

INFO262

Group Assignment

Untappd

Candidate numbers:

107, 146, 111

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1 Introduction

In this assignment we will take a look at the application Untappd. Untappd is an application designed to accompany drinking, it lets the users check in beer and rate the beer with a grade of 1 - 5 stars where 5 stars is the best, as well as keeping tabs and statistics about what you drink and what different types of beers you have checked in. It also allows companies to see statistics about their beers. Who drinks it, where is it bought and how much their different beers are being sold.

1.1 Goals

The goals of the assignment is to see how well Untappd performs when used by users. Among other things, what we intend to find out about the application is how well it responds to users under the influence of alcohol, which would be natural for such an application. Is the graphical user interface easy to learn and able to use efficiently for most people? Even for tipsy people? Is the way Untappd responds to miss clicks good enough, or is there anything else that prevents drunk users from using this application. These are some of the major questions we are going to answer throughout this assignment.

List of goals

1. Test and analyze the usability of the application by doing user testing of the application and the functions it contains.
2. Analyze the application thoroughly by going through the application step-by-step and following Nielsen's Heuristics.
3. Create specific use cases and come to conclusion about a possible solution for them. Write a conclusion containing a summary of this assessment and possible improvements for Untappd in the future.

We are going through the goals listed above during this assessment and will try to explain these as good as possible and also try to go as much into detail where it may possibly

be needed. First of all we are going to explain the approach we will be taking while evaluating this specific application, Untappd.

2 Evaluation approach and methods

The evaluation approach for this assessment will be a bit untraditional. We will attempt having a user testing while drinking. The reason why we are doing that is to create the most likely use case for this application, which will therefore involve drinking beer. This way we will hopefully be able to get some more realistic results compared to just doing regular testing. This application is not a necessary piece of technology that society needs, but seems to be a rather fun or maybe one could say social application that depends solely on the entertainment and competition it brings to the users. We are intending to see how this application can affect the already working practices that exist. What sort of new features does it bring to the users? Is it useful? Will it make an improvement to the users or the other way around? This and more is something we will find out by doing the usability tests as mentioned above.

As the user testing will primarily be done by checking in beer, we will also be evaluating the application after the drunk user testing, in order to achieve more accurate results. This will include using the heuristics as mentioned earlier and compare the usability result we got from the “drunk” user testing with the sober testing in order to be certain that the results are not too much apart from each other. We will go through all the Nielsen’s heuristics in order to be able to see how well the application functions all together, and then summarise the result in the end. This will be done separately from the usability testing.

We will also go through a use case with a persona and see the steps needed to do simple tasks with the app. This way we can illustrate in steps how users interact with the application for the tasks.

3 Practical issues

There are a couple of practical issues that occurred while testing the mobile application Untappd. This is not something that we didn't know beforehand, and is why we still intended to test the application. As Untapped is an application for checking in different beers, which contains alcohol, the effect of alcohol might affect the user's capability of properly using the application the way it was intended to. However, as the purpose of this assignment was to test and evaluate the applications usability and performance, it turned out to be a good way of testing how usable the application turned out to be. If a drunk person is still able to use an application, then it is more likely to be an easily usable application.

As a user of this application checks in multiple beers, the application might become somewhat harder to use due to the user's current state. By that we mean that the users might not always be as dependable as any other sober person and the general experience of the application could be different. Therefore, we have been testing the application both under the influence of alcohol and in a sober state to make sure that the results seem to somewhat add up.

Other than the issue of alcohol affecting how the testing of this application will be going there are no direct practical issues that we could think of beforehand other than being able to test the application with a high enough number of people. We are planning on being the so called "expert users" according to Nielsen's Heuristics, but we might also take in consideration other user tests if they turn out to have some kind of expertise on the subject of application testing or the content of the application itself.

Taking in consideration that the Untappd application is both an application for checking in beers and a social platform for people all across the world there might be difficulties including all of the components needed in order to create a viable user interface. Speaking from experience, having a high amount of components in a user interface where space is limited, often tends to create a kind of messy experience for new users. However, once a user has spent some time using the application these barriers are often no longer a problem.

