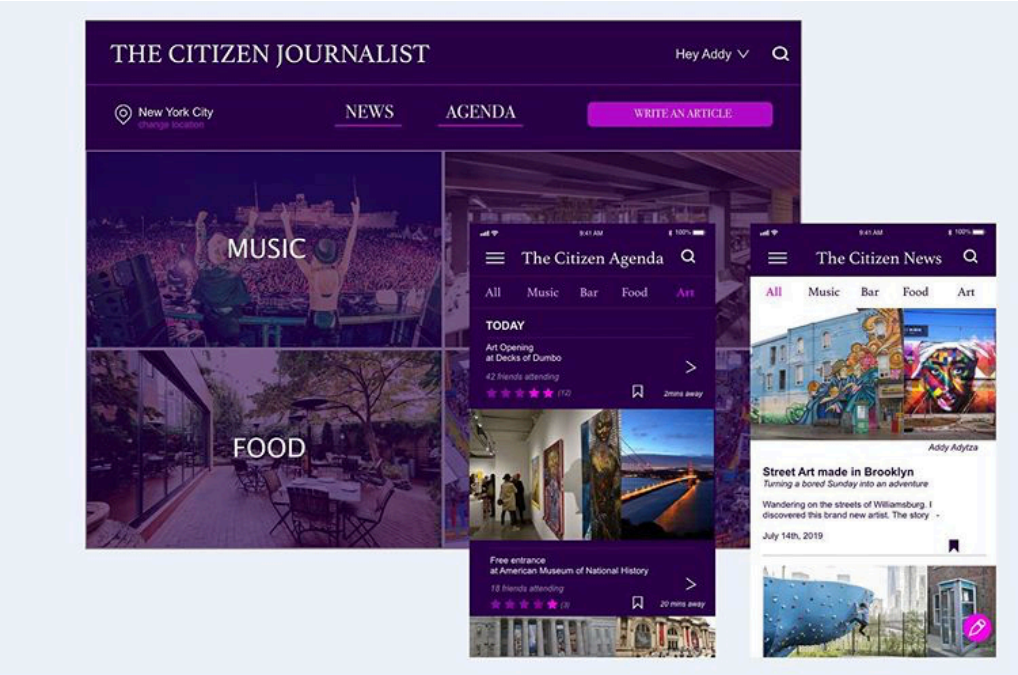
UX Case Study -
The Citizen Journalist

A newspaper created by the citizens.



Project Summary: The Citizen Journalist is an app and website that allows ordinary people to submit news stories from the front line. It gives a voice to the citizens by letting them rate and share their experiences.

Client Name: Udemy – Dr David Travis

Length of Project: 3.5 weeks

Role: User Experience Designer

Responsibilities: Carry out user research to discover if there is a user need for a product like this. Identify the key user groups, key tasks, set usability goals, develop a prototype and run a usability test before iterating on the design.

Design Tools / UX Methods: Used Competitive Analysis, Affinity sorting, Personas, Storyboarding, Paper prototypes, AdobeXD for interface design and mockups.

Key Performance Metrics: Success rate, number of clicks taken to achieve tasks, ratio of + to - adjectives used to describe the product.

The Problem

We are swamped with information, so much it is easy to get lost or miss out on something important. Sometimes it is difficult as well to receive the news in time or to get specific details. We don't always know where to look.

The Solution

A newspaper created by the citizens. Everyone can submit their articles and pictures, give their opinion, allow small events to increase their visibility, and isolated people to know what's going on around them. It gathers the community. It also allows to scan the information quickly, news and things to do, all of it with reviews and ratings of the users with well-defined tastes to avoid having bad surprises when you discover a new place.

