

USER INTERVIEWS

RESEARCH GOALS

- To learn about the users' attitudes towards apps in general. What kind of apps they like and dislike and why is it so?
- To gain overview about the context where the users normally search for expert help. How do they usually do it? How often they find themselves in such situations?
- To gather information about the users' view about expertise. What kind of people are experts? What is to expect of them? What is important for having both helpful and pleasant encounter with an expert?
- To learn about the general attitudes and opinions about the expert app. What would be expected of such a service? How the users would like it to work?

INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Introduction

Hi! My name is Mikael and I'm going to carry out this interview about the new app that we are developing. To put it short, it's a mobile and web service for people in need for expert help. We are still at very early stages in the development so the interview consists of quite general questions. The session is likely to take around 20-30 minutes.

Before starting, I want to make clear that this is not a test. You cannot say or do anything wrong. So, that is something you shouldn't worry about. Our goal is just to gain some general information about the attitudes and thoughts of our potential users. This interview will be used for that purpose only. If you have any questions or if you want to take a break at any time, please let me know.

As a last thing, I would like to ask for your permission to record this session. It would help me a great deal in analysing the answers afterwards. Like I said, the record will be used only for the purpose of developing the app.

OK, so let's get started!

Questions

1. Please, tell me a bit about yourself. How old are you? Are you a student or professional?
2. Do you use a lot of mobile or web apps? For which purposes these apps are usually?
3. What do you like about the apps you use? You can think of some app you particularly like. And what do you dislike? What about apps in general? What kind of things you like in an app and what not?
4. OK, now I am going to change the subject a bit. I would like to know about situations where you have needed help or advice from an expert. When was the last time that happened? What did you do? Were you successful in finding the answers?
5. How often do you find yourself in such a situation? With what kind of questions you would like someone to help you? How do you usually approach these matters?
6. Which kind of experts are most difficult to reach? Would you be ready to pay for their help and advices?
7. I would like to know more about your idea of expertise in general. So, who do you consider an expert? What makes him or her an expert?
8. What makes you trust an expert then? How do you know that they meet your conditions? What would you like to know before accepting their help?
9. How do imagine a helpful and pleasant encounter with an expert of some field? What is important for you? Can you describe how it would be?
10. So, now in the end, I would like to ask a couple of questions about the app that we creating. So we are developing a platform where one can reach experts of various fields in order to ask for their assistance. What do you think about such a service? Would it be of any help for you?
11. If you had such an app, how would you use it? How would you like to communicate with the experts? In which kind of circumstances?
12. Do you have any expectations for such a service? What would be important for you? How do you imagine it to work in an ideal situation?

INTERVIEW NO.1

Name: Joana

Age: 33

Occupation: Online Editor

Nationality: German

Location: Berlin



1. [see bio]
2. Perhaps in comparison to other people, I have relatively few apps. I use the basic ones, like maps and weather apps. For my work I use several social media apps. Sometimes I download certain apps but then I realise that I don't actually ever use them. I downloaded some meditation apps which I have used quite a bit. Then some children apps for my daughter when she wants to play. I had a pregnancy app when I was pregnant. That helped me a lot to keep informed what was going on.
3. I think I like it when they are not too complicated. With any app, where I feel like I need to read a lot or to inform myself how it works, I get quite quickly impatient. An app is something that is supposed to be something small, easy and accessible for my daily life. To give me information. The apps I like, they give me straightforward the information that I need and kind of make my life easier. I like apps that inform me about things. I need the feeling that they are useful and not that I am wasting my time with them. They should not take too much of my time.
4. The first thing that comes to my mind are the administration things. So, that could be for example applying for the *Kindergeld* for my daughter or getting the voucher for the kindergarten. Everything to do with the public administration in Berlin. Or to get information about the employment things. I recently tried to do that for my husband. Or things to do with insurance or taxes. So all this day-to-day administration stuff which is very complicated. It is really difficult to get a hold of a person who can give you an expert advice...
5. [see question 4.]
6. ...I would even be ready to pay for it if I had an expert who would tell me, say, how to deal with my tax issues, or this and that. It is so complicated. You have to look at several places and you have questions for which you just can't find the written

