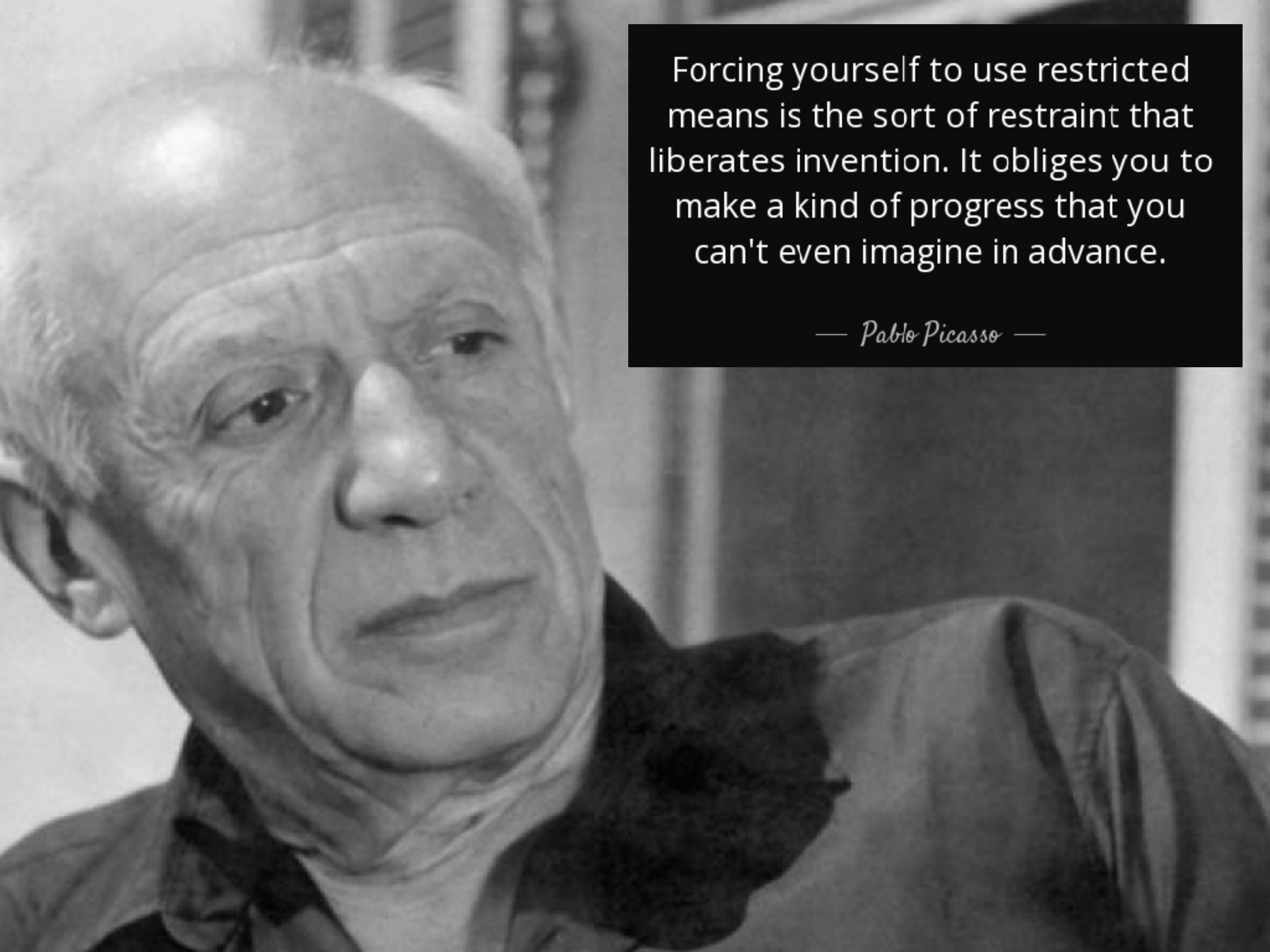


From Pixels to Psychology: Decoding Behaviour Through Smartphone Sensing

Prof. Vassilis Kostakos
School of Computing and Information Systems
University of Melbourne

9 June 2025
Talk given at the 2025 Ubi Summer School
Oulu, Finland

Thank you to countless people



Forcing yourself to use restricted means is the sort of restraint that liberates invention. It obliges you to make a kind of progress that you can't even imagine in advance.

— *Pablo Picasso* —

Brief history of computing



1960's



1980's



2000's

3 “Waves” of computing

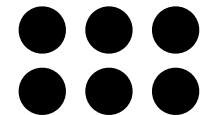
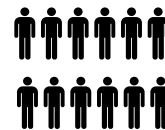


