

Search Tech News & 8,000+ Products

Go

Browse Products

-- Select a Product Category -- Go

Personal Tech »

Cellphones, Cameras, Computers and more.

Individual Retirement Account The sooner you start, the better. Open a No Fee IRA Today. Banc of America Investment Services, Inc. Bank of America

Social Networking Moves to the Cellphone

By VICTORIA SHANNON Published: March 6, 2008

PARIS — Social networks may be nothing new to habitués of the Internet. Several years of competition among Facebook, MySpace and Friendster have generated tens of millions of members.

But now the market is teeming with companies that want to bring the same phenomenon to the cellphone. There are so many "mobile social networking" upstarts, in fact, that when New Media Age magazine in Britain tried to identify the "ones to watch," it ended up naming 10 companies.

Some of those in the thick of battle are resigned to having a lot of company. "If there weren't competitors, there wouldn't be a market," said Dan Harple, founder and chief executive of GyPSii, a mobile social network based in Amsterdam that is a contender. "Maybe there are 30 or more now — in three years, there will be 5 that matter."

The prize, as these start-ups see it, is the 3.3 billion cellphone subscribers, a number that far surpasses the total of Internet users. The advantage over computer-based communities, they believe, is the ability to know where a cellphone is, thanks to global positioning satellites and related technologies.

The market research company Informa Telecoms said in a report last month that about 50 million people, or about 2.3 percent of all mobile users, already use the cellphone for social networking, from chat services to multimedia sharing. The company forecast that the penetration rate would mushroom to at least 12.5 percent in five years.

Most mobile social networks seek to capitalize on location information. The SpaceMe service from GyPSii, for instance, will show users where friends and other members are in real time.

A GyPSii search will show users a map of their environs dotted with photos, videos and information from other members.

Bliin, another network that started in Amsterdam, lets users update and post their whereabouts every 15 seconds.

But for other networks, geography and "presence" information is not as critical. MyGamma, a social network run by BuzzCity, based in Singapore, draws most of its 2.5 million users from developing countries in Asia and Africa, its chief executive, Lai Kok Fung, said.

"These are countries with low Internet penetration — they are not PC-centric," Mr. Lai said. "For our members, the mobile phone is the only way to get on the Internet."

For that reason, Mr. Lai is not overly concerned with the big Internet names — like MySpace and Facebook — and their plans to invade the cellphone universe.

SIGN IN TO E-MAIL OR SAVE THIS PRINT REPRINTS SHARE ARTICLE TOOLS SPONSORED BY IN SELECT THEATRES 3/19

Next Article in Technology (3 of 13) »

Latest Technology Headlines



- Apple to Encourage iPhone Programmers Will Europe Let Google Out of the Penalty Box? Circuit City Extends HD DVD Return Time Bank Moves to Withdraw Its Suit Against Wikileaks Site

Today's Headlines Daily E-Mail



Sign up for a roundup of the day's top stories, sent every morning.

See Sample | Privacy Policy

Sign Up

Ads by Google

what's this?

Researching Myspace?

Get better search results & smart answers at Ask.com. Try it now! www.ask.com

Wireless Mobile

The Latest Wireless & Mobile Development News and Resources. www.NetworkWorld.com

This Week in Wireless

Original Analysis of this Week's Most Relevant News Stories www.wirelessweek.com/newsletters

MOST POPULAR - TECHNOLOGY

E-MAILED BLOGGED

- 1. State of the Art: A Camera That Frees Your Face 2. Apple iPhone Gets Corporate E - Mail 3. From the Desk of David Pogue: Tech Support Gets a Reprieve While Users Take a Hit 4. Pogue's Posts: Tech Support Gets a Reprieve While Users Take a Hit 5. Social Networking Moves to the Cellphone 6. Apple Aims to Put iPhone Into the Workplace 7. Q & A: Tip of the Week: Viewing Images in 3-D 8. Basics: Downloading: That Other Way to Get a Video Game 9. Bits: Bank Asks Judge to Dismiss Its Suit Against Wikileaks Site 10. Bits: New Patentable Idea: A Way to Invalidate Vague Patents

Go to Complete List »

The New York Times REAL ESTATE nytimes.com/realestate



[AOL](#), [Yahoo](#) and [Nokia](#) have initiatives to create discrete communities out of cellphone users.

“We don’t think any of them will make a big splash in the mobile space,” Mr. Lai said. “They view mobile as an extension of the online site, while we know our members use mobile much differently.”

