M2 Interactive Usability Test

Paul Lee's Reflections

Our team conducted a usability study on the M2 Interactive application created by Luminary Promotions. The purpose of the research was to learn about the usability of the augmented reality technology in relation to human and computer interaction theory. The app as described by Alexis from Luminary Promotions was "...designed to be simple enough to not need tutorials, as the fast paced lifestyle of an M2 reader does not have time for that." So we decided to take this to the test and see how easy the app actually is to use.

I am doing a Bachelor of Computer and Information Science, majoring in Software Development. The applied human and computer interaction paper has given me plenty of insight in regards to the interaction between humans and technology. It was extremely interesting to think about our perception of things and how we automatically know how something will work just by looking at it.

The usability study that we conducted was a study based on using an augmented reality application. This had added benefit because it is a big component of the BCIS project that we have been assigned this year.

From the investigation we were able to see how hard or how easy the augmented reality application was to use. Generally, I believe that people more familiar with technology were able to easily use and understand what the application did. The target audience for the M2 magazine and accompanying app is said to be well-off, middle-aged men and women. Therefore I would say that the people that are targeted, would be competent at using such applications. They would be familiar with how many applications work and probably would have heard about this new type of technology and its applications. I feel that because of this, they would quickly be able to understand what they need do and how to use the app.

For the usability study we identified that the usability of an application was determined by a few key factors; intuitive design, ease of learning, efficiency of use, memorability, error frequency and severity, and subjective satisfaction. Our findings show that many users would have benefited from a little help screen or guide, as it took all of them some time to identify what activated the AR components. A quick-start guide or video would have solved this issue quickly and would have not taken much time at all. The purpose of the three menu items on the application was not easily understood, so they were not very efficient. The design was very basic, however most of the participants understood that they were buttons and to be clicked. The application had a few flaws, the app sometimes was very glitchy displaying the AR content. This is not appealing to a user and decreases the satisfaction that they would have while using it. The glitches of the app come from the limitations of the technology used. Therefore, it is not entirely a usability concern but, this takes away from the usability of the application as users are less inclined to use a broken app. The app is meant to supplement the magazine, to give another dimension of content and I think it does that well, users are not obliged to use the app and do so at their own wish. Many users will most likely read the magazine and the instructions in the magazine before downloading it and trying it out themselves, which may remove the whole inability and lack of understand our test participants had.

For the BCIS project my group has been asked to develop a platform using augmented reality to help guide people around Auckland City. The results that we found from the study help me identify focus points needed to make a successful application. I have discovered from the study that there are a few main features an app should have to pass all usability concerns. A few features include: a simple help screen or video, no outside links and succinct, quick loading content.