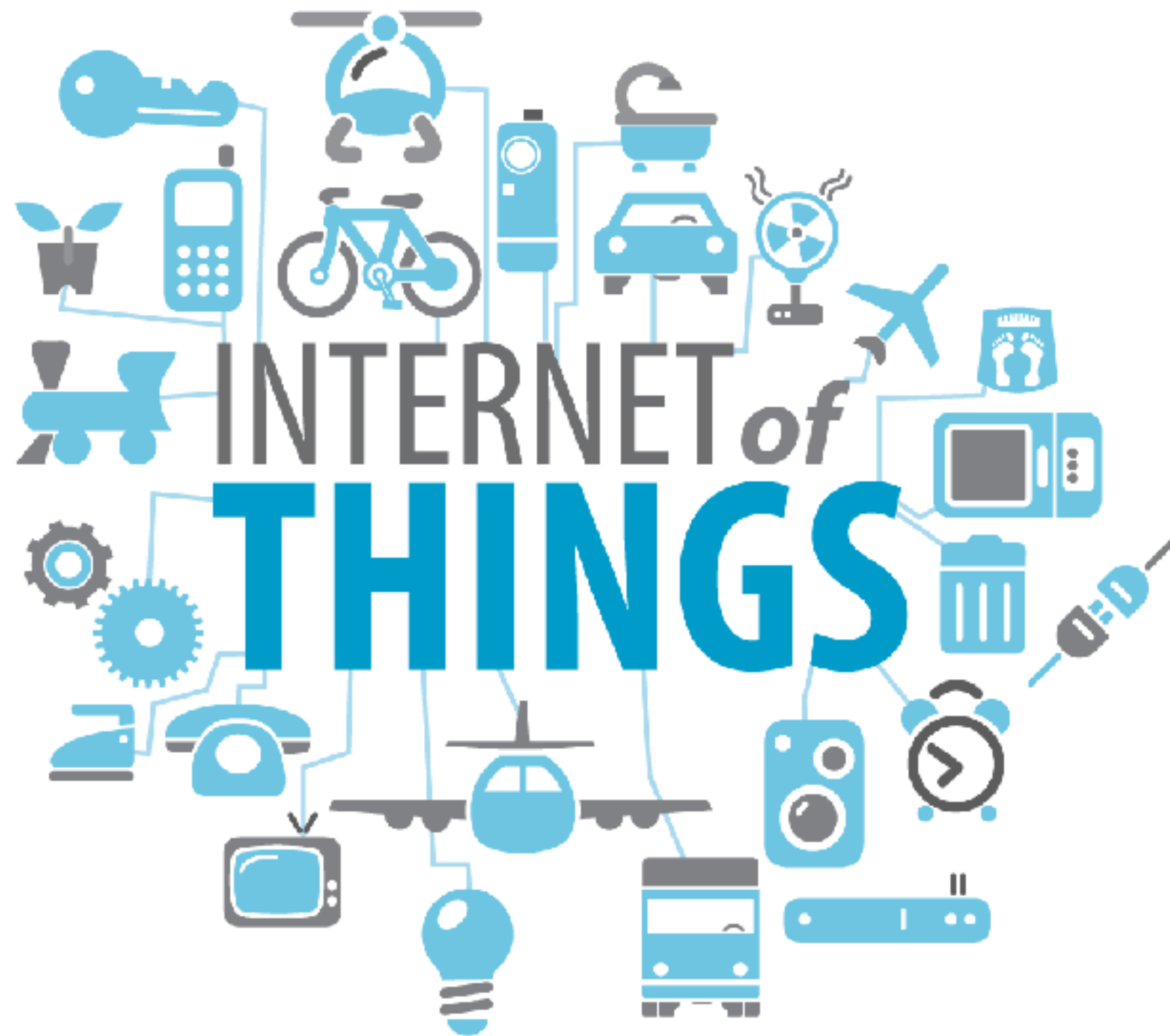
Capabilities

Size

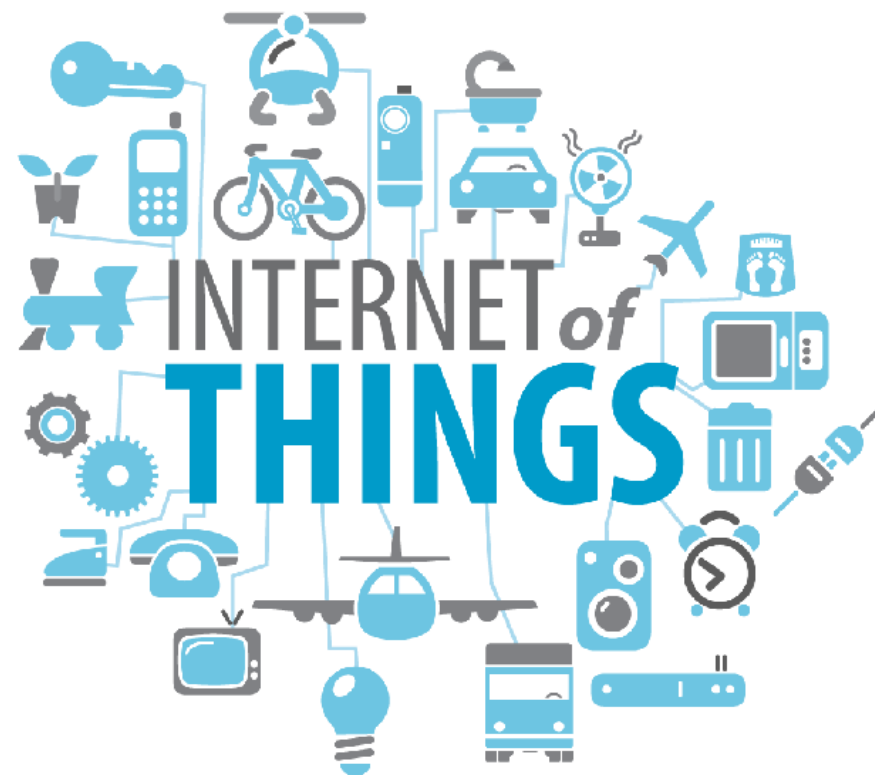
Usage

Research





Understand people -> build better technology



Study technology -> better understand people

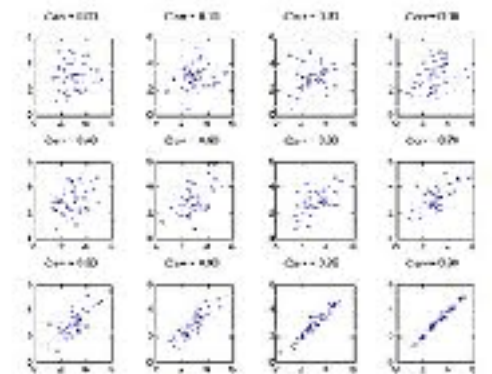
Modus operandi



Smartphone
data



Calculate metrics



Establish correlations
Describe behaviour



Behaviour, attitudes,
questionnaires, etc.



Calculate metrics

Sources

Social Media
Smartphone use
Smart city
Interaction



Insights

Happiness
Personality
Habits
Exposure

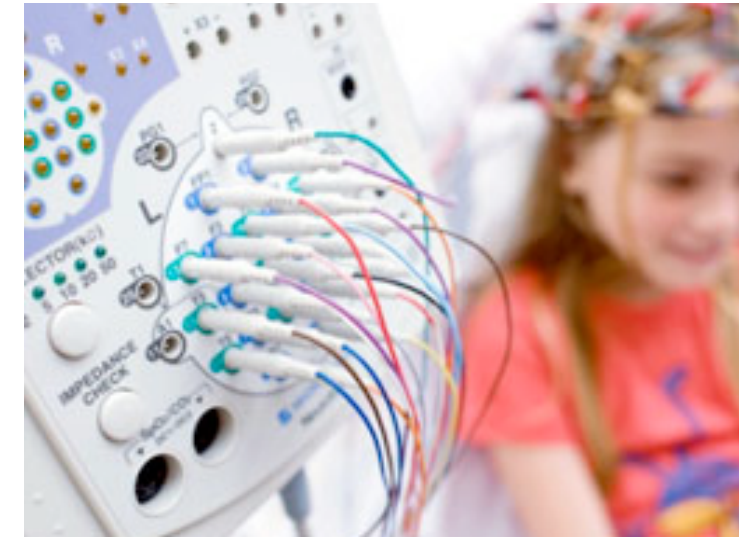
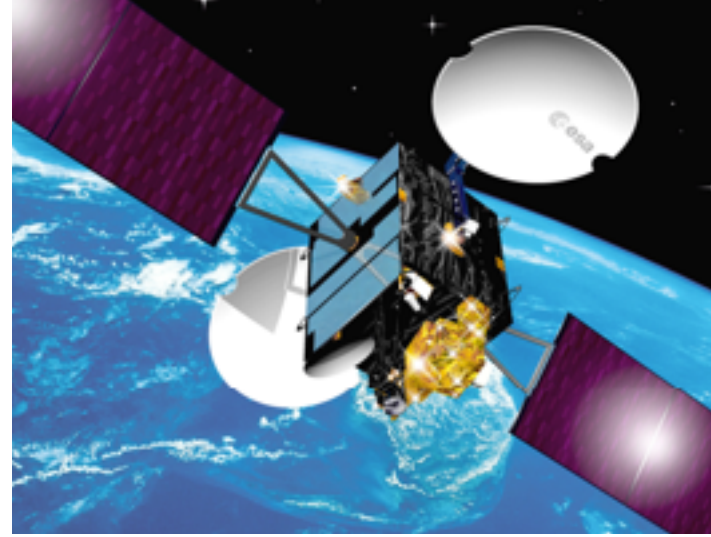
Methods