4 Ethical issues

The main ethical issues regarding untappd is the encourage consumption of alcohol. Using and gathering data from this application can pose an undesired disclosure of information regarding alcohol consumption. We did consider doing a questionnaire and attempt to get people to submit answers, but since this is about personal habits, we deemed this hard. Having people to both explain their drinking habits and if they have used a rather uncommon application such as Untappd would only provide spare data.

We also chose to do the user testing ourself since we thought it would be hard find people that would allow us to watch them drink and evaluate an application as this could we figured it would be uncomfortable for most people.

5 Evaluation

As an approach to test the application, we had to take in consideration all the use cases for the application in order to create an evaluation which was as a accurate as possible. Therefore, whenever we had a beer we tried to remember to check in the beers using the application.

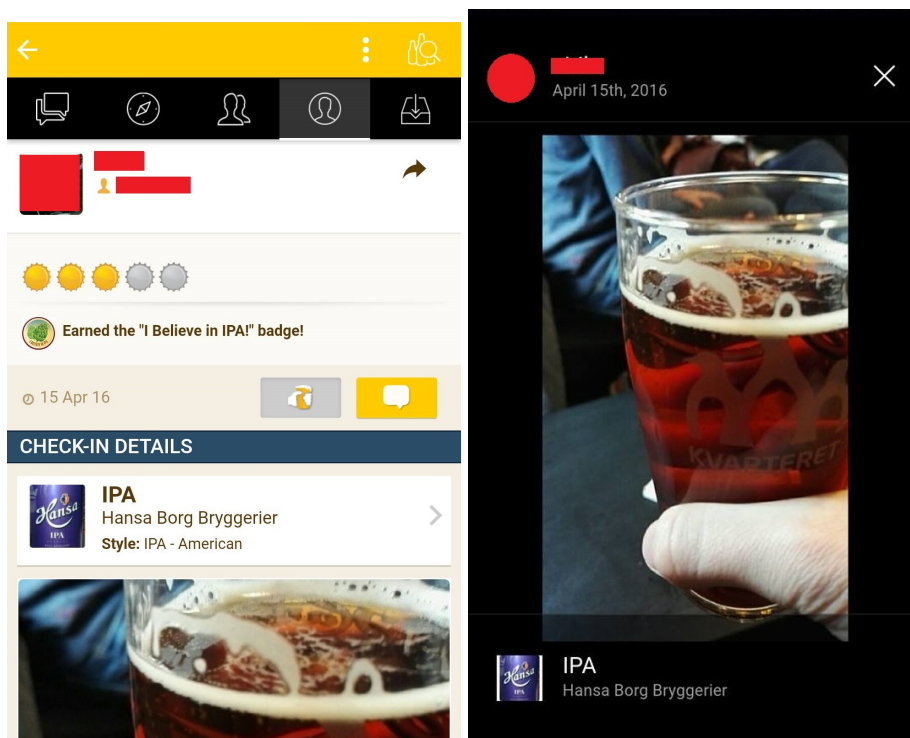
Since the application encourages the user to drink beer and cider, which in most cases contains alcohol, we came to a conclusion that the application would be used a lot by users heavily under the influence of alcohol, thus we decided that we had to be that user as well.

In the end we chose three approaches to analyse and test the application. One, test the application and check in beers whenever you decide to take a beer. Two, dedicate a friday night to test the application as much as possible on different levels of intoxication. And lastly, three, to analyse and test every single visible component of the application and get user input from people who are not registered users and have no experience with it whatsoever to see how they respond to the technology on their first experience with it.

5.1 Testing levels of intoxication

Since the app's consumer market mainly consists of people who drink alcohol, and is mainly used while consuming alcohol, we decided to test the application whilst consuming alcohol in order to create a realistic use case. The application has to be easy to use for people under the influence of alcohol, so what better way than consuming alcohol ourselves and testing its full potential.

We all have used the application before, but not a lot, so we already had users in the application and didn't to have register. We started simply by heading to "Det Akademiske Kvarter", which is a student driven pub and social club in Bergen, we ordered a Lager pint each and sat down. Even though we had all tasted the classic Hansa Lager before, we felt we had to include it. After taking a sip of the cold pint, we unlocked our phones and simply tapped Untapped. When the app opened it was a pretty straight forward with the same instructions as mentioned earlier.



