

User Experience Design

ACCA7020

Lecture 4 – User Research

What is User Research?

User research is about asking users what they think and feel

Two types of information can be collected from users:

- Subjective – *Do you like this?*
 - If 100 people like something and 20 people don't, this is still subjective data
- Objective – *Could you find a control to do this?*
 - These are facts, not opinions

This can be done before starting a design, during the design process, or once the design is done

Consult users whenever possible!

Listen to what users say, find out what their problems are, then solve those problems

How Many Users?

The less obvious the problem, the more people you need to find it

Imagine two problems:

- 1 out of 3 people don't notice the button that opens a menu
 - You need *at least* 3 people to spot this
 - In practice it may take 4-5 people
- 1 in 20 people don't notice that a particular product is free
 - You need *at least* 20 people to spot this
 - In practice it may take 30-40 people

Things are commonly tested with around 5 users, so the pricing problem would be missed

Asking Questions

User research generally involves asking real people real questions

Three basic types of questions

- Open – How usable is this software?
 - Allows for a wide range of answers
- Leading – What are the good things about this software?
 - Narrows down the answers to a certain subject
 - Might exclude things you want to know
- Closed/Direct – Which is better, the tablet version or the phone version?
 - Normally leads to a binary answer
 - If the questions are stupid, the answers will be stupid

Research Methods



Observation

Watch people doing things then ask questions



Interviews

Ask people a set of questions one by one



Focus groups

Get a group of people together to discuss something



Surveys

A form that people can answer anonymously



Card-sorting

Each person gets a set of ideas or categories (on cards or post-its) which they sort into groups that make sense to them personally



Google

Research Methods



Ask the same questions
in the same way to
everyone



Avoid interpreting
questions or suggesting
answers



Remember that people
may lie to avoid
embarrassment of if it
seems you prefer a
particular answer



Take notes or record
interviews. Never rely on
your memory of what
was said



Get a broad range of
people, not just your
friends/colleagues.
Oddballs often provide
useful insights

Observing Users

- ▶ Use video and take notes
 - ▶ Analysing video takes time, so allow for that in your project plan
- ▶ Don't just watch what they do, watch how they do it
 - ▶ Body language and facial expressions reveal thoughts and feelings
- ▶ Watch how they choose, not just what they choose
- ▶ Do not help
 - ▶ Sometimes people get confused or uncomfortable when they don't know what to do next. Letting users fail is sometimes a great learning experience
- ▶ Remember: People lie

Interviews



These are good when you need to test subjective stuff with many steps or decisions



Good points

Follow-up questions

Giving users tasks to complete and discuss

Long rambling open answers

Watching for non-verbal clues



Bad points

Your presence can influence the responses

Interviews take time, so you use fewer users

Not good for asking embarrassing questions

Not good for introverts

Surveys

- ▶ These should be used when you want to compare users to each other, control how questions are asked, or ask a lot of people
- ▶ Good points
 - ▶ Private, anonymous and (hopefully) more honest
 - ▶ Every user gets the same questions
 - ▶ Cheap and easy
- ▶ Bad points
 - ▶ No follow-up questions or clarifications
 - ▶ The wording or ordering of questions can influence the results
 - ▶ The longer the survey, the fewer users will complete it

Card Sorting

Used to get ideas from users on how information should be structured

- Each user is given a set of cards with information topics on them and asked to arrange them in a logical manner

Good points

- Great starting point for large projects
- Identifies the users' priorities
- Can reveal differences between users and developers

Bad points

- Takes a while to set up
- Users organise the cards you give them irrespective of whether the cards make sense

Activity

▶ The following items are all required on a university website. Perform a card sort to develop a sensible menu structure for the site

