P2: Interviews and Observations

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Section 1

Target user:
For the application user, we are targeting at people who belong to Millennial Generation (born from 1981 to 1996) and Post-Millennial (born from 1997 and later) and who are currently still a student in college or high school. We are targeting on people who have his/her own mobile device and already develop a habit of using their mobile device daily for communication and entertainment. The major and field they study or work for does not matter, but they can use mobile device proficiently and explore Apps by themselves freely. Also, they should have limited budget in their expense and cannot really afford buying trees and planting trees in needing areas by themselves. Lastly, they should care about environment and have the awareness to do things that would help improve environmental issues.

Interview Notes and Reflections:
Interview 1 (Jennifer):
1. About the Interviewee:
I interviewed one of my female friend, who is currently a graduate student at Medill studying marketing. She is 23 and uses her phone daily for communication, videos, social posts, exercise tracking, online shopping and payment and many other functions that mobile applications may provide. She has used Ant Forest (A competitor' platform based in China and built inside Alipay application) for 2 years. She really loves using the app and already plant 2 virtually trees. Now she is not using it that much, but still goes to the platform now and then.
She is a good representative, because she is in Millennial Generation and already developed a habit of depending on mobile device for daily communication and entertainment. Her previous actions showed that she cares about environment and are familiar with online gaming activities.
2. Task
I asked her to help me set up my account in the Ant Forest app and describe features that she thinks would be necessary for me to know.
3. Notes
(Pain Points) When she went into the app, as she was trying to describe features that she wanted to introduce me to, she opened a tab named "tool" and was quite **confused**. She said "I never used this and do not understand what it is for." So she just closed that tab and went on introducing other features.
Later when I asked her to reflect, she explained that she did not read through the long instruction page about how to use the tool, so even if she knows that maybe the tool could be helpful, she just find it too complex to figure it out. So she just left it the way it is.
(Pain Points) When she tried to show me one of the major feature, which is to collect energy, she said that "Oh wait, I cannot do that, because now is not 7 am in China. See that's why I do

not use it in US, because the time does not match and I am always not sure when to collect energy. I used to collect it every morning at 7 am"

This is something that she find surprising because she assumed that the time would adjust as the time on her phone adjust and she would still be able to know the exact time that she can collect tree. However, when she came to US, she find that the time counter is still China time, leaving her grade and activity record in a mess. The **confusing** time change is one of the reason she quitted the app now.

(Enjoyable Experience) When she helped me set up and entered the main page, she scrolled down excitedly to show me that I can steal energy from my friend's tree and leave a trick note that says" Hey, you are too lazy today". She find the feature that lets her to interact and compete with her friends really intriguing and interesting.

Later when I asked her to reflect, she said that this is one of the activities that she and her best friend do for fun every day in the morning. They set the clock at seven and wake up to compete who is early enough to steal the other's energy. She also loves the tags on the app that are fun and interactive.

(Interesting Observation) When she showed me another feature, which is to track the real tree planted on the earth, she was quite excited to show me where her own trees are planted on the planet. When I asked "How do you they really plant it", she showed me the tree number and a virtual map location.

Later when I asked her to reflect, she said that the tree number and planet indeed cannot guarantee that real trees were planted, but she saw videos and posts saying that some customers actually went there and saw their tree. So she thinks that the tree are indeed planted.

Reflections:

1. The design should be unified and adjust to any possible location or life-style change
Because this competitor's app and our app both involve track and involve the daily activity of users, adjustment like time zone is necessary to consider if we want the application be usable in the long-term.

2. The design of features should be straight-forward enough to not have lengthy explanation
The tab that my interviewee never used in the app was the one that has long explanation and may provide certain functions. For functions that are not essential, a long instruction would really keep the user aways and make the user confused and worried when they play. When we are designing, we should provide a few essential functions and make sure we choose the right icons or graphics to avoid lengthy texts.

3. No need to provide too much certificate feature to show the real tree
I was quite surprised to find that she believe that the real tree is there just with information of the tree number, virtual map and social posts. Therefore, in our design, I think our primary concern needs not to be how to prove the real trees are planted, thus leaving more space to focus on the virtual tree design and draw user attention to the platform and the encourage pro-environmental actions.

4. The competition and interaction with friends are key motivation drivers

From the behaviors my interviewee had with her friend, we can see how much fun the experience had brought to them. I was quite surprised to find that such competition system can encourage them to wake up at 7 and just to win more energy. Just imagine how much such motivation can help them do more pro-environment activities. The interaction with friends through competition and leaving fun notes to each other's page can be an area that we can innovatively design and utilize.

Interview 2(Guan):

1. About the Interviewee:

Guan is one of my female best friends, who is a graduate student major in Electrical Engineering. She is 22 years old and really loves to chat with friends through internet. She is passionate about environmental charity. She has been a volunteer of Beijing Botanic Garden, who is responsible for rubbish and garbage collection. Moreover, when the spring comes, she will always planting trees and watering flowers with her volunteer friends.

Since she is a faithful environmentalist as well as a frequently mobile phone user, she is a good representative. And also, getting along with friends makes her really happy, so by interviewing and observing her, we can make more thoughts about social media on our website.

