

CURRENT – USER SCENARIO

PROBLEM DEFINITION

Long gone are the days of searching for information in books or even just generally knowing facts off the top of the head. Nobody needs to when all of the world's information is available to them at their fingertips. A report by Betsy Sparrow, Jenny Liu, and Daniel M. Wegner calls this the "Google Effect" and shows that people are more apt to rely on the internet and choose not to remember information knowing that they can access it [1]. This, along with the fact that the average time spent playing games or accessing social media on mobile devices has increased 57% since 2012, combine to prove a need for an app that allows users to have access to quick and useful information in a game or achievement-like setting [2]. The goal of Current is to make use of this increased use of mobile devices and decreased ability to recall information create this app that allows users to learn new facts and current events. The difficulty is keeping user's attention [3]. With millions of apps available to take their time, the plan is to grab our user's attention in a simple and effective way by creating engaging questions in a game format. Current will take the spare minutes a user has to return easily digestible content in a fun way.

USER BACKGROUND

Sarah Summers is a twenty year old college student at the University of Alabama. She is diligent with her classwork, but with only a Business classes and her sorority, Sarah has a decent amount of free time. Like most other people her age, she spends a lot of time on her phone. She spends over the average time on her phone for her gender and age which according to a Baylor University study on cell phone addiction is approximately 10 hours [4]. On her phone she gets on social media, surfs the web, texts, emails, and plays mobile games. Sarah is on social media quite a bit, like many other college students her age. According to Jason Mander of Global Web Index, this would mean she spends almost 3 hours a day on social media [5]; time that even she admits is mostly wasted time. Sarah is looking for a more fulfilling way to spend time on her phone instead of getting on social media or surfing the web.

OBJECTIVE

Sarah uses the Current app, a current event trivia game app, to make better use of her time when she only has a few minutes in between classes or activities.

USER NARRATIVE

Sarah Summers rolls over in bed at 10:30 am on a Monday morning, already late to her Women's and Gender Studies class. She decides to skip class and with her newfound free time, Sarah decides to hit the usual routine: Instagram, Yik Yak, and Twitter. But as she sees her fourth picture in a row regarding #SelfieSunday, she has this empty feeling that she is wasting hours on her phone to the mind-numbing lull of social media. Subsequently, she discovers Current, a current event trivia game. She downloads it and connects with her friends to challenge them to a few rounds. Thanks to her unit on the treatment of women in war-torn countries she manages to win a round against her Big. After gaining some confidence through Current, Sarah decides to get out of bed and take on the day.

SOURCES FOR USER SCENARIO

[1] Betsy Sparrow, Jenny Liu, and Daniel M. Wegner. "Google Effects on Memory: Cognitive Consequences of Having Information at Our Fingertips". Internet: <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/333/6043/776.short>, July 14, 2011 [Oct. 1, 2015].

[2] "Average Time Spent Playing Games on Mobile Devices Has Increased 57 Percent Since 2012". Internet: <https://www.npd.com/wps/portal/npd/us/news/press-releases/2015/average-time-spent-playing-games-on-mobile-devices-has-increased-57-percent-since-2012/>, Jan. 27, 2015, [Oct. 1, 2015].

[3] "Memory and the Importance of Review." Internet: <http://faculty.bucks.edu/specpop/memory.htm>, May 10, 2015, [Oct. 1, 2015].

[4] "Cellphone Addiction Is 'an Increasingly Realistic Possibility,' Baylor Study of College Students Reveals". Internet: <http://www.baylor.edu/mediacommunications/news.php?action=story&story=145864>, Aug. 27, 2014 [Oct. 1, 2015].

[5] Jason Mander. "Daily time spent on social networks rises to 1.72 hours". Internet: <https://www.globalwebindex.net/blog/daily-time-spent-on-social-networks-rises-to-1-72-hours>, Jan. 26, 2015 [Oct. 1, 2015]



To: Dr. Summers

From: Current - Anna Tierney, Jonathan Banks, Lucinda Combs, Cassidy Cain, and Jake Working

Date: 10/29/15

Subject: Current Paper Prototype and Test

The purpose of this memo is to discuss our usability test and its results.

SUMMARY

Through our usability test of the Current phone application we found that we were missing some features that would make the experience a more straightforward one. By adding and removing screens and redesigning parts of our app we hope to make it a more user friendly experience.

