Jake Cioffi

SMAD 408

Professor Wang

February 3, 2021

Independent Project Proposal

**About**

For my independent project, I will be working on improving a prototype for an app I created last semester in SMAD 317. The application I designed with my team is called directUs, which serves as a hub for students to have every and any school or JMU related app stored in one location. The purpose of this app is to serve as a conduit for many other apps which directUs will host and maintain within its own application, essentially storing multiple apps within itself that users can access and use as they normally would within the regular applications. The idea behind creating something like this was to have a service that can alleviate various tedious issues many students have while using their devices for class and other work while also freeing up space on user’s phones.

**Overview**

I first designed the app directUs to condense the number of apps JMU students need on their smartphone or tablet. I wanted to create one app for students where they can locate all of the information they need for classes, campus, and daily life after personally being frustrated with the multiple apps on our phones. After preliminary research, I expanded directUs to be personalized with customizable features so students can save time finding information they access daily. I aimed on including as many apps as possible JMU students currently use, including Canvas, Outlook, Duo Mobile, LiveSafe, and various others. I also included information and tools students often are searching for, such as MyMadison, Google Drive, Quizlet, dining hall information, and parking information. I identified and included new features, including a chat feature with professors and students, favorite bus routes, and a building directory. The goal of this was to focus on student’s needs and wants after their initial interview process and to then select the main tasks from each application to include in my app. Ultimately, the creation of personas, storyboards, scenarios, and student feedback guided my design process and led me to my final design for directUs.

**Goals**

For my next project, I will re-create directUs to alter its interface for users. I will maintain the integrity and purpose of the application, however, I will be aiming to add more inclusive options for users when selecting the app and downloading all of their data on it. This may specifically narrow in on the sign-up page, greeting users with the option to specify their gender with a more varied list of options rather than just M/F as well as including more open-ended responses to questions which gauge the type of user on the app. Also, rather than having simply buttons on each page for each user to click through, I will try to add an audiovisual component which can read the contents of each page aloud for students with disabilities impairing them from regularly using the app.

**Audience**

I defined my target audience as James Madison University undergraduate students who are frequently on-campus with a smart device. This specific group includes freshmen through seniors between the ages of 18 and 22.  Freshman and upperclassmen living on campus at James Madison University will be the primary users of the app. Off-campus undergraduate students are the secondary users of the app. I don’t expect professors and James Madison University employees to be included in these groups for this app or to be a large group of users; therefore, they were not included in the research process.

I interviewed a range of students across grades and majors along with on and off campus students. In total, ten students were interviewed including freshman, juniors, and seniors. Interviewees were not randomly selected due to virtual learning and social distancing. Interviews were conducted in person and via video chat due to COVID-19 during the week of September 21st (2020) online, in public spaces on campus, and in apartments.  During interviews, the interviewees answers were noted on paper along with their attitude and body language. I used a range of questions to understand the user's background, their current habits, and their likes and dislikes with the apps they currently use. Follow-up questions were asked for clarification, and topic specific questions focused on the apps that each interviewee used frequently.

**Timeline**

For this project, I have not mapped out a timeline yet, however I anticipate setting dates for certain goals and having specific features implemented throughout the way along the process. Moving forward, I expect to set milestones each week to have these features utilized successfully within the app.

**Visual Samples**

**Chart, timeline, box and whisker chart

Description automatically generated**

**Figure 1**. Thematic analysis identifying the needs, frustrations, wants, positives, and observations of users.  Gain points, in green, were defined as areas where users identified their current likes and areas that support the goals of our new app.  Pain points, in orange, identified areas of improvement and features that users currently dislike.

**Graphical user interface, application, Teams

Description automatically generated**

**Figure 2**. Thematic analysis identifying what users have, what users would like, and app solutions.

**Primary Persona**

Kelly Wilson represents the primary group of users as an on-campus upperclassmen student.

(Below)

**Secondary Persona**

Secondary Persona.  Charlotte Kilden represents the primary group of users as an on-campus freshman student.

(Below)

**Tertiary Persona**

Tertiary Persona. Sonny DeLuca represents the tertiary group of users as an on-campus upperclassmen student.

(Below)

Text

Description automatically generated

Graphical user interface, text

Description automatically generated

Graphical user interface, text, website

Description automatically generated

**Storyboard**

**A picture containing website

Description automatically generated**

**Qr code

Description automatically generated with low confidence**

**Primary Storyboard -** Kelly Wilson, the primary persona, is able to save time by using directUs to quickly find an open dining location near Madison Union where her next meeting is located.

**Brainstorming / Sketches**

Diagram

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

A picture containing text, indoor

Description automatically generated

**Prototype**

**Graphical user interface

Description automatically generatedGraphical user interface, application

Description automatically generatedGraphical user interface, application, Teams

Description automatically generatedA picture containing graphical user interface

Description automatically generatedGraphical user interface

Description automatically generatedA picture containing table

Description automatically generatedGraphical user interface, application

Description automatically generatedGraphical user interface, application

Description automatically generatedGraphical user interface, application

Description automatically generated**