Smartphone instrumentation
Crowdsourcing
In-the-wild methods

Smartphones for science



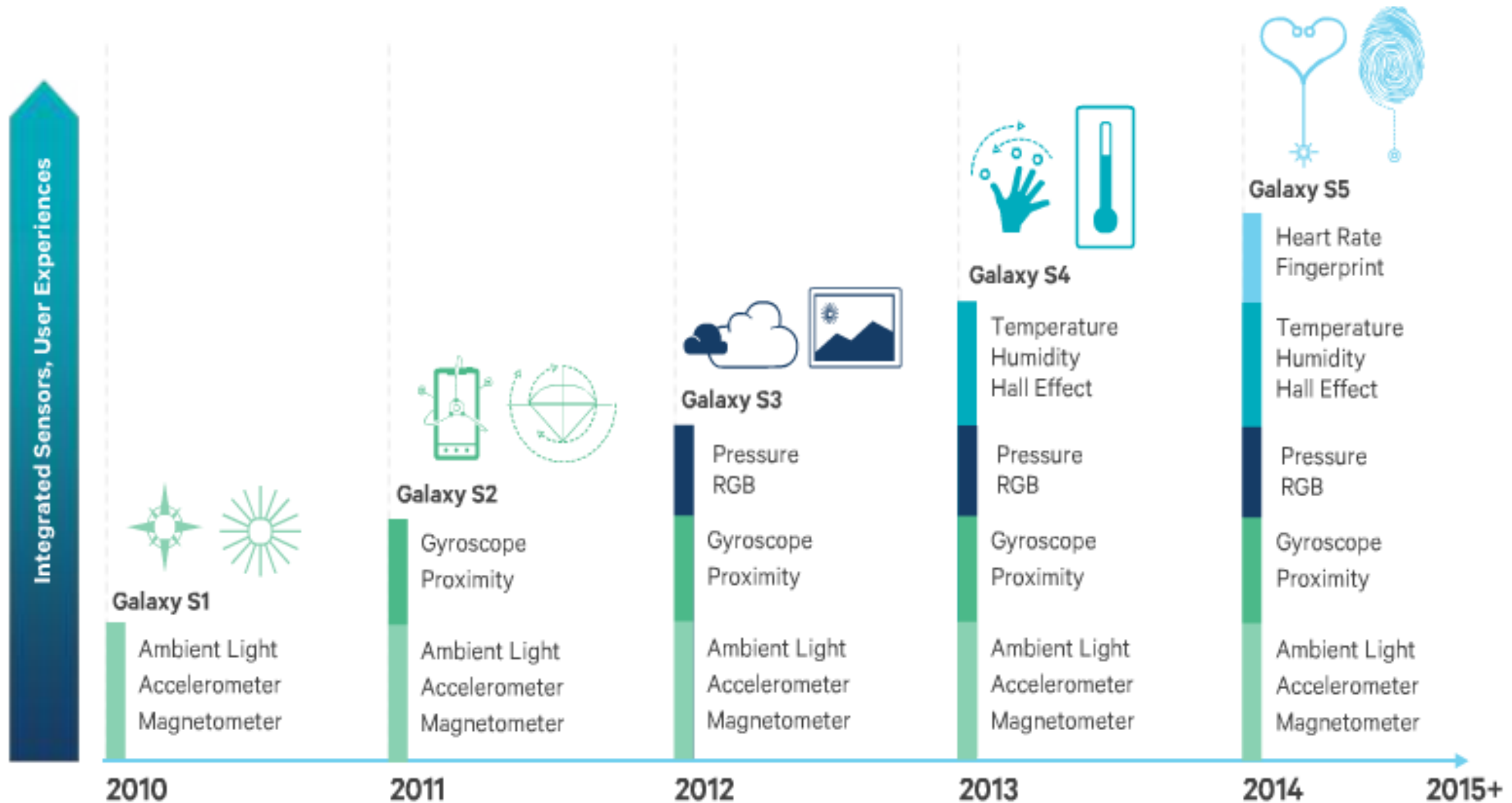
Scientific instruments



Non-invasive sensing

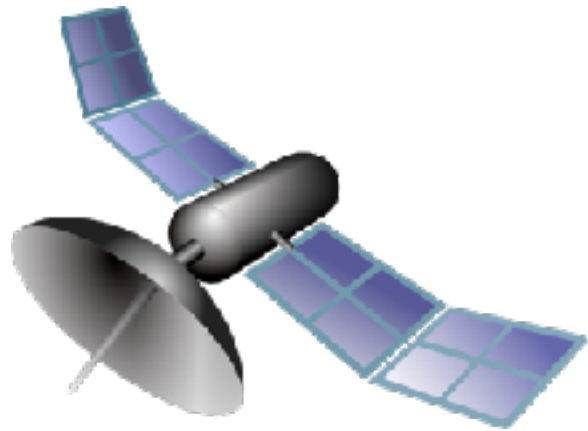


Sensor growth in smartphones



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Over the next year



2 500

90 000 000



280 000 000

1 500 000 000



5 x



dreamstime.com

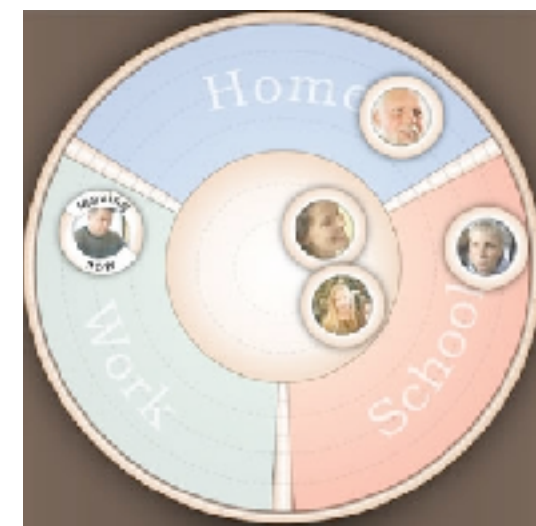
What to
analyse?

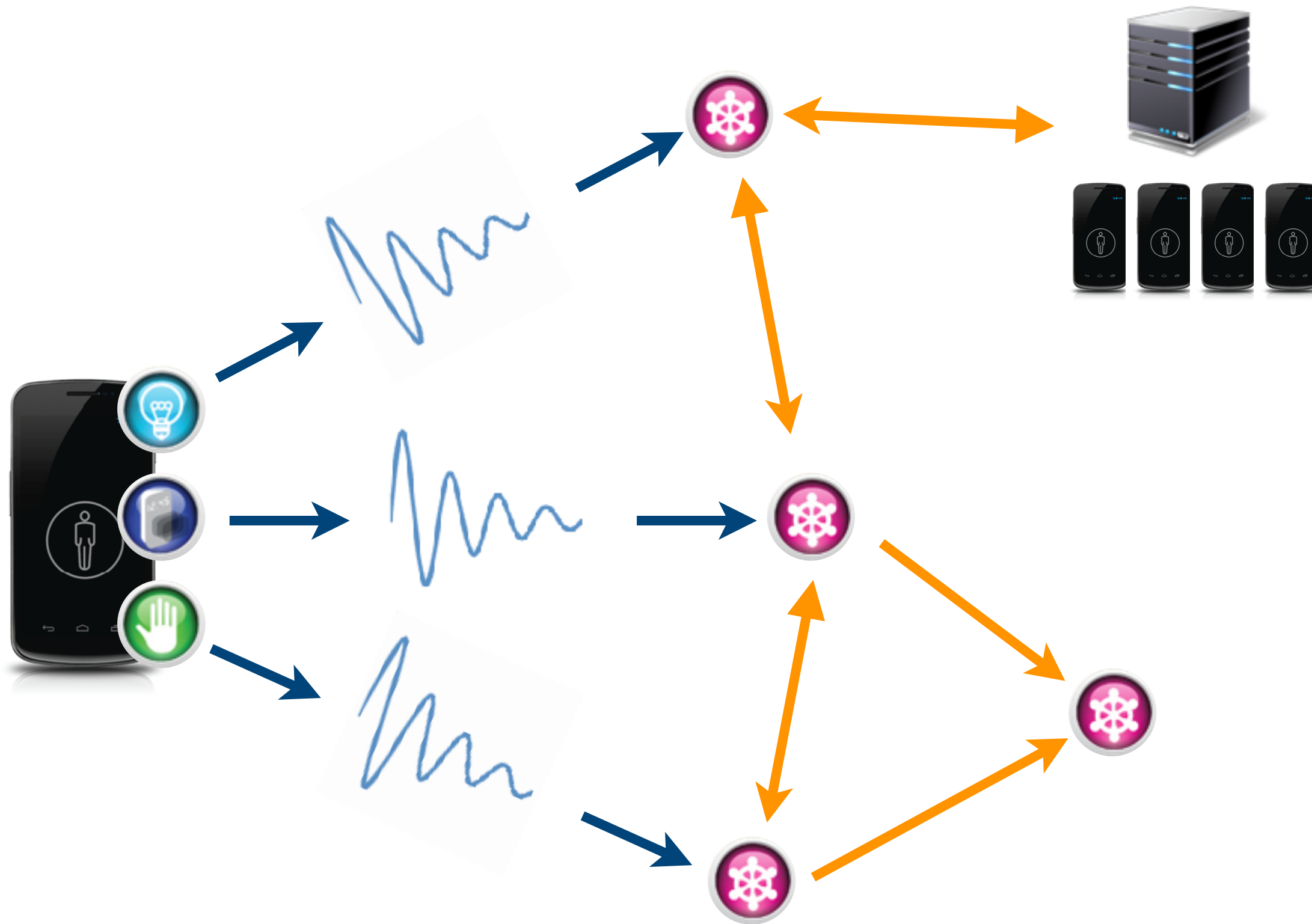


How to
analyse?



