

The Media and the Messages of Location-Based Services (LBS): Death of Distance or the Revenge of Geography?

Daniel Z. Sui

Department of Geography Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-3147 USA

E-mail:sui@geog.tamu.edu

Abstract

With the dramatic increase of mobile phone users, coupled with steady innovations in wireless/embedded computing and communications, the past five years have witnessed the emergence of various kinds of location-based services (LBS). The backbone of LBS relies on an integration of multiple spatial and communication technologies, including (but not limited to) GPS, GIS, wireless communication, mobile computing, the Internet, etc. The emergence of LBS provides unprecedented business opportunities as well as enormous challenges for society. This paper reconceptualizes LBS as new media. By doing so, a synthetic framework based upon Marshall McLuhan's laws of the media is developed. The media and messages of LBS are discussed through a preliminary tetradic analysis, followed by a discussion on the applicability of Asimov's laws of robotics in guiding the development of LBS. The paper concludes by arguing that the way to cope with the paradoxes of technological innovations is a major challenge in the information age.

Keywords

location-based services (LBS), laws of media, laws of LBS, social impacts
