

Reflection

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In the second semester of year 2, I have done a research project in the Design for Creatives squad. I chose this particular squad because of the pitch during the project market and interesting projects made by other students who had previously worked with the design for creatives squad. I had heard that this squad worked with graphic design and this caught my interest too.

The design process did not pass as smooth as we had hoped. While developing a concept for our research, we encountered several dead ends. We came up with several concepts which, after a while, turned out to be less useful than expected or not in line with the expectations of the coaches. However, with the help of our coach, discussing our visions for the project with each other and by asking ourselves and other students the right questions, we managed to get our process back on track and determine our goal. This resulted in our goal to help design students create more effective and better quality pitches by means of crowdsourcing.

Integration of the expertise areas within the project

One of my goals was to learn more about a design research process as opposed to a design process. I also wanted to be able to process and analyze data in a clear and understandable way to better communicate findings or other data. Before starting the project, I had mostly only developed the competency area of 'math, data & computing' with course like calculus and modeling. There was still a lot of opportunity for improvement in this area, which resulted in my goal to develop this competency area further in a more realistic setting during my research project. During the project, I took most of the responsibility for writing the paper, apart from the data analysis. The data analysis we did with the four of us. I wrote the abstract, introduction, the pilot (hypothesis, methodology, data analysis and conclusion), measurements, methods, protocol, participants, hypothesis and the entire appendix. I did this to gain a better understanding of how to communicate the results of such a research process. I am satisfied with the amount of knowledge I gained as I am now much better at communicating these research processes after receiving

feedback from other students, teachers and coaches and improving upon that.

Additionally, as I wrote a very large part of the paper. I noticed that by documenting everything we did, I was able to reflect on each step of the process much better. For example, when writing the methodology, it made me think of each exact step that we needed to do in order for our tests to succeed. Before writing the methodology, I had an idea in my head of how we would do the tests. The participants would send us videos, people would give feedback and the participants would get the feedback given to their videos. When writing the methodology, it made me think about the process more in depth. I asked myself questions like: 'how are we going to measure the data gathered from the in-depth interviews?' and 'what exactly can we take from our pilot test to improve our final test?' By reflecting on our prior actions, I understood exactly what we were planning on doing. Even though we could have made better decisions, for example regarding the processing of our data, even after reflecting beforehand, I do believe that I have learned the importance of documenting all my work to become aware of my actions and aware of the possibilities in the rest of the study.

Next to the competency area of 'math, data & computing', I have also developed the competency areas of 'User & Society' and 'Creativity & Aesthetics.' I designed the posters and the video of which we received incredibly positive feedback. This resulted in a development within the area of 'Creativity & Aesthetics.' This area was also developed when brainstorming about the project. In regards to the area of 'User & Society,' we learned a lot about user testing by involving the test subjects in every question we had during the process. I was responsible for all communications we had with our participants and spent a lot of time motivating students to partake in our research. We approached our research with a mixed methods approach, which meant that we also did in-depth interviews with the test subject. These have helped me realise how important the user is, not only in this research, but generally in design.

During the start of our project we spoke to a few professionals as well as investors about the importance of pitching. These people have taught me about the importance of pitching in the business world. They have also taught me

what makes up a good pitch and what investors are looking for in pitches. These conversations and my knowledge regarding pitching have developed my competency area of 'Business & Entrepreneurship' too.

Development of professional skills

The collaboration within our group could have gone better, but was quite well nevertheless. I am naturally a person who takes initiative and comes up with a plan of action. However, I noticed that I find it difficult to work with people who do not take as much initiative. One of my group mates mostly waited for others to give out tasks, which I ended up doing in the end, but then did the tasks really well. It taught me to listen more to the needs and wants of group mates and find a good middle ground.

We ended up working together on certain tasks but dividing others. We helped each other when we needed it and communicated and discussed everything we did. This ended up taking a lot of time, but helped us develop our concept further.

We started the project by writing weekly progress reports. These reports showed our coaches our progress, but also helped us reflect on previous choices. By reflecting, we could eventually continue working and develop our research.

When it comes to our planning, we had a rocky start in which we should have been more active, however, towards the end, we were quite organized. I created a planning and everyone mostly stuck to it. We had finished most of the paper a week before the deadline, which meant we could still ask for feedback from our coach. This has helped us improve our paper and resulted from a structured planning.

