Assignment 2: POVs and Experience Prototypes

Introduction

Meet the Team

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## Problem Domain

Our problem domain is food trucks. Based on our first round of interviews, we decided to focus on how consumers discover food and evaluate others' reviews. Our initial field research revealed a contradictory lack of trust yet reliance on Yelp, as well as tension in convenience and spontaneity are valued. In our second round of needfinding, we aimed to explore how consumers make reviews and decisions surrounding food.

Preliminary POV
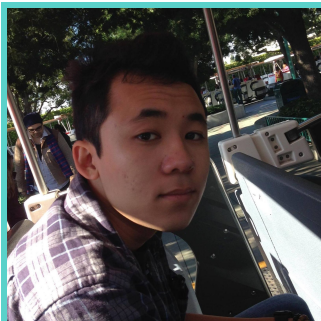
We met Sho, a coterminal student in Computer Science, at the food trucks near Y2E2. We were amazed to learn that he always trusts the taste of food trucks, but only goes when he's sick of other food options on campus. We were surprised to learn that when Sho tries new places off campus, he doesn't trust Yelp reviews. It would be game-changing if we could streamline the process of discovering new places for food and make food trucks more accessible.

Additional Needfinding

Based on our identified needs for easy food discovery and trust in the selection process, we went back into the field for four more interviews, three of which we analyzed in greater depth below.

Interview #1

We talked to Cary Huang, a senior studying Computer Science at Stanford University, at a couch in a student dorm. Even though he initially had a negative attitude toward food trucks, disliking the unhealthy food, lack of seating, and scarcity of trucks, he noted that he appreciated the convenience and good taste. However, he wanted a space to relax and have a good time with friends near the trucks, and wished that food trucks could come to him.

Interview #2

We talked to David Hu, a recent UCLA grad working as a consultant and tutor. He thinks food truck food is often good but also too expensive and inconvenient. He prefers finding new restaurants by checking food blogs, exploring Yelp, or getting friends' recommendations. On Yelp, he checks the most popular dishes and number of reviews because that means either lots of people go there, or the experience created a strong enough impression that people wanted to leave a review.

Interview #3

We met Cassie, an entrepreneur and "foodie", at the Sunday farmer's market on California Avenue. She likes to eat out with her husband, but stopped going to food trucks after she experienced food selling out. If she's in a new place, she uses Yelp to find nearby restaurants with good reviews, but if she's visiting friends, she defers to their expertise and recommendations.

Revised POVs and HMWs

POV #1: Cary

We met Cary, a senior studying computer science at Stanford who often eats out when his friends ask to hang out. We were amazed to realize that when he and his friends try choosing a place to eat, they use Yelp even when they feel they can't trust strangers' opinions. It would be game changing if Cary could choose restaurants quickly and in a reliable way.

How might we… (samples)

- Ensure that ratings and reviews are reflective of the location?
- Ensure food trucks are considered an option to eat out at?
- Make food trucks more visible?
- Make discomfort desirable?

POV #2: David

We met David, a recent college graduate who is working out of his home as a security consultant and a tutor. We were surprised to learn that he usually only eats at food trucks if he happens to be passing one, since he lives in a California suburb. It would be game changing if food trucks could connect to consumers searching for food options.

How might we… (samples)

- Bring food trucks to consumers?
- Make the lack of a physical environment an adventure?
- Make finding specific menu items easier?
- Bring professional reviews to consumers?

POV #3: Cassie

We met Cassie, an entrepreneur who finds new eateries with her husband. We were surprised to learn that she often experienced menu items selling out at food trucks. It would be game-changing to give users real-time feedback on food availability.

How might we… (samples)

- Help customers find seating near food trucks?
- Provide a way for food truck owners to convey information to potential customers?
- Not let selling out of an item be the end of a customer journey?
- Encourage discovery of new food trucks?

