Southern New Hampshire University

Final Project – Part Two

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**Prototyping Process**: Outline the process and explain the importance of prototyping for the design process. Why is prototyping important for this particular design project? Support your claims.

Prototyping is a vital step of the design process. They are a tool a designer can use to lay out early ideas, building blocks for the projects, a way to show the client early thoughts. Later in the design process they can even have varying degrees of functionality and serve as a tool for usability testing and feedback. Depending on the level of detail in your prototype, they can be great for initial planning and act as a olive branch for communication between a designer and the client. Prototypes with a low level of detail do not take a long time, and therefore are extremely cost effective when getting a design idea down on paper. A well thought out prototype early in design can save a ton of money, time, and emotion later on. For ‘fork in the road’ and this assignment, we have been tasked with using our prototype in usability testing. For this reason, we are going to want to include some functionality so that the tester has as realistic of an experience as possible. This is a great opportunity for me as a designer to get feedback from users on various functionality, assumptions, and layout. We want the application to be intuitive to use, simple and clear to navigate while still offering a wide range of functionality so that users come back and use the application again. Ideally, we learn about additional desired features, find design features, and are able to iron out any assumptions made by the designers before we head to production. This step is intentionally and necessary to avoid spending a lot of time and money coding the front and backend of the application with design flaws.

**Prototyping Types**: Explain the difference between a high-fidelity prototype and a low-fidelity prototype. Discuss what a high-fidelity prototype for this project would look like.

There are two distinct degrees of digital prototyping. The first being low-fidelity prototyping, which are often quickly generated, display the general planned layout, and sometimes include navigational interactions. The do not have to include all the intended content, colors, a logo but anyone reviewing it should have a good idea of what the main features are. The other side to digital prototyping is high-fidelity. This should provide a user experience as close to the actual application as possible. Since the application is not being coded for a high-fidelity prototype, these interactions are not actually happening, but many digital tools for these prototypes allow the designer to create realistic interactions and interfaces. A high-fidelity prototype for ‘fork in the road’ would ideally include the final iteration of the logo, final font and theme choices, as much actual content as possible, and interactive and realistic interfaces. Common features such as log in text input, date selection, and settings menus are not as important to include in a prototype. These are features that people are used to interacting with, and it is best to save time through the use of widgets and common practices when designing them.

**Justification for User Research & Validation Methods**: Select the types of user research and validation methods you feel would be appropriate for this project. Justify your selections with specific examples and accompanying research sources.

For this specific product I would want to conduct some user research as early as possible. I think this is important for ‘fork in the road’ because there are already similar products available on the market. What we want to gain from early user surveying or interviews is finding out their likes and dislikes about existing products. Additionally, leaving an open-ended portion for the user to describe actions they wish they could do when utilizing a product like this. Conducting sever user reviews allows for themes to emerge which could help guide our design better. Since this space is already occupied by several applications, I strongly believe this step cannot be skipped. Once we have surveyed users, and we have a mid to high level wireframe, meeting with the client would be beneficial to allow them to weigh in on the design, as well as giving the designer time to summarize what we learned in user surveys and how that information influenced the design. (Allen 2012) During this conversation, problems and comments can be mapped and then adjusted in the next wireframe or prototype. Validation methods are another great tool for designers to lean on in order to better understand the customer. Lean UX validation consists of multiple iterations that allow for the design to evolve in order to best align with user expectations and find the best spot for our product to fit in the market. (S. Elena 2022)

**Importance of User Research & Validation**: What is the value of user research and validation? Why do designers employ these methods, and what important impacts do these methods have on design?

User research and validation create an opportunity for the designer to define user needs, UX problems and potential solutions for all of these. (S. Elena 2022) Without this step of design, we are left making guesses and hoping for the best, which could be a costly and time-consuming process. When a designer has defined problems and potential solutions, they can now spend time discussing the most viable one and implement it into the design. Ultimately this stage, if properly executed, creates and open environment with shared understanding surrounding the product itself. (Allen 2021)

It is safe to assume that most clients who are paying for a design team to work for them, probably are not willing to gamble on the budget that much. That said, a client may not realize the importance of research and validation, and that may mean the designer needs to take some time to explain that to them so that they understand how the budget is being spent.

