

Heuristic Evaluation of Spiel

1. Problem

We evaluated the app Spiel by Addison, Katherine, SunMi, and Joanne. Spiel encourages users to share positive and uplifting real-world items to their network of followers.

See: https://web.stanford.edu/class/cs147/projects/crowd_power/startup_generator/

2. Violations Found

- [H2-4 Consistency and standards] [Severity: 2] [Found by: A, C]**
There is a share button on the search page for other people's spiels but nowhere else. I looked for it when I zoomed in on the pumpkin spice spiel since that seemed like a good place to share from. Would be good to have that option everywhere!
- [H2-4 Consistency and standards] [Severity: 1] [Found by: A]**
The word "picks" is still littered around a little bit. The pumpkin spice spiel says "Other recent *picks* by Katherine".
- [H2-10 Help and documentation] [Severity: 1] [Found by: A]**
I got (and needed) a lot of help to navigate the bottom bar from your README file. I wish there was a tutorial / initial screen that showed me what each tab did. [Something like this: <http://bit.ly/1L0dTSE>]
- [H2-6 Recognition rather than recall] [Severity: 3] [Found by: A, B, C]**
I did not immediately realize what the arrow buttons on Katherine's profile did. I think now that they're tabs to move between months but they feel very connected to the 2nd spiel on that page.
- [H2-7 Flexibility and efficiency of use] [Severity: 2] [Found by: A, C]**
I found searching to be a chore and a little confusing. Right now, it seems very limited – is it a drop down or a free-form search box? If it's free form, I would expect the suggestions to be "Books by Germans" or "Books about animals" or "recipe books" rather than just categories. If it's a category picker, the interface doesn't seem to match – why have that top bar with the magnifying glass if the first thing I tap on always advances the screen?
- [H2-4 Consistency and standards] [Severity: 1] [Found by: A]**
The search results page is missing the verified badges that appear on famous people's accounts. It also should use the "spiel" vocabulary for example "Book spiels from people you follow" and "Trending book spiels". Also, sometimes usernames are underlined and sometimes they aren't.
- [H2-3 User control and freedom] [Severity: 2] [Found by: A, B, C]**
The initial tabs all have a "back" button, which seems pretty confusing to me. I would think that tapping back would always bring me to the first screen in that tab, not all the way back to my feed.
- [H2-3 User control and freedom] [Severity: 3] [Found by: A, B]**

There's no back/cancel button on the "create a spiel" flow. If I realize I want to categorize my laptop case as "style" instead of "tech," I'm stuck.

9. **[H2-2 Match between system and the real world] [Severity: 2] [Found by: A, C]**

I really expected the "notifications" tab to have a time when the event occurred. In the real world (and in every app I can think of), events have an associated time.

10. **[H2-3 User control and freedom] [Severity: 1] [Found by: A]**

I'm pretty confused about how to add a comment or favorite a spiel, and what favoriting really means. Does that mean I save it and can review it later? Or is it just a Facebook like? You might think about removing comments and favorites entirely, unless you flesh out the idea more in the implementation.

11. **[H2-7 Flexibility and efficiency of use] [Severity: 2] [Found by: A]**

The flow to create a new spiel is very slow. To advance from beginning to end, I count at least nine "interactions" or taps. This is a big barrier to entry and I would consider thinking about how you can streamline this task.

Also, Katherine's "Pumpkin Spiced Everything" has two photos and I could only upload one! How does a user upload multiple?

12. **[H2-1 Visibility of system status] [Severity: 1] [Found by: A]**

It's hard for me to tell on my own profile what belongs to me / what is visible to the rest of the social network. Facebook does a good job trying to show you what your privacy settings are. As a whole, I don't know exactly what my privacy settings are – is every spiel I add visible to the whole internet, or just my followers?

13. **[H2-5 Error prevention] [Severity: 1] [Found by: A]**

You should prevent someone from advancing and clicking "Next" on the spiel creation flow by graying out the button until all the fields are filled out.

14. **[H2-7 Flexibility and ease of use] [Severity: 1] [Found by: A]**

I found the rounded-square photos clashed with the perfect circle user photos. Circular profile pictures feel as though you lose a lot of valuable space by cropping the photo so aggressively.

