InspireUs: Heuristic Evaluation Summary

Important Problems

The most critical issues found from heuristic evaluations were due to page link errors. These were infrequent but led to confusion due to some links accidentally behaving like "back buttons". Some other problems were related to user error prevention and user freedom. When creating a new post, we did not implement editing or deleting the fields the user entered. The final prototype now simulates simple "undo" actions upon clicking each respective field to indicate that editing is allowed. The original prototype also lacked a confirmation window when buying an item, which could lead to accidental purchases. The final prototype corrects this.

Another important issue was users not understanding the concept of themes used throughout the site. A common point raised in the evaluations was a lack of user documentation, which would clarify the meaning of certain terms. From this feedback, we realized that our prototype did not clearly illustrate the purpose of InspireUs as a site for sharing creative content based on official prompts. At first glance, the interface is similar to more general social media platforms like Instagram and Deviantart, so elaborating on what makes InspireUs unique is important. To address this, we added a help page that links to detailed documentation on different site features. We also added a sign up and log-in screen with a quick tagline to convey the purpose of the site as soon as the user enters it.

Moderate Problems

Many evaluations noted a lack of error popups in the prototype. The initial prototype focuses on showing correct usage and does not allow errors to occur. However, adding some sequences where an error is prevented would deepen the prototype's realism. For example, displaying a popup when the user tries to submit a post with missing information.

The interface had some inconsistencies. For example, there are multiple pages accessible in the Badges and Shop section, but the interfaces for selecting pages are different. Another issue with consistency is that not every scrollable page has a "go to top" button. The meaning of some mostly unimplemented features was unclear, such as the full post editor and Explore page, which looks very similar to the Home page.

Minor Problems/Suggestions for Future Projects

It was suggested that the interface was somewhat cluttered due to the abundance of menus. Abstracting some of the options into submenus could make the design cleaner. There were also small visual interface bugs with showing each page the user is on, but these did not impact the overall user experience.

Another feature suggested was a brief tutorial when a user first signs up. This would be a good way to explain the different features available, while being more interactive than plain user documentation. It would be especially useful for users who are unfamiliar with social media platforms. It could also be easily tied into the Badge system.