**Importance & Types of Usability Testing**: Explain the purpose of the usability test and provide a detailed description of appropriate usability tests that highlights their importance and the different types of testing possible.

Usability testing is the practice of having someone trial a product, and then observe and report on any problems faced while using it. (Allen 2012) It is best to use objective people to participate in the user test so that you get a true vision of the product from the perspective of a brand-new user. This is all in an effort to find problems early, find solutions and ultimately improve the product. It is best to perform usability testing as soon as the design permits, because fixing issues earlier is always more cost effective. If the budget and timeline allow, performing usability testing in multiple rounds can be even more beneficial to the ultimate success of the product. (Allen 2021) It is important for the designer to plan their test material and plan before presenting it to the testers. Depending on the stage of design, material could range from a paper sketch all the way up to an interactable prototype. (Allen 2012) It’s up to the designer to determine how to utilize the budget and decide upon what version would be most beneficial to their product. Additionally, having a clear testing plan, with established objectives and structure are important so that trends can be pulled from the results of the usability testing.

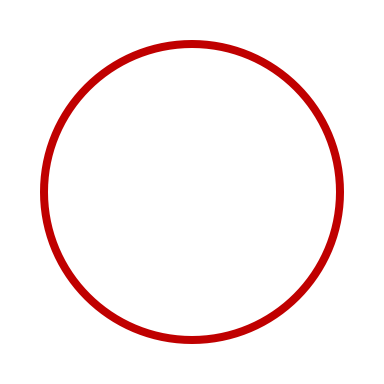
**Recommendations for Usability Testing**: Of the various types of usability tests available, provide a justification for the usability test you recommended for this project. Justify your choice using information from the project, as well as relevant research support when applicable.

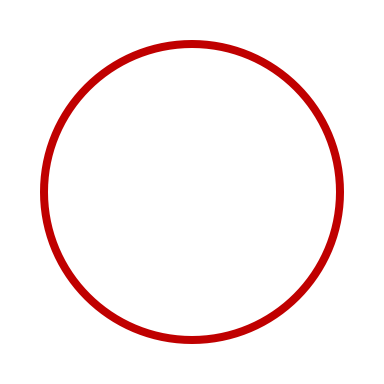
There are many different variations and type of usability typing. I would likely recommend an unmoderated and in person approach for ‘fork in the road’. This would include a tester on a desktop, they will be given a few explicit use instructions, and a moderator in the room with them. A person would not be conducting the test; however, a moderator would be present solely for the purpose of observation. (hotjar 2022) The moderator would be taking notes on the tester’s actions, body language, facial expressions, and any other relevant observations. While not directly usability testing, I would likely include a 5-10 question survey for the tester after completing the usability test, to report on functionality, and allow for comment on any issues they faced during the test. The survey results, combined with notes taken by the moderator, we should be able to gather enough information to outline problems and identify meaningful solutions.

**Results & Alterations for ‘fork in the road’ Application**: Include the results of one usability test in your final submission and justify any changes or any lack of changes made in response to the results of the test.

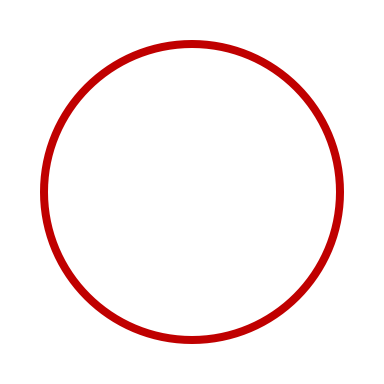
**Objectives for Tester**: Please complete each of these tasks, once completed you are free to navigate as you please.

1. Sign In (no need to enter login information)
2. View a sponsored result from the home page
3. Find the Main navigation menu
4. Access search page
5. Select a previous search
6. Access/view search filter options
7. Navigate freely
8. Once you feel you have fully tested the capability of the prototype, proceed to the next page and answer a few survey questions based on your experience with ‘fork in the road’

**Survey Once Test is Complete**: please circle a number, 1 – 5, one being strongly disagree, three 3 no strong opinion, five being strongly agree.

