

## App for discovering what's happening nearby

Natasha Baker, Reuters

Instead of checking the local newspaper or social networks, a new app takes the guesswork out of finding local events and what is happening nearby.

Called Roamz, the app aggregates data from social networks around a particular location to provide information about what is happening at venues in the area.

Roamz founder and CEO Jonathan Barouch said the explosion of social content on social networks such as Twitter does completely address the issue.

"Say I'm walking down the road in Sydney and there's a noodle market going on in Hyde Park. How do I find out about that? Unless I'm following someone on Twitter or Foursquare I'm going to miss it," said Barouch.

The app gathers public data from Twitter, Facebook, Foursquare and Instagram about a particular location into a feed tailored to a user's interests, chosen from ten categories ranging from child or pet friendly activities, to restaurants, attractions, shopping and nightlife.

"Our vision was to sift through those millions of posts and pieces of content and work out the signals that are actually relevant to the user at the time they're relevant," Barouch explained.

Using artificial intelligence the app gets smarter as it learns how a user rates particular venues and the types of content uploaded or frequently viewed. It uses this information to refine the data being presented.

Launched at the Web 2.0 Summit in San Francisco last week, the app has already received 8000 downloads. But there are still kinks to be worked out.

"We launched as any good startup should probably -- a bit earlier than we could have," said Barouch. "We could have spent another six or eight months building it."

The company plans to increase the amount of content available, which is currently sparse in some areas. While densely populated areas such as Manhattan have content from hours or even minutes ago, other cities like Perth in Australia tend to have less recent content.

"We already have more data than we know what to do with. It's about us mining the data that we've got a little bit better," said Barouch.

He added that content is being filtered out conservatively to ensure that data in the app is relevant. The company is also planning to improve the intelligence of the app.

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"If we notice that you're going to a coffee shop everyday at 11 AM, and you open up Roamz at 10:30 AM, we should be smart enough to start showing you activity being discussed at coffee shops nearby."

The startup, in Sydney, Australia eventually plans to enable users to purchase and redeem tickets for an event discovered on Roamz within the app.

Although there are many location-based apps for finding venues nearby, Barouch thinks there is room for Roamz.

"People are getting tired of opening five or six different apps. And even when you do, you're only seeing what your friends are doing - not what everyone else is doing", he said.

The free app is available for iPhone on the iTunes store.

(Reporting by Natasha Baker; editing by Patricia Reaney)

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