
Spokin App - User Research



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What is Spokin?

- An online social network for people with food allergies
- User generated content
- Users are encouraged to connect to others by sharing their food allergy experiences (restaurants, recipes, doctors..)
- Currently largest user base consists of parents of children with allergies
- Seeking to tap into a younger audience to refine what exactly “Food Allergy Friendly” means



Our Goals

To find out...

- **Why** are social applications *useful* as opposed to fun or convenient
- **Why & if** college students (ages 17-24) find social networking apps that provide ratings and/or recommendation useful
- **How** Spokin can potentially manipulate the data to build its user base from the college student population
- **What** exactly can motivate students to become a part of Spokin community



Our Methods

- Audience determination - students 18-25
- Creation of interview protocol
- Creation of informed consent
- Screening survey
- Interviews
- Affinity clustering - post-it notes
- Information visualization/interpretation - personas, diagrams



Interviews

- 7 students total
- 13 questions - audio recorded face-to-face interviews (conversational style)
- Informed consents signed prior to interviews



Deep Focus Questions Sample

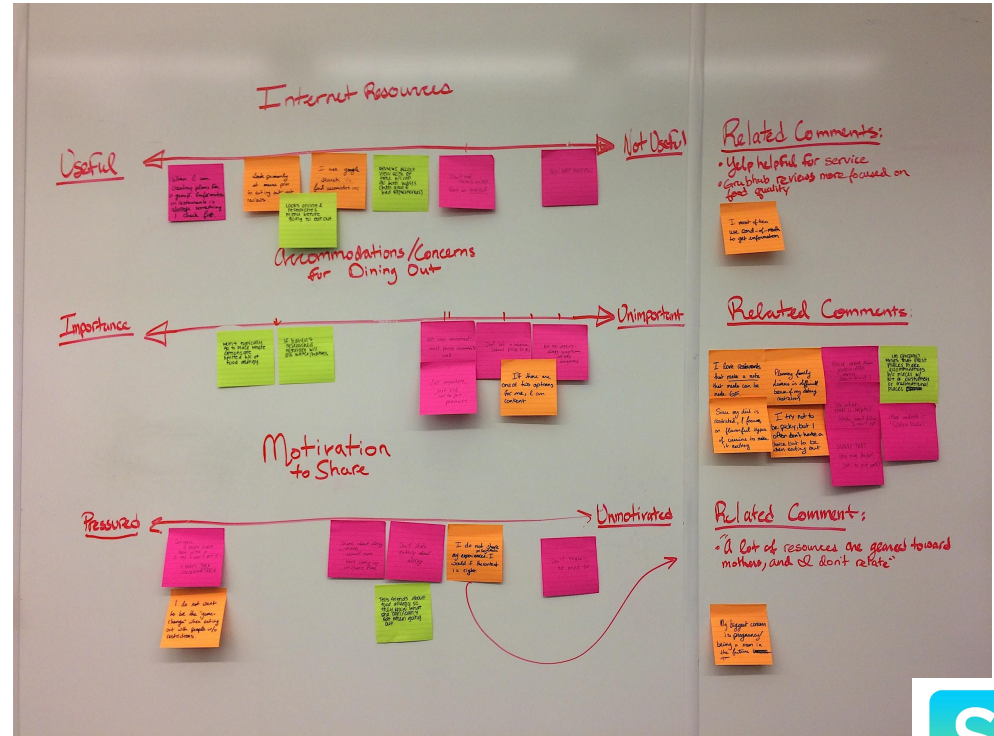
- How does your food allergy affect your choices about where to eat out?
- Can you tell me about your last experience eating out? (and continue asking based on answers)
 - How did it go? Was it easy to make choices based on your food allergy?
 - Did you plan ahead of time where to go?
 - Who were you with?
 - Would you eat there again? Why/why not?
- Where do you get information about dietary accommodations when you eat out? (websites, forums, blogs, friends, etc.?)?
- What do you generally look for in a place when you eat out?



Information Visualization

In order to organize the information we got from our interviews, we used a method called affinity clustering.

