Before you get started with users [+4]

1. [+1] As a group, discuss any assumptions you have about your users or usage contexts.

Consider aspects such as language, age, dis/ability, indoors/outdoors, alone vs. small group vs. family vs. large social gathering, etc. Write a summary of your discussion and a clear statement of your assumptions going into user research.

We assume that the users are regular Internet users, and have run into cookie popups before. We also assume that there is a difference in perception vs. reality, and that people who claim to be familiar with cookies may not really know what they do.

2. [+1] As a group, share any hunches you want to test or unknown/open-ended questions you want to answer through user research. Summarize your discussion, listing out 2-3 things you want to learn through user research.

We suspect that older users are more likely to be unfamiliar with cookies and the data they track. We also suspect that users find the EU-mandated cookie pop-ups to be annoying, and would like to confirm the above hunches. We want to see if there is a need for some sort of plugin that would help educate users about cookies being used on a site, and we want to see if users find cookie popups to be annoying enough to demonstrate a need for a plugin like Simplify for job applications, a one-size-fits-all plugin to automatically fill out a user's cookie preferences on all sites. We also suspect that users who don't know much about cookies may want to learn more about cookies.

3. [+1] Based on your discussion above, pick a method/s. Write 1-3 sentences justifying your methodological choice. You can employ multiple methods or just one. Make sure your response answers: How are these methods going to help you understand the problem you are trying to address? How will each method allow you (or prevent you) from reaching users of interest?

We are picking a survey because our area of scope is very broad at the moment, and we want to use a survey to narrow down this scope. By conducting a survey, it is easier to recruit a larger sample to fill out the survey on their own time. The survey allows us to get a large set of data to understand general cookie knowledge and pain points of experiences with cookies (such as cookie popups, etc.)

4. [+1] Write your user research protocol. Consider the following:

- Recruitment strategy (e.g., whom to contact, how to contact, how many)
    - We advocate around people that we know, friends, friend's parents, discord servers

    - We try to get a diverse sample set (younger people, older people, non-tech, etc.)
- Time and place for each user research session (e.g., “in the afternoons, in person, in a meeting room”)
    - It is conducted online
- Each member’s role and responsibilities (e.g., For interviews: interviewer, note-taker, discussant, etc.)
    - We all designed the surveys and sent them out to different groups of people, as well as edited the responses in this submission
    - Joseph: analyzed initial data from surveys and wrote up findings, as well as a persona and scenario
    - Beide: Drew up storyboard
    - Kalyan: Worked on process map / task analysis

Conducting user research [+5]

1. Write and submit ~0.5-1p of notes for each user research session OR initial analysis of survey results

Here are some rough guidelines for how many users you should reach:

- 10 users/groups of users for interviews

- 25 users/responses for surveys

- 5 users to conduct contextual inquiries that are at least 1 hour in duration

- some combination of the above (talk to instructor to make sure that you're reaching enough potential users)

Users of all age groups and backgrounds are rather familiar with cookies. While users may not know about the details of cookies (for example, types of cookies and what they do), it seems like many of these users know to use extensions (ad blockers, etc.) in order to manage their cookie usage. Users seem to want more information about what cookies are active and a general explanation of what cookies are doing on a given page.

Many users do not engage in best practices with cookies: most users rarely clear their browsing data. Also, most people usually only accept essential cookies when prompted, and find the cookie pop-ups to be annoying, though not to the extent where they will leave the site that has the cookie pop-up. In general, cookies are perceived negatively.

After you get started with user research [+4]