We decided to meet some friends for a "vorspiel" and we wanted to continue testing the app, so we headed to the nearest grocery store and bought approximately 12 different

sorts of beer. We tried to be aware of feeling affected while testing, but as the night progressed we didn't really have any problems using the app, or no problems we could remember at least. When the night was nearing an end, the application even warned us by giving us a badge, which is an achievement in the app, that was called "take it easy" and could be achieved through checking in 12 indistinct beers during one day.

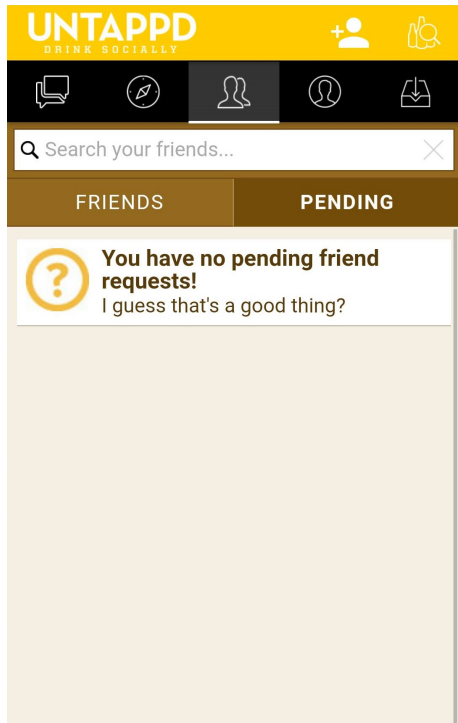
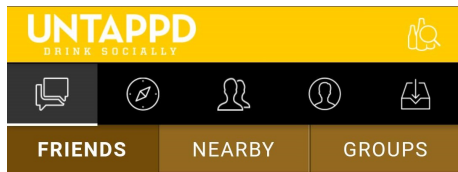
In the end we did not encounter any problems with the application, under the influence of alcohol. The applications creators most likely designed it to be used while intoxicated since it kind of encourages the user to drink. However, even though we managed to use the application while under the influence of alcohol, doesn't mean it was near perfect. There were several difficulties that could most likely become problems for a new users of the application. These issues are both mentioned and discussed below while analyzed using Nielsen's heuristics.

5.2 Nielsen's heuristics

In this section we will go through Untappd by using the heuristics created by Jakob Nielsen. [1] to see how well untappd fares with these requirements.

5.2.1 Visibility of system status

When it comes to visibility, the application has a few minor problems. When the user opens the application, he or she is sent to the main page, on the main page there are two menus. One of the menus does not say anything, it has simplistic pictures to visualize what they are but might not be easy to understand. The second menu is smaller, consisting of only three buttons and does contain text but is not necessarily easy to understand. The menu items says "friends, nearby, groups" but it does not say what it is for. When you select some of the options, it simply switches the main page feed to the related button, nearby feeds and friends feeds etc.



The first menu, which only contains images, is harder to understand. Some of the images may be obvious for some users such as the image with two heads, which is the “Friends” page, and the one with one head being the “Profile” page. However, for it to be obvious, the user need to have some sort experience from other applications or programs that have used the same or similar looking pictures or icons for their menu items. This is not necessarily the case for most new users and is something that possibly could have been improved. The reason why they are doing it this way is most likely to avoid using more space than needed as a mobile screen in most cases can be quite small compared to a computer screen and they are probably therefore aiming for a better user experience in the long run instead of an easy start.

The compass icon does not have any real relevance to what it leads to. It leads to a menu that lets the user select a small number of different categories. Not beer categories but more like searching and looking for new beer categories.

Each page of the application has the same layout except for the feed items. On some of the pages, the menu items were changed. If you look at the screenshot of the app above, you can see a small illustration in the top right corner, this is a button for searching for a beer, which is used as the main function for checking in beers. When you navigate to different pages, that button is sometimes removed and replaced with search fields on the page instead and sometimes other buttons are added to the side of that button. This is something that could be quite confusing for an intoxicated user.

5.2.2 Match between system and the real world

The application does not contain any language that might not be understood by the user, taking in precondition that the user does in fact speak english. The closest the application will come to be hard to understand language, is that each beer has a name and a type, which every user might not understand. But seeing as the application is focused towards beer enthusiasts, the language is most likely understandable by the standard user.