We wrote separate findings on post-it notes and grouped them based on their similarities.



Findings

In order to make our user research findings easily comprehensible, we will represent our findings with 2 personas, 3 scenarios, and an experience map.



That's Interesting!

- About 40% of interviewees do not rely on internet resources looking for accommodations (do not find them useful enough)
- It's important for people with allergies that they feel waiters care about their requests
- People with common allergies (such as peanuts) seem to be less worried about eating out (as they are confident that their requests will be applied) than those who have more rare allergies
- One of the most uncomfortable thing is to tell people they cannot eat things someone give to them, or they cannot go to particular places (be the "game-changer")
- Most people feel OK sharing about their allergies with others, but only if there is a right context
- Some people have friends/family members with same or similar allergies and they like it because they can share food and go out together not feeling "game-changers"

Personas

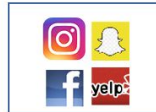
Goals

- Wants her and her companions to have an exceptional experience if she is spending money to dine out
- Aspires to work as a Hotel Services/Concierge Manager after graduating
- Wants to be in charge when planning social events with friends

Frustrations

- Allergens are common ingredients in many dishes
- Food lover, but frequently must ask for substitutions
- Is frequently invited to go out and tired of checking food all the time

Associated Brands



CLAIRE



"Since I've had a an allergy since birth I have become my own resource, I don't often look to others for help."

AGE: 22, senior, DePaul

Communicative

Major: Business Administration & Hospitality

Harmony

Location: Former - Iowa City, Now-Chicago

Kindness

Soybean & Sesame allergy

Helpfulness

Shares allergy with younger sister

Technology

Experienced social media user

Glued to her smartphone, Snapchat addict

Posts reviews often to Yelp, but usually to criticize not complement

Not trusting of other's opinions, prefers to form her own and share them

Personality

Self-sufficient



Independence



Hard-working



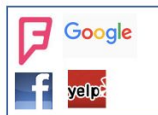
Goals

- Aims to spend as much of his free time as possible with his friends
- Enjoys going out to dinner if he is not the deciding factor as to where to eat because of his allergy
- Any food accommodation is okay with him when eating (if he has something to eat)

Frustrations

- Frequent fad dieter, so food preferences are always changing
- Difficult to eat out with friends without feeling embarrassed about accommodations needed
- worried about having an allergic reaction

Associated Brands



THOMAS



"I try not to be a picky eater, but I do not have a choice at many restaurants when I eat out."

AGE: 19, Freshman, University of Illinois at Chicago

Major: Nursing

Location: Lincoln Park, Chicago - lifetime

Severe peanut allergy, food consumed cannot come into contact with peanuts whatsoever.

Shares allergy with younger sister

Optimistic

Open-minded

Kindness

Helpfulness

Technology

Experienced smartphone user

Frequently posts memes and shares interesting articles but rarely posts original content

Avid consumer of review sites and apps such as Yelp, Google, and Foursquare but does not post often.