2. Task:

I asked her to teach me how to use the Ant Forest app, and which part she loves most or not satisfied about .

3. Notes:

(Pain Points) When she was reading the instruction manual, she was surprised that there are a lot of ways to accomplish a tree, which she did not know before. But she also wrinkled her brow and said that "Wow, I even did not know it before."

Later when I asked her to reflect, she explained that maybe Ant Forest app can send some ad push to the user to let them know the new way to collect energy point. She also told me that maybe this app is too commercial, since the energy point we can get by walking is less than the energy point we can get by paying online. She thought that a big company has the responsibility to contribute to the environmental protection of the entire society.

(Pain Points) She invited me to join her to grow a tree together with her. She was also pleasant to let me invite my friend as well. But, when she clicked the button of "Grow a tree with your friend", only the administrator can invite people. She feel so sorry that I can not invite my own friend.

(Pain Points) When she introduced kinds of trees that can be planted, I noticed that she was really excited about that. Then I asked her "Do you know what are the differences between these kinds of trees?". She told me that she wants to know too.

Later when I asked her to reflect, she explained that environmental protection requires knowledge on that. Since this is an app to encourage people to protect environment, promoting

environmental knowledge is of great importance. She said that if she were the designer of this app, she would briefly introduce some related information of this tree.

(Enjoyable Experience) She thought that ''stealing'' energy from her friends makes her excited. And she laughed and said that this feature kind of encourage her to get up early in the morning. She said that when the app is becoming a game, it will be really attractive. And also, when she finished growing the virtual tree for the first time, she had a really huge sense of achievement. The certificate of the tree, the location her tree is on the map are all excited her. She realized that if everyone does a little green everyday, the world can be better.

Reflection:
1. The app can provide some additional energy point when the user is using a novel feature, which is a good way for encouraging people pay close attention to the app as well as a new way to make our life greener.
2. Some features such as growing trees with friends need to be updated to a more general and open way.
3. Maybe we can design some features for promoting environmental knowledge, which is helpful for people get a whole idea of environmental protection.

Interview 3 (Sheng):
1. About the interviewee:
He is a graduate student in Computer Science at Northwestern University. He is 24 years old and has 10+ years computer user experience, so he is good at using smart phone app, computer, etc. Since he is also aware of environment, I decide to share our idea to him.
2. Task:
I asked him to use Ant Forest app and tell me about how he felt. It should include what design he likes in this app and what design is not clear for users.
3. Notes:
(Pain points) He thought the credits we need to earn in this app are not clear. He didn't know what the credit unit "g" means. It doesn't make sense for any units we use in the real world. When he tried to learn how to earn the credits, he found that it is hard for users to understand how to earn these credits to plant a tree. They didn't provide a clear tutorial for new users.
(Pain points) For UI design, he thought they didn't provide a complete goal we need to achieve. For example, why we need to earn the credits? what will happen when the tree grows up? He didn't understand what the main function is.
(Pain points) He also mentioned that the buttons are not shown clearly. He thought the buttons should be visible and noticeable for users; however, they put the buttons in the corners. Users cannot see it and notice it directly.
(Enjoyable experience) When he was trying any functions in this app, he found that we can press the tree shown in the main page. When we press it, the tree would reply something. It seems the tree is talking to us. He thought it is fun for users. He also found that we can plant a

tree with another friend. We don't need to earn the whole credits by ourselves. It is also a good way for users to interact with each other. Finally, he thought the color in the main page is comfortable because the colors are harmonious.

Reflection:

1.   We can define a credit unit for users which is clear about what it means. For example, in our tutorial, we will show how many credits are earned by how many steps you walk.

2.   The app can provide a tutorial for new users. It can help users to understand what their goal is and what they should do. We also need to convey our awareness of environment to users. Everyone is responsible for our environment.

Interview 4 (Tzu):

1. About

He is currently a master's student in EECS department studying Computer Engineering. He is 27 years old and has more than fifteen years computer user experience, so he has high level understanding using smart phone app, computer, etc.

2. Task

I asked him to use Ant Forest app and tell me about how he felt. The answer should be about the features of the app design and the user experience.

3. Note

(Pain points) He thought the UI design in this app is messy. There are too many information on the main page. Users can't understand what they mean at first time. For example, it is hard to understand the relationship between size of the tree and the credits. Besides, they don't know what the purpose is of this app. There is no a clear goal for users.

(Pain points) The buttons shown in the main page are not clear. It is not noticeable for users. We don't know they are buttons or not in the beginning.

(Enjoyable experience) He thought the user interface design that shows the ranking of other users is great and fun. We can see our friends' achievement and their ranking. This app also produces a feature that shows the activities of other users. Both of these functions provide a good interaction with different users. We can also use the map in the app to see where we can plant our tree. It is very interesting.

Reflection:

1.   We should design a clean user interface. For example, the buttons or any important information should be visible and clear. Everyone can learn it and understand shortly.

2.   We can design some features that allow users to interact with each other. When they have more interaction with their friends, it will increase the app usage.