User Experience Research Plan

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Introduction

The development of OnLeash was fueled by a personal need — the anxiety of leaving my epileptic dog, Burnley, in the care of others. Existing pet care apps excel in finding sitters but fall short when it comes to addressing the concerns of leaving pets with friends or family. OnLeash aims to fill this gap by catering to pet owners who prefer familiar caregivers.

Jess Sherrington
UI/UX | DOG MOM

Burnley
INSPIRATION | FETCH CAPTAIN

This User Experience Research Plan serves as a testament to my commitment to crafting an app that not only caters to the distinctive needs of pets like Burnley but also provides unparalleled peace of mind for pet owners. Join me on my journey as I delve into the core of OnLeash, exploring user interactions, refining the user experience, and ensuring that every pet, including Burnley, receives the care they deserve.

Executive Summary

OnLeash, is dedicated to revolutionizing the pet care industry through a user-centric mobile application. With a focus on enhancing the experience for both pet parents and caregivers, my overarching research goal is to evaluate the usability and effectiveness of the OnLeash app through comprehensive user experience (UX) testing.

Through user testing, I aim to uncover potential usability challenges, refine navigation, and streamline the overall user interaction process. My hypothesis is that by addressing these aspects, I can elevate user satisfaction and instill trust in the OnLeash app. The insights gained from these tests will play a crucial role in guiding iterative improvements, allowing me to optimize user engagement and refine the app's functionality. These tests are particularly important given my solo role, ensuring that OnLeash not only meets but exceeds user expectations, establishing itself as a user-friendly and indispensable tool in the competitive pet care app landscape.

Methodology

Roles

Navigating the realm of User Experience research as a solo entrepreneur for OnLeash, I find myself donning various hats to ensure a comprehensive approach.

As the sole researcher, I take on the roles of both interviewer and notetaker during user testing sessions. My responsibility spans from crafting insightful questions that unveil user experiences to diligently recording observations and feedback. Simultaneously, I act as the data collector, observer, and photographer, capturing valuable insights through meticulous observation and documentation.

Balancing these roles demands a methodical and agile approach, requiring me to seamlessly transition between tasks to glean meaningful data and refine the OnLeash user experience iteratively.

Sampling

The primary population for OnLeash consists of pet owners and potential caregivers who are likely to use the app for managing and facilitating pet care.

User Personas

Persona: Sarah Thompson

- Age: 32
- Occupation: Marketing Manager
- Pet: A 5-year-old Labrador Retriever named Max
- Pet Care Needs: Regular walks, feeding schedule, and occasional medication
- Usage of OnLeash: Seeking a reliable and trusted caregiver when away for work trips.

Persona: Alex Rodriguez

- Age: 26
- Occupation: Graphic Designer
- Pet: 1-year-old tabby cat named Luna
- Pet Care Needs: Feeding routine, playtime, and litter box maintenance
- Usage of OnLeash: Looking for a user-friendly app to connect with friends for pet-sitting.

Sampling

Frame and Method

The sampling frame will primarily involve leveraging word of mouth and social media platforms such as Nextdoor, Instagram, and LinkedIn to recruit 8-12 participants. These platforms will enable a diverse pool of potential users to engage with OnLeash.

Sample Representation

The challenge lies in ensuring that the sample reflects the diversity within the potential user population. Efforts will be made to recruit participants with various pet types, needs, and caregiving arrangements to capture a comprehensive range of user experiences.

Meeting Locations

Given the potential geographic diversity of participants, a combination of in-person meetings and virtual sessions using platforms like Zoom will be employed. In-person meetings can provide more contextual insights, while virtual sessions offer flexibility and accessibility.

Opportunities & Challenges

Opportunities lie in tapping into existing social networks and online communities for participant recruitment. Challenges may include the need for diverse representation and potential scheduling conflicts for in-person sessions. Adapting to participants' preferences, whether in-person or virtual, will be crucial for a balanced and inclusive sample.

Methodology

Testing Instruments
Script

Define Rolls

- Participant
  - Follows the prompts outlined in the usability protocol
  - Provides a narