Locating the “Scruff Guy”: From Bodies to Communities in Bear-Targeted Social Media

Abstract:

This paper offers a critical examination of the smartphone application Scruff, a gay geosocial networking service targeted primarily at bears. Through the use of smartphones and global positioning technology, Scruff connects a user base of over one million individuals in more than 180 countries. In this paper, I suggest that Scruff calls for a reevaluation of existing theoretical paradigms of embodiment and geography in studies of queer community. Through a close reading of the Scruff interface and a study of the technological possibilities and limits of the Scruff application, I offer both a theoretical intervention into the relationship between bodies, space, and technology, as well as a methodological inquiry into how humanities scholarship ought to critically assess devices, applications, and interfaces.