answers. These practical matters. It would be great to have some kind of help with them. That is one example. Another that I can think of is that we recently bought a house and I try to inform myself about the renovations, building, contractors and so on. This whole field is so new to me and it would be very helpful to have an expert advising me. I was using one app, myHammer, that was putting me in contact with firms that can make an offer, but they didn't provide any expert advice. They were just telling me that this is the firm that can do it and so, but they couldn't answer any of my questions.

7. I feel like nowadays there is this movement of moving further away of people being experts to people being more generalists. The information works differently. Before people needed to know things by heart, now you can just go to internet for all kinds of information. So for me an expert would not necessarily have to be someone who has studied something. For example, if I need help in renovating my house, I don't necessarily need someone who has studied building. Maybe he just needs to have the access to the knowledge in general or to some other person who has it. He can just make it available for me. I think the problem nowadays is more the accessing the right information, because there is some much of it. So an expert for me would be giving me this piece of information that I can then rely on, that is correct, and I wouldn't have to do all the work looking at different places and compare the information. An expert would have a reliable access to information and he would deliver it to me. He doesn't have to know everything or he doesn't have to have studied it in-depth. He can even say that he cannot answer my question right away but he will find out or refer me to some colleague of his.
8. I guess references. So other people saying that this person has helped them to achieve what they were looking for. And making it transparent. Who or what is there behind the information? What is there on the background? It does not have to be the person I am talking to but he would have to have some expertise on the background. Like people working at the moment on this issue in real life. So that I have the feeling that the information is up-to-date and that there are actually people working on the matter on daily basis and know the latest developments and how the things are changing. So a person giving me the advice would not have to be the architect himself but at least a person who is constantly talking to architects and seeing how things are developing there.
9. In those situation where I have been, I have often had the feeling that people are telling me all kind of things but not really answering my actual question. So I think I would have to have the feeling that my question is actually being answered. Of

course I would like them to be polite and have a nice exchange, but more importantly I would like to have the feeling that I am getting the quickest possible way to the answer to my question. So I would rather have that someone says that he cannot answer my question right away but that he will find out than someone giving me a lot of information which is not actually what I really need.

10. The idea of an expert app attracts me, because I feel that it would be of actual use to me. It would be useful and improve my daily life. Like the apps I talked about earlier. It would help me in filtering the information, not like Google that just gives a lot of information but you don't know what is right. Kind of like curated and vetted information that I know that I can trust.
11. I can imagine using chat, because I started to use chat at work. We have this social network channel with a chat function and I am kind of used to use it. It is usually fast and not too complicated. It is quite practical. So you just type your question in and then wait for the answer and then like perhaps 20 minutes or half an hour later you get the answer. And during that time you can continue with other work. I do like the phone still. Talking to a person. Especially in certain situations, when they are a bit more complicated. Because I feel that, when you talk to someone, you can explain things in more detail, you can explain the context better than when you are writing, and they can ask you questions back very easily. So I would like that option for certain situations. With chat it is good that you can attach documents and stuff. And then perhaps later have the conversation on the phone.
12. I would expect the app to be quite fast. I mean that that would also be the challenge for such an app, because our expectations are that the information is reached fast. I can imagine that there needs to be some kind registration process or whatever the first time I use it, but then once I have done that I would like it to be easy and accessible. I wouldn't want to register all the time again. It would be nice to have an account that, when I get in touch with people, they already know who I am and my previous situations, maybe the question that I have asked before. I would expect it to be like a service center. Like you have when you are a client buying a product, like with your phone contract when they know who you are already when you are calling. There should be a good customer management system where they recognise me. But that is just the ideal. I am not saying that it would be easy to put together. It would be expensive too but then you just needed to ask for money. But that is something for which I would be really willing to pay. You cannot expect that the expert help would be free. After all, they have worked hard for that.