Frequently researches his allergy and accommodations to assist him

Personality

Self-sufficient



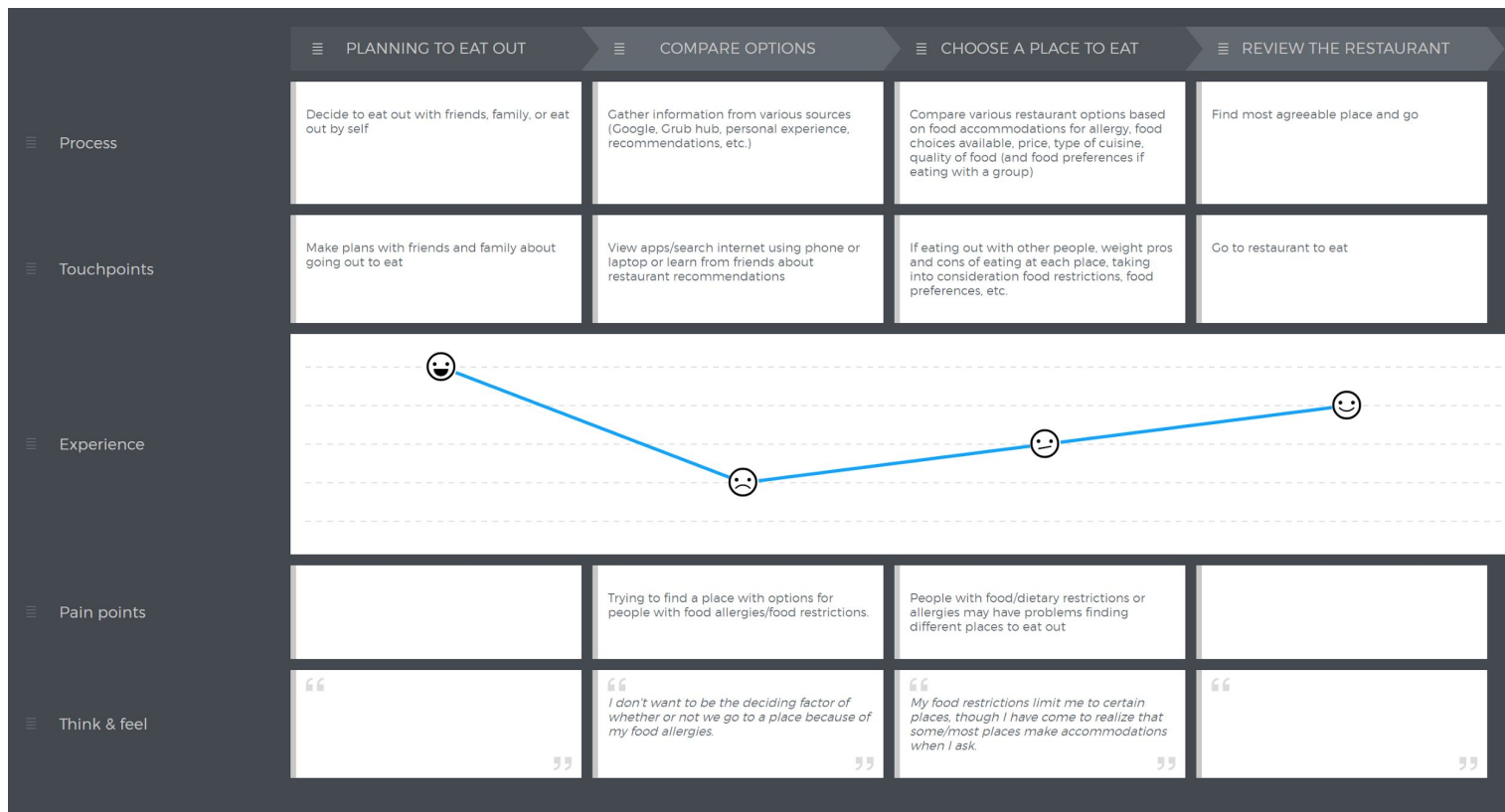
Independence



Hard-working



Experience Map



Scenarios

Scenario #1: Thomas, who has a severe peanut allergy, makes plans to eat with one of his friends. His friend suggests a place that Thomas know does not cater to his allergy. Thomas feels embarrassed about asking for food accommodations, so instead he goes on the Spokin app to find a peanut-free restaurant and recommends he and friends go there instead.

Scenario #2: Claire has a bad experience with a restaurant that she and her colleague goes to. She asks the waiter to make an accommodation for her sesame allergy, but finds sesame in her dish when it arrives. Unhappy, she request the food to be sent back and when she gets home, she writes a dissatisfied review of her experience at the restaurant.



Scenario #3 Claire and her sister plan a vacation to Los Angeles which is coming up in a few days. They are both excited to be visiting a new city, but they both have concerns when it comes to eating out in a foreign city. Claire's sister decides that their best option is to research recommendations before they go and uses the Spokin app to find a place in the city to eat.

What's next?

Now, as we have a solid understanding of the potential users (students) frustrations and needs regarding their allergies, we are ready to move forward and start user testing of the Spokin App.



Thank you for your attention!
Any questions?

