

People-Oriented Computing

Project Assignment: Observing interaction

Observation of interaction with recipe website supercook.com

21.10.2019 - 4.11.2019

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Description of system, environment, and approach

Supercook is a website that helps one find a recipe with the ingredients one has at home. The website scrapes the entirety of the internet for recipes and returns recipes you can cook right now at home with the ingredients you have. On top of that, it shows you suggested ingredients you might have to or want to add to your search query or finds a recipe for a dish you already know.

In our observation, we tasked the participants to visit the website Supercook.com and find a recipe based on the ingredients they have in their kitchen. The task entailed them visiting the website, browsing through their kitchen to find ingredients. They would then start to interact with the website by browsing through ingredient categories, selecting/deselecting ingredients, maybe filtering the results/search query by diet, a key ingredient, meal-type or cuisine, browse through the results and clicking on an interested recipe and analyzing that recipe on the new website they just navigated to.

The observations were both conducted at our kitchens at home, 3 people at Cyril's kitchen, 2 people at their kitchens and 5 people at Jerome's kitchen. After giving the participants their task we told them we would be recording their screen session without audio but making sure they would know that it's the website we're testing and not them. The screen recordings were mostly there for us to see the feedback and response of the website. The screen recordings were also helpful in mapping their facial or verbal reactions with the state of the website at that moment. The facial and verbal reactions were just written down on a notepad together with a timestamp. Specifically, we were looking for signs of satisfaction, disappointment, cluelessness, amazement, and anger. Lastly, we checked if the task was successful or not.

Reporting of observations

Participant #1 - V.Veliz (Jerome's Kitchen)

Participant #1 scrolled through the website and browsed through the different ingredient categories and started adding ingredients from the dairy section but seemed surprised that the site wouldn't start showing results for the three selected dairy ingredients. Only once the participant started to add more ingredients from different categories results started to show up and after having selected 13 ingredients from 8 categories, the first result was opened in a new browser tab and after looking at different pictures of the dish the participant had their recipe selected. Participant #1 went with a veggie pie.

Participant #2 - O.Hadorn (Jerome's Kitchen)

Participant #2 was quick to select 15 Ingredients from 6 categories and to have found a recipe. But it turned out that the recipe required more eggs than available so they switched to the number one result, risotto with mushrooms.

Participant #3 - Y.Hadorn (Jerome's Kitchen)

Participant #3 only selected one ingredient on the site before switching to typing the ingredients into the search bar. The participant also seemed confused after having selected the first ingredient some of the welcome text disappeared and instead there was a blank white portion of the screen that only seemed to populate after having added an additional 3 ingredients. Participant #3 found a recipe after reading through five similar Indian daal recipes in detail.

Participant #4 - L.Hadorn (Jerome's Kitchen)

Participant #4 had no problem adding 23 ingredients in no time. The participant went through section by section and added every available ingredient. Compared to others the search results were quite diverse. The participant even clicked on one of the suggested ingredients that they didn't choose before and went with the top-ranking pasta salad.

Participant #5 - M.Brandao (Jerome's Kitchen)

Participant #5 had to first explore the foreign kitchen and check what ingredients were available. After having added different kinds of vegetables and grains the participant selected the diet filter to only show vegan dishes. The participant wasn't able to find oat milk in the ingredient sections and the system didn't accept the ingredient when being typed into the ingredient search bar. The participant moved on to the results and after exploring 5 different recipes the participant selected falafels with hummus and bell peppers and cucumbers.

Participant #6 - L.Hunziker (Cyril's Kitchen)

Participant #6 first scrolled the homepage from top to bottom to familiarise himself with the website. The participant then proceeded to directly search for a dish instead of adding ingredients first. After the site returned some results the website had a text label saying that he couldn't cook any of these recipes as he didn't select any ingredients. He then proceeded to enter some ingredients. In the end participant #6 compared the different "bolognese" recipes mostly by the presented images and choose one he seemed to like.