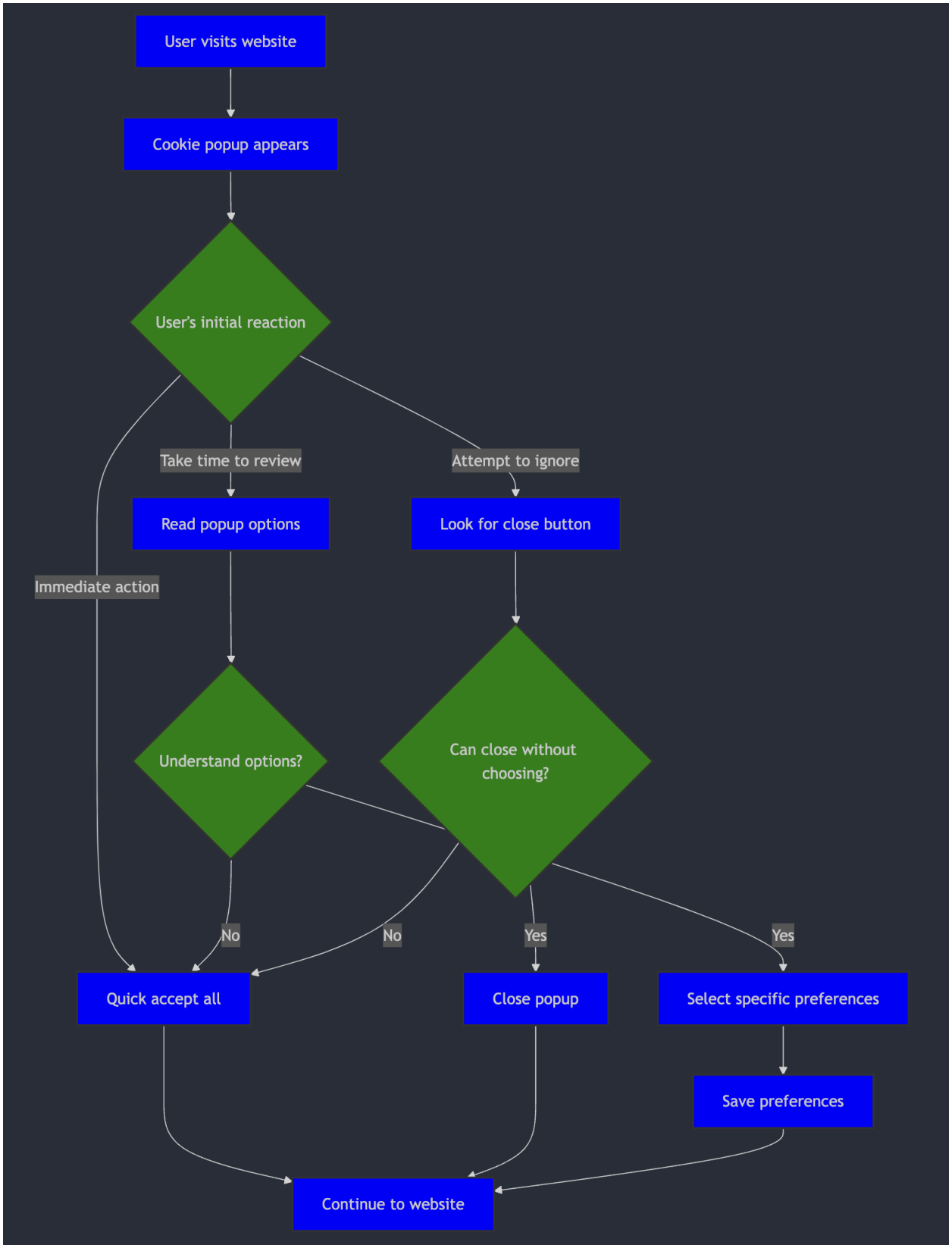
1. [+2] Synthesize your user research into:
    1. [+1] Personas + Scenarios (at least one persona, one scenario)

    Persona: Alice is a professional who uses technology and is aware of cookies. She finds cookie pop-ups annoying, and does not engage in best practices for managing cookies (such as clearing cookies, etc.). While she is aware of cookies, she does not know about the specifics of what data is collected by each type of cookie.

    Scenario: Alice is sent an intriguing article from a friend, and clicks on the link to read the article. Upon opening the link, she is presented with an intrusive cookie pop-up, preventing her from reading the article until she selects her cookie preferences. Trying to close the pop-up as quickly as possible, she clicks “accept all” without understanding what data is being collected about her.

    2. [+1] Process map or more in-depth task analysis (at least one)

    We created an in-depth task analysis below as a flow chart


User visits website
Cookie popup appears
User's initial reaction
Immediate action
Take time to review
Attempt to ignore
Read popup options
Look for close button
Understand options?
Can close without choosing?
No
No
Yes
Yes
Quick accept all
Close popup
Select specific preferences
Save preferences
Continue to website

2. [+1] Articulate a problem statement. A problem statement should illuminate the core of the issue you observe. Often, there is a contrastive tension between what users want to do and what their current tools require them to do. If you cannot articulate this yet, describe why you think you are not able to converge yet, what promising directions to follow up with additional user research and feedback might be, and what steps you think you should take next.
    1. Tip: Rely on your process map. What is it telling you about what users want to do vs. have to do?
    2. Double check: Does your storyboard communicate/highlight this core tension?

    Many users are becoming aware of web cookies but lack a clear understanding of their function and implications. While about half of internet users recognize the existence of cookies, their knowledge is often superficial, leading to indifference or frustration when prompted to accept or manage them.