DEFINE

Strategic objectives

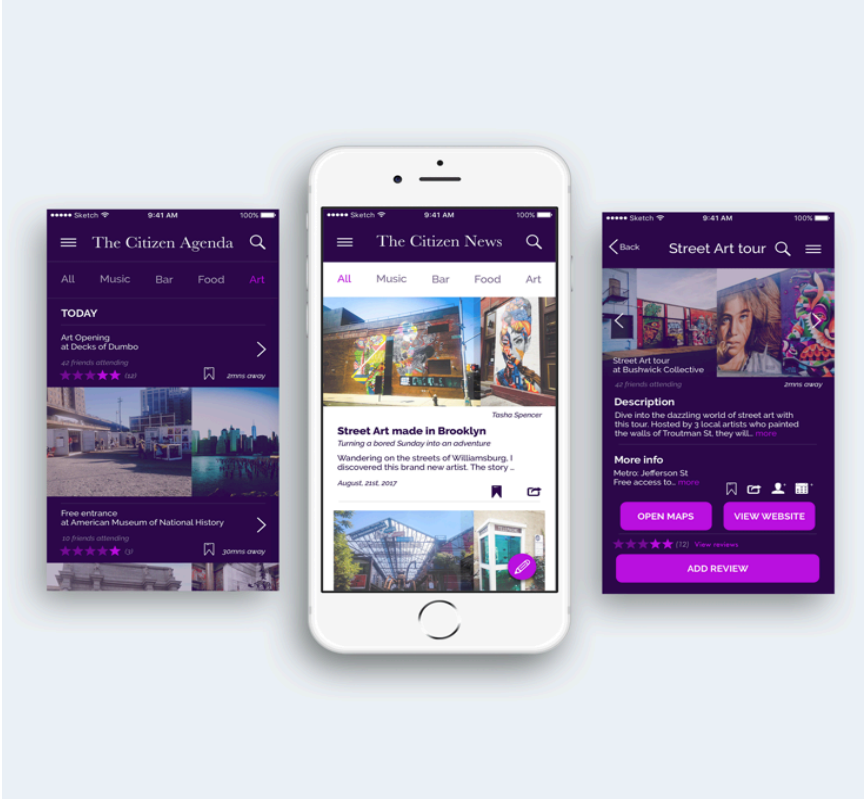
The editor of a national newspaper wants to create a system with the citizens crowdsourcing the news.

Requirements

The editor envisions the final system as having a mobile component but he's also open to the idea of people editing on a laptop. It will depend on the user research.

Business Goals + User Goals

A crowdsourced newspaper. The user research will show the user needs and the changes the app will need to meet them.



DISCOVER

Competitive Analysis

I observed the following apps and websites: Time Out, Resident Advisor, BBC News and The New York Times. I did a feature inventory to see the tasks users can complete. I took screenshots at every step and notes on difficulties, useful features and poorly implemented ones. My goal was to find commonalities between competitors to determine what users would expect from The Citizen Journalist.

I also had a look on the user reviews on the App Store to see what they were happy about and what could be improved.

- Time Out appeared to be only for big cities and with no calendars and events listings.
- Resident Advisor is considered as the favourite catalogue of events you can synchronise with your music library. Only the desktop features the magazine and reviews.
- BBC News has the feature "Have Your Say", "Your news Your pictures" but on the mobile app, it doesn't provide an agenda with things to do, reviews and recommendations.
- The New York Times allows users to save articles and share easily.

[*see table sheet of the feature inventory below*]

Feature	TIME OUT Desktop	TIME OUT Mobile	RESIDENT ADVISOR Desktop	RESIDENT ADVISOR Mobile	FOURSQUARE Desktop	FOURSQUARE Mobile	THE NEW YORK TIMES Desktop	THE NEW YORK TIMES Mobile	BBC NEWS Desktop	BBC NEWS Mobile
News	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Agenda / Events listings	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Past Events / News	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
Write an article	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
Reviews & Ratings	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
Comment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
Recommendations	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
Keywords & Categories	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Refined Search	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Upload pictures	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
Share on Social Media	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Create Planning	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Save Locations / Articles	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Notifications / Alerts	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Follow Users	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
Profile	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
Responsive	✓	NA	✓	NA	✗	NA	✗	NA	✓	NA
Mobile Version	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

User Research

I interviewed 5 people age range 22-54 to evaluate the need for the system. I recorded the user interviews to focus on the body language.

It showed the following:

• 60% are living in small cities, the communication is based on posters.

• 40% don't go out without checking the reviews.

• 2 users always wanted to create a blog but never found the time or a specific idea to write about.

