

Komorebi by Kore: The Millennial Social Gaming sensation

Problem

A 'virtual' wave is ascending across various cultures, digitalizing everything from large social groups like nations to the smallest interactions, affecting human relationships regardless of their depth and nature: our very human identity is altered and alienated.

The ubiquitous possibility to connect to the internet at any time and any place, using the smartphone as an extension of our personality impacts all human behaviors and shape human interactions. Research on smartphones' impact on our social relations sounds alarming bells, revealing dangers from physical and mental health risks, to great addiction and isolation.

Although reverting this trend is unlikely, the development of solutions that counter or mitigate some of these issues should become a part of the public and private focus.

Connectedly Disconnected

Recent research has expanded our understanding of the effects that regular smartphone usage has on personal health. The negative effects range from negative physical effects to mental health issues or problems with concentration. The findings point to some alarming risks, such as increased risk of brain tumours. Other less clear effects are being studied but often challenged, such as damage to fertility and reproduction, negative impact on childhood development, insomnia etc. Physiotherapists also revealed the damaging effects of prolonged phone use on posture and subsequent pains restlessness and muscle spasms.

More importantly for our project, constant internet connection and ever-present social network at the tip of your fingers have resulted in lifestyle changes, especially in the way people spend their free time, often dedicating hours of the day on actions done through and on their telephone device.

But our main concern goes beyond the threats to the personal wellbeing by virtuality, to its shocking negative influence into how we, as human, social beings, approach relationships, strangers and society in general (including our place in that society).

Smartphones & interpersonal communication in non-virtual situations

Have you ever wondered about how smartphones and our reliance on them changed the way we relate to the community and society as a whole?

A study was recently made to decide in an experiment, if the presence and the possibility to use a smartphone to entertain yourself during waiting times, reduces the smallest interpersonal interaction – a smile.

The study has found that using the phone in the waiting room not only reduces smiles between strangers that catch each other's glance over the room but reduces approach behaviours between them, such as starting a conversation or even just saying "hello". This means that not only we close ourselves to a virtual social bubble, filled with our close ones but we are also,

mostly unwillingly, giving up on the people around us. Such behaviours may foster feelings of isolation and apathy towards the society that surround us.

Smartphones on public transportation

Bearing in mind the insight on the negative effects of smartphone on social situations, we decided to focus on a specific situation in which people tend to use their phones while they are surrounded by other members of society.

This is during the regular commute or another type of transport when they use public transport (such as metro, train, bus lines or trams) that many people take in cities. Regular commuters create a community of their own sort. They can be an identified group of (mostly) strangers, who has similar needs. Those may sit or stand (ideally comfortably) and get to their destination as fast as possible, while mindlessly looking around, reading, or, as we want to stress, scrolling or playing on their phones.

Research shows that 65% of commuters or passengers use their phone while they are on public transportation. This makes a regular commute or a transport in a city quite similar to the waiting room used in the smile experiment above.

A simple bus ride can therefore become a source of isolation and apathy towards society rather than acknowledgement of the existence of the people around you. It is not necessary that an individual seeks proactive engagement with fellow commuters. With smartphones in the picture however, a simple bus ride can become yet another additional factor to the already individualistic, isolating, and anonymous web of negative effects of urbanism.

While it is unlikely that people will stop using smartphones on transport as a way to kill time until their destination is reached, we ask a question of how can people use their smartphones and be aware of the opportunities to socialise around them.

Our Problem:

How can we make commuters using their phone interact with each other to potentially obtain a simple HUMAN CONNECTION - like an exchange of smile or laughter- ensuring at the same time their safety and encouraging them to overcome their lack of trust?

Our solution: Komorebi

We want to challenge virtuality using, paradoxically, the same weapons, in the form of a digital application named Komorebi, design for the use of commuters, during travel and waiting time. However, despite its virtual nature, we aim to change the paradigm, by using the application as an enabler of social connection and not the channel of communication, as a means and not as an end.

Mission & Name

Komorebi mission is revealed from the onset by its very Japanese name, which describes the momentarily sight of sun rays coming down through the tree branches: its beauty relies in the simplicity and ease of use, as well in the personal, original feeling of warmth that we associated with honest human interaction. As an application, Komorebi aims to provide a

small portion of excitement especially for the morning and evening commuters, an opportunity to exchange smiles among strangers living or working in similar areas.

Functionalities & Target group

Komorebi is a minimal application, encouraging real-life social networking through small, short phone games. The application pairs the participants of the game based on geolocation, so that people taking the same bus/metro/ waiting station get involved in a gaming experience with an unknown, anonymous user.