Start
from
scratch





Hardware



Software



Human



Meta

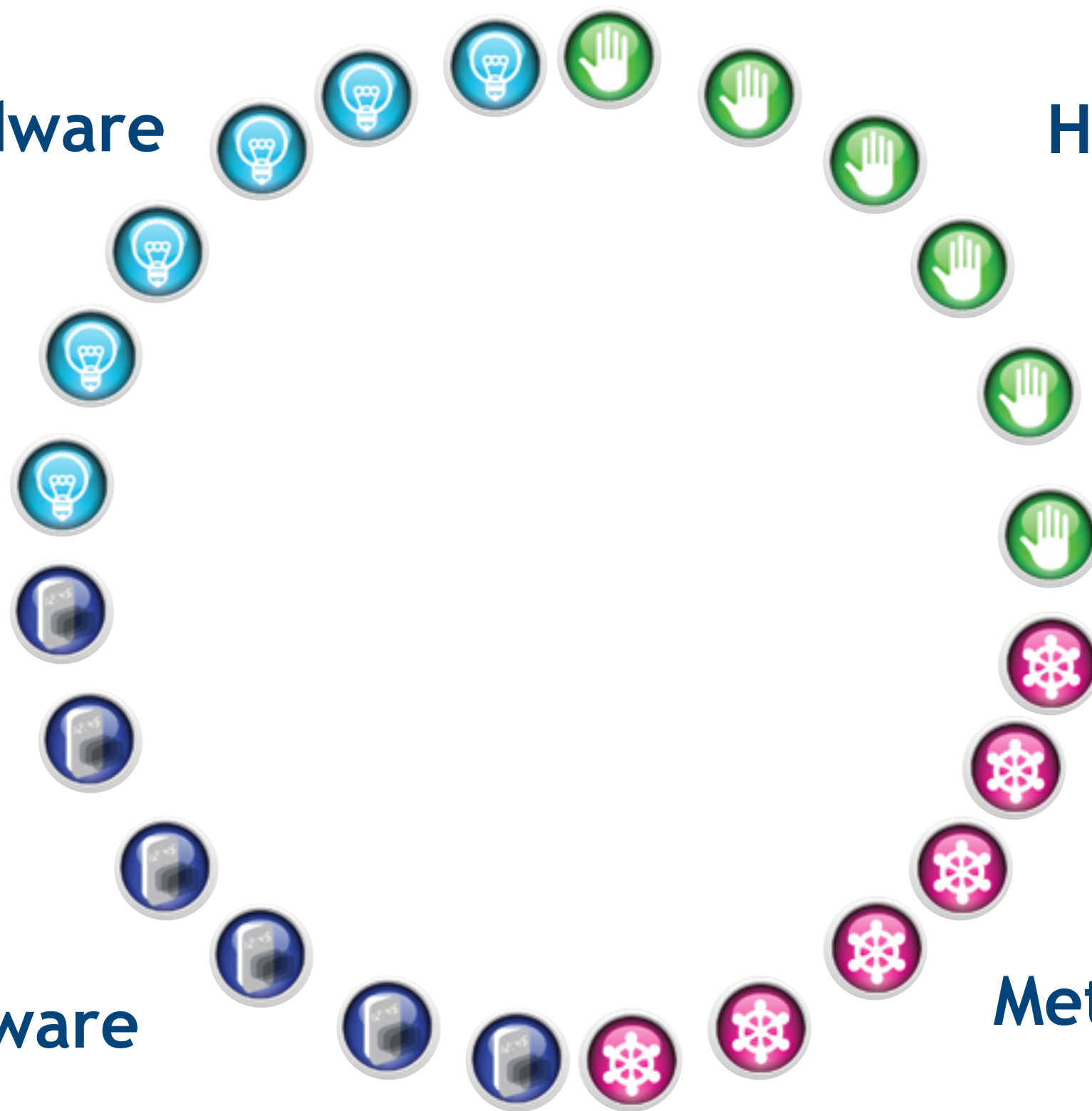


Hardware

Human

Software

Meta

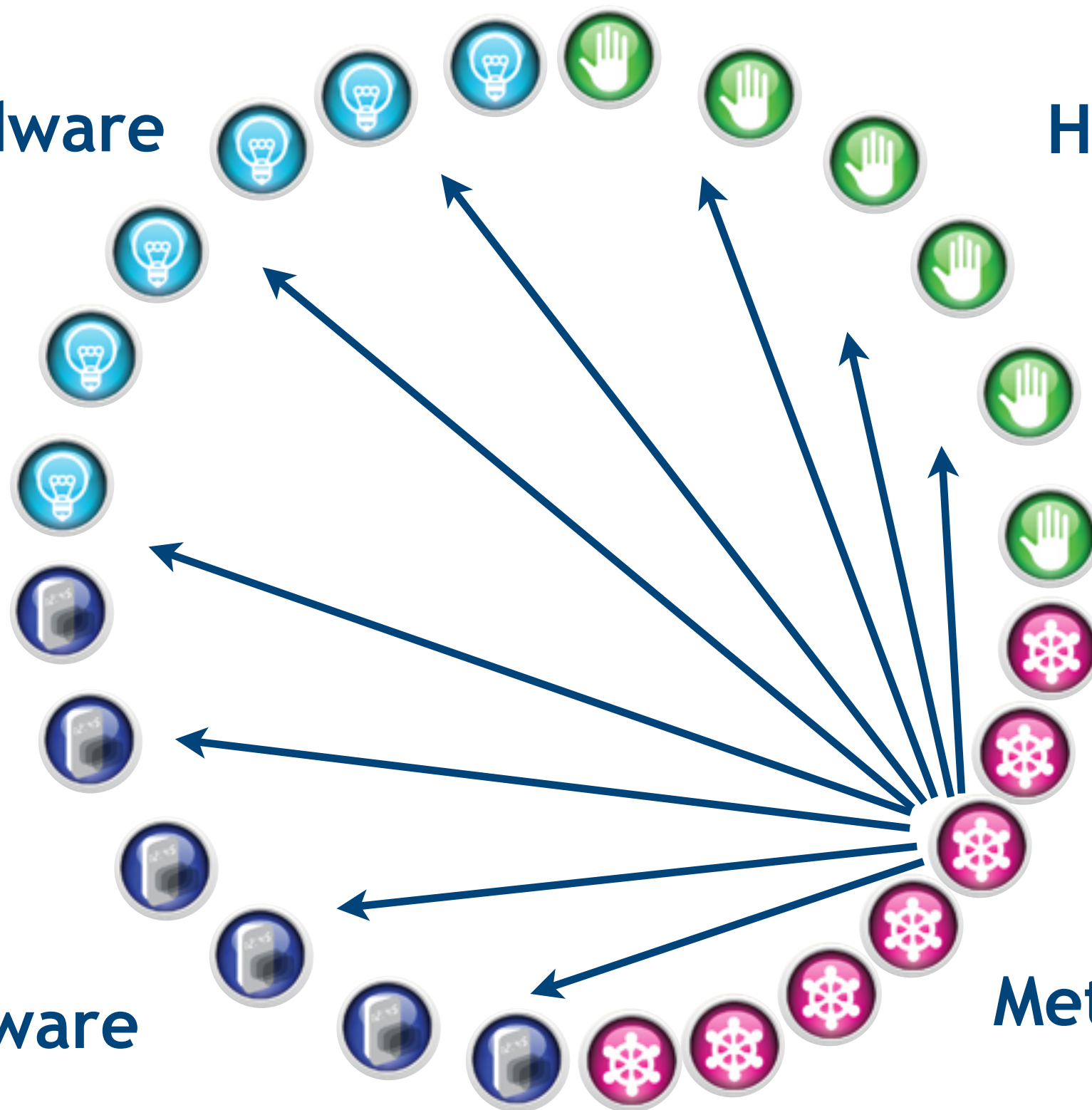


Hardware

Human

Software

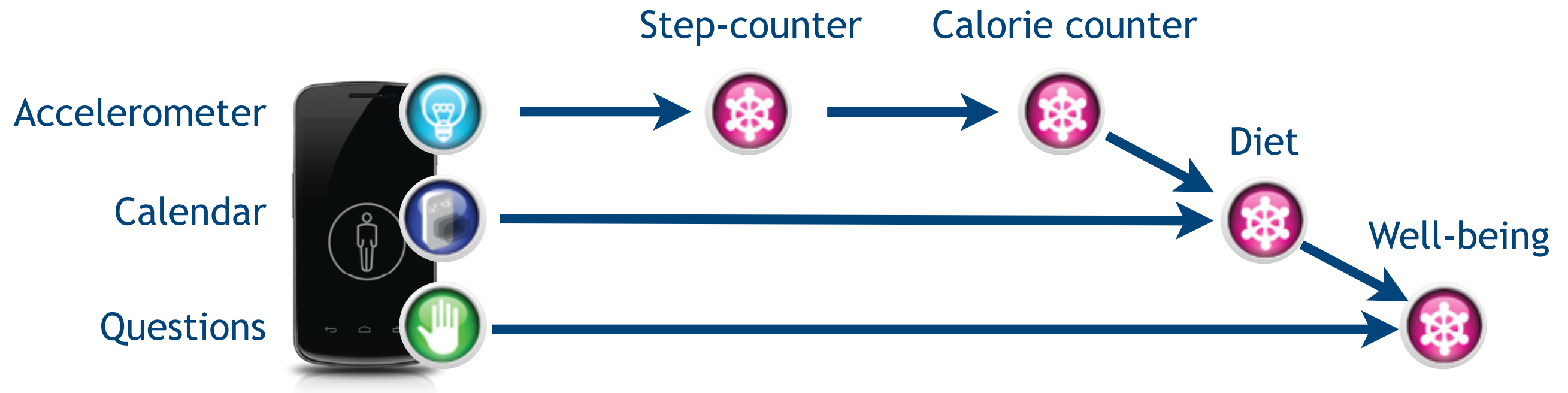
Meta

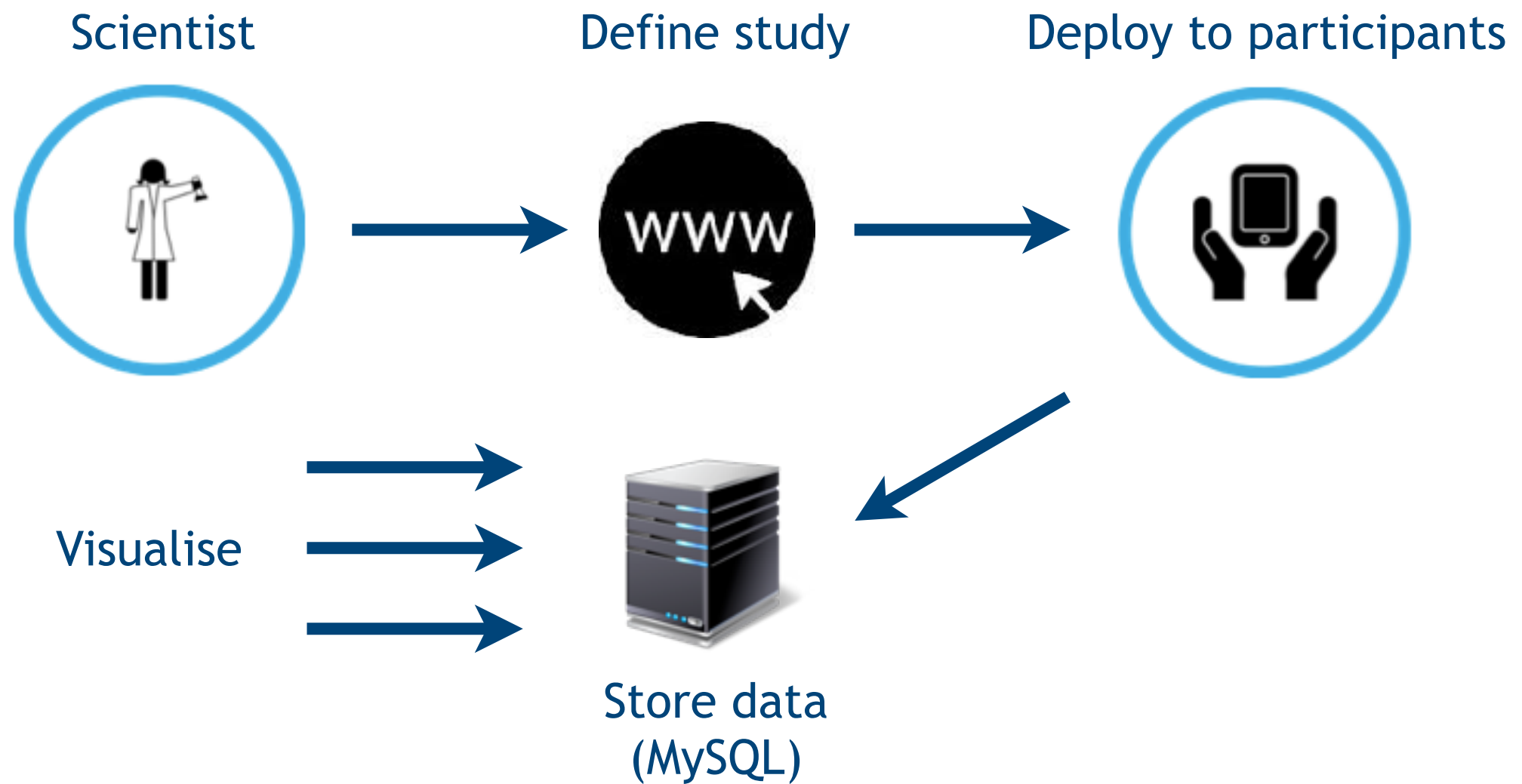


AWARE framework