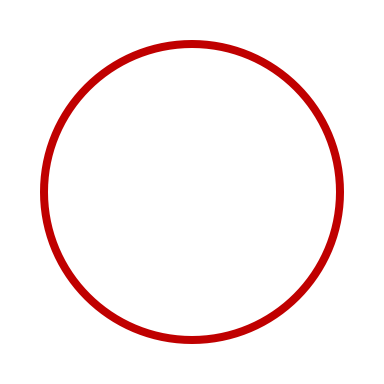
I understand the purpose of ‘fork in the road’.

1 2 3 4 5

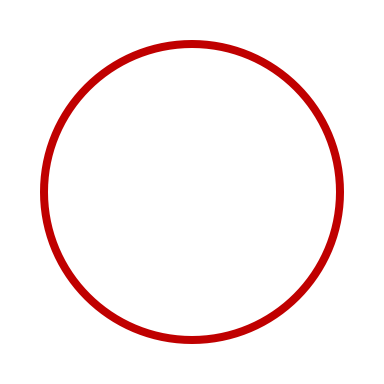
‘fork in the road’ uses application navigation patterns I am familiar with,

1 2 3 4 5

There is too much sponsored content throughout the application.

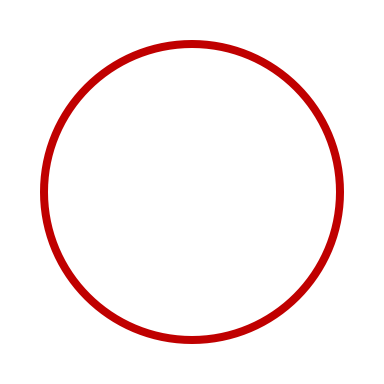


1 2 3 4 5

There are too many filter options available.

1 2 3 4 5

I would be willing to create a profile in order to use this application.



1 2 3 4 5

**What was challenging about navigating the application?**

I didn’t know how to go back to the last page I was on except by using the menu.

**What is something you wish ‘fork in the road’ could do?**

When you click on a pinpoint on the map, if a small popup appeared that gave the restaurant’s name and a quick blurb, that would be better than being instantly redirected to the expanded restaurant page. Since the pins are not labeled, I was taken to restaurant pages I may not have wanted to or needed to visit. This could limit unnecessary interactions.

**Any other comments?**

I wish there was a way to trial or sample the application without creating a user profile, sometimes I feel deterred from using an application if I have to make an account before even trying it.

\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \*

Thank you for your participation!

**Designer Alterations**: As a designer, I would never make alterations based upon one usability test, however for the sake of this assignment let us pretend these are the trending responses received. Seeing that generally the user did not mind advertised content is reassuring, I think keeping the logo as a small indicator of sponsored content is transparent for the user, but not so eye catching that it feels like an overwhelming amount. Users seem to feel comfortable with the number of filters, and I’m sure this is something we can adjust and add too once we have a user base. Ultimately using filters is not a necessity for using the application for its intended purpose, so I do not believe we need to make any major changes there before launch. The idea to include a small pop up on the map after selecting a pin, that includes the restaurant name and rating is a great idea, and definitely functionality we should try and include. Since no information is communicated by the pin alone, besides location, users would be unwillingly directed to pages of restaurants they may not be interested in. Additionally, I think we could change the color of the pin after a user has opened it up, so they do not lose track of what they have interacted with. I also agree with the test desiring the option to trial the application before creating an account. This should be something that is discussed with the client to see what their preference is. We could make these changes, do one more round of usability testing; in the closing survey ask how likely they would be to make an account if they were able to trial the application first.

Citations

Allen, J., & Chudley, J. (2012). Chapter 3 Planning and Conducting Effective Stakeholder Interviews. Chapter 5 Planning, Conducting and Analyzing a Usability Test. Chapter 18 Using Prototypes to Bring your Ideas to Life. In *Smashing UX design: Foundations for designing online user experiences* (pp. 91–100, 118-145, 336-350). essay, J. Wiley & Sons.

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