

First Interview Assignment - Kelvin Pierre

For my interviews, I decided to focus on the area of food applications. More specifically food apps (applications, not appetizers) that allow you to order food and log your purchases. I talked to twelve different people, but received quality answers and feedback from eight. I started each interview by asking people if they hate waiting in line for food. Most of the people I asked were during the lunch rush hour of the Student Center. I used the conversation about lines to segue to the app by asking, "Do you ever use restaurant apps to skip the line?". I would then ask about which ones they use, which ones they like, which ones they don't, and what are the most important features for a restaurant app. I learned a lot from these eight interviews, and I will keep these insights gained in mind when developing mobile applications this semester.

For the first quality interview, I talked to a graduate student from India, and when we started talking about the different restaurant apps that she uses, she immediately mentioned the Chick-fil-A app. She then talked about how her favorite things about the app include the ability to save and remember orders, the points you can accumulate for quality rewards, and the simplicity to use. She said one food app that she does not like using is the McDonald's app because it is slow and has a confusing layout. An interesting observation is that she seemed to favor simplicity over any other quality.

For the second quality interview, I talked to a GT Dining employee who said that he really likes the Chipotle app due to the great customization options and ease to use. This person claimed to be not very tech-savvy, so they appreciated the easy to navigate nature of the app that allowed him to specialize his order to perfection. One app that they do not like using is the Marlow's Tavern app, which has no options for specialization, which is a problem since he has dietary restrictions. This person valued flexibility and customization most.

For the third interview, I talked to an undergraduate student. This person said they do not have any issues with any apps and can easily navigate all the apps she has encountered. For him, the most important thing about the app was the ability to skip the lines, and the perks that you could accumulate by using the app, buying the food, and redeeming rewards. He mentioned the Domino's app as one that had some great in-app perks that you can use.

For the fourth interview, I talked to a graduate student studying business. This person also talked glowingly about the Chick-fil-A app for the "way that you can easily check in and get your food right on time". When talking about below-average apps, he mentioned the Smoothie

King app, lamenting its layout and difficulty to navigate. The most important quality a restaurant app can have is a clear path to get to the menu and checkout.

For the fifth interview, I talked to a Dad of a high schooler on a visit to the GT campus. When I talked to him about using food apps, he said he typically avoids apps now due to a bad experience. When I asked him about the bad experience, he talked about using an app about 3 years ago where he did not properly press the confirm payment option after filling out all the information, which ended up delaying his order. He said that the frustration of that experience keeps him away, and that he would rather just wait. My main takeaway from this interview is that a bad experience can sour the entire industry for someone, and that you need to make sure you are always clear with your customer about confirmation buttons, and when you are actually done with a process.

For the sixth interview, I talked to a pro-staff member of the Student Center, and their app that they use the most is the GT dining app, and they did not really like using the app because the wait times would be wildly inaccurate and inconsistent. For example, one time, the app said that there would be about a 45 minute wait for the food, when in actuality, the wait was only 5 minutes. This was very frustrating as they had planned their schedule around the 45 minute wait and were not ready when the food was. For this person, the most important thing for an app was how easy it is to navigate.

For the seventh interview, I talked to an undergraduate student who is a computer science major. For her, she says the most important thing for her was the design or layout of the app that made some apps more appealing than others. She said that she did not want her apps to just look like they are “straight off of a website”, but rather be optimal for phone usage. I was not expecting this answer, and I did not think that people would specifically prefer some apps over the other for the primary reason of visual appeal. I also did not know there were strong opinions against using an interface that looked like a website. That is something I will keep in mind moving forward.

For the eighth interview, I talked to another undergraduate student and they said that they really like the app for a restaurant called Grindhouse Killer Burgers. They said the app is easy to use, saves previous orders, and has plenty of customization options. When looking for good food apps, they said that they want apps that are just “easy to use”. When I asked what makes app easy to use they talked about how complex the menu is, the checkout process, and how easy it is

to modify an order. When I asked about an app that they do not like to use, they talked about the Cracker Barrel app, as it had a tendency to crash.

When looking at the answers from the different interviews, there are definitely some trends that I see. First, I found that there is some correlation between age and the main desired feature of the app. I found that the older the person, the qualities that they looked for were more accessibility, ease of use, and simplicity. For the younger people that I interviewed, the most important features were the perks, reward systems, and the little adjustments that the apps used to distinguish themselves. This makes a lot of sense, since the younger people are more likely to have grown up with technology, meaning they are more likely to be technologically literate. This means that they can focus more on the “extra stuff”. The people who are older and perhaps are not as comfortable with navigating phone apps tend to be more concerned with the functionality and simplicity of the apps they use. I thought that was a very interesting trend to see. One thing that was universally liked was the ability to gain points or rewards. This is interesting, since you typically need some of account to log in with in order to have a point system, and I was under the premise that people did not like creating accounts and signing up for things, but the value proposition of skipping lines, getting rewards, and option to pay online seem to be a good one for the customers. When I asked people why they do not use apps for all of their restaurants, they all said either “they do not have one”, “I do not know if they have one”, or “I don’t know why”. This means that restaurants need to make sure that they are properly advertising their apps to their customers, since a lot of the time it seems that people are not sure if a restaurant has an app or not. In terms of the diversity of the interviewees, I felt that I got a broad range of ages, education, race, and gender. I did not notice any specific trends by any of these factors besides age.

In summary, I learned that when it comes to food, people simply want a functional app that allows them to wait less time and get rewards. That is what people mainly use restaurant apps for. When developing a restaurant app, this means that you do not want to waste anyone’s time, and you want to incentivize people to use the app as much as they can. One quote that I heard that surprised me was how attractive tiers of rewards were to them. If people have some sort of incentive to use the app *even more* frequently for *even more* prizes, accomplishing that provides a sense of accomplishment and value. People really enjoy feeling valued from the businesses that they support, so designing and developing an app that allows a clear interface for

the businesses of restaurants to directly reward, value, and serve their customers in a seamless manner should be the primary focus for customer satisfaction. I think the apps that are not successful at filling the gap lack the user interface or the genuine attention to detail for a customer to get reliable service. One possible solution is for more companies to use a third party software that would streamline the app development process, so that users would see some similarities in the apps they use, since usability seems to be a problem. Hopefully, more companies take a more thoughtful and thorough approach to their apps so their customers are less confused, more satisfied, and hopefully fuller.