INTERVIEW NO.2

Name: Dominik

Age: 42

Occupation: Lawyer

Nationality: German

Location: Berlin



1. [see bio]
2. I use apps mostly for information, news, messaging, weather, travel, maps, booking, some games and translating.
3. I like it when I find things very easily. They must lead the user properly. Sometimes apps have too much information. That makes it difficult.
4. Recently I wanted to build something and wasn't sure if I could use a certain screw on a certain type of wall.
5. I would say medical things. When I feel something weird in my body. Or with my child. When I don't know what to do in a certain situation. Sometimes legal things too. And tax. It is quite difficult to find answers. I go online, but I don't know which sites are trustworthy. Who is really an expert and who is just sharing his personal opinions? The reliability of the information is important.
6. When I think about this app, I would think that it is difficult to pay for help that you get free elsewhere. Like medical help. In Germany, you can go to doctor for free. Only advantage of such an app would be that the help would be right there. Like if you just have something little to show and don't want to leave the house, but then the experts much be reachable on short notice. But for legal and tax things it would be okay to pay. For building and constructing stuff, I am not sure if I would pay for that.
7. Training. Like for medicine, someone who went to med school. Lawyer who studied law. For tax questions someone who is a tax advisor. Or years of practicing the job. Especially when it comes to building and renovation. That is even more important.
8. Some CV information. To see where the training and experience come from. Where they studied and worked and so on.

9. Precise answers. Practically usable information. Not something like "bla bla bla bla bla bla". I know that it is difficult sometimes, for example with a certain a bit unclear medical condition, but at least you need to be able to give the right lead or to ask the right questions. You should be able to come to a recommendation quite quickly.
10. It would be cool. I think that it is something that doesn't exist in the market so far and it would give extra value. Now you have to type the question in internet and hope that the answers match your question, but you don't get direct help.
11. I would imagine that you first need to find a general field and then to go through several experts. Then you choose the one who could have the answer and type in the question. And then get the answer. And then, when there is more in-depth information required, there is perhaps a function to call the experts. To speak directly with them.
12. I think that, what is critical, is having a sufficient amount of experts who are available on short term. So that you don't have to wait for the answer for like two hours and maybe you don't even know if you will ever get an answer. Then you would start to look for the answer elsewhere. That would be critical. It is difficult to relax and wait for two hours if you don't even know if you are going to get the answer in the end.

INTERVIEW NO.3

Name: Julie

Age: 27

Occupation: Marketing

Nationality: French

Location: Toulouse



1. [see bio]
2. I use apps for online banking a lot. I buy stuff online, I got Amazon and Vintage, for instance, to sell clothes. I use Facebook, Instagram and photo apps. And GoogleMaps a lot. I don't have apps just in order to have apps. I just have the ones

that have some purpose. When I travel, I use the Ryanair or Easyjet app a lot, because they are really useful. When I read news, for instance, I do it on my laptop.