Design challenges

During the project, we faced several challenges. Especially during the first semester, we faced some problems which led us to fall behind a bit. While reflecting on the project, I notice that the most difficult challenges revolve around motivation.

Motivating students

As the communication between the participants and us and finding participants in general was my responsibility, the motivation of the participants is something that I struggled with in the beginning. As filming yourself makes you vulnerable and preparing and performing a pitch takes quite some effort. I struggled to find participants who actually wanted to record a video for us to use.

To collect data, participants were necessary, so to address this problem I took a more direct approach. I contacted people I know on a more personal level, who would be

more likely to do me a favour. I contacted them personally and multiple times so they would not forget and would be reminded of our agreement. As people are more likely to participate if it takes less effort, I made sure to do everything I could to help them. I came up with ideas for a pitch to perform, set up cameras and sent the links for surveys through whatsapp for easy access. Whenever someone was unwilling to participate regardless of these activities, I asked them for their reason and if they would be more likely to participate if they were compensated. By doing this, we still obtained meaningful insights without these students actually participating.

With this direct approach, I was able to get nine people to participate in our research. I still wish more people could have helped us to obtain more data, but as we took a quantitative approach in this part of the research, I think these nine people have given us enough data to draw the conclusions we drew in the paper.

From this experience, I have learned that the more personal and direct the approach I take is, the more motivated people are to participate in a study. If I were to post something on facebook, no one would respond, while if I ask them in person, people are much more inclined to say 'yes.' Also, I have learned that people appreciate you helping them when it comes to doing research. These participants felt like they were doing me a favour by participating, and when I helped them, they felt that I appreciated the favour they were doing me. (As said by several participants). I feel like this challenge eventually helped me develop the competency area of 'User & Society,' as I am now more aware of the needs and wants of the participants and how to motivate them.

Motivating the group

I am usually the leader in a group, I take a lot of initiative and am usually the one trying to motivate and give directions to others. This time around, I decided to move more towards the background. I wanted to give others the chance to share their opinions and lead the project. I soon noticed that this is much more difficult for me than I anticipated. We were moving far too slow in the first quartile and no one was really taking a lot of initiative to undertake certain activities like deciding on a certain concept and no one was really leading the conversation when we needed to discuss the progress of the project.

As mentioned previously, I noticed that some group members would not do any work unless someone asked them to. This is the reason I, after the first quartile, decided to abandon my attempt at being in the background and started to take more initiative and create more structure in the group. I decided that the project was a priority at this stage and I moved towards the background more in a

different course, where there was more room for that, so I could learn that regardless.

I lead the discussions we had and specifically asked for opinions when we needed to make a decisions. For example, when we needed to decide whether we wanted to work together closer with Penny, or make the project more our own and when we needed to decide between continuing with the tool to improve pitching or intergrate crowdsourcing with an app. I divided specific tasks and created a planning so we could stay organized and stay on track. I noticed that this motivated the group to work harder, become aware of the situation and know exactly what needed to be done.

From this experience I learned that I need to consider the group I am working with more. In this specific group, we needed someone to take initiative and tell the group what to do and what the plan was. In other groups, there is not necessarily a need for that. I now know much better when to take control and when not to. I also learned when to prioritize which things. I was a bit stuck in my idea to not be the leader, which resulted in me neglecting the fact that in this case, the project had a priority over this idea. In the future, I will be able to notice this sooner and have a better feeling of the group I am working with. Teamwork is one of the most important things in these kinds of projects, especially when you feel like you might not be on the right track anymore, which made me aware of the importance of listening to your teammates and trying to find a way that works well.

Overall competence as a designer

At first, I thought a research project did not necessarily fit with my interests, as I thought we would mostly have to read and write papers. But, I soon discovered that research also consists of interviewing test subject and presenting your project, which fits my identity and vision much better. Even though, I think a research project is much more difficult for me than a design project, I do believe it is incredibly important to develop (scientific) skills as a designer by means of a research project. This project taught me how to communicate my design better as well as how to process data in a clear and meaningful way.

All in all, this project helped me to develop myself within the competency areas where I was missing experience, mostly within 'Math, data & computing.' I believe that I am on track when it comes to gaining awareness in all competency areas and am even on my way to gaining depth in areas like 'Creativity & Aesthetics.'

I have enjoyed working with the 'Design for Creatives' squad and I am satisfied with our final results. As discussed

before, I have learned skills that will definitely help me in my further projects.