DISCUSSION

Purpose and Methods

The purpose of our usability test was to determine flaws in our current app prototype and receive feedback in order to make it more user friendly and desirable. We used three participants in individual tests to gain recommendations and their thoughts on our app. From this initial testing we seek to improve the design of the Better in Five app.

Procedure

After consenting to take part in our testing each of our test subjects was given a few tasks to complete within our app in order to test its major functionalities:

1. Create an account
2. Add a friend and play against them
3. Play against a random player
4. Check achievements in the app

The test subject worked to accomplish these objectives within the time period, and verbally explain their thought process as they went along. Afterward we asked them the following questions to assess the usability of the app:

1. Is this a game that you would use?
2. Were there features you would change?
3. What is the best attribute of this app?
4. Do you have any other comments?

Results

The test itself was generally successful, with no major errors. Favorite features included the countdown to start the round, intuitive system, and the ability to connect with friends through social media. They all agreed that they would use the app if it became publically available. Most of the errors we found tended to affect one only user's view on how the app should run. The only point where the users were sometimes confused on how to proceed was after each question.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REVISIONS

Based on our usability test and the feedback received from our three test subjects, we have identified changes that need to be made with respect to the functionality of the game (rules, timing, and how turns worked) as well as improving the login screen.

The instructions or rules of the game always seemed to be brought up by our users as they continued to question what exactly they were supposed to happen next during the game. In order to correct this, we have decided to include a pop-up screen that has our instructions right after logging in for the first time. These instructions will also be available on the home screen and is accessible if the user taps a question mark button. Users also would often be sitting waiting for the next question to appear automatically since we had built a 'Next' button to advance the questions. To fix this, we just removed the 'Next' button and had the questions advance automatically after a set amount of time.

The login screen was difficult for every one of our users in some manner. We are deciding to have the 'I Agree to the Terms and Conditions' box be available during the entire 'Create an Account' process. This will reduce the confusion and help our users better access and move through our app.

CURRENT – TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

INTRODUCTION

Current is a mobile application designed to provide education about current events through fun trivia-style questions. The idea of the game is to fill a user's spare minutes with quick and fun information about current events. Its function is to be played as a turn-based game that allows the user to compete against their friends or against a random opponent. With a simple user interface, users can jump from a game to a new game, check on their current games, and access their achievements all from the home screen. The amount of smartphones being used is growing everyday [1]. According to eMarketer, the amount of people with smartphones is expected to grow to 17 million by 2016 [1]. The time to introduce a new mobile application is now and the uniqueness of Current will keep users interested and informed.

The feature that sets Current apart from other trivia-style applications are the type of questions. Updated weekly, the questions are all current events ranging from topics in sports, technology, politics, and world events. This technical description will go through the setup of the game, how to play an opponent, a description of the gameplay, and the benefits to a user from Current.

SETTING UP AN ACCOUNT

Setting up Current is easy, intuitive and simple. Quickly after the app is opened there is a sign in page as seen in Figure 1. There are many options including signing in to an existing account, creating a new account, as well as setting up an account connected to Facebook or email. Signing up through Facebook or email can help the user connect with their friends that are using the app. When creating an account the user can choose a distinct username as well as secure password. Once that has been chosen, the user will be prompted to choose an avatar so they can be easily recognized by friends in the app. Once an account has been created the user will no longer be required to sign in unless they want to play on a different device or choose to sign out of their account. The setup process is made for ease of use and to give the player the best possible app experience.