- <https://www.awareframework.com>

“LEGO” - context





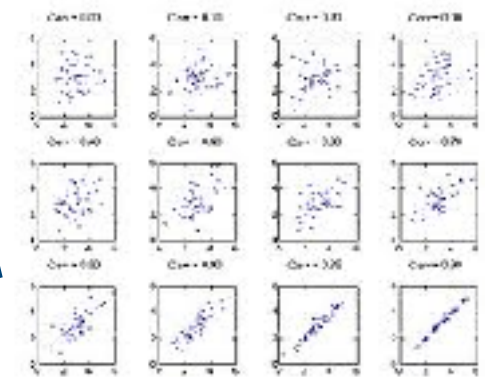


Measurement

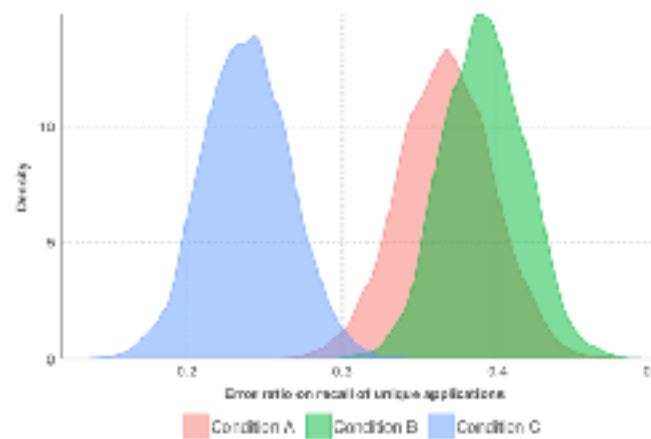
Phenomena



Sample data



Analysis/Statistics



Measurement instrument



- Bias
 - Reliability
 - Transparency
 - Repeatability
-
- Privacy
 - Battery life
 - Convenience

