

Expert Review

Clandestine Backdoor Diversion

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Introduction

We chose to do this 'Expert Review' about an app called 'Biernet'. We thought this was a nice app to review. We heard some other students that were already using it, but we never really gave it much attention. So now we've downloaded it, and we're ready to start reviewing.

Personas

User types

This app is all about beer, and where to get your favourite beer for the best price ofcourse. That's why we thought this app would be used most by students and beerlovers.

Persona Profiles

First, the beerlovers. We're dealing with this topic first because this is the most vague one. People from all ages love beer, but if we have a quick look at all the people from all ages we see that most of them are married. That's why we imagine our 'beerlovers' as married, somewhat older men (because of the fact that the average age is actually rising, in our country). Women also tend to love beer, but the males are just better at it. Beer is almost always associated with being tough and doing a lot of stupid things but also having nice evenings out getting hammered. This doesn't fit the profile of the average woman. However, a lot of people also just love the taste of beer and want to have the kind that suits them. They still are married, so their wives will complain about their expenses and this is why they reconsult this app.

We can now declare our test subjects, who represent this group of people. These are: Karel. Karel is a 40-year-old husband with two children. Besides making an effort to be a good husband and father, he has been working in a brick factory near Amsterdam since he was 20 years old. He has recently been promoted to manager in a brick factory near Amsterdam. To relax from his stressful job, he likes to drink beer with his mates. Unfortunately, they cant make it every weekend, since they are also obligated to spend time with their families. Thats why Karel also likes to visit different beer breweries to taste all sorts of beers. He doesnt really have much computer knowledge, because he didnt feel like he needed it. Although hes recently been convinced by his friends to buy a smartphone, in order to stay in touch more easily.

Henk is a 25-year-old university dropout. He met his current girlfriend, Laquisha, in the Drie Gezusters during his study Informatica at the Radboud University in Nijmegen. Laquisha got pregnant when he was 23 years old. Hes currently living in a small apartment with Laquisha and his two-year-old daughter, Kimberlie. To provide food for his wife and child he began to work at the McDonalds when he was 24 years old. Unfortunately he couldnt manage to combine it with his study, so he quit. This all got him into a depression. Luckily he got out of it quite quickly, but his beer addiction lived on.

Now, the students. I think we're pretty much known by a lot of people already, because you can cross paths with a student almost everywhere on the whole planet earth. We drink, we party and we have to pass some subjects to get a diploma and become the decent working guy. Students don't have much money to spend, but want cheap beer. I think this is the persona profile that uses the app the most, because the whole thing is about discounts. Students do have some feel for the taste of the beer, so this one suits them well because they can also see what beer is the cheapest at the moment or how much their favourite costs.

We can now declare our test subjects, who represent this group of people. These are:

Jantine. She's a 19-year-old student, who just happens to love beer. She studies chemistry at the Radboud University, and goes to one or two parties a week. Besides that, she happens to grab a beer when having dinner or when she's watching movies/series during the evening hours. She isn't that good with computers, and only uses them for the most mainstream stuff.

Melvin. He's a 22-year-old student who has a job in his spare time. He studies "Bedrijfskunde" at the Radboud University, and he doesn't have that many contact hours. He has plenty of time to get drunk but loves to do so by the means of his favourite beer. He can afford it, but he also doesn't want to waste his money. He knows his phone well but he doesn't know any in depth details about it.

Heuristic Evaluation

Setup

We have two evaluators, who are working with the persona profiles in mind. The first evaluator does the two 'beerlovers' and the second one does the two 'students'.

We have the following scenarios:

Jantine is chilling in her room, when she finds out she's almost out of stock. She wonders where she can get some "Hertog Jan" to drink for the rest of the week. Usually this stuff is really expensive, but 'Biernet' makes this affordable. She is in a relaxed setting and doesn't have any timepressure. She also has a reliable internet connection.

Melvin is on his way home, and has to get some beer for his friends who come over to party tonight. He has to buy a lot, and he doesn't have a good internetconnection because he has to rely on his 3G. He wants a cheap beer that isn't that nasty to down during the evening hours before going to the city. Melvin is hasted, and has a lot of stuff on his mind.

Its friday noon. Karel has finished his shift and just arrived at home. He just read on his smartphone that his friends cant make it this weekend. He decides to download the Biernet app, because he heard that one of his colleagues visited a nice brewery that he found on Biernet. Somewhat tired and without much technological knowledge he manages to download Biernet. He opens it to find a nice brewery near his home to visit during the coming weekend.