15. **[H2-8: Aesthetic & Minimalist Design] [Severity: 2] [Found by: B]**

Home each spiel item in main feeds contains a 3 sentence description summary, a Spiel categorization, image, username, and time posted. Displaying all of that information allows users to only view two Spiels in one screen at a time. Reduce clutter/content in the Spiel preview in the list to allow users to browse and access more content easily.

16. **[H2-3: User Control & Freedom] [Severity: 2] [Found by: B]**

Each posted Spiel contains a categorization i.e. food spiel, music spiel, etc. Requiring pre-determined categorization for all items constricts the variety of content the user can post.

17. **[H2-3: User Control & Freedom] [Severity: 1] [Found by: B]**

In viewing a profile, when sorting past Spiels one can only sort temporally by month. This can be klunky given that some users may post Spiels much more or less often than monthly, and not

allowing to sort by other time periods (weeks, years, days, etc.) limits freedom to browse other users past Spiels easily.

18. **[H2-4: Consistency and Standards] [Severity: 1] [Found by: B]**

Search results display Spiels without displaying number of likes and comments like is displayed when browsing Spiels from the home screen. This is confusing for the user and can make it seem like the displayed Spiels have no likes or comments made on them.

19. **[H2-4: Consistency and Standards] [Severity: 0] [Found by: B]**

Every time it says 'Spiel' within the UI, S is capitalized. However in the bar on top of the screen Spiel is written as 'spiel'

20. **[H2-7. Flexibility and efficiency of use] [Severity: 1] [Found by: B]**

After creating a Spiel and choosing to share or not share it on other platforms, the user receives a confirmation screen saying that the Spiel was properly created. This seems unnecessary and inefficient, no other social media platform provides confirmation for posts, users assume their post is created as they intended.

21. **[H2-8. Aesthetic and minimalist design] [Severity: 1] [Found by: B]**

On profile page, each sort button (by category, by month, most recent) is greyed out when not selected. The text on these buttons is white, and is very hard to read against the light grey of the buttons.

22. **[H2-2: Match Between System & Real World] [Severity: 0] [Found by: C]**

The app is named "Spiel" – a quick search reveals the following meaning:

"a long or fast speech or story, typically one intended as a means of persuasion or as an excuse but regarded with skepticism or contempt by those who hear it."

Users familiar with the word or who searched for its meaning may be amused or skeptical of the name choice. Using a different name, such as "vita", "conte", or "legend" might be appropriate. Vita is a biography or a resume, while legend might simultaneously refer to user stories, a "key" detailing the best of every category, and might also point to the well-known personalities on the platform. Of course, none of these are as catchy as the use of "spiel" throughout the platform as it stands.

23. **[H2-4: Consistency & Standards] [Severity: 1] [Found by: C]**

On the feed page, every item is associated with "comments" and "favorites". However, when I go to my notifications, I see that Katherine "liked" my spiel. Users might be confused by the terminology – is there a difference in like and favorite? It would be best to use "favorite" everywhere on the platform – "Katherine favorited your spiel".

24. **[H2-1: Visibility of System Status] [Severity: 1] [Found by: C]**

It's unclear what the tick mark next to certain names represent. Does this mean this is a verified user? If this is the case, then the user profile of that user should mention "Verified User" somewhere.

25. **[H2-7: Flexibility & Efficiency of Use] [Severity: 2] [Found by: C]**

Adding a photo is a good choice for non standard non-indexed items – food, articles of clothing etc. However, users would need to go through an additional step to find an appropriate picture or

thumbnail for a book or a movie. Instead, if I'm in one of those categories, typing the name should autosuggest something and autopopulate a thumbnail. I can still be given the choice of adding more pictures.

26. **[H2-4: Consistency & Standards] [Severity: 3] [Found by: C]**

Right after adding a new spiel, I get a confirmation dialog that tells me I can see my new spiel on the home feed. Clicking next however takes me to a screen that shows me the new item, but looks nothing like my feed. This seems like a "dead state." This can be fixed by redirecting to the home feed and displaying the newly added spiel to the top of the feed.

27. **[H2-8: Aesthetic & Minimalist Design] [Severity: 1] [Found by: C, B]**

It's unclear what the back button on the page after creating a new spiel represents. Does this go back to the confirmation screen? It is an irrelevant button once a spiel has been added and can be removed.