We bet on human curiosity that our users will be intrigued about the other person and will look around for their competitors: that is when the opportunity of smile exchange arises, when the two sights meet and two humans are momentarily connected. At the end of the game, the participants can also exchange inédit recommendations - music, books or restaurants- and receive their rewards in the form of points. This is the augmented product.

Process:

Application connects random users-> the minimal game is played-> people are curious to know the other participants, so they look around-> Ideally: the smile exchange-> Practically: exchange of recommendations-> rewards points for online merchandise

Target group & Feasibility

It is addressed to smartphone users, preponderantly young commuters between 18 and 25, including nonetheless the working age users between 25 and 55. With a long-term vision, we foresee a growing market segment of digitally literate people, therefore there is potential to target with our app even older market segments, depending on their digital literacy and smartphone usage patterns. Komorebi has true potential as a gaming and social application, since it responds to the identified commuter behaviors, who most often engage in checking their social media (59%) or playing games (47%) during their commute time.

Originality: Minimal, eye pleasing, safe

Our application integrates several elements of originality, which makes it unique in the networking and gaming offer. Any user remains anonymous to protect its identity and can choose to stay so even in real life. Our care for its personal protection and safety is also reflected in the introduction of a safety button that users can press if the real-life social interaction involves any concerning or alarming element. The safety alarm is then sent on the phones of all other app users in their proximity, discouraging the offender to proceed with their uncalled behaviors.

We invest a lot of efforts to choose the right PANTONE color palette for the application, using psychological studies on color impact on human eye and mood. The app design is minimal, as little intrusive as possible, so as to maintain its role of intermediary of social interaction. The games are also conceived using the same philosophy, to engage users either in problem-solving, competitive or - parimarily- in cooperation activities. Their design is minimal, to require little amount of download and upload data streams and hence ensure its smooth functioning even in areas with low internet connection, such as in the subway stations.

Feasibility: Incentives to use Komorebi

- Internal, personal: people are interested in curious social interactions and provided they are given a memorable first experience, they will return to use the application.

Reasons to use the app: as an opportunity to engage in social interaction with other commuters, people, as a challenge for oneself to get out of their comfort zone etc.

- External, network effect: at the end of each game played, the users receive rewards points that can be used on the application to buy certain merchandise coming from our sponsors or to benefit of various offers provided by key partners. Similarly, once the application is used by enough people, the tipping point in its expansion can be reached and people will turn into our users due to their friends, family, peer pressure etc.

Potential product Komorebi 2.0

After launching the first version and studying its development, customer assessment and quality improvement, we aim to expand Komorebi functionalities to include chatting options or user identity personalization.

Communication strategy

For our application to be quickly adopted by as many people as possible, it is crucial that we have a high visibility. The most important period is obviously the launch of the project, because of the intrinsic requirement to obtain the network effect and enable commuters to play together. To attract and retain our users, we design very carefully the communication strategy, to raise awareness about Komorebi's functionalities and its fun usage.

Since we target young people (15 - 40 years old) in urban and cosmopolitan areas and the purpose of our app is social interaction, the marketing strategy will be interactive and based on an experimental dimension. We will therefore concentrate our efforts on three main channels which are advertising, events and digital marketing. Our strategy will be organised in three parts:

1. BROAD EXPOSURE IN THE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

This is where our targeted group is the more likely to be sensitive to our app. On top of that millions of people will be aware of our app. Therefore we need to invest in huge billboard in the metro, train and bus stations so our logo will be well recognised and promoted 24 hours a day. This part will be the most expensive but is necessary to launch the app.

2. UNEXPECTED EXPERIENCES: We incite the curiosity of customers and give them incentives to use the app. They need to trust it and to do so the best way is to show them how it works. We need to provide experiences through little events like flash mobs or role playing in the metro or in the train (go and play it around people and meet them) on what the use of the app might look like.

Outcomes:

- introduce Komorebi in people's minds
- free promotion on social media
- attracting more easily the press attention
- create partnerships with the RATP to consolidate the feeling of trust in the app