- Undergrad course info
- Postgrad course info
- Staff details
- Campus maps
- Open day details
- University history
- Student email
- Staff email
- Faculty details
- Department details
- Admin departments
- Research groups
- Research papers
- University events
- Library locations
- Student fees
- How to apply
- Visa applications
- Student accommodation
- Press office
- Alumni newsletters
- Student exchanges
- Student stories
- Research ethics
- University regulations
- Moodle
- Contact details
- Consultancy services
- Venue hire
- Student union
- Sporting facilities
- Clubs and societies
- Shops
- Part-time courses
- Job vacancies
- Ratings and rankings
- Awards
- Scholarships/bursaries

6 Things About Devices

- ▶ Different users are likely to want to use different devices in different circumstances
- ▶ Six points to consider:
 1. Finger or mouse?
 - ▶ What's your main interface mode?
 2. Start small
 - ▶ Design for the least powerful device first then expand the functionality
 3. What special powers does this device have?
 - ▶ Size & power vs. portability
 4. Consider the software
 - ▶ What OS? What version(s) of the OS?
 5. Be responsive
 - ▶ Do you need multiple designs for multiple devices?
 6. Think about multiple screens
 - ▶ Can you use the phone and computer together? Can you log in on two devices at once? Can you throw data between devices?

User Profiles

- ▶ Once you have researched your users you can create *user profiles* (aka *user personas*)
- ▶ These are NOT
 - ▶ Personality types, demographics, stereotypes built on your experience, concepts, predictions, shallow
- ▶ Profiles describe the goals, expectation, motivations and behaviours of real people
 - ▶ Why do they come to your site? What are they looking for? What makes them nervous?
- ▶ All of the profile data should be backed up by user research, not just made up
- ▶ Users are not all alike
 - ▶ You need a user profile for each different user group

User Profiles

Bad Profile

Persona A is male, between the ages of 35 and 45 with an above average income and education. They have at least 1 child and own at least 1 new vehicle. They are outgoing and career-oriented and tend to be right-brain thinkers

- ▶ Good for marketing, bad for UX
- ▶ Doesn't allow you to say 'no' to feature ideas
- ▶ What features does this person need?

Useful Profile

Persona B is an experienced manager mostly interested in 1 or 2 areas of expertise. They visit often but are pressed for time so they focus on collecting content to read at the weekend. They are prolific social-media sharers, particularly to Twitter and LinkedIn. They see themselves as thought-leaders, so public image is important

- ▶ Needs curated content
- ▶ Needs sharing functionality
- ▶ Needs digest feature

User Profiles

Persona name

Demographic

One-line description

- Goals
 - 3-6 lines
- Pain
 - 3-6 lines
- Media & device preferences
 - 3-6 lines
- Role & responsibilities
 - 3-6 lines
- Tasks
 - 4-6 lines

User Profiles

Persona name : Amanda

Demographic : 18-25, single, no children

One-line description : Amanda is a second-year student studying art and design

- Goals
 - Keep up to date on what's going on
 - Know where she's supposed to be for lectures
 - Be seen as a fun party person
- Pain
 - Too many clicks!
 - Missing lectures due to timetable changes
 - Missing fun social events

User Profiles

Persona name : Amanda

Demographic : 18-25, single, no children

One-line description : Amanda is a second-year student studying art and design

- Media & device preferences
 - iPhone
 - Uses her phone a lot during the day
 - Has access to a desktop machine but only uses it for writing and printing assignments
- Role & responsibilities
 - Student rep for her course
 - Volunteers with a kids circus group one night a week
 - Shares a flat with 3 other students

User Profiles

Persona name : Amanda

Demographic : 18-25, single, no children

One-line description : Amanda is a second-year student studying art and design

- Tasks
 - Check emails
 - Check timetable
 - Check for big social events
 - Book tickets to social events

Activity

- ▶ Based upon what you discovered during the card sorting exercise, develop three separate persona for university website users.
 - ▶ Why do they use the university website?
 - ▶ What information do they need?
 - ▶ How do they access the website?

Coming Soon...



Next lecture: Information
Architecture



Homework: Read the articles
linked to this lecture on Moodle.