According to a BuzzCity study, members usually gain access to the mobile social network from home or work, and they use their cellphones first, even if they can get to the network from a personal computer. For most users — 62 percent — each myGamma session lasts 30 minutes to an hour.

[Itsmys.com](#), a social network run by the Munich-based GoFresh, also exists only in the mobile world. Itsmys, which says it has more than a million registered users, opened its Italian-language service on Wednesday. It was already available in English, German and Spanish, and a Japanese version is planned.

GyPSii announced a version of its software for the [Apple iPhone](#) this week, and last month it concluded a contract with [China Unicom](#) to start GyPSii during the Beijing Olympics.

Mr. Harple, an American technology entrepreneur, does not consider it unusual that so many mobile social networks originate outside the United States, which has dominated the Internet business.

“I moved to Europe because I thought the U.S. venture capital community — which I was a part of — was myopic,” he said. “They can’t see the global significance of what is happening.”

Mr. Harple predicted GyPSii “could have more users in one year than Facebook had in three.”

[Next Article in Technology \(3 of 13\) »](#)

[Need to know more? 50% off home delivery of The Times.](#)

Tips

To find reference information about the words used in this article, double-click on any word, phrase or name. A new window will open with a dictionary definition or encyclopedia entry.

Related Articles

FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES

[DRILLING DOWN; A Tough Sell: Movies on Small Screens](#)
(March 3, 2008)

[With Software and an iBand, There’s No Need for Roadies](#)
(March 3, 2008)

[Intel Announces New Chip for Small Computers](#)
(March 3, 2008)

[The Very Model of a Modern Media Mogul](#)
(March 3, 2008)

FROM AROUND THE WEB

[What’s This?](#)

[FACEBOOK APPLICATIONS REVIEWS](#)
[Zazzle printing social networking profile cards](#)

[TECHDIRT](#)
[Buddhist Monks Warned To Stop Using Social Networks To Flirt With Girls](#)


[GIZMODO](#)
[Crocs Make Shoe-Themed Cellphone Holsters, We Wonder Why Holster](#)

[ISRAELITY](#)
[Pulver * Tel Aviv * Networking](#)

[PC MAG](#)
[Social Networking Unveiled for iPhone](#)

[16 Related Articles »](#)

Powered by [Blogrunner](#)



What you get for ... \$500,000
Also in Real Estate:
[Homes for \\$500,000 or less in Manhattan](#)
[Homes for \\$500,000 or less in Essex County, NJ](#)
[Homes for \\$500,000 or less on Long Island](#)

ADVERTISEMENTS

In a world of second opinions, get the facts first.
Complete coverage of Awards season
All the news that’s fit to personalize.



The New York Times
nytimes.com/health
ALL THE NEWS THAT’S FIT TO CLICK

Ads by Google

[what's this?](#)

[RFID Infrastructure](#)

Scalable - Secure - Easy to Deploy RFID Network Infrastructure
[www.revasystems.com](#)

Browse Local Business Services

Find businesses near you on The New York Times Business Services Directory.

[Business & Financial Services »](#)

[Computer & Telecom Services »](#)

[Food & Beverage »](#)

[Franchises, Partnerships & Manufacturing »](#)

[Health & Beauty »](#)

[Miscellaneous »](#)

[Professional Services »](#)

[Retail & Specialty Businesses »](#)

[Travel & Real Estate »](#)

In partnership with DirectoryM

INSIDE NYTIMES.COM

[N.Y. / REGION »](#)

[HOME & GARDEN »](#)

[OPINION »](#)

[SPORTS »](#)

[OPINION »](#)

[MOVIES »](#)



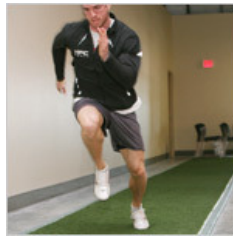
[Bronx Courthouse Will Become Charter School](#)



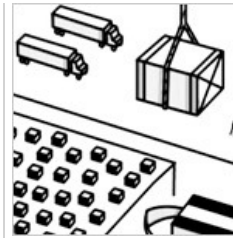
[Analyzing the Therapist's Chair](#)

Campaign Stops: The Fourth Quarter

Why a close race is good for the Democratic Party.



[Great Set of Wheels for Olympic Hopeful](#)



[Op-Ed: Grand Old Protectionists](#)



[Hollywood Hopes to Laugh to the Bank](#)