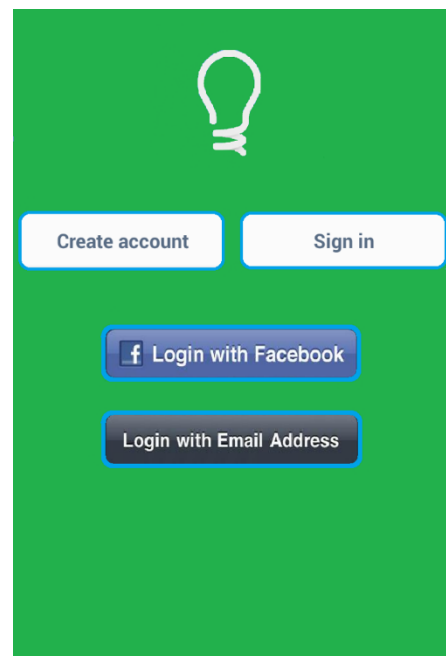


Figure 1 - Login screen

CHOOSING OPPONENTS

There are two different options for how to play the game as shown in Figure 2. Current allows you to connect with friends, by challenging them to a game. In order to find friends you can search their username and instantly add them. If your account is connected through Facebook or email, those systems will be used to send friend requests from your list of contacts. These systems will also be able to recommend friends based on people you know from the platform attached to your account. If you have are waiting for a friend to take their turn in a game you are able to “poke” them to remind them of the game that they are playing. In addition, if you have no friends currently available to play with, you can choose to play against a random player somewhere else in the world. This is to enable you to play whenever you have free time, instead of just when there are people able to play.

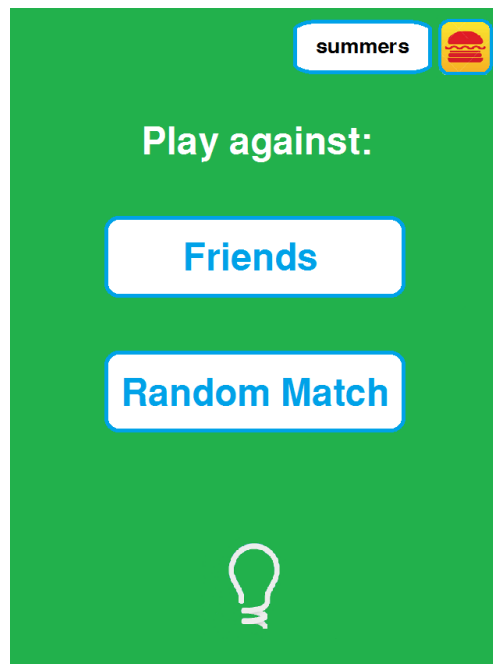


Figure 2 - Play against screen

PLAYING THE GAME

Before Choosing an Answer

After choosing the opponent, random or a friend, and starting a game with them, the app will take the user into the gameplay mode. There will be a 3 second countdown before the first question appears. At that point, the timer will start and the user will have three minutes to answer however many questions they can in the given time period. Questions will appear in the format of Figure 3. They will be questions relative to current events or events that would appear in a national newspaper.

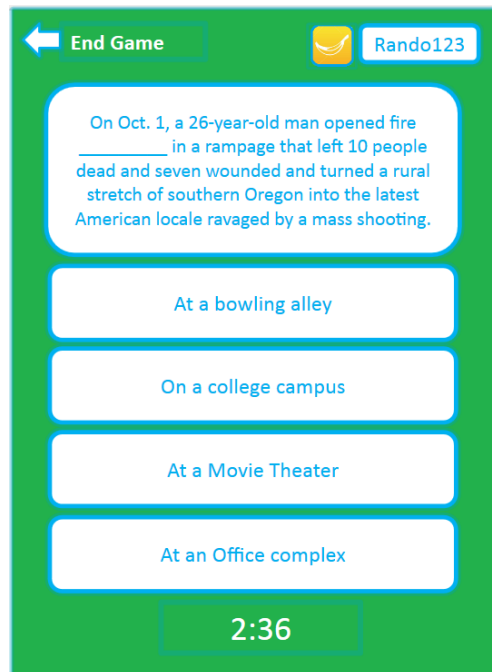


Figure 3 - Question screen

After Choosing an Answer

When you choose an answer the next screen that appears will be the answer screen as seen in Figure 4. The correct answer with a checkmark graphic and the wrong answers with an 'X' graphic. This screen will appear for three seconds and then the next question will automatically appear. This pattern will repeat itself, with a new question, for the time period. Once your three minutes are up the game will end. The next screen will give a summary of your gameplay and will tell you that it is your opponents turn. Once your opponent has played their turn you will be alerted that it is your turn again. This will continue until each player has played their three rounds. If you answer more questions correctly than your opponent you will win the round. The winner of two rounds will be the overall winner between the two opponents and your win will be recorded in your statistics. In the gameplay mode, there is an option to end your current game. If you so choose to end the game, you will be given credit for the questions you have answered correctly but will forfeit the rest of your points for the round. Your opponent will be notified that you have finished your round and it is their turn. The rest of the rounds will be played as described before.