Looking forward

Lifestyle sensing





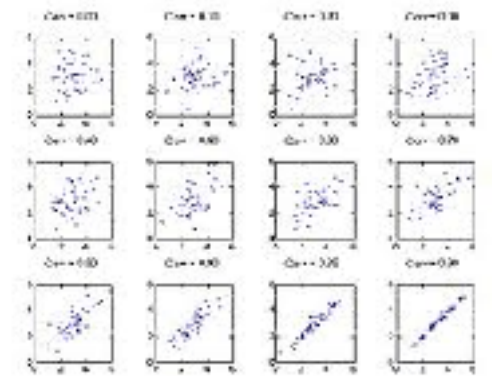
Modus operandi



Digital phenotype



Calculate metrics



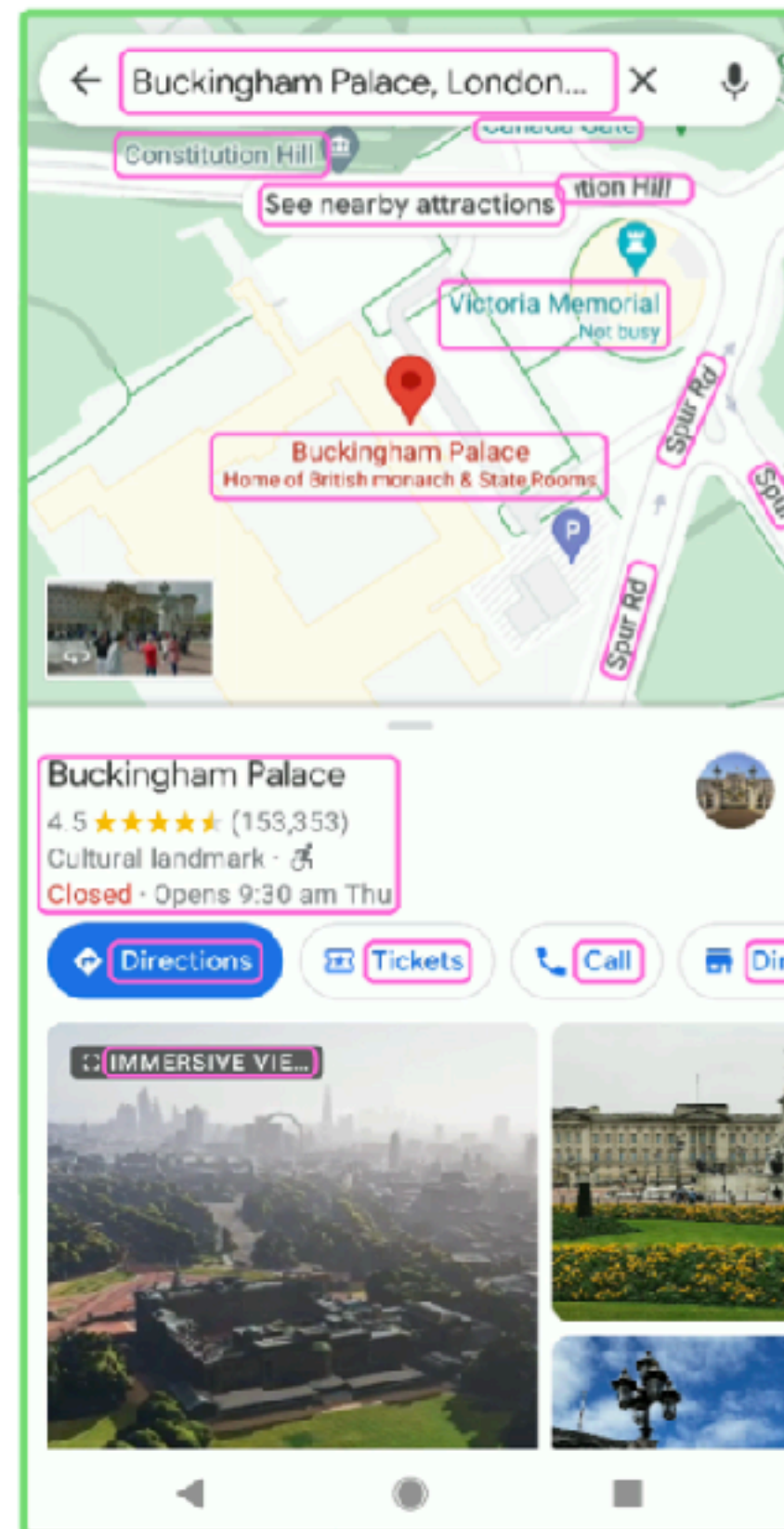
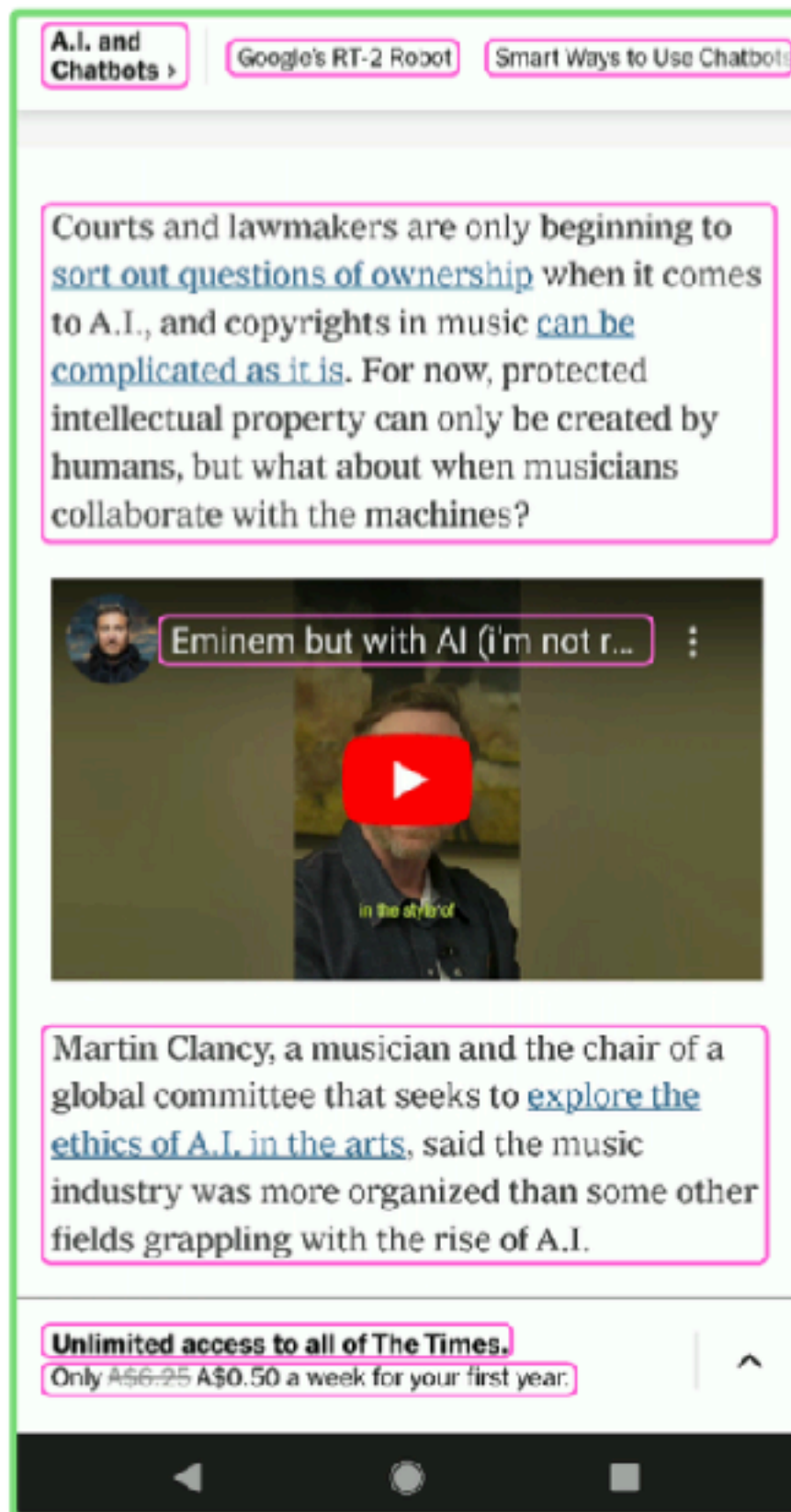
Establish correlations
Prescribe treatment