Everything is displayed in an orderly fashion, but the beer lists are not sorted by any clear logic. If the user searches for a beer, it will simply return all relevant beers with that name somewhere in the description and the user has to scroll through the lists and keep an eye open.

5.2.3 User control and freedom

As for undo and redo, it does not have any indistinct “Back” or “Home” buttons. Most of the items used for navigation is in the menu and can be accessed on every page. If the user happens to press “Back” on a OS native button on the phone, he or she can simply tap the menu item that they were using and be sent back to where they were and it does not remove whatever they were doing on that page.

Even though the application does not have a “redo” button, it is very easy to redo actions when misclicking something. If the user has, for instance, been to the “Friends” panel and tapped “Pending” and then returned home, he or she can simply tap the “Friends” panel and automatically be returned to the “pending” panel on tap.

5.2.4 Consistency and standards

There should be no trouble navigating for the user when looking at buttons and reading words. There are no buttons that have the same name or same illustration, so it should not be any problem understanding what is going on.

There is one small problem though. If the user is on the main page, and has selected “Nearby” to look what nearby people have checked in and then started navigating other places in the app, the main page would still be on the “Nearby” section which might cause confusion when returning to the main page since the only way of truly knowing the difference between the pages is by looking at the color of the menu. This might cause some confusion but is not a hard fix, by the simple tap of a button the user can return the menu to however he or she prefers.

In addition to this, there is a button right next to the search button up in the top right corner which only appears only if certain other tabs are selected. While checking out your profile this icon will appear as something that might look like a settings icon and if you are currently viewing friends this icon becomes an icon of a person and a + sign which might indicate an add friend button. This is a good way of saving space, but could be confusing to begin with. One of the main functions however, the search button for finding beers is constantly placed in the top right corner and does not depend on anything else being selected to use it which is good.

5.2.5 Error prevention

The only error we have encountered with the app, is the loss of connection which simply states “Error You don’t appear to have network connection. Please check your connection and try again.” with an OK button at the end. This is not a problem with the app, it simply reminds the user that the wifi on the phone is either turned off or there is some sort of problem outside the app.

Neither friends or family, or friends of friends has ever had any complaints about errors through the app. The application has a good design that prevents errors from occurring as there does not seem to be too many actions that could end up in an error being thrown.

5.2.6 Recognition rather than recall

The application has had its moments when it comes to performance. The search functions and load functions of the application are all as fast as lightning. The user does not have to wait or do other things while waiting for actions to happen on the app.

Even though the application is fast and does not take too much of the user's time, it has crashed a couple of times for different users. This is most likely because of the difference in phones and specs between each user. Some users have had minor crashing problems, but have blamed the phone not the application itself. According to users who have seen the application crash on their phone it is because "The phone often quits apps and performs poorly", thus nobody has blamed the application for crashing.

5.2.7 Flexibility and efficiency of use

Untappd has a pretty straightforward menu system. One bar for the main features of the app, and the top row for a back button, more options and a check in button. This makes it very efficient for the user to walk through all the main components of the app. The one complaint could be the placement of the check in button. The button is placed in the upper right corner of the screen. This makes the button hard to reach when holding the phone in the left arm and using the thumb.

One solution to this problem could be to place it in a lower corner where it does not obstruct the layout. The current placement could be intentional to prevent users from entering the check in screen by accident. There are also applications allowing you to scan barcodes or the etiquette of the product. A solution along the lines of this could help Untappd to be easier to use for people searching the beer, and they could always default back to the search bar if nothing is found.

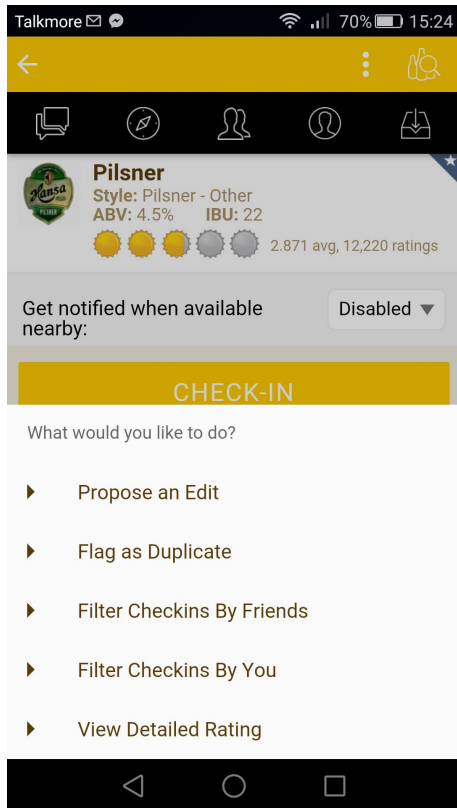
Apart from that, the interface is easy enough that adding new features could be done easily with the current layout. There is not much bloat in the interface and it's sleek and polished.