Participant #7 - Friend #1 (Friend #1's Kitchen)

Participant #7 clicks on what appears to be a search bar as soon as he lands on the homepage. But it turned out that it was just an empty nonfunctional space he clicked that just really resembled how many search bars on other sites look. He proceeded to select ingredients in the ingredients section starting in the dairy section. The site started to return some results which didn't seem to satisfy him. He began to add some of the ingredients the site proposes to add in the top right corner. After having added "flour" and other ingredients the system proposed, the results became more diverse and the participant went ahead with a pancake recipe he seemed to enjoy.

Participant #8 - Friend #2 (Friend #2's Kitchen)

Participant #8 goes straight to the ingredients selection and starts adding ingredients in no particular order, jumping from ingredient section to ingredient section. The participant never used the search bar to type for ingredients, he just added them via the checkboxes. After each added ingredient the participant looked at the recipes the website proposed him until he found an "easy banana pudding" that he seemed to like.

Participant #9 - D.Hunziker (Cyril's kitchen)

After having read the introductory information on the homepage participant #6 locates the search bar and enters "string beans mozzarella" as his search term. He didn't type it correctly but the website offered him an auto-corrected version of what it thought the participant meant. He scrolled through the results and had a message telling him that he was able to do none of these recipes as he didn't have any ingredients selected. He scrolled through the results and found a recipe he liked and then went ahead and checked if the ingredients needed were available to him. Interestingly the recipe had a different name than his search term, "Cheesy Garlic Green Beans". Participant #9 didn't interact with the website in a way we expected or that completely aligned with the task we gave him.

Participant #10 - A.Hunziker (Cyril's kitchen)

Participant #10 started his interaction by going to the vegetable ingredients section and only selected ingredients from this specific category. The internet was very slow, the result needed time to return, the participant seemed a bit clueless and irritated, the participants seemed to wonder if his request worked or if he had done something wrong. After the site returned it's results the participant, scrolled down, found and clicked on a recipe that interested him and that contained some the ingredients selected, "tomato juice".

Analysis of system and observations

In general most of the participants were able to follow our task and complete it successfully. Nevertheless, most participants experienced some hiccups interacting with the website.

Successful parts of the system

When visiting the website and landing on the welcome page, all participants were immediately confronted with a call to action “To get started, choose your ingredients from the categories on the left.”, explaining what to do and how the website works.

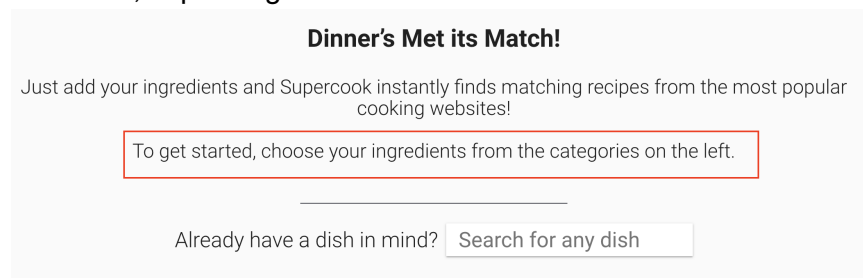


Fig. 1 - Image of a call to action on the landing page

Once returned with search results participants #4 and #7 were able to add ingredients to their ingredients list suggested by the website itself, giving them, in turn, richer results.

All search results are clearly marked if all ingredients needed for the dish are present and if not it clearly lists which ingredients the participant is lacking for the recipe. This functionality turned out to be useful to participant #4, it showed her that for the desired pasta salad, she was just lacking pesto, an ingredient she didn't list but actually had at home.

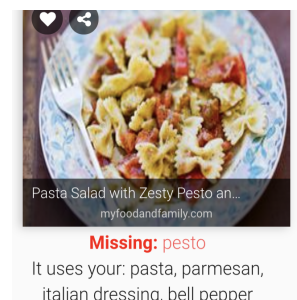


Fig. 2 - Result showing missing ingredient

Problematic aspects and problems with the site

The website demands a basic knowledge of how to use a computer and how to navigate a website, a hurdle with our participants was that the website is only written in English.

Starting with the welcome page, participant #6 wanted to search for a dish but wasn't able to immediately find the search bar. The participant clicked the empty space above a line and expected he could start typing his search term. But the line was a separator and not a text field. The search icon and the separator line are badly placed and make it seem like a text field, but one has to click the search icon for the text field to appear.

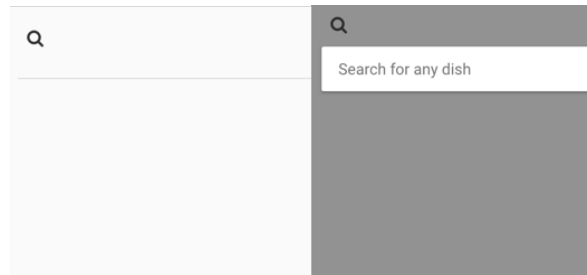


Fig. 3 - search text field

Participant #1 and Participant #10 interaction with the site could have been better if the site would have provided better feedback on the completion of the current search request. The loading indicator is too small and not centered. It's placed in the top right corner overlaying other page elements which makes it hard to tell if the site is even searching for recipes. This made participant #1 think that she would need to select more ingredients for results to show but in fact, the website was still loading just not communicating that to her. The Progress Indicator is also very narrow and at the top of the website so it's really well hidden and was unnoticed by this participant.

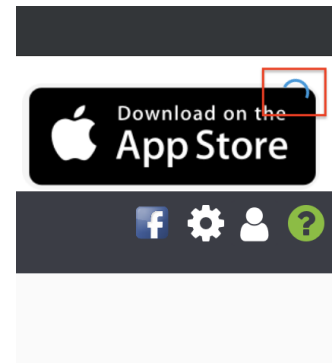


Fig. 4 - Barely visible loading indicator

The lack of feedback seemed to confuse quite a lot of our participants. Participant #5 wanted to add oat milk to her ingredients list but couldn't do so. When typing in "oat milk" nothing happened, the ingredient wasn't added to her ingredients list and neither did the website inform her that she can't choose the ingredient or proposed another way of writing the ingredient or shook the textbox or colored the search term red. This constraint is useful but only if according feedback is given.



The predefined ingredient sections seemed to work well for certain participants but challenging for others as well. All the ingredients are grouped by broader ingredient categories, this lead to our participants having to walk to the fridge to check their dairy ingredients, open a cupboard to check their grain ingredients but then walk back to the fridge to check which kind of meat they had. A lot of unnecessary walking and opening the same cupboards multiple times. If there were an option to see ingredients mapped by where they are stored it would better the overall experience. A lot of participants spent quite some time browsing through the dairy section with 30+ different kinds of cheese, a subcategory of cheeses would make the site less cluttered and easier to navigate.

Fig. 5 - Ungrouped cheeses

A type of slip which we observed twice was participants wanting to remove an ingredient by clicking the trash icon next to the ingredient name and accidentally removing another

ingredient as well and then not being able to undo this action.

The result information could have been visualized in a better way, participants weren't always able to read the entire recipe name because some characters were truncated and there was no way of seeing the entire text. A rather big part of the result's space is taken up by "You've got all the ingredients" message which could easily be replaced by a checkmark or another symbol. As it is quite repetitive seeing this text on most of the top results.

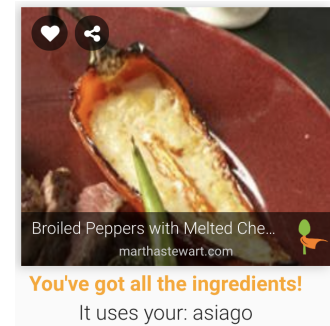


Fig. 6 - unreadable and cluttered Result

A functional shortcoming of the site which was experienced by Participant #2 is that only the ingredients are checked but not the amount. Because of this, the participant had to choose another recipe.