LIFE HACKS

Honda Is Designing Ingenious Shoe Navigation System for Visually Impaired People

By bestfolkmedicine · 07/07/2021 · 2 min read



Most GPS devices, whether in your phone or in the car, are made with the assumption that you're able to see and read them.

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However, the new approach that Honda has taken on is a bit different-the accessibility is based on the assumption that you can't see and read the data.

The solution they're developing uses vibrations in shoes and is designed for visually impaired users.

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Honda Japan's new byproduct is part of their startup accelerator program.

New GPS by Honda StartUp Designed for the Visually-Impaired

The device the company designed is fitted snuggly around the feet of the user and then slips right inside the shoes. The device is currently in the prototype phase and is planned to be ready for market release around March 2023.

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According to the designer of the device, the startup Ashirase established by Honda's accelerator program, the waiting is worth considering the accessibility potential this new tech offers.

How Does the Device Work?

The device works by being connected to a smartphone app and vibrating for real-time commands. The startup notes it uses "three-dimensional" vibrations to ensure quality navigation. In practice, there are several vibration points on the device and each of them is able to ignite separately.

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Let's say a user is told by the navigation to keep going straight. If this is the case, the front part of the shoe will vibrate.

If the user needs to head left or right, the device vibrates as the user is nearing the turns. It's much more intuitive than most accessible GPS modalities which require the user to pay attention to audio instructions.

The All-In on Accessibility

According to Ashirase's representative director, Waturu Chino, an accident that happened to a family member is the motivation behind the improvement of the mobility and safety of people who're visually impaired.

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Chino adds the startup is ready and willing to meet all of the challenges that arise from launching this unique product to the market.

Other tech companies have also improved their accessibility features throughout apps, especially in recent years.

However, for the most part, tech that focuses on accessibility in their design is still rare. And, the reason isn't a lack of audience; according to Ashirase, by 2030, around two million people in Japan will have a visual impairment.

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This is why the startup's efforts are so refreshing, especially if we take into account that a global conglomerate like Honda is supporting it.

More efforts for the impaired like this tech are more than welcome, that's for sure!

Sources:

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AUSTRALIAN ONLINE NEWS

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