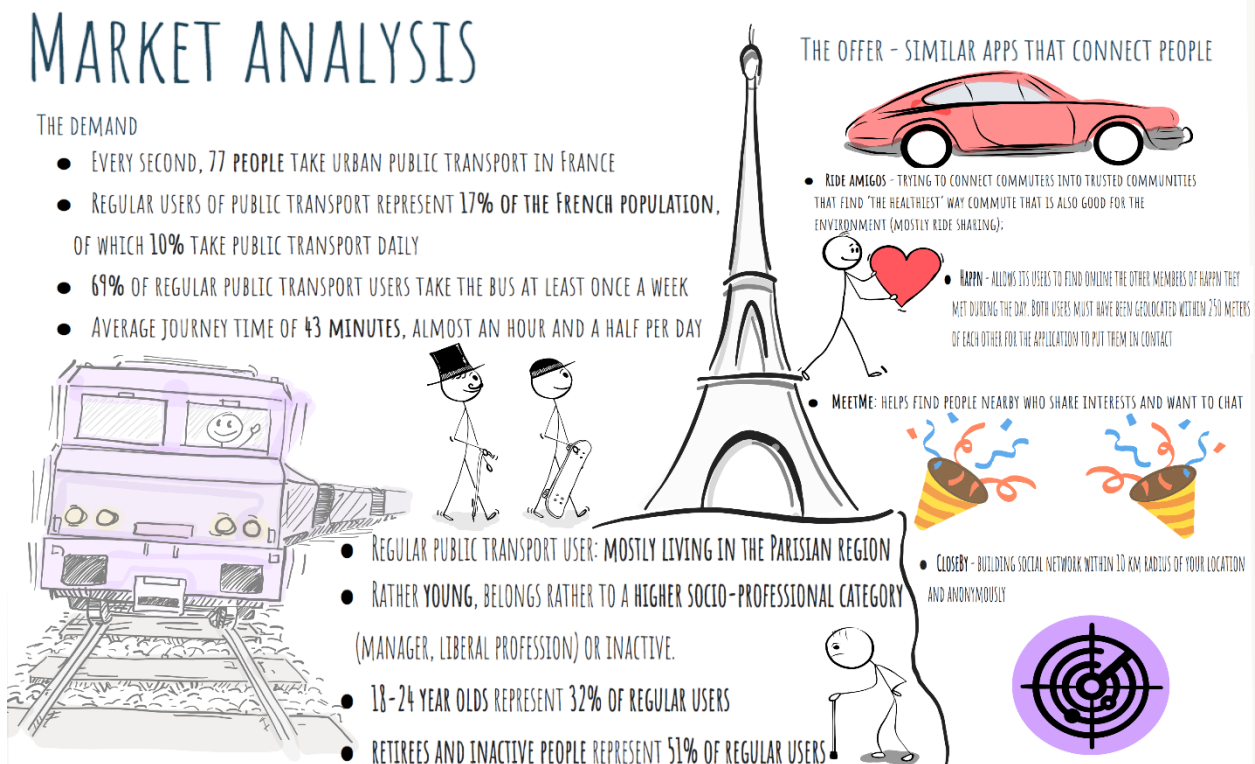
These events will make the app viral.

3. **DIGITAL ADVERTISING:** We focus on digital marketing which includes an efficient website, an optimization of the search result ranking on the app-stores, and a good participation on social networks.

Market Analysis

Various applications encourage their users to get out of their comfort zone and meet other people, but by providing them the certainty of ‘always available if needed’, the users apparently tend to be satisfied with just the online experience.

The existent applications are also very much ambitious in their intentions: finding your soulmate, sharing a party together with strangers, getting involved in similar activities with people one does not know. In this sense, the existing proximity application all demand a lot of emotional efforts that most of the commuters do not want to go through.



Finally, the Business Plan for our application:

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total Revenues	20 000,00 €	135 000,00 €	275 000,00 €	540 000,00 €	890 000,00 €
Advertising	10 000,00 €	70 000,00 €	150 000,00 €	350 000,00 €	600 000,00 €
Grants	5 000,00 €	5 000,00 €	5 000,00 €	5 000,00 €	0,00 €
App purchase	0,00 €	50 000,00 €	100 000,00 €	150 000,00 €	250 000,00 €
Corporate Partnerships	5 000,00 €	10 000,00 €	20 000,00 €	35 000,00 €	40 000,00 €
Total Expenses	528 500,00 €	414 250,00 €	307 000,00 €	303 500,00 €	303 500,00 €
Design and conception	6 000,00 €	3 000,00 €	2 000,00 €	1 000,00 €	1 000,00 €
Development	19 500,00 €	9 750,00 €	4 000,00 €	2 000,00 €	2 000,00 €
Maintenance	3 000,00 €	1 500,00 €	1 000,00 €	500,00 €	500,00 €
Marketing	500 000,00 €	400 000,00 €	300 000,00 €	300 000,00 €	300 000,00 €
Cash Flow	-508 500,00 €	-787 750,00 €	-819 750,00 €	-583 250,00 €	3 250,00 €
Net result	-508 500,00 €	-279 250,00 €	-32 000,00 €	236 500,00 €	586 500,00 €