Narrowing Our Focus

From those HMWs generated from our 3 chosen POVs, we selected 3 HMWs to tackle:
1. How might we bring food trucks to consumers? (POV #2)
2. How might we make strangers' opinions trustworthy? (POV #1)
3. How might we help customers find seating near food trucks? (POV #3)
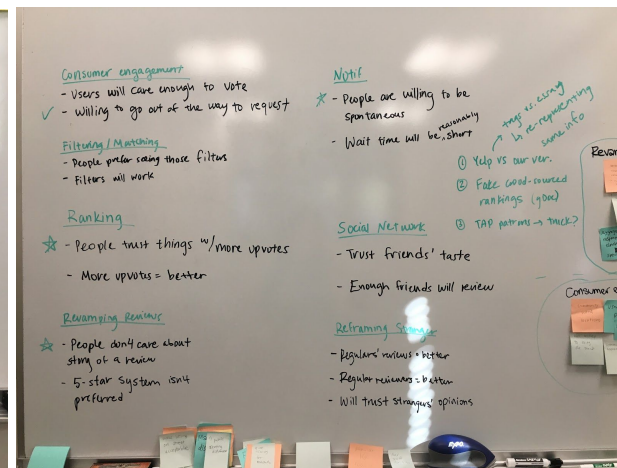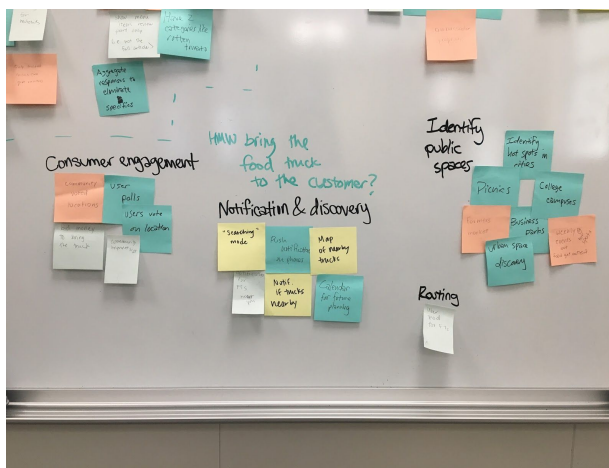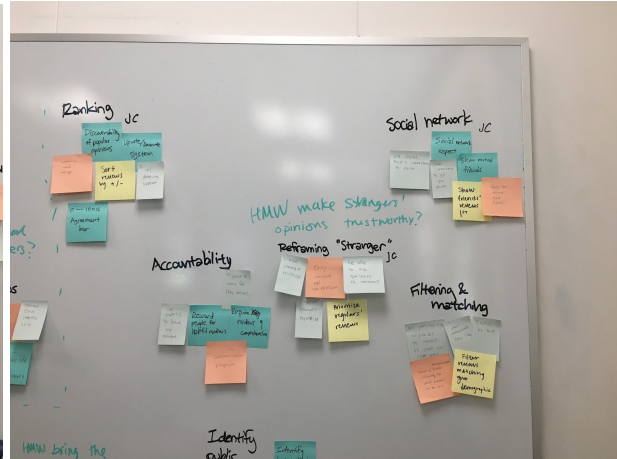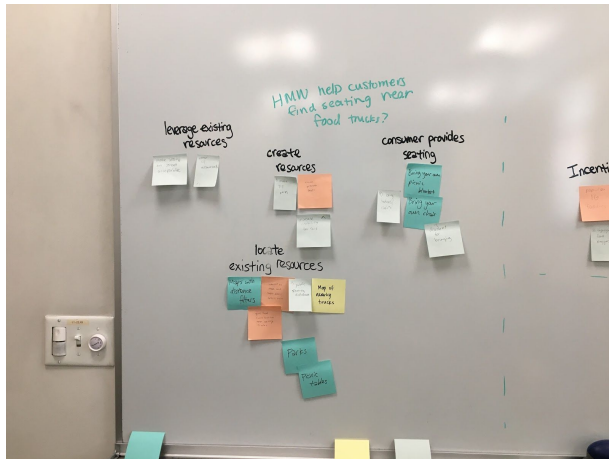
Based on those HMWs, we generated solutions and grouped them by topic. From those topics, we then created a list of assumptions surrounding those topics that could tested and chose 3 solutions, each to test an assumption.

Prototype #1: Text vs. Tag Reviews

Introduction

For our first prototype, we aimed to explore how we could improve the food rating system. From our interviews, we learned that people often browse reviews and we assumed that people would prefer a different way of representing the same information, which we tested.

To make the prototype, we decided to take screenshots of some Yelp reviews on the mobile app and made mockups that highlighted each review's main ideas. We took the reviewer's biggest points and visually represented them in a simpler way. We also made sure to include the "Read more" tag and the images from the original post, so we could test just the representation of the words.
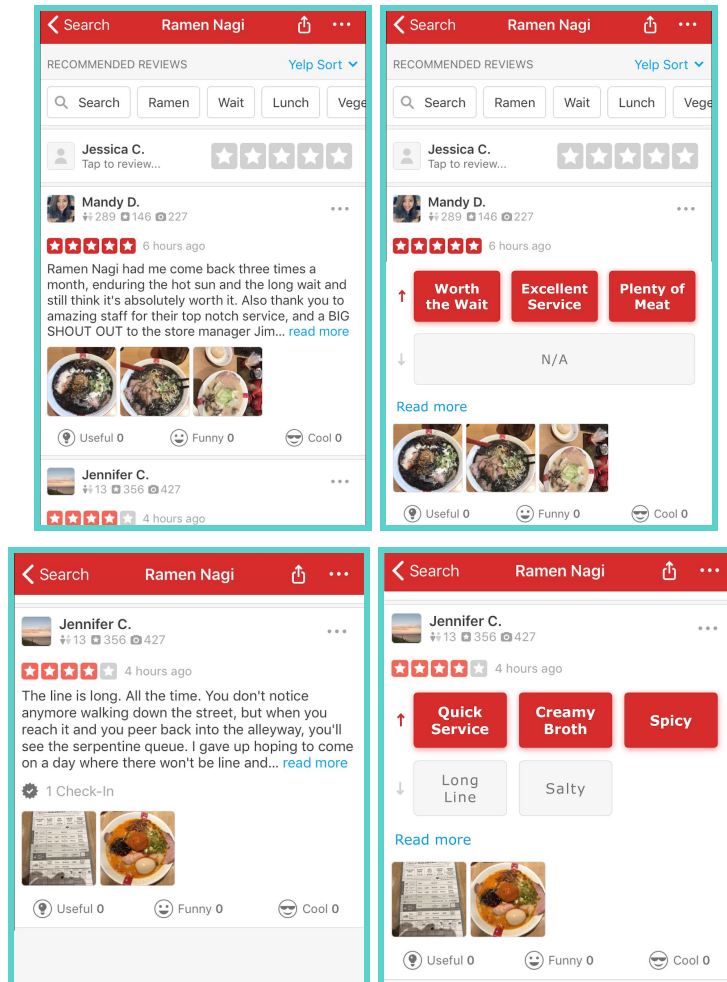
Testing