3. I really like the online banking app, because it is a lot quicker to log in in comparison to the laptop, while I can use my fingerprints. I like it because it is really secure and fast. I don't like apps that look too much like websites. When there is too much writing. I like them when they are really visual, really easy to use.
4. So, I looked for an expert advice when I got a medical condition. I know it is really bad, but I always go to these websites to check what I have. Maybe for the car or something too. When I don't know how to use something. Like when I was meant to change the oil. Things like that. I checked it online. I usually find what I am looking for, but it takes me a while, because I always check loads of different answers just to make sure that they make sense. If they don't, then I go to the shop and ask the questions.
5. Actually quite often because of my little hobby. I make pots out of cement. There are things that I am checking pretty much every day at the moment. When I am trying to find different kind of cement, or silicon, or things like that, so that it is actually something where I need expert advice. And most of the time I don't find the answers online and then I have to go to a hardware shop. I find it easier to get proper information there, as I can explain what I am going to do.
6. I don't think that I would be ready to pay for such information because I think that with Youtube you should find answers to everything. There is always videos where someone is explaining how to do things. If there are no answers there, I just go to the shop.
7. When someone has studied and really know what he is doing, or someone who hasn't even studied but has been doing that thing for so long that they probably got even more expertise than someone who just has a diploma. Like for example a PhD or 20 years of experience. From these two I would choose the latter.
8. I would like to know where they have worked before, how long they have been doing this, or then I would check the reviews. Like if this person has helped someone before. Maybe I would like to see how this person looks like, or to hear his voice, or just a short introduction. If he then looks friendly, I would be ready to trust him.
9. If I want to find the answer and I am trying to explain something, but this person doesn't really listen to me or thinks that my ideas are a bit silly, I really don't like it. I would want this person to be understanding about that I don't know anything about this topic. I want them to be friendly. I want them to give me a better answer than the

answer that I am looking for. So for instance yesterday I tried to find vanish for the little metal things that I am doing. First time the girl was really unfriendly and didn't want to help me, but today I went again and suddenly she went really over the top. She was very friendly. She gave me the vanish, she gave me a lot of advice, she gave me legal advice, and so on. She really went the extra mile to help me. The difference is that, the second time around, she really tried to understand me. She really put herself in my shoes. So instead of just giving me an advice, she really tried to think about the solution with me. We were really having a chat how to solve this problem together.

10. It is a good idea, but I am really not sure if I wanted to pay for it. But it would be so practical to have one place where you could get advice from different kinds of experts. I don't think that there is such a place. It would be quite helpful. Like an encyclopedia of experts. I would use it.
11. I think I would like to send a message first. To see if they got the answer for me. But then if I still struggled, I would like to make a video call. But if I need someone to come and fix the problem, then maybe I would like to be able to contact them some other way. That they could come to my house or give me the contact details of someone else. There is actually one thing with which I would really need help. We have a lot of old things here in the house, like vases and cutlery and stuff, but we don't know if they are worth anything. For that purpose I would definitely use such an app and even pay for it. I could contact someone and ask if the things are of any value. That would save me a lot of trouble.
12. Maybe I would want the experts or some of the experts to be available straight away. I don't think that I would like to wait. Like if I send a message, I expect to have the answer in one hour or so. I am quite impatient, so I would like to get contact quickly. If I need to talk to someone, it has to be in reasonable time. Like by the next day or so. I think I would not wait two days. And I think it would be cool if people could speak their own language. Like foreigners too, when they are living somewhere else. Because sometimes it makes it easier to express yourself.

SUMMARY

General Thoughts

The interviews went generally well. I would gladly have carried out a couple more, but as they were quite time-consuming (especially the transcription), I have to settle only for three now. Some points were highlighted. Some that I already knew, some that I had not thought of yet. With the expert app, there really is some critical questions and concerns that need to be well thought and put into practice in order to create a successful product. They are real challenges that should not be underestimated.

Key Points

- The most critical question, the one that I had not thought that much before, seems to be the availability of the experts and getting the answers relatively quick. This can be very challenging as many potential users do not seem ready to wait for the reactions more than only one or two hours. At least some kind of response has to come pretty soon. Perhaps green availability lights would be a good solution.
- People have interesting views about which kind of help they are ready to pay for and which kind of they do not. That must be well considered when thinking about the expert profiles and prices.
- The general ideas about the experts and their credibility seemed to be quite coherent, although there were some quite innovative thoughts too. Majority seemed to appreciate efficiency and clarity over friendliness even if both are of course important.
- People seemed to find both options, messaging and calling, equally crucial.
- Joana had some interesting ideas about the user accounts and how the experts should be able to see what kind of problems the users have had before, etc. in order to make the exchange more efficient.