FOODEALIZE

Milestone 1 activity, part of User Experience (UX) Research and Design Micromaster by University of Michigan and edX, section UX509x

Initial Concept and Needs Finding Plans

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August 2018

THE DESIGN BRIEF

SELECT DESIGN CHALLENGE

Defining the project

The project "Foodealize" is in the facts a study to discover the possibilities to make more "social" the distribution of food.

Unlike many other software applications such as Deliveroo/Foodora/Just Eat, here the approach turns out to follow a different goal: having a structured system to allow the redistribution of the leftovers across the territory.

Contest

In a world afflicted by famine, poverty and inefficiencies, half of the total available food [1] is (especially in the western world) wasted due to a thought totally conformed to aesthetic standards before of quality (for what concerns the buyers), and to economic pressures on the market (for what concerns the goods exchange and globalisation). This can lead to catastrophic consequences on the social (scuffles), environmental (land consumption, water shortage) and, in the end, on geopolitical equilibrium.

The main question is: can a software improve the quality and quantity of food consumption in a modern social way?

PROBLEM RESEARCH

Identify existing offerings / Web searches: background research

At the time, the apps for the same purpose are "Food for all" [2] born in October 2016 from a Kick-Starter Campain (Rain of Innovations), "Olio" [3] ideated by Tessa Cook and Saasha Celestial-Oneand in 2015, "Too Good To Go" [4] developed by a Danish startup, as well as "YourLocal" [5].

Each one of these has lack of some feature of the others, like the open times of the shops and if that shop is vegetarian/vegan friendly. Some of them don't have a notification system. Some of them permit paying goods in advance while other simply report the availability.

Informal interviews

For a first informal interview I asked the three people in my local area how they manage the food leftover:

Name	Description
James	He the owner of a small grocery store in a little town, open for almost 10 years.

Nicole	She is an employee of a catering company, she serves meals for ceremonies, communities, meetings etc.
Thomas	He is a farmer. He produces vegetables like lettuce, watermelon and tomatoes.

Plot for the informal interviews

The following plot was used as guideline reference while making questions. This means that the interviews were not conducted as a straight "step by step" approach, but as a friendly conversation (always keeping in mind the reason for the meeting).

1) Can you tell us more about your work, responsibilities, daily routines, etc?
2) Can you tell us some background for this—how it all began?
3) What are the most important practices or the best means? Why exactly these?
4) What are the downsides or the biggest challenges?
5) If you could change something that it would be? Why?
6) How do you see the situation about food waste developing? Why is that?
7) How can your job change the society in the future?
8) Is there anything else that you want to say, or something that I didn't ask yet that I should know?

Summary of the interviews

James: he works 8 hours a day selling dairy products, he started to sell this kind of products because his parents were farmers. He has a good business but when something remains unsold, he feels extremely bad because he thinks about the poor conditions he has suffered when he was a child, and his heart "bleeds" when a product still edible, is thrown in the trash.

Nicole: she started to work as a waitress for her catering company to pay the tuition fees five years ago. She says that most of the time, the company have a good idea of how much food is required for the next event, but, sometimes the requests of the customers forced them to deliver more food than necessary, so, sometimes 20% of the food is wasted.

Thomas is a farmer that produces vegetables both for local reseller and for bigger food supply chains. He always relies on the good weather conditions because he tries to make his procedures "as much as organic possible". Often he can sell everything he produces but in the last periods he is leaving lot of vegetables rotten on the ground, even if they were edible in principle because he, as a lot of other farmers, starts to feel burdened the importation of the same vegetables from abroad at lower prices, so it is not always convenient for him to pick the vegetables up and selling them "almost for free".

DEFINE TARGET AUDIENCE

The system will make it possible the meeting of two types of people: the "providers" and the "requesters". The providers are the ones who can give and share leftovers on the common platform from where the requesters can get them. Considering also the possibility of these two entities to act as the other one, the target audience can be very broad:

- Age: 16-80

- Level of instruction: any
- Gender: any
- Salary/incomes: probably low for the requesters

Having this big range of selection will make it easier to find testers for the system.

USER NEEDS

- Having the possibility to share untouched quality food that could be wasted
- Having the possibility to gain some money by selling unsold food in a shop.
- Having the possibility to give food for the ones that can't buy any.

SYSTEM GOALS

- The system must be easy to use, even for very old people whose don't use modern technology with ease.
- The system must be lightweight in terms of resources provided by the hardware on which the system will run, since who can't afford expenses for food, can't get the latest phone on the market.
- The system will provide a good experience for what concerns the decreasing of food wasting in the area of interest (possibly worldwide).
- The system will also provide a mean to finance charity institutions in certain scenarios.