5.2.8 Aesthetic and minimalist design

The application does not contain or display much unnecessary information. Instead of texted menus, the application uses relevant illustrations for the different pages, even though not all menu illustrations are very relevant. The application keeps a simple style and does not crop too much information on the screen. It keeps a clean look while providing all the information the user needs. The only instance where the users does not receive all the information he or she needs is in the one menu item that resembles a compass but provides categories. The application has a good and minimalistic design all in all as they have used the space they have to deal with good and provide the needed information for each specific situation. An example for this is the menu items which all has their own submenus containing more options or information about the specific item.

5.2.9 Help and documentation

The application also provides relevant and helpful guides for different actions. The main function of the app, checking in beer, has a list of useful guides for the user to better learn and understand the process of what he or she wants to do. When navigating to checking in a beer, The application displays a little box the first time the user enters the page, saying "More information above" and pointing to the three dots on the top of the menu. When tapping the menu, different guides will pop up and the user can choose the one most relevant to his or her need.



5.3 Use case and requirements

The app's goal is to make the user share their ideas of good beer with other users. Since it forces the user to create a user before using the app, it is likely that the creators of the application wants to create a personal community amongst the beer enthusiasts.

Use cases attempts to highlight the steps needed to complete a given task in a system, in this case, an mobile application.[2] Doing this we can test and highlight possible flaws in the UI. In this use case we will go through each step of how the user can view other user's beer recommendations.

Use Case: View other users and their recommendations.

Actor: Registered User

Overview: The user opens the application and finds a song to play. The user taps a song

under 'recent songs' and is navigated to an info page about the song. The user deselects 'competitive' mode and hits play. The song starts playing and the chords drop down. When the song is over, the user is navigated to a page where he/she can rate, comment and favorite the song. The user can then either play the song again or return home to find a new song to play.

Preconditions:

- The user has already registered and logged in.

Basic flow: Find another users beer recommendations.

Description: The user wants to find new beer to taste, and is going to check out other users recommendations.

1. Open the app.
2. Tap the middle icon on the menu, which is the friends icon.
3. Tap one of the friends on the list.
4. Scroll down on the selected friends wall.
5. Tap one of the beers and read up on it.
6. Done.

Termination Outcome: The user has now found a new beer to taste through another users recommendations.

Alternative Flow 3A: The user has no friends.

Description: If the user navigates to the friends panel and has no friends, he will get no users to browse.

1. Tap the compass icon, second to the left on the menu.
2. Tap either "Trending Beers", "Top rated Beers", "Nearby Beers" or "Global Feed"
3. Scroll down the wall of either of the selected categories.

4. Tap one of the beers and read up on it.
5. Done.

Termination Outcome: The user has found new beers to taste even though he or she has no friends to get recommendations from.

6 Conclusion

The application could be more descriptive on some fronts. Menus and buttons could make more sense so that the user won't have to tap a button to test what happens and then tap return. The etiquette checker could also be a nice addition on the application itself. But overall the application was easy to use and surprisingly easy to use for a user under the influence, which it should be. Untappd scores with its rather good interface and easy to access social media features. A few things could maybe be placed different, like the check in button. But this is overall minor issues with the application.

Despite its ethical dilemmas, Untapped is a great tool for both beer lovers and beer breweries. The users can share their opinions and get recommendations while the breweries can take in consideration the opinions and ratings from the users in making better beer.

References

- [1] Jakob Nielsen. *Usability Engineering*. Academic Press Inc, 1994.
- [2] Laurie Williams. Use case-based requirements. <http://agile.csc.ncsu.edu/SEMaterials/UseCaseRequirements.pdf>, 2014.