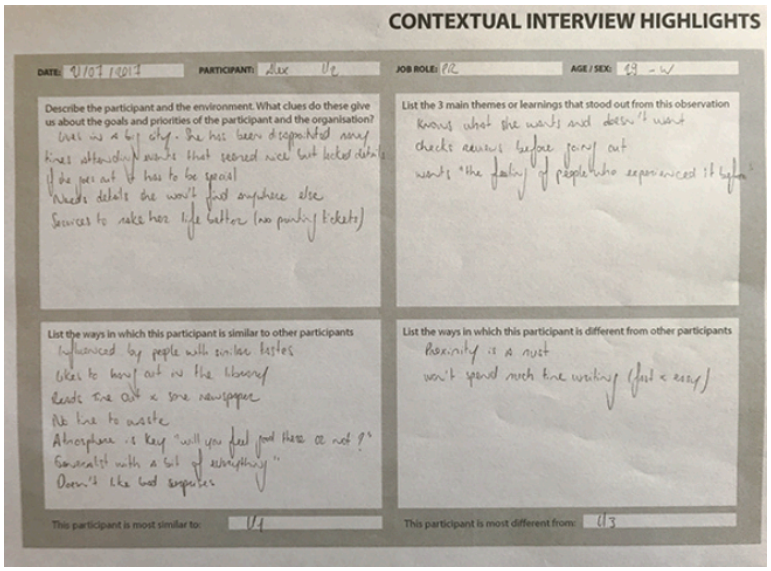
• 60% like to check how the event is told afterwards.

• 2 users want to share their experiences and inspire others.

Affinity Sorting

I used affinity sorting to analyse the research.

[*see contextual interview highlights*]



Personas

2 groups stood out: The ones who wanted to share their experiences and give visibility to small events and those who choose where they go very carefully and don't like having bad surprises.
My *primary persona* was Charlène and my *secondary perso*na was Alex.

Based on the ***user research***, I discovered the need of the following features:
• News with the following categories: music, bars, food, art
• Agenda with the following categories: music, bars, food, art
• Write an article (possible to save and edit later)
• Write a review with what they liked and disliked
• Possibility to share articles and invite friends

I created the *red routes* for the app and 2 *scenarios* based on my primary and secondary persona and their *user story*.

[*I used the severity chart to define the red routes*]

ALL OF THE TIME	Checks opening of new stores	Checks reviews before going out	Give more visibility to small events	Influenced by people with similar tastes
	Checks available seats	Share with people	Search by keywords & categories	Target what's on tonight/ this weekend
MOST OF THE TIME	Can't find the info	Checks alerts	Agenda & Events listings	I need more details
	Meet people	Not enough people informed	Read newsfeed	Visual matters
SOME OF THE TIME	Reads the news banner on Bing	Finds an event via poster	Share content on social media	Read newspaper on mobile
	Would give a meaning	Convey an emotion	Post event reads how the story is told	Only one opinion (pain point)
VERY LITTLE OF THE TIME				
	FEW OF THE PEOPLE	**SOME OF THE PEOPLE**	**MOST OF THE PEOPLE**	**ALL OF THE PEOPLE**

DESIGN

Wireframes

I created *paper prototypes* to *iterate* through many design options and perform usability testing based on interactivity.
I sketched all the screens based on the list of features to help the users achieve their goals.

Usability testing

With all the screens ready, I performed a usability testing with 5 users age range 32-56.

Some observations and modifications after the tests:

• Opacity of the price needs to darken as they choose more euros or stars. Not the opposite way.
• Invite friends didn't make sense in the "write an article" page, it needs to appear after the article is written.
• Same observation for "share on social media".
• Add media should appear before adding the details of price, address, etc.
• Precise the price of what? Entry?
• Merge of the search for the Agenda. People are not checking "more filters" and miss on options.
• Delete "recommended | all" and put the categories "music | bars | food | art" for repetition.
• Add invite friends on the agenda page.
• Delete listing and design like the news tab for consistency.

