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Fairly Local

Alison Schwebach

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FAIRLY LOCAL

by

Alison Schwebach

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation with Honors in the Art, Studio

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Bradley Dicharry
Thesis Mentor

Spring 2017

All requirements for graduation with Honors in the
Art, Studio have been completed.

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Kee-Ho Yuen
Art, Studio Honors Advisor

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Alison Schwebach
Spring 2017
Brad Dicharry
School of Art and Art History

In recent years there has been a huge push by consumers for stores to move towards stocking more local and organic products. Many consumers, including myself, want to know that their shopping habits have as little negative impact as possible. Buying local produce is not only a great way to contribute to the community, but it also helps reduce your environmental impact. However, unless the produce item is specifically labeled as being local, it is not always easy to know exactly how far your fruits and vegetables traveled to get to market. With that in mind, I wanted to explore the process behind designing an app for your phone that would list the local produce stocked at your grocery store. From a design standpoint, I also wanted to explore the use of bright colors and minimalistic design for the app.

The first step of my research process was to begin initial market research to see what possible users would look for in an app to help locate local produce. I created a survey that included questions about the participant's grocery shopping habits and app usage. Out of the 30 participants, I was able to deduce that there is a significant interest in an app like what I was proposing (62% answered "yes," 44% answered "maybe") and their answers helped shape the direction of my initial logo sketches and interface wireframes. At this stage, I also looked at different existing apps with bright color schemes and sleek design elements to see what works well design-wise. As the next step of my research, I interviewed Kevin Erhardt-Hansen, produce manager for Lucky's Market in Iowa City, to get a better understanding of how they market their produce as "local." After talking to Mr. Erhardt-Hansen, I was able to conclude that for the app to function easiest, it would rely on produce managers and/or farmers inputting information about the produce into the app for shoppers to search. From there, I went forward designing the different interfaces of the app, including a login page with portals for shoppers, grocers, and farmers to help filter the user experience. Once I finished the initial designs, I created another survey to complete my second round of market research, this time incorporating screenshots of the app's design and interface to see how possible users accessed the usability of the app. From the participant's feedback I made some final changes to the design, the biggest of which was correcting some usability issues. It then took a couple renditions to get the bright color pallet used in the app to look cohesive and to keep the look of the app minimalistic, yet still fun to look at and interact with.

The final outcome of my research on this project are designs for an app, called Fairly Local, with two different functions—one for shoppers and one for the produce managers and farmers. From my research on this project it can be concluded that the app would be beneficial in three different ways: firstly, it would help consumers find the local produce they seek much more efficiently; secondly, it would benefit grocers in being free advertisement for their products and grow their sales by bringing in a demographic that seeks local produce; and finally, it would encourage grocers to purchase more of their stock from local sources, creating even steadier business for local farmers. The research I have conducted for this project is vital practice and experience that I will be able to draw upon in conducting market research and product development for future design projects. One of the most important takeaways was learning how to involve potential users in the development process and then using that feedback to make the app as user-friendly as possible without compromising the overall integrity of the design.