Treatments



Calculate metrics



Word	Count
relevant	1070
unit	856
teaching	758
lecturer	689
information	642
accounting	535
professional	535
academic	535
cyber	535
security	535

App: SEEK (Job-Finding)
(All Participants)

Word	Count
cal	11348
km	7875
distance	5473
set	5057
heart	4995
sleep	4949
hr	4811
fitbit	4793
rate	4162
2023	4100

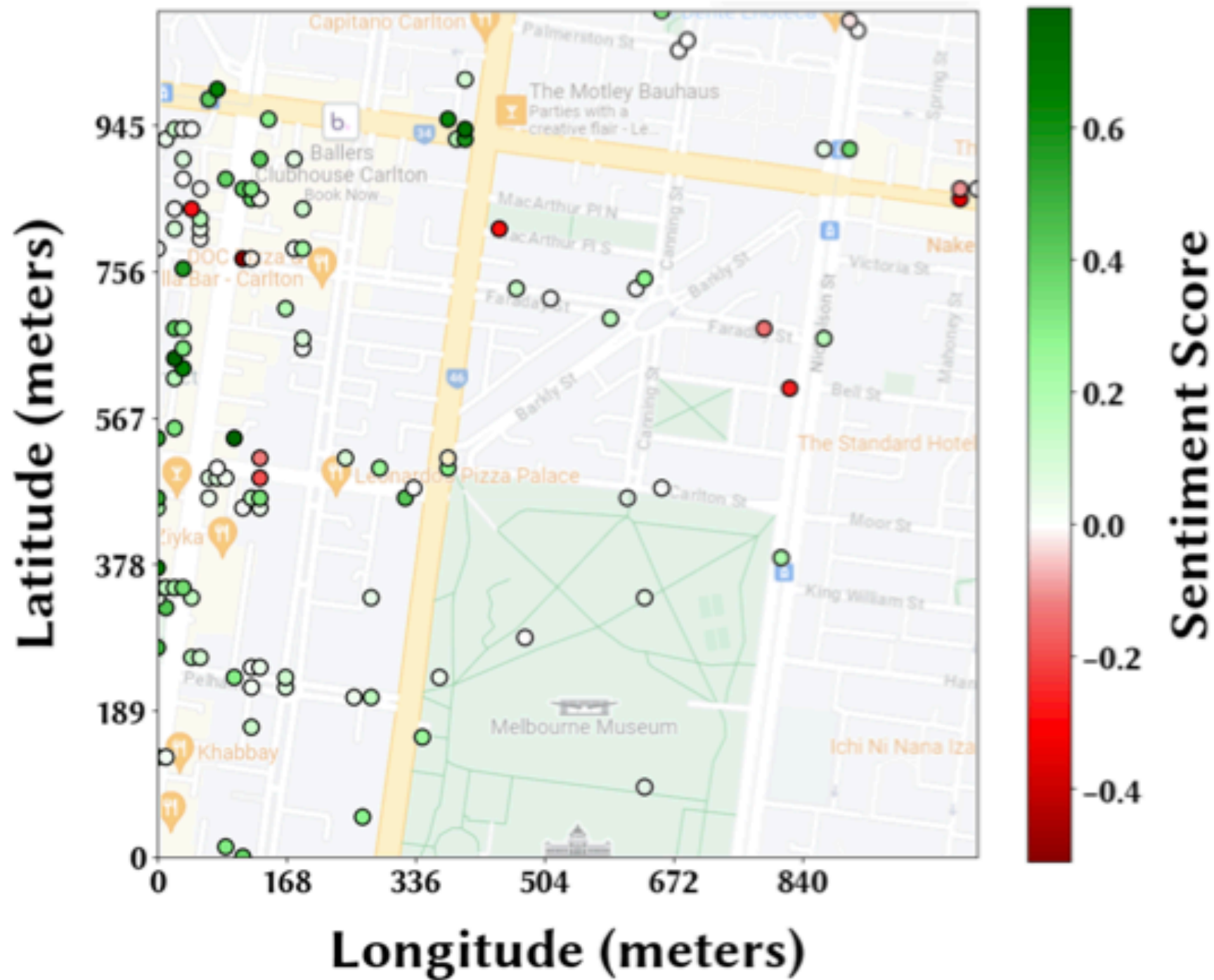
Category: Health
(All Participants)

Word	Count
taylor	3964
swift	3248
version	1832
playlist	1749
red	1628
loving	1174
english	980
never	927
chou	879
g.e.m	860