To test, we went to downtown Palo Alto to find people who were eating at a cafe or restaurant. Our plan was to show people both the verbose version and the simplified "tags" version and have them pick which design they preferred and found more trustworthy

We showed the prototype to a man working on his laptop outside of Paris Baguette. He was very enthusiastic and took his time to contemplate which design he preferred. He said he preferred the simplified design because he works, so he's always on the go. He doesn't like wordy reviews because he thinks they go into too much detail that isn't relevant to him, and dislikes reading contradicting reviews.

Was the assumption valid?

Yes, this prototype validated our assumption that people would prefer reviews visually represented in simpler way. People want reliable, trustworthy information, but they also want it fast and have it be easy to see at a glance.

Prototype #2: Push Notifications

Introduction

One common theme throughout our interviews was that people often complained about the far-off locations of food trucks. With this prototype, we wanted to test the assumption that if they see a food truck in front of them during a meal time, people would actually be willing to go. We assumed that people would be spontaneous enough about their food choices to follow through their interest in food trucks if they were closer to the consumers.

In order to test this assumption, we devised a scenario to simulate that decision process. In the scenario, we asked people to pretend they were getting ready for a meal when suddenly, they receive a push notification on their phone about a nearby food truck. Based on that information, we then asked them whether they would be likely to visit that food truck.

Testing

To test, we went to downtown Palo Alto and proposed the scenario to consumers waiting for food and drinks — two women waiting for food outside Burma Ruby. We learned that the two women at Burma Ruby are generally less flexible about dinner plans, since they are more likely to already have a place in mind. On the other hand, they're more likely to be spontaneous about lunch because they need to grab food quickly. The two women cared about cuisine, rating, description, and photos prior to visiting a food truck, and considered eating at food trucks "a novelty" as opposed to a steady, reliable source of food.

Was the assumption valid?

No, we underestimated how committed people are to their lunch or dinner plans. A new assumption is that if we notify consumers 1 week/day/meal in advance, they'd be more open to working a food truck into their meal schedule.

Prototype #3: Student-Sourced Reviews

Introduction

We assumed that people would trust strangers' reviews that gave restaurants a higher ranking or better review. For this prototype, we created a Google Doc to simulate a student-sourced food review system. We listed a few popular restaurants around the area, and pasted 2 reviews from Yelp under each one as a starting point. With this prototype, we wanted to observe how participants would interact with strangers' reviews or choose to add their own.

Hey! Thanks for helping us find the **best place to grab a meal** off-campus.
You can:
- Write down your thoughts on a place to eat
- Criticize or agree with other people's opinions
- Suggest a new place

Pizza My Heart

- ★★☆☆☆
  - In all the years I've been around Palo Alto, never had pizza from here. Stopped by yesterday, suffice it to say if the pizza was as nice/good as the decor, physical premises, it would get 5 stars. I had a 2 star experience.
    - Reply
    - Agree on the pizza rating, disagree about the decor. The bathrooms are pretty dirty
- ★★★☆☆

Testing

To test this prototype, we approached 15 students around the dorm Okada about their favorite place to eat off campus. If they agreed or disagreed with certain reviews, we asked them to respond with their opinions. Afterwards, we asked them — out of all of the reviews which one do you trust and why? Some people resonated strongly with certain reviews, while others felt that writing reviews or adding comments was a lot of work, and typically contributed to places that they either really liked or disliked.

Was the assumption valid?

Not necessarily — we received mixed responses about what participants trusted and learned that everyone has a different metric. The rating system worked to an extent because people still trusted it. However, some people only read bad reviews to be prepared for the worst case while others only looked for restaurants that had consistently positive reviews. One key takeaway from this is that people look to both general consensus and to strangers who think similarly as them to validate their opinions on a food place.

Reflection

From our testing, we learned that Prototype #2 underestimated people's lunch/dinner plans, and Prototype #3 still involved a lot of writing and reading, one of the initial complaints we heard about Yelp. Out of these three prototypes, we found the Prototype #1 (Text vs. Tag Reviews) to be the most successful in validating our assumption and generating excitement & trust for reviews from the user. We're excited to move forward with it for the coming weeks!