WORK PLAN

Milestone #	Period
1	First half of August
2	Second half of August
3	First half of September
4	First half of September
5	First half of October
6	Second half of October

NEEDS FINDING STUDY PLAN

- The interview protocol (following the template provided as part of the Interview Protocol Assignment in Understanding User Needs)

HIGH LEVEL GOALS OF THE STUDY

This study will find out how much good is the idea to implement in a unique system all the functionalities that lack in the single similar yet available applications and if the new contrived function to be implemented, can give a further boost for what concerns the linking between social technologies and solving of the food scarcity.

RECRUITING CRITERIA AND STRATEGY

The target criteria are defined in the "Define target audience" section.

The strategy will imply asking a possibility of interviewing to the owners / employees of grocery shops, soup kitchens and catering services.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

[Overarching Question]

1) What are the challenges about leftovers recycling?

2) How can it be useful would be to have a complete platform to manage the problem of food wasting?

[Introduction]

Hello, my name is Gabriele, and I'm here to comprehend better how do you face the food consumption, in particular, what is your attitude toward the nowadays food management.

This interview will take about one hour, during which time we'll go through some questions.

Throughout, I'd like you to treat me as if you're describing the situation to some who doesn't know very well this kind of issues. I'm here to learn from you.

Just a short introduction before we start: I'll keep all your comments confidential as much as possible. Me and my research team will uses lot of interviews like this one in a global way so your answers will not be easily traced to you.

If there will be the possibility to quote you in our final report, we will make sure you will not be identified by your name and/or your role. This interview is totally voluntary on your part, so you can stop it whenever you want with any repercussions for you of any kind; moreover, if there is anything you don't want me to take a note about, please let me know, and I can also discard all of my notes about what you have told me so far.

Please feel free to ask anything you want before we proceed. All right, then, let's start.

[Once the interview gets underway...]

Since I don't want to miss anything you say, I'd like to do an audio recording, do you agree? Only me and my research team will be able to access this recording. Thank you.

[Warm up]

How often do you use app for food delivery/redistribution?

In general, are you satisfied in nowadays social network pervading mechanisms?

[Culture of the food in a technology contest]

[core 1]

It could be interesting knowing about your last time on applications like "Food for all", "Olio" or on more commercial application as "JustEat", can you tell me something about that?

1 When was the last time you accessed this application?

2 Do you remember the reason why you logged in?

3 Do you remember if you were searching for a particular product and what it was?

[core 2]

What do you think is the best way to be aware of the new events about food in you area?

1 In case you use Facebook, how effective you think the "events" about food are?

2 How much comfortable do you think would be having a push notification on your device in case of the possibility to have free or low cost food from leftovers in your area?

3 Among the companies and shops you have in your area, do you think that any of them would be active in programming a "give away" event?

[core 3]

What do you think about the food management in the last decade?

1 Have you ever had the necessity to search for the lowest prices at your favourite grocery shop?

2 Do you think that the food waste has increased or decreased in the last year, by your experience? Why?

3 Do you think the balancing between political/geopolitical economics decision (customs, taxes, etc) and the appropriate care about population's needs, is satisfactory in your area?

[core 4]

Let's slightly switch to another issue: how much do you think would be useful in terms of economic growth giving to your local reseller the possiblity to sell leftovers?

1 How much powerful do you think would be good in terms of marketing?

2 Would you get some leftovers (even in the late evening) if they were free of charge (or almost) from the closest offerer?

3 How much do you think there is the risk for little grocery shops to be overwhelmed by the big food chains?

[core 5]

What would be the most powerful features you would like in an application specifically born to mix social awareness and food waste management?

1 What kind of recommendation would you like to receive in terms of trustfulnes by a food provider about leftovers quality?

2 What are the limits and the consensus in terms of privacy that the users (providers and consumers) should give to such application?

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3 How often would you use this application to share leftovers of your dinner/lunch with the people in your neighbourhood, for free or behind payment?

[Conclusion]

Thank you for answering my questions. I have for you. If anything else occurs to you after I leave, please don't hesitate to contact me by email. In the case, I would like to contact you again to ask a few more follow-up questions.

At the end of my research I can send you my results, if you want.

Do you have any other questions?

Thank you again!

REFERENCES

[1] https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/jan/10/half-world-food-waste

[2] https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.foodforall.foodforallapp

[3] https://olioex.com/

[4] https://toogoodtogo.co.uk/

[5] https://yourlocal.org/en/