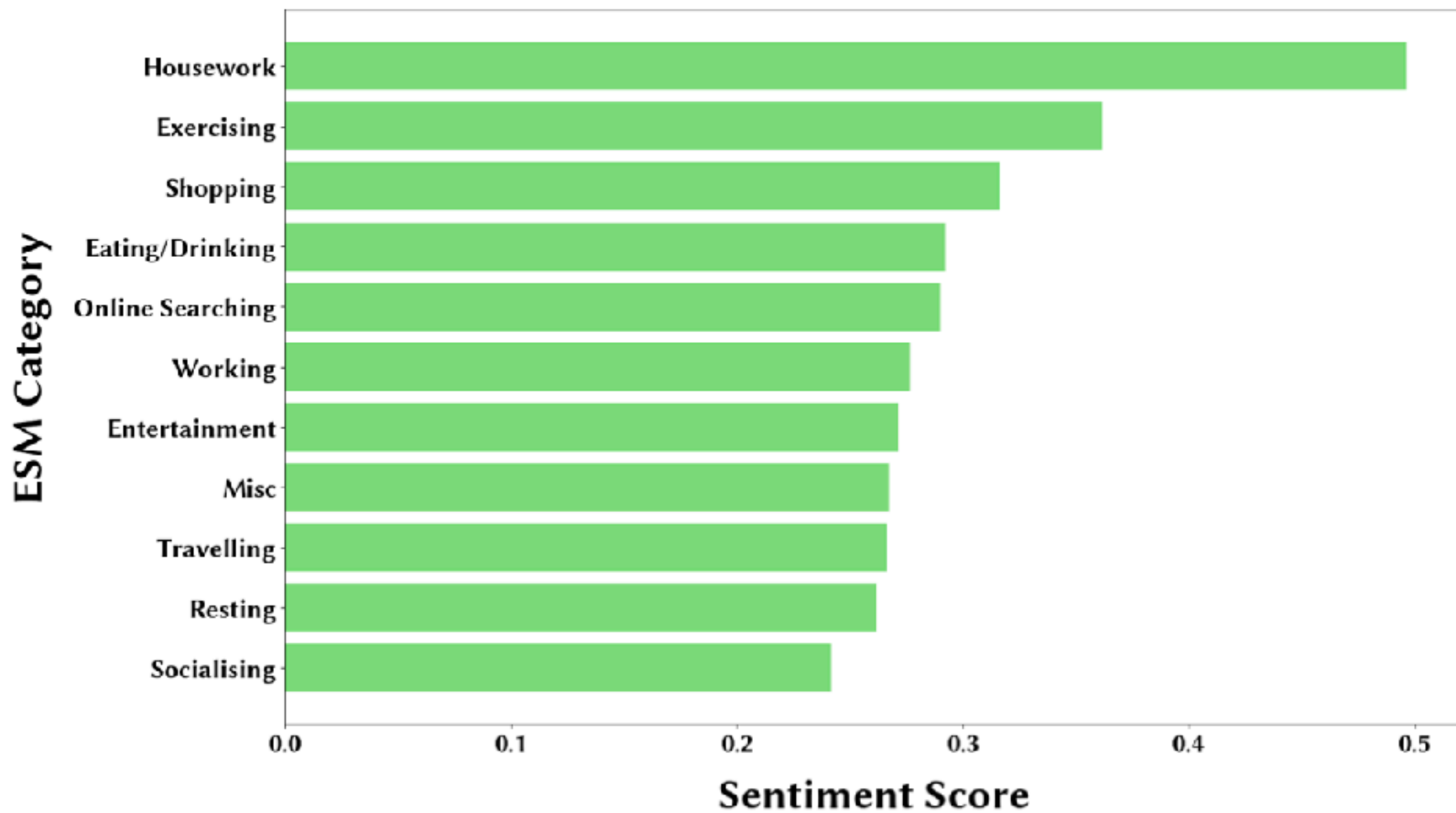
App: Spotify (Music)
(P8)

Word	Count
foo	3197
fighters	3197
bon	3031
jovi	3016
led	2490
zeppelin	2490
remaster	1747
jukebox	1594
postmodern	1592
rock	1346

App: Spotify (Music)
(P11)



(a) Average sentiment.



Here are the sentiments of text that a university student has viewed on their smartphone for each day over a week. The sentiments range from -1 to 1, with -1 being most Negative and 1 being most Positive.

Your task is to rate how the student felt for each of the following feelings based on the sentiments of the text they have viewed:

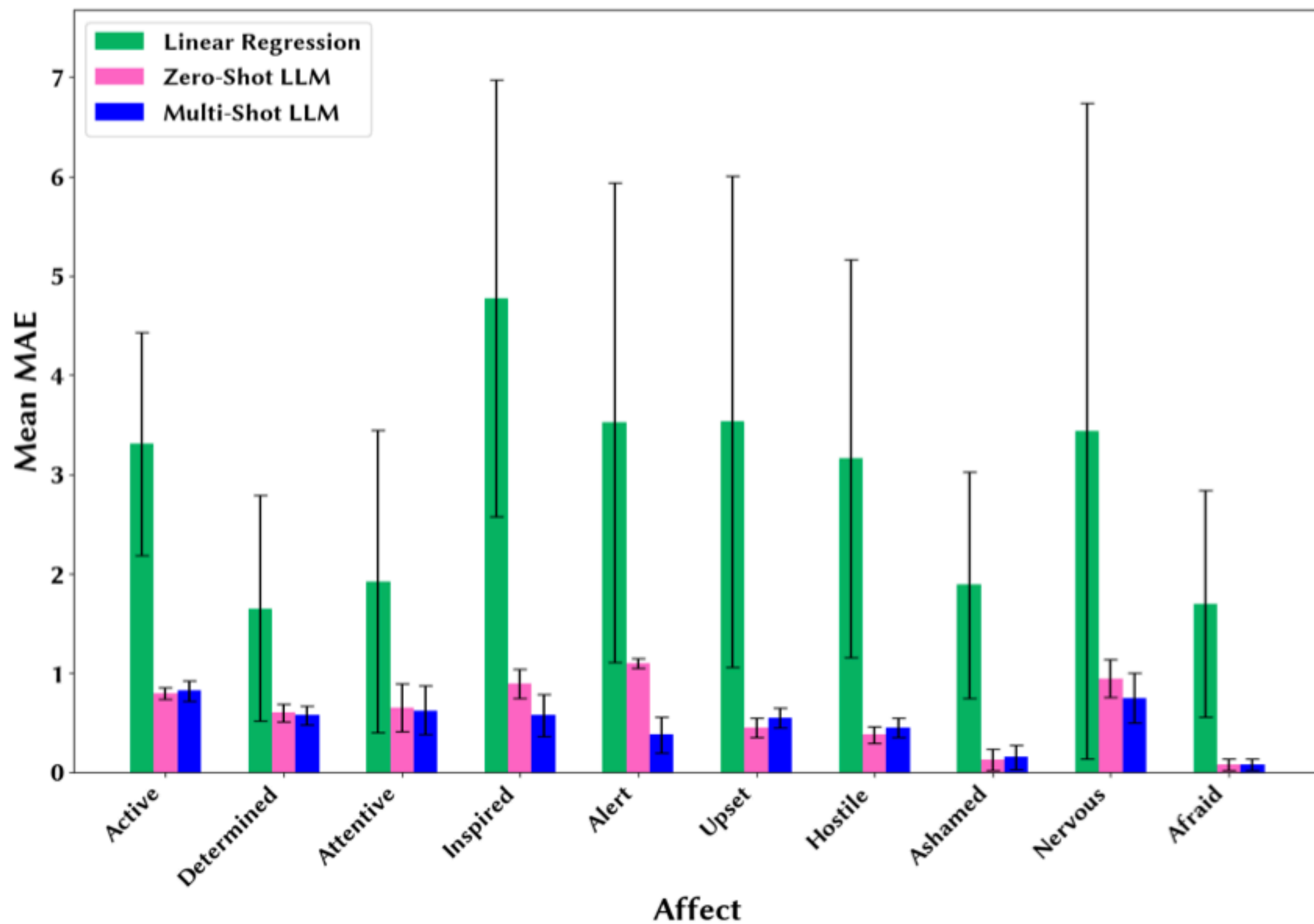
Active
Determined
Attentive
Inspired
Alert
Upset
Hostile
Ashamed
Nervous
Afraid

For each feeling, choose a Likert score ranging from 1 to 5 that best represents how the student generally felt during the week, where 1 represents Never and 5 represents Always.

Sentiments of text the student has viewed on their smartphone over a week:

Day 1: {sentiment of text viewed on the first day of the week}
Day 2: {sentiment of text viewed on the second day of the week}
Day 3: {sentiment of text viewed on the third day of the week}
Day 4: {sentiment of text viewed on the fourth day of the week}
Day 5: {sentiment of text viewed on the fifth day of the week}
Day 6: {sentiment of text viewed on the sixth day of the week}
Day 7: {sentiment of text viewed on the seventh day of the week}

When predicting information for a single week, only consider data from that



StudentSense - 150 students

- Deployment to 150 students
- Observe for a whole semester
- Most AWARE sensors
- A wide range of questionnaires

Ongoing work: Guardian Angel



User: “I want to loose weight”

...

Guardian Angel: “You should not add sausages to your shopping cart”

Ongoing work: Digital self



Observe user behavior

Answer question on the user's behalf

“If a user took a mental health questionnaire now, what would they answer?”

“What was the most stressful part of the user's day today?”

The end!

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