

Qualitative Research - Interviews

In the process of developing our App, we as a team had to select a method best suited to understand our users and their needs. To better achieve a sound decision, we analyzed our context. The context being restaurant visits, that have a well-known and often quite similar procedure of tasks. Thus we wanted to profit from this existing structure and were looking for research methods that allow answering structured questions, while giving the interviewees the room for diversion or mentioning of unrelated ideas. Therefore we settled on the research format of a semi-structured interview.

Reimagining the context of different users, we tried to conceive questions that considered all aspects of a restaurant visit as-is to extract typical personas, or typical kinds of restaurant visitors from these considerations. Furthermore we were interested in increasing our knowledge about the willingness to use technology in general or more specifically while eating out. This process led us to a total of 20 questions ranging from very closed questions (e.g. What is your age?) to very open questions (e.g. Describe your restaurant visit?).

We aimed at achieving a participant population more representative of the general population, rather than interviewing only students. Participants were recruited in the social surrounding the team members. We managed to conduct the semi-structured interview with $N = 8$ participants, aged at average 38.8 ($SD = 15.7$) years old and featured 5 female and 3 male participants.

In general, smartphone and technology usage was quite frequent among all of the participants and seemed to be matching a pattern of decreasing smartphone usage with increasing age. Furthermore, a lot of contextual types of restaurant visits could be identified ("dates", "birthdays", "business") that will be useful in the creation of scenarios.

A broad range of participants mostly seemed to agree upon the idea that restaurant visits are a social occasion and alone visits are usually for certain out-of-the-ordinary situations. Typical reasons of bad user experiences at restaurant visits included displeasure with the staff ("impolite", "rude", "too influential"), with the food ("bad", "not vegan"), other clients ("too loud", "no distance-keeping"), or price ("expensive").

A typical restaurant visit could be extracted by asking participants to describe their entire typical experience. Furthermore we observed mixed opinions on the tendency to socialize while being at restaurants. Mixed opinions were also found on the willingness to use an app in the way we conceive it. Nonetheless we received a lot of qualitative wishes and ideas from all participants in respect of app content and priorities. With these ideas, we are ready to move on to the next cycle to pursue the development of our app.