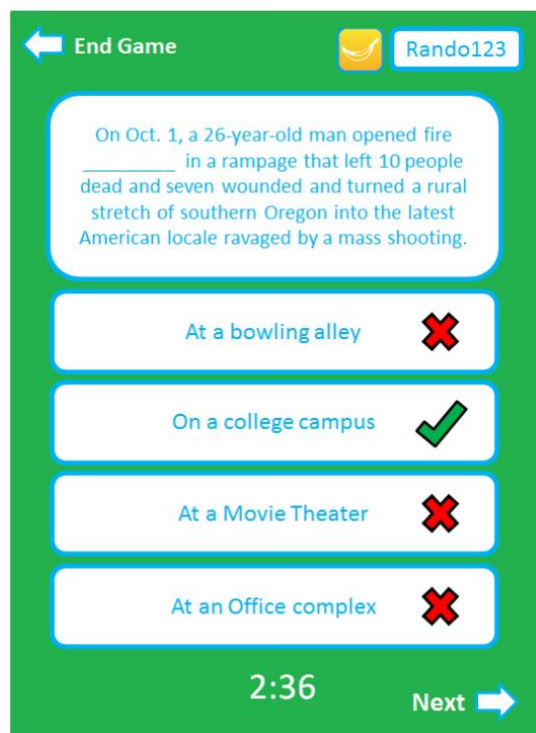


Figure 4 - Answer

BENEFITTING THE USER

As the students at RHIT can attest, free time is valuable; however, when it comes in small doses it can be wasted. Americans are considered some of the least knowledgeable people on the planet. Thinking of waiting for a friend or the few minutes between classes, Current would help to make use of this extra free time. Current helps students learn about current events going on in the world in a fun and entertaining way. Students spend their short periods of time more wisely by learning not just getting on social media apps.

CONCLUSION

Current engages the users from choosing their character until they finish their first game and beyond. Setting up their profile through Facebook would maximize a user's experience as all of their friends who already play the game would be easy to add and play and it would speed up the login process. The idea of a user profile that tracks achievements creates that competitive aspect among friends which ultimately forces users to stay on top of their current news knowledge. The game experience was designed to limit wasted time and go straight into a game as quickly as possible. The goal is to make current information available in a fun setting in order to increase the general public's knowledge.

SOURCES FOR TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

[1] "College Students Adopt Mobile across the Board — eMarketer Newsroom," *eMarketer Newsroom*, 2012. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.emarketer.com/newsroom/index.php/college-students-adopt-mobile-board/>. [Accessed: 2015].

Prototype Document Packet

Team

Members:

User Scenario				
<p>The user scenario is complete. The user profile and background sections are specific, grounded in at least 5 sources of scholarly or professional research, and lead to clear design choices. The narrative section is inventive, vivid, and considers all aspects of the user's interaction with the app. Research is cited correctly in IEEE format, both in the text and in the bibliography. The writers use ICE to contextualize sources. _____/20</p>				
Outstanding	Very good	Satisfactory	Poor	Unsatisfactory
Usability Memo				
<p>The usability memo is complete and detailed. It vividly describes the procedure for the usability test and the results. The results are clearly connected to the plan for revision, which is specific, thorough, and actionable. The document follows professional memo form. _____/15</p>				
Outstanding	Very Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Unsatisfactory
Technical Description				
<p>The technical description is complete and thorough and includes an appropriate sentence definition. The introduction effectively defines the product and sets up the description, and the rest of the document uses an organizational pattern appropriate to the product. The description provides information at a consistent level of understanding. The document uses visuals to support audience understanding. _____/50</p>				
Outstanding	Very Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Unsatisfactory
Overall Design and Presentation of Documents, including Team Documents				
<p>Documents are carefully designed to increase readability, including the appropriate use of headings, numbered and bulleted lists, and visuals. Documents are clear, concise, and avoid technical jargon. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are correct. Style, both in design and tone, is consistent across the packet. _____/15</p>				
Outstanding	Very Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Unsatisfactory

Total _____/100

Grade:

Comments: