EngComp 600 - Introduction to Technical Writing

Project 5 - Usability Study Report

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Abstract

This usability report relays findings about developing and studying the effectiveness of a manual developed to guide students through Pittsburgh's public transit system. This report digs into the manual, its development, and the user's response after its launch. This allows us to assess the success of the manual. This study will impact future versions and further development of the manual.

Intro

The developed manual helps guide users through the Pittsburgh Regional Transit, also known as PRT. This addresses the struggle many students new to Pittsburgh have to figure out the public transport system. This manual sets PRT users up for success. The manual teaches the basics and advises navigating the routes to some popular locations. The manual guides students on how to use the Bus, Trolly, and Pittsburgh's bike share program. Hosted on GitHub as an HTML website, the manual is easily accessible on the web or a mobile device. The simple design of the manual allows any user to quickly overcome the trouble of figuring out public transit. The accessibility and simplicity of the manual effectively launches users to navigate the PRT system with ease.

Process Description

This PRT manual was developed due to a need recognized at the University of Pittsburgh. The development team either personally had struggled at one point or knows a peer who had struggled to decipher the PRT system. This led to the development team's formation and a survey launch. The initial survey gathered information about University of Pittsburgh students' struggles with the PRT system. It also gathered information about popular destinations for the students. From the initial survey, the development team learned some of the top travel locations, including

downtown, grocery shopping, and Target. We also learned that these locations are also some of the top places people have trouble getting to.

     After this survey, the development team met to strategize the most effective way to tackle the manual. The end goal was established in this meeting, and tasks were divided to fit talents. As individual members worked, communication was consistent through messaging so problems could be tackled proactively. For my part, I was a copywriter. The success of this role relied heavily on working closely with other team members. This required an understanding of their roles and perspectives, as well as what they needed me to write to fulfill the goals of the manual. I learned that a project's success hinges on a group's communication ability. It also required me to hone my writing skills so that the manual would serve its purpose well. The most important part of the manual's development turned out to be the team's ability to work together. As we progressed, we met a few times, which always resulted in drastic improvements to the manual.

     Once the manual was up online via HTML, it was presented and distributed to our peers. A random group of the University of Pittsburgh students was then asked to participate in a usability study.
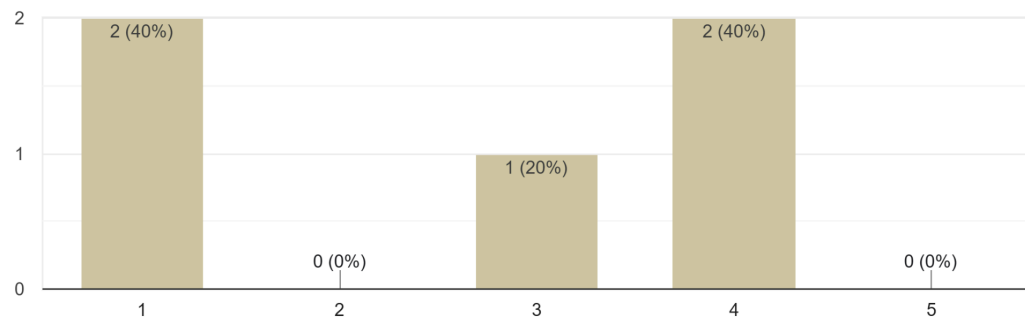
Usability Study Description

     A usability study was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the PRT manual. The survey investigated the user's ability to use the website and their response to the design of the website. To investigate the usability, the survey asked about navigation, consistency and restrictions. The survey also had a section to submit additional feedback. These questions show how the user interacts with the manual and it's navigability. To determine how users felt about the design, they were asked about the color scheme, balance and their visceral reaction to the site. From the design questions, we hoped to learn the users' response to the website's design and its themes. Over these questions, the survey used various ways to gather feedback. The survey asked users to answer yes/no and open-ended questions and rate their experiences. Randomly selected users were gathered from peers at the University of Pittsburgh and asked to respond to the survey.

Results and Recommendations

     Results from the user survey demonstrated the effectiveness of the manual. The users that were surveyed were first asked three questions about usability. The first question asked about the navigability of the manual. The user was prompted to rate it from one to five, one being "Easy to Navigate" and five being "Difficult to navigate." The results were not conclusive.

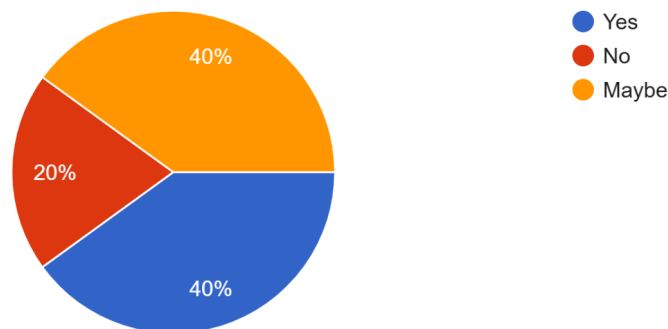Navigation: Could you find what you were looking for?
5 responses

The second question in the survey asked the user to rate the consistency of the out of five stars. The average rating was 4.6 stars. This indicates that the manual is consistent. The last question about usability asked the user about constraint. The results indicate that the manual constrained the user as expected. The next part of the survey asked for any additional feedback. The main feedback received was about the manual's design, which was the next part of the survey. The first design question asked the user to rate the color scheme of the out of five stars. The average rating was 3.4 stars. The next design question asked about the balance of the manual. The results were not conclusive.
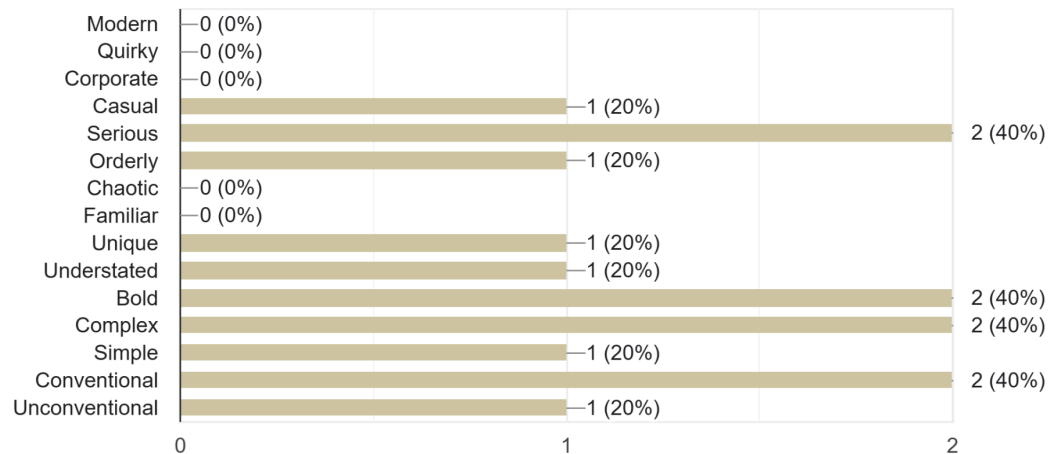
Would you Consider this Site Balanced?
5 responses

The last question asked the user about their first reaction to the aesthetics of the manual by suggesting some possible reactions. These results were also inconclusive.

What was your visceral reaction to the aesthetics?
5 responses

Reaction	Count
Modern	0 (0%)
Quirky	0 (0%)
Corporate	0 (0%)
Casual	1 (20%)
Serious	2 (40%)
Orderly	1 (20%)
Chaotic	0 (0%)
Familiar	0 (0%)
Unique	1 (20%)
Understated	1 (20%)
Bold	2 (40%)
Complex	2 (40%)
Simple	1 (20%)
Conventional	2 (40%)
Unconventional	1 (20%)

Based on the results, we recommend improving the manual's navigability to appeal more consistently to users. The development team should also overhaul the manual's aesthetics and color scheme. This could be achieved by taking some of the feedback received into consideration. The consistency and constraints of the manual should be maintained.

Appendix

Project Deliverable link:https://huyhuynh27.github.io/PRT-Training-Manual/
Project Repository: https://github.com/HuyHuynh27/PRT-Training-Manual
Usability test tool:https://forms.gle/Cusdq3tyFJRV3s9cA