

Human Computer Interaction

Review of Project Groups 6 & 7

Group 5

1 Group 6: University of Birmingham Homepage

1.1 Synopsis

This group argues that the University of Birmingham website is poorly designed and as a result fails to attract potential students. They set out to design a new website interface that tackles these problems and provides a better experience for these users.

1.2 Strengths of the Work

- The group evaluated many examples of related work, i.e. university websites
- Their research also includes principles of web design, and how information should be displayed on a web page.
- The scenarios created covered a wide-range of needs.
- The group conducted thorough evaluations of first generation prototypes using user personas and scenarios

1.3 Weakness of the Work

- In researching related work, they neglected to evaluate websites other than university websites. Furthermore, in their conclusion of this research they did not outline which features in particular they would consider taking forward into their own design.
- After opting to focus only on students, there was still little variation between their individual user personas. For example, each of the personas were technically proficient.
- Their first generation prototypes were largely very similar, particularly prototypes 2 and 3, apart from some variations in the positions of the links. This could be a symptom of having researched only university websites.
- Again, in their conclusion they did not highlight which features they would take forward from the first prototypes to the second prototype.
- They did not explain how they would evaluate their first prototypes. In particular, they used heuristic evaluations (page 36) before explaining why they would be using them (page 66).

1.4 Summary

The group set out to improve the university's website by focussing on the needs of students. Their research covered a number of other university websites and principles of web design. However, the

research and initial prototypes focussed solely on the homepage, whereas the group attempted to redesign other pages in the second prototype. This led to design inconsistencies between different pages. Focussing on a few good examples of university websites (or other websites) and researching them more thoroughly by looking at subpages and using their findings in their prototypes may have helped them achieve their goal.

2 Group 7: Clothes Shopping Online

2.1 Synopsis

This group wants to create an online clothes shopping experience tailored to women who are unsure of what size to choose and whether it will flatter their particular figure. This system aims to make it easier to buy clothes that fit well and give women confidence that the clothes they buy will look how they imagined without having to try them on first.

2.2 Strengths of the Work

- The initial research of existing websites was very thorough. A large number of different clothes shops with from a range of different target audiences were examined.
- A specific and detailed evaluation plan was used.
- Complete and detailed user profiles for a range of ages with clear scenarios which outline several interesting possible use cases.
- Thorough evaluation of first generation prototypes using user scenarios.

2.3 Weakness of the Work

- There is no related research into design principles and general guidelines. Also no research into online shopping websites which are not directly clothes related.
- Same prototyping tool used for all prototypes, and not much variation between first generation prototypes. This group failed to take advantage of exploring different designs and using the strengths from each one to develop a more improved design
- There is no clear definition of the aim of the project in the project specification.
- The group did not use a system usability test to analyse their results after real users experimented with their system. Their results were also nowhere to be seen.
- User scenarios did not cover a wide range of use cases, eg product sold out, email notifications for back in stock, refunding an item, etc.

2.4 Summary

The research of existing products encompassed a large number of existing systems and plans for the evaluation of the products to be designed in this project were thorough and clearly well thought through with respect to the end users of the system. However, since there were so many already existing websites that provide this functionality, the final prototype did not seem to offer much that was radically different, or that would make this system better or easier to use than the competition.