Abridged description task analysis

Prices for housing has increased dramatically in recent years. Our application’s goal is to help students deal with this increase, by providing them with cheaper housing and entry level jobs.

We concluded that our potential users are majority female and not in financial difficulties. They have a good relationship with their parents (no one was kicked out) and can, for the most part, count on support from the community if anything goes wrong. Therefore, they are mostly looking for rooms to rent and not for jobs. Most had already looked for housing online, but many didn’t use university resources or personal connections.

This means that we should follow other services’ lead and copy the overall feel of their interfaces. In most related services, the initial page contains a simplified search feature, that serves as a call to action. We also use this feature. However, we can’t just copy everything they offer, otherwise why use our product and not theirs?

Our vision for the app must include a social aspect and not be strictly a business transaction. We decided to target not the owners of the rooms themselves (who will tend to be older), but other students who had seen learned about a good opportunity but couldn’t take it. We envision our product being used like this:

Therefore, while we can allow “outsiders” to use our product, we only need to optimize the interface for young, somewhat unmotivated Portuguese people.

Prototype

We developed an interface covering the following pages:

Home Page (initial call to action)

This is the page we copied from other interfaces. Its goal is to make the initial step of searching something easier, redirecting people to the search page, where they can complete the search.

Search Page

This is the page where the search results are displayed. There is an option to filter and order, offers are not yet clickable.

Create Offer Page

This is the page where people can add new offers. Since the interface is the same and the pages are simple, they are implemented for both housing and employment.

Profile

We wanted to affirm our product’s identity here, focusing on the student’s experience: making it clear that you can share other people’s offers and rewarding in some (emotional) way active users.

We had a lot of ideas to implement here, however, these features aren’t related to any task. While this would probably be the most important section of our product to test if we wanted to bring it to market (we need to prove our initial hypothesis: students are willing to share opportunities they see with strangers), we are testing the interface, therefore it doesn’t matter as much.

We gave up after making initial profile and login and registrations pages, but decided to keep them in the prototype.

Heuristic Evaluation

Small Fonts and Forms Problems

We agree that these issues affect readability and make our application stressful to use. We increased the fonts to a minimum of 16 (more than double in some cases). The description input box in add offer will increase (read next section to see why) and receive a sliding bar on its right side and some transparency at the edges, to better indicate that it is only focusing a portion of the text

Missing Features

Most of the complaints from group 2 are included in this class of problems. They assigned it a total severity of 13. Group 4 didn’t give it as much weight, with only a total severity of 7. Add Offer is incomplete and, therefore, the worst page. It’s missing an upload image option and it isn’t clear that the description doesn’t need to completely fit into its box. Regarding the attributes we don’t see the problem as not having enough options (if we added more, there’d be complaints about having too many) but rather as lacking customization. The attributes are fixed and sometimes different offers need to highlight different aspects. 7 Search Offer suffers from not clearly highlighting selected attributes (a result of the small font: the change in color isn’t very noticeable) and not having a search bar. The user needs to go back to the home page to use the one there, which doesn’t make sense. And finally, the home page can be unintuitive when using it for the first time. No labels, placeholders, or indications are provided and the user can be left feeling lost, for at least a few moments. This is especially bad when we consider that this page is supposed to serve as a call to action, an initial and simpler interface for the Search Offer feature

Navigation Problems

The user should be able to tell which page he’s currently in. We have our reservations with group 2’s feedback: our idea was that by making several redundant navigation options all tastes would be satisfied.