28. **[H2-3: User Control & Freedom] [Severity: 4] [Found by: C]**

Once I've added a spiel, I see no option to delete a spiel. As a user, I am likely to make mistakes, or my preferences are likely to change and I might want to delete my older spiels. Include an option to delete a spiel on a page that displays a spiel you've created.

29. **[H2-8: Aesthetic & Minimalist Design] [Severity: 1] [Found by: C]**

I'm not sure whether having a "Most Recent" button on the profile page adds any useful functionality. I would like to see just two ways of organizing my picks - "By Time" and "By Category". Under "By Time", the current month will be displayed by default, with the latest picks at the top.

30. **[H2-8: Aesthetic & Minimalist Design] [Severity: 1] [Found by: C]**

Under a user profile's list of pick's, the following text is repeated: "Katherine's October". This is not required - it is clear that we are on Katherine's profile and we're viewing her October spiels.

3. Summary of Violations

Category	# Viol. (sev 0)	# Viol. (sev 1)	# Viol. (sev 2)	# Viol. (sev 3)	# Viol. (sev 4)	# Viol. (total)
[H2-1: Visibility of Status]		2				2
[H2-2: Match Sys & World]	1		1			2
[H2-3: User Control]		2	2	1	1	6
[H2-4: Consistency]	1	4	1	1		7
[H2-5: Error Prevention]		1				1
[H2-6: Recognition not Recall]				1		1
[H2-7: Efficiency of Use]		2	3			5
[H2-8: Minimalist Design]		4	1			5
[H2-9: Help Users with Errors]						0
[H2-10: Documentation]		1				1
Total Violations by Severity	2	16	8	3	1	30

4. Evaluation Statistics

Severity / Evaluator	Evaluator A	Evaluator B	Evaluator C
sev. 0	0	50%	50%
sev. 1	41%	29%	29%
sev. 2	38%	23%	38%
sev. 3	33%	33%	33%
sev. 4	0%	0%	100%
total (sev. 3 & 4)	28%	28%	42%
total (all severity levels)	32%	29%	37%

5. Summary Recommendations

Overall, this interface is very neat and intuitive, and is similar enough in look and feel to a lot of other social media applications such that use was very simple. I would say that this is both a strength and a weakness however, because when I was using the app it felt a little too much like Twitter or Instagram, and I would worry that the novelty of the idea and content might be understated if users feel like the app is too similar to either Twitter, Pinterest, or Instagram because of the UI for them to start using the app. On a related note, I believe the app is doing too much while not offering anything novel, and focusing on a very specific thing that Facebook, Instagram and Twitter do not solve at all, rather than doing something at the intersection of all three, might make more sense. On the other hand, I really do like the orange and green, I think it is subtle and works very well. I also appreciated the consistency in look and feel throughout all of the different tabs.

Additionally, I think that your usage of categorization of Spiels is interesting and perhaps a bit underutilized. By requiring everything to be categorized into a set amount of categories, you give yourself the freedom to add potentially cool features/displays that would present content to users somehow sorted by category which other apps cannot do (other apps can only sort by time, popularity, hashtag maybe).

Also I would display the settings gear on all pages, it seems that eventually there would be some settings that users would be able to change for the home screen display, search, adding new Spiels, and notifications in addition to just account settings. Good job guys!

A general piece of feedback is that because there are so many features, a user can get lost trying to navigate the pages and tabs. I would recommend you streamline all of the tasks as best you can and try to do a good job of reusing unique interfaces, row entries, and profile links so as to limit the number of new things the user has to learn to parse and read. I enjoyed looking through the app once I got a feel for it, but (at least initially) there is a ton of text and photos to immediately grasp what the app is useful for. I would challenge you to come up with a friendly way to train the user initially so that they have a good feeling for what each aspect of the application does.

On a related note, the entire process of adding a spiel feels too long - Choose a category, add a picture, a title, a description, share and a confirmation screen. Contrast this with twitter - write something and press enter, or Instagram - take a picture and add a filter. There are too many steps for me to share content, which is a barrier to using the platform, especially when the value proposition in comparison with existing apps is unclear.

Good luck building the high-fidelity prototype and I look forward to testing it in a few weeks!