Individual Reflection

DCM100 - Constuctive Design Research

In my identity I state that " Research provides me with stability during all phases of the design process, making design decisions more grounded. I aim to use different research methods such as journey mapping, interviews and literature review in order to be able to have a holistic perspective and gain as much insight as possible about the user, their values and effect of existing methods or products. Next to that, I also use prototyping and visualizing as a research method to explore user interaction, intuition and user experience."

During my internship I was able to experience the in-context research phases of a design process from up close. This has taught me a lot in regards to how it can help you make well-grounded decisions and take the next step in a design process, and motivated me to improve my research skills in regards to design.

Although having written a few papers during the bachelor, I felt like my skills in research were not yet sufficient to start my M1.2 project with confidence. During the master I want to grow towards becoming a service designer/design consultant. In this industry, knowing how to conduct (field) research is an important skill to have and a commonly used methodology throughout the whole design process.

In order to strengthen my skill set and to prepare for my M1.2 semester, I set a few goals. I wanted to learn how to analyze and interpret research outcomes better, and how to then apply these findings onto a real-time context and possible design. Especially in the case of field research where the environment is less controlled than with lab research. I believe that the chosen topic, reflective videos as a tool for remote collaboration, helped me achieve this goal. Since our research was explorative and data was collected from observations, diary entries and interviews instead of quantitative data, it was challenging to define concrete insights and draw conclusions.

Our research consisted of two iterations. Whereas both iterations had the goal to gain deeper insights on the influence of reflection videos, the first iteration had an additional goal to optimize the research protocol. By doing a second iteration, we were able to confirm insights from the first iteration and strengthen our conclusion.

Next to that, thematic analysis helped us map data gathered to shared understanding and disregard insights that resulted from practicalities instead of shared understanding. This taught me a lot on how to set up your research method in order to be able to derive reliable results from 2 iterations that are not identical, and how to analyse the data coming from these. I feel like this is a valuable insight, since the industry of consultancy does not always allow for controlled environments when researching.

In relation to this learning goal, it could be discussed to what extent our research solely adopted the field methodology. Reflecting on our method, our approach made use of a mix between lab and field methodology. Even though our study was not a comparative study, the two iterations had to have certain stable variables such as complexity of the design challenge and communication regulations in order to be able to validate insights regarding shared understanding from both iterations. This resulted in the environments being more artificial, since the context of the design process was recreated and not natural.

Secondly, my goal was to improve reflection skills on the research that I conducted. Due to the explorative nature of our study and the fact that we were our own participants of the study, we had to look critically at the implications this had on the validity of our findings. In the discussion section of our paper, we therefore reflect extensively on the limitation of our research, the implications and proposals for future work to overcome the limitations and to validate the findings and that can be drawn from our paper. This approach helped me identify the lessons that can be learned from the conducted research, how to improve upon the research and discover possible flaws. By applying this gained knowledge to future projects, I am able to trust my research more and can make my design decisions more well-grounded.

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