact also has a status tag which gives the user insights about what his friends are doing at the moment. His own status is shown on the top, where the gray bar is. The status bar is a show-off communicator which all users have to input individually.

The list can be browsed by a scroll wheel or a set of up and down arrows. Every time the user scrolls up or down, the string of dots moves by one, clockwise or counter-clockwise, and the dot in the middle becomes a 3D ball to show that this contact is currently selected.

The user can rate all contacts. The ratings can be shared with the other members of the user's social circle. This event will potentially impact of social dynamics, by stregthening some people's social position and damaging others'.

VOICEMAIL

The social controller only allows people from the allowed list to reach the user on the phone. When someone else tries to reach the user, he is automatically transferred to the voicemail.

When there is a new message in the voicemail, a ticker dashes through the screen, mentioning the name of the caller who left the newest message, also giving a recap of the older, unchecked messages.

The message ticker disappears from the screen after five minutes. Green round icons will display the number of unchecked messages in the voicemail. These icons stay on the screen until the messages in the voicemail are checked.

ADDING A CONTACT

The user can continuosly edit his "allowed list" to match his social realities.

To add a new contact on his "allowed list," he has to squeeze the phone...

....at which point, a new dot will appear on the screen...

...together with an input box, where the user can input the contacts' information, using the normal keyboard.

He can then rate the contact, by using the up or down arrows.

After all the information has been inputted, the user has to squeeze the phone again....

...which will move the new contact into the normal string of contacts.

The new contact will remain selected until the user uses the arrow keys to navigate up or down the contact list.

BLOCKING

Even some of the contacts from your allowed list can become annoying. To block them temporarily, the user has to select the contact he wants to block from the allowed list...

...and then shake the phone.

The selected ball will run out of the screen, and join the "blocked list."

The list of contacts rearranges automatically...

....and the next person in line is selected.

UN-BLOCKING

Friends fight and make up. Once the user stopped being angry at a friend he blocked from calling, he can reinstate him or her. To un-block, the user has to select the contact...

...squeeze the phone...

....which will make the contact slide outside the screen. The contact was now moved into the "allowed list."

EDITING A CONTACT

When the user wants to modify some information about a contact....

...he should tap the phone.....

...and the name area will become an editable text box.

The rating could also be modified with the up and down arrow keys.

.After editing the information, the user has to squeeze the phone...

....and the changes will be saved.

VALUE PROPOSITION

FOR THE END USERS
Enjoy one's time without being disturbed.
Strengthen social ties with friends and family.
Ease of use thanks to the gesture-controlled interface.

FOR ALCATEL & TCL
Jump-start on gesture-controlled interfaces.
Innovative corporate image.
Customers' chain effect.

FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS
The phone makes it easy to tailor special services for different audiences.

NEXT STEPS

Further explore social aspects of mobile phones
Interface fine-tuning
User testing on interaction and interface design