Henk just woke up at noon after his night-shift at the McDonalds. His beer addiction kicks in once again. However its the end of the month and he doesnt have much money left. Also his wife turned out to be very controlling lately, because she falsely accused him of cheating. To calm her down and make her somewhat satisfied, he decides to buy some cheaper beer than the Grolsch he usually buys. However, he still wants some quality brand beer, because he finds that he deserved it after his long night-shift. He decides to use Beernet for nice promotions near his appartment.

Aggregate findings

Under the heuristic of "Error prevention", I found that Melvin found one problem. He accidentally clicked on an ad while he was rushing to the stores to get his beers. He was really annoyed by the fact that the app didn't warn that it was opening an external link and this took some time too. There wasn't a kind of confirmation option or something.

Under the heuristic of "Visibility of system status", I found that Jantine was worried about what she was selecting right now. There is a dropdown menu that let's us sort the way we want, but it doesn't say which sorting method is selected at this time. We don't know wether it's sorted by prize or by prize per litre. This is because it doesn't show what's currently active. We also don't know wether there's an option to sort different (by example) litre prices per store. It doesn't say wether the old sorting method is still active or not, and if so, it doesn't display the possibility to sort on a second level.

Under the heuristic of "Match between the system and the real world", I found that all the users were rather pleased by the language and the documentation of the information, inside this app. They're all Dutch, and the app also has a Dutch name. This is why they were so happy about it. The terms they use to describe the dropdown menus are pretty good, and easily understandable. The different categories have also been given a correct name that describes them well, and also depicts the category really well.

Under the heuristic of "User control and freedom", I found that all the users also were really pleased about this. Except for the ads. All the actions that happened accidentally were often easily fixed, because all the dropdown menus didn't fill the whole screen. They could be cancelled by pressing anywhere on the screen, or by pressing the back button. There was also a back button in the upper left corner, that was always visible when entering a product or category that filled the whole screen. This wasn't the case with the ads. As stated above, the ads do open a different window because they are external links. The app doesn't provide a solution for people who accidentally click those. This could however be done easily, by just pressing the back button on your phone. Jantine found this a little bit annoying but wasn't really bothered by it.

Under the heuristic of "Consistency and Standards", I found that there were no problems formed amongst the test subjects. All the categories are chosen quite distinctly, so that doesn't provide any misunderstandings.

Under the heuristic of "Recognition rather than recall", the problem was found that Karel, who was looking around for nice nearby breweries, had to memorize or write down all the possible options. He couldnt retrieve all the candidates in an easy way.

Under the heuristic of "Flexibility and efficiency of use", I found the following: Henk used the Biernet app to find a good promotion nearby his apartment. He did this while walking home from work, so his phone is using somewhat spotty cellular network internet. The app still continued working though, as it cached data while it had none or little internet speed to work with. When the higher speed internet came back, the app refreshed all it's data so that it's up-to-date. This shows that the app is very flexible and works efficiently, not wasting cellular data unnecessarily.

Under the heuristic of "Help users recognize, diagnose and recover from errors", I found that Henk never experienced an error, but the app still made it very clear how to solve any errors that might have occurred. On the main page of the app, the one you see when you open it, there is a "Contact" button which allows you to email the developers of the app directly so that if you get an error the app cannot recover from, you can immediately ask for help. There's also an "About" button which contains links to their website for further help, and if the app really doesn't work, this link can be used while the developers are working on your problem.

Under the heuristic of "Aesthetic and minimalist design", I experienced the following: Karel is still tired after downloading the app, but he was still able to find a brewery. This is because the app has very clear design, which shows small images of what you're looking for, and also uses big letters next to those images to make clear what the buttons do. The buttons are also big enough so that they are easy to press, which reduces the hassle of misclicks. Even on a bigger screen, the app does not behave abnormally, and it keeps its design so that it is usable on every phone, for example, Karel and Henk's different phones.

Suggestions for further development

I think that it would be good if the ads in this app would be opened inside the app itself when being clicked on, and not in the default browser of the users phone. This makes recovering from a misclick more easy, and doesn't slow your phone down so much. Also adding the option to navigate using the first letter of a brand or a type of beer would be a good option to scroll through the app a bit faster. Some explanation about all the different types of beer like "Bokbier" would also be nice, plus the explanation about fermentation would also do the app good.