

Sterio

The future of radio: combining streaming services with the traditional radio

Speed Dating (User Enactments Activity) — Report, Feedback & Notes

- **Prototype and study details**

- The main goal of deploying the prototype was to showcase the final concept of the MyRadio application to the common user. Users were guided through a set of dummy screens that enabled them to create a personalized radio station, that included a playlist from Spotify, breaking news about the COVID-19 topic, and weather information based on a 'dummy' location.
- When reaching the final dummy screen of the prototype, an audio file that contained the 'selected' items was played. To keep users focused, the audio had a small duration of 2:30 minutes. To make it feel more natural, it included snippets of two songs (from the 'selected' playlist) and radio-like transitions/separators, along with the selected content.
- Users were encouraged to try the prototype either on their desktop computers or on their smartphone, as the platform on which the prototype was built allowed both mediums.
- The sharing of the prototype was done using the WhatsApp social network, given the social distancing limitations we're facing as a society in the period of the activity. Groups with 4 users were created (larger numbers were avoided in order to make the discussion easier). In total, 7 groups of 4 people were created, totalizing 28 participants in this study. The majority of them (15 to be exact) were of ages ranging from 18 to 25, whilst the remaining were of ages ranging from 26 to 62.
- Users were encouraged to share their opinions and engage in discussion with each other, thus providing useful feedback that should be taken into account when developing the final product.
- From the 28 users, 19 have participated in the need validation activity, thus an introduction to the general concept of the platform wasn't necessary. The remaining 9 users that haven't participated in the previous activity were introduced to the main abstract of the thesis and were asked to sign a virtual consent form.
- Users were informed that the displayed user interface was created for demonstration purposes only and that it didn't match the final product.

- The middle-fidelity prototype was created using the following tools:
 - **Adobe XD** for the development of the dummy interface. This app allows playback of an audio file, which was handy to showcase the final concept of the platform. The app also always shares the prototype along with many groups of people, guiding them through the available options of the prototype.
 - **Audacity** to create the 'dummy' radio station audible file. This app allowed the editing of the audio file, making easy to showcase how a created radio station would sound. Gathered all the various audible elements (text-to-speech, music, transitions).
 - **Mac's built-in text-to-speech software** to read the content that the dummy user would provide (in this case, news and weather information). Recorded using QuickTime. The system provides a very reliable and natural European Portuguese (Catarina, feminine voice) that was available to showcase the concept. The reading speed was set to 1.25x in order to make the speech feel more natural.

● Received feedback

- **General concept**
All users understood clearly the concept of the platform. Most of them mentioned that they didn't understand quite well the concept on paper, but the prototype did enlighten them by showing in a visual and practical way how the platform would work.
- **Text-To-Speech (TTS)**
Overall, the feedback received was very positive. The majority of users thought that the voice mimicking a radio host was more natural than what they were expecting. When asked if they felt the human element, and/or a connection with them in a similar way that radio stations provide, all users replied affirmatively. Some younger users noted that the pronunciation of some words was not clear/natural, mainly new words or foreignisms (which is natural with every TTS software). Nevertheless, most of them noted that the advantages of using it outweigh the drawbacks. Older users accepted the TTS functionalities quite well, mentioning that their original perception of this software (such as GPS instructions) was overblown with the use of this particular voice.
- **Expected usability**
Most users noted that they would use the platform on a daily basis, while others said it would be particularly interesting to use on specific occasions (such as driving or cooking). Users enjoy the concept of the radio, but don't

listen to it due to the redundancy it provides; in their opinion, this platform would fix this and provide a better experience. On the other hand, a user thought that it would be difficult to persuade power-users of Spotify or radio lovers to 'switch' to this new platform concept.

- **Interface**

Some users noted that a few aspects of the sketched interface were not intuitive, or were hard to understand, such as the 'drag and drop' design choice. Apart from that (and noting that the interface was not the target of this evaluation), users liked the 'blocks' concept', mentioning that they understood how to add content to their stations and how to edit its settings according to their taste.

- **Uniqueness**

Users noted that the most 'similar' applications/use cases they have interacted with include the Spotify app itself (that allows the playback of podcasts/music in a seamless way) or some 'digital' radio stations that create third-party stations (for instance, Rádio Comercial Rock). Most users saw the advantage of using this platform, with many noting that the fact that they can create their own radio and listen to what they want without necessarily having to "lose" everything else characteristic of the traditional terrestrial radio makes it a good way to be useful and comfortable at the same time. Users saw the platform as an 'extension'/upgrade to the Spotify and traditional terrestrial radio experiences.

- **Ideas and suggestions:**

It would be great if users could select their own voice (male or female), in their own language. Some users also noted that, although they like to have control over the personalization of the station, they would like to listen to the radio without having to choose what they listen to (thus, a 'quick station' feature would be interesting). Adding liked songs to the users' Spotify account would be a good feature to add.

- **Overall satisfaction:**

Users were very satisfied with the prototype/concept. They really liked the idea and said it has a lot of potential. Most users have shown availability to help gather further testing and feedback.