



Initial Plan : Designing a Solution that Helps Storytellers Better Address Audience Preferences

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Project Description:

This project targets two distinct problem areas that link two demographics of stakeholders together. Content consumers, often referred to as 'audiences', and content creators, often referred to as 'writers'. This project aims to provide a solution to the issues of, firstly a lack of high-quality engaging content accessible to audiences causing them to turn to paid subscription services such as Netflix (ref 1.) and Amazon Prime (ref 2.), and secondly a general lack of writer experience and expertise, causing the stories being told, or the way they are being told, to be either subpar or lower than general audience expectation (ref 3.).

The general purpose of this project is to find out whether there is a genuine need for these problems to be solved, and whether the solution that this project produces is able to adequately address the target demographic's needs and wants. To that end, the solution that this project plans to produce is a mobile and web compatible application that connects inexperienced writers to audiences that are looking for specific content to consume. This application will need to incorporate features that will allow for a solid solution to the previously outlined problem areas.

Storytelling is becoming more and more popular in the modern era with millions of people every year purchasing content subscription services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime. If these issues were to be solved, it would likely be positive for, not only the industry of general consumption media, but also industries such as business management (ref 4.) and teaching (ref 5.) which are ever-increasingly leaning on storytelling to convey their messages to their audiences; the hope is that through using this project's app, writers will be able to gain the experience and expertise that they lack to better perform in these storytelling situations.

Project Aims and Objectives:

The overall aim of the project is to design and implement a mobile and web application that connects audiences with writers across all forms of media. The aim of this app will be to connect content creators with content commissioners, allowing a collaboration of effort to produce a desired story driven piece of media, developing the content creator's abilities and satisfying the audience's preferences.

There are five main objectives that this project will aim to achieve in order to fully address the project's aim. These are:

1. To discover the user needs and wants of the two target demographic user bases of the app; audiences and writers.
2. Conduct several rounds of user testing to gain insights into the app's user bases and derive actionable qualitative and quantitative data, allowing a clear definition of the scope for the mobile/web application through a list of functional and non-functional requirements.
3. Implement a minimum viable platform that meets the stakeholder's expected standards through an iterative design process.
4. Implement a platform that allows users to collaborate on story driven projects, through multiple modalities (for example: text, images, video), in order to both develop the content creator's creative skill, and satisfy the content commissioner's vision.
5. Evaluate the mobile/web application's effectiveness at achieving the previously defined user needs and wants, to discover whether the app serves its purpose in solving the problem area, or whether further feature and design iteration is required.

Work Plan:

Background research into the project's problem area will be conducted over multiple weeks to gain insights into how design iterations should be approached and to provide context to the data derived from the several planned rounds of user testing. This context will likely be useful whilst building the conclusions and evaluations during the final portion of the project.

During the beginning weeks of the project, ethical consideration documents will be submitted for review. If further revisions of these documents are requested by the Ethics Board then the user testing for the project may be delayed or need adjustment within the time plan.

Implementation of the prototype system will continue through multiple weeks, while user tests will be conducted in parallel using a rapid prototyping software (current ideas are to make use of Figma) where the design of the system will be iterated upon. Once implementation of the core system requirements is completed the final round of evaluative user testing will be using the prototype system.

Slack weeks have been included into the plan, consisting of the semester's easter break and week 12, in case tasks for the project are behind schedule. Within early March a review meeting with the project author and supervisor will occur. (the exact date has yet to be decided due to potential schedule conflicts) During this Easter break period, no weekly supervisor meetings are planned to take place. It is currently uncertain whether a 'project Viva' will be conducted for the individual project this year, however if one is required then it would likely take some planning, which will have to be fit into the project's schedule.

Deliverable(s) by the End of Semester Week 1 :

- Weekly supervisor meeting.
- Draft and submit project initial plan.

Deliverable(s) by the End of Semester Week 2 :

- Weekly supervisor meeting.
- Plan iterative rounds of user testing.
- Draft and submit ethics documentation.
- Begin conducting background research into problem areas.

Deliverable(s) by the End of Semester Week 3 :

- Weekly supervisor meeting.
- Conduct initial user studies based around the problem area.
- Derive user needs and wants from initial user study data.
- Outline prototype scope through defining functional and non-functional requirements.
- Clearly distinguish which requirements are a 'must have', 'could have', and 'won't have' based on a MosCoW system.

Deliverable(s) by the End of Semester Week 4 :

- Weekly supervisor meeting.
- Create implementation planning documents. (core systems pseudo code, entity relationship diagrams, database model, and security measures such as encryption design) The exact documents needed will depend on the feature scope defined in the MosCoW system.
- Research and define the industry standards that the code base will follow.

Deliverable(s) by the End of Semester Week 5 :

- Weekly supervisor meeting.
- Start implementation of the core 'must have' requirements.
- Draft first full prototype design, iterating on previous work in my CM3116 UX design module.
- Conduct the first round of prototype design user testing.
- Interpret user testing data into trends.

Deliverable(s) by the End of Semester Week 6 :

- Weekly supervisor meeting.
- Derive actionable feedback from data trends.
- Iterate on prototype design using actionable feedback.

Deliverable(s) by the End of Semester Week 7 :

- Weekly supervisor meeting.
- Conduct another round of user testing for the prototype design.
- Interpret the new round of testing data into trends.

Deliverable(s) by the End of Semester Week 8 :

- Weekly supervisor meeting.
- Derive actionable feedback from data trends.
- Final iteration of prototype design using new actionable feedback.

Deliverable(s) by the End of Semester Week 9 :

- Weekly supervisor meeting.
- Finalise prototype implementation.
- Detail steps taken for implementation within the implementation section of the final report.
- Review code bases to ensure that they follow industry standard code maintainability, scalability, and updatability practises.
- Conduct evaluative user testing for the final prototype system.

Deliverable(s) by the End of Semester Week 10 :

- Weekly supervisor meeting.
- Analyse evaluative user testing data.
- Collate data to form the results part of the results and evaluation section of the final report.
- Form conclusion, future work, and evaluation sections of the final report.

Deliverable(s) by the End of Semester Week 11 :

- Weekly supervisor meeting.
- Complete the reflection on learning section of the final report.
- Redraft and proof-read final report.

Deliverable(s) by the End of Semester Week 12 :

- Weekly supervisor meeting.
- Submit final report and prototype system.
- This week will be used as a contingency period for any complications within the project that make any tasks take longer than expected.

References:

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3. Jain, Vinay. "How Bad Writers Ruined Game of Thrones' Legacy." Trending News Buzz, 21 Sept. 2020, <https://trendingnewsbuzz.com/how-bad-writers-ruined-game-of-thrones-legacy/>
4. Hurley, Kendall. "The Consequences of Bad Writing." HurleyWrite, 2016, https://www.hurleywrite.com/Images/HurleyWrite/PDFS/The_Consequences_of_Bad_Writing.pdf
5. Haigh, Carol, and Pip Hardy. "Tell Me a Story - a Conceptual Exploration of Storytelling in Healthcare Education." Nurse Education Today, May 2011, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0260691710001486>