A5 – Individual Heuristic Evaluation

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Project Description:

Im evaluating PoliMensa, an app intended for students of Politecnico di Torino that has the objective of improving their experience at the university canteen.

Evaluation Execution:

Before starting the evaluation i tired to gather some contextual informations about the application and understand how the app should work. I performed the evaluation in multiple iterations, both in person and online.

I didn't need to meet the other group and ask more information than the ones on the README since the idea of the prototype was pretty clear and straightforward.

I tried to use the app with different users' perspectives and explored each defined task, while doing so i noticed some things that went against Nielsen's ten heuristics, some trivial some more severe.

List of Violations:

(This list is ordered by Nielsen's heuristic order)

1.H1 Visibility of system status
Where: Choose amount page
What: When a user wants to recharge the account, at the top of the page is the possibility of choosing the amount of money (5-10-15) but it is not clickable so no changes are visible and no units of measurement is shown for the amount.
Why: The user would not know if what he just did worked.
Severity: 2

2. H2 Match between system and real world

Where: Choose timeslot

What: Timeslots on the applications are only lunch-related

Why: Even though an user can make a reservation for dinner he can only choose lunch related timeslots

Severity: 3

3. H3 User control and freedom

Where: Succesful payment page

What: bottom Navbar does not work in this page, the user can only click on "Select Meal".

Why: This denies control to the user.

Severity: 3

4. H3 User control and freedom

Where: Choose your dishes pages

What: The user must always choose one dish per course and cannot for example choose to buy only a first course and a side dish.

Why: A way to "skip" a course should be implemented, like an arrow to make the user free to choose what he wants.

Severity: 3

5. H3 User control and freedom

Where: Pages with back-arrow

What: Back arrow behaviour is anomalous since it is not connected to "the previous page" but to fixed pages.

Why: The user on some occasions would be lost on the flow of the application because he expected another behaviour from the back button.

Severity: 3

6. H3 User control and freedom

Where: Missing page

What: Orders reservations page is missing from the application.

Why: The user might forget the order he placed (especially the timeslot), i think it's essential to have a section where he can see the reservations. Maybe it's in the "last transaction" section but there is no page connected and only a date is shown.

Severity: 3

7. H3 User control and freedom

Where: Choose amount page

What: Choose amount values are fixed.

Why: Why can the user only recharge 5-10-15? It would be better for them to choose the amount themselves.

Severity: 2

8. H3 User control and freedom

Where: Choose first course

What: option Pasta/Riso in Bianco is ambiguous.

Why: Is it Pasta or Riso in bianco? How does the user choose between these two options?

Severity: 2

9. H4 Consistency and standards

Where: Every page

What: There is no name/description for the elements of the navbar.

Why: A new user would need to interpret and think what each symbol means.

Severity: 3

10. H4 Consistency and standards

Where: Every page

What: Clock symbol in the navbar has no purpose

Why: What is the use of the clock symbol in the navbar? It always redirects to the timeslot page that you have to choose at the end of the order, so if the user clicks it while on home or anywhere else it has no meaning and could actually lead to some errors.

Severity: 4

11. H4 Consistency and standards

Where: Choose your dishes page

What: Mismatch between choices on orders page and the Calendar.

Why: Not every dish that is on the "Calendar" page is on the relative page when choosing a dish for each course, this would confuse the user.

Severity: 2

12. H4 Consistency and standards
Where: Choose your timeslot page
What: Timeslot of 14:00-14:30 missing
Why: If there is a contextual motive for which this timeslot is not available (but it seems weird given the pattern of the timeslots) it should be told to the user.
Severity: 2

13. H6 Recognition rather than recall
Where: Order summary page
What: The price of the order is missing from the summary page.
Why: The user should not need to remember the price of what he is ordering.
Severity: 3

14. H7 Flexibility and efficiency of use
Where: Choose your dishes pages
What: Navigation when choosing the dishes for your order is not well designed.
Why: At the top of the page where the user choose the dishes there is a three-dot menu that could be used as a way for the user to navigate easily in case he wants to modify his order, but they do not work, so the navigation for the user is tedious.
Severity: 2

15. H8 Aesthetic and minimalist design
Where: Choose amount page
What: Page layout is a bit cramped.
Why: I feel like there is too much space on the bottom of the page and everything is cramped at the top.
Severity: 1

16. HN Non-heuristic issue
Where: Choose your order pages
What: Some things are non-evaluable because not implemented even though they are part of the tasks.
Why: An example is: can you change a dish of your order(or the timeslot) by clicking on another after you already choose or can you change it after going ahead by using the back arrow? I can not test it since only one timeslot is clickable and only one dish per course, i can only think its intended, same thing with the cancel button, it's there but there is no functionality connected so i have to imagine how it would work.
Severity: 3

Summary and Reccomendations

Heuristic	# violations
H1: Visibility of system status	1
H2: Match between system and the real world	1
H3: User control and freedom	6
H4: Consistency and standards	4
H5: Error prevention	0
H6: Recognition rather than recall	1
H7: Flexibility and efficiency of use	1
H8: Aesthetic and minimalist design	1
H9: Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors	0
H10: Help and documentation	0
HN: Non-heuristic issue	1

Overall i think that the idea of the project is good, it tries to solve a problem that almost every student has experienced (the huge waits for the Mensa), i think that the approach was a bit too shallow, few important details of the defined tasks were not implemented in this medium-level prototype (see this) and that made me guess how they would work in the intended application instead of just see it, i understand that doing all combinations of the various choices of the user would be not easy but i needed at least one more different example/flow to see how it was intended, also i did not catch how the application is connected to the themes of AI.

The application would be better in terms of communication with the user if it was more "verbose", i felt like a few times i had to interpret what i was doing using my pregress software knowledge instead of having the prototype communicate it to me, furthermore im sure that some decisions (like only be able to top-up the wallet for fixed amount of money or not be able to skip a course) would make me not happy as a user of the final product.

I advise my collegues to enrich the prototype by focusing on:

- Improving the navigation system that is a bit "limiting" for the user experience.

  (see for example violations: 3,4,5,14)

- Making the application communicate more with the user be it for a better understanding of the flow or to remind him/her of important information.

  (see for example violations: 1,6,9,12,13)

- Extend the application functionalities, remove the wrong implementations but keep the minimalistic design.

  (see for example violations: 7,8,10)

I hope my suggestions can be useful and lead to an improvement of my collegues' prototype.