• Add information regarding how many friends are attending in the agenda.
• Add the distance in the agenda.
• Home screen (news) wasn't clear on the paper prototype, 3 people didn't go first on the pen icon, they chose the category, thinking they could add an image where there is the "picture" text with the camera: "Taped on one of the themes on the top"
• Put a flashy colour on the pen icon and make it bigger.
• Loved the filter for the atmosphere.

Measuring Usability

Effectiveness
• Success rate: 80% of participants who correctly and completely achieve each goal (unassisted).
• 70% of tasks completed successfully on first try.
• Disaster rate: 20% of users thought they were successful but failed .

Efficiency
• Number of clicks taken to achieve tasks: straight forward, no added clicks.
• Time correcting errors: pen icon not obvious on the paper prototype, I should have added colour to enhance the call to action. 40% of users had difficulty with this point.

Satisfaction
• Ratio of + to - adjectives used to describe the product: "easy to use", "intuitive", "complete", "allows an extensive research", "really help finding what we want", "I would use it".
• 80% of users would recommend it to a friend.
• Customer rating of quality of output: 4 stars.

OUTCOME

Learnings?
I reinforced my knowledge on Information Architecture, I did a lot of research to build a cohesive responsive experience from mobile to desktop. I carefully worked on the labelling of the menu, categories and keywords but also the selection of the main call to action.

Surprising insights from user research?
The environment was key for this project. The users living in big cities had different issues to solve than the ones living in isolated towns. For both, there was a problem to solve regarding the communication of news and events, a lack of one or on the contrary, too much of it. Surprisingly, with so many apps and websites, the users had no specific solution to manage their frustrations.

Challenges?
This project was way more ambitious than I expected to do all by myself. I felt a bit overwhelmed when I started to ideate on the designs from mobile to desktop. I waned to maintain the same information Architecture on both versions, so I requested for suggestions from a UX community group. Someone suggested to focus on the user's key tasks for mobile, streamline the IA for the purposes and then work up an expanded version for desktop. This enlightened me and unlocked my creativity.

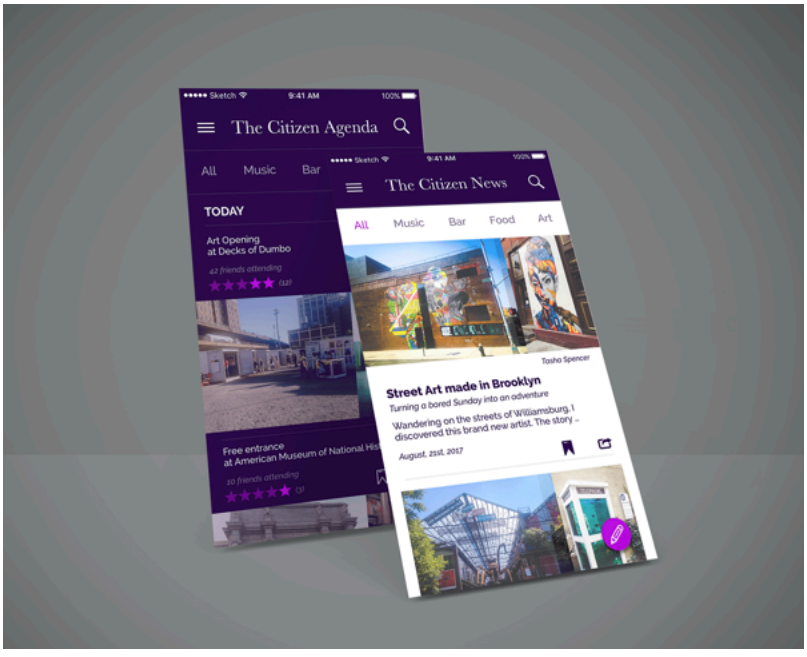
Quantitative data to measure the success of the product?

- *Effectiveness, Efficiency, Satisfaction*

Recommendations:
We could improve the features of the agenda for the users and add a social network within the product. Not only to connect between users, invite to an event or meet new people but also to offer a carpooling option for isolated users. The agenda could offer ticket purchase with an option to "add to wallet" and avoid printing tickets.

Introducing the Citizen Journalist

Share your local news and experiences.
Browse articles to discover new places around, and further.



Have your say, anytime, anywhere