    This creates a contrastive tension: users want a seamless and secure browsing experience but are frequently interrupted by cookie consent requests that they do not fully comprehend or engage with. On the other hand, websites need user consent to comply with privacy regulations, often resulting in poorly designed or intrusive prompts that prioritize legal compliance over user experience.

3. [+1] Storyboard of how your proposed system could address the core problem. This is where you begin to imagine a prototype to address the core problem you identified.

On Next Page


How to make cheese cake
cookie
COOKIE CONSENT ON WEBSITE
ACCEPT
DECLINE
cookies ? for cake?
COOKIE
This website uses these cookies
based on your preference, we have allowed

Reflection [+3]

1. [+1] Look back at your assumptions (in the “Before you get started with users” section). Has your user research contradicted or challenged any of these assumptions? If so, which ones? How?

User research has challenged the assumption that people who don’t know about cookies want to learn more about how cookies work. To some extent, the assumption that there is a difference between the perception of cookie knowledge vs. the reality was also incorrect; while no users identified that they knew about the various types of cookies in our survey, many users did actually respond that they use certain extensions and features to deal with cookies, suggesting that their perception is somewhat accurate: they know that cookies track their data and know how to manage those settings, just that they don’t know about the specifics of how cookies work.

2. [+1] What does your user research tell you about what kinds of interactive systems/solutions are unlikely to be useful/successful? Why not? Any hypotheses about what features of an interactive system will be useful? Why?

User research suggests that tools that aim to educate users about how cookies work are unlikely to be successful. We specifically targeted users who were less likely to be technologically well-versed, focusing on users in older age groups and users who were not primarily working / studying in STEM. For example, we targeted non-tech parents, as well as professional musicians. Even so, we found that the vast majority of users knew about cookies, and that a large proportion of the respondents were not interested in learning more about *how* cookies work.

We suspect that an interactive system which shows users what cookies are active on a site and what data they are collecting would be useful. Users responded that they were generally interested in such explanations. Additionally, an interactive system that automatically fills in cookie pop-ups may be useful; the vast majority of respondents said that the cookie pop-ups are annoying, despite it not impacting their likelihood of using the site.

Another potential avenue to explore would be to create a browser plugin which automatically clears your browsing history/cookies / etc at a customizable period. Most people who responded to the survey do not clear their browsing history regularly (nor do some of the people conducting this survey…).

3. [+1] What questions do you have about your users? What hunches or hypotheses do you have about promising solutions? What is one thing you can do to begin answering these questions?

Questions:

- Does a more intrusive cookie pop-up make you more likely to accept all cookies?
- Does a less intrusive cookie pop-up make you more likely to ignore the pop-up?
- Do users ever read the privacy policy linked with these cookie pop-ups?

It seems that a Chrome extension would reach many users; based on our survey a slim majority of users used Chrome (far more than any other browser). Ideally, we would have a cross-platform extension, but given the limited time, a Chrome extension would probably reach the most users.

It seems like while there is some knowledge of what cookies do, many users do not follow best practices (including clearing browser data, etc.), so this could also be an avenue to follow (perhaps an extension that automatically clears browsing data every X days)

To answer these questions, we can interview users (depth assignment) with these detailed questions.

4. Did you use a generative AI tool for any part of this assignment? If so, which one and how?

No.

5. How much time did you spend on this assignment as a group? Individually?

    As a group, we spent approximately 5-6 hours collaboratively working on the write-ups, drafting survey questions, and refining our understanding of the study.

    Individually, each of us dedicated about 2 hours to independent write-ups and an additional 2 hours conducting interviews.

Additional group depth exercises

Each member in the group who participates in the below will receive the depth points.

- [+1] Conduct an additional round of user research with another method, involving at least 5 more users. Analyze the data.
  - 1 Joseph
  - https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XlcGg3_80ob6m_9xNluyfN-yCG6SjVB0NcEhHx46Vgg/edit?usp=sharing
  - 2 Kalyan
- ~~[+1] Meet with a community partner + come up with a plan for continued engagement with them.~~
- ~~[+1] Depth: Interview 2 experts. Synthesize this new information.~~
- ~~[+1] Depth: Talk to a local LA startup about your project. I recommend 2 group members (max) in a meeting with an LA start up. Share the contact information for people you met with + notes you took during/after the meeting.~~
- ~~[+2] Complete IRB training + submit an IRB to cover your project. Every team member must do this. Talk to the instructor about this.~~