Heuristic Evaluation on Room Raider

1   Introduction

The application being evaluated in this Heuristic Evaluation is the Room Raider application for Android Devices made by the group Hop Scotch Mafia. Room Raider is an application that allows people to create groups within the app and provides a chat interface, URL sharing resource, and a medium to book a room on the Uvic campus for group meetings. Room Raider essentially makes it easier for university students who are in a group to interact with each other and organize group activity, or simply put it is a project management tool. This makes sense given that many students do not have the same classes and might struggle to meet up with fellow group members outside of class or at the very least struggle to organize it. I'm not sure if Room Raider is Uvic specific, but I could see it easily being adapted to other universities and perhaps demographics outside of just students, although it seems to me it fits that need rather well.

2   Method

Room Raider will be evaluated using Nielsen's Heuristics, which are the following:

1. Visibility of system status
2. Match between system and real world
3. User control and freedom
4. Consistency and standards
5. Help users recognize, diagnose, recover from errors
6. Error prevention
7. Recognition
8. Flexibility and efficiency of use
9. Aesthetic and minimalist design
10. Help and documentation

The scale of severity rating used will be Nielsen's scale, which is the following:

- 0 – Not a usability problem
- 1 – Cosmetic problem only
- 2 – Minor usability problem
- 3 – Major usability problem
- 4 – Usability catastrophe

3 Findings

3.1 [H-4 Consistency] [Severity 1]

- The green and blue button colouring used on the "New Group" and "Manage Groups" buttons are different from those used on the "Send" and "URL Log" buttons.
- Its purely cosmetic. I do realize that in terms of the UI design and colouring this prototype is probably not finalized and so these colours will change and the UI will change cosmetically, but as it stands it will look better with consistent button colourings and colour schemes.
- Pick the set of colours you like on the one button set and use it on the other.

3.2 [H-4 Consistency] [Severity 1]

- The style that the chat is presented to the user, and the style that URLs are presented to the user in a group chat and its URL Log respectively are not consistent.
- Once again, purely cosmetic. I'm not sure that either style of presentation makes sense for the other. As it currently stands the chat is broken down day by day and the URLs are not, perhaps this is not the way to break down the chat. Furthermore, the URLs then have the date printed above them, so its just currently inconsistent. The result of this makes the chat and the URL Log just a little awkward. I'm hesitant to say that this is a 2 severity, as this is a purely cosmetic issue, but it should not be left as it currently is.
- There could be a timestamp printed into the chat area when there is enough time between messages, or when it crosses over to different days, similar to Skype. As opposed to breaking the chat down by day and not the URLs

3.3 [H-9 Aesthetic] [Severity 1]

- Colour Scheme has too much variation and not a lot of consistency.
- Purely cosmetic. The background is black, the App heading "Room Raider" and subheading representing the current location such as "Group Chat:" are white, blue text for the date in the chat box, green "Send" button, blue "URL Log", red "Book A Room" button, Orange group name such as "CSC 225".
- It would be okay to have white and orange used as your two primary heading colours, this makes sense, and one more colour would be workable into your colour scheme outside of your background. More than 4 colours isn't really advisable on any page. I understand the desire to have different coloured buttons, but that would only be feasible with maybe two buttons, if you count the back and group buttons you have four different colours just on buttons on one chat page. Find a standard design of buttons, that you like and that fits your colour scheme and apply it consistently to all your pages.

3.4   [H-2 Match Between...] [Severity 2]

- The logout button on the application is an exit sign.
- This makes sense when you think about it, exit sign and logout, but its really not in a standard location nor is it a globally accepted standard. I found it pretty soon, but its was mostly a byproduct of clicking my mouse quickly and it being the same location as your back button, if I was using my finger and touching the screen just once, I might have spent a long time trying to find that. It also somewhat looks like its part of the "Room Raider" banner, so a user might just think that is cosmetic if they don't make the connection, simply put it just doesn't speak a users language and presents a usability problem although a minor one.
- Place a standard logout button somewhere you think is appropriate on that main page, top right corner is the standard, but your banner currently sits there and that could be awkward. The button should be visible, but not too big so a person doesn't accidently hit it, as it would be tedious to re-login, or it should require user confirmation.

4   Summary

Room Raider is very well polished. It has simulated all the functionality that it would seemingly need to be a useful tool, and gives a good sense as to how the application would function and how it would function makes sense. It has the appropriate back buttons etc, to handle all cases that occurred to me in terms of navigation, and I found functionality in areas I expected to find them. The only problems I have with Room Raider beyond the logout button are purely cosmetic, although the logout button is a visual issue it presents usability issues. Many of the violations I mentioned I'm sure will be addressed when the User Interface is more polished, as a more consistent colour scheme and layout for all the pages is something that would be more likely to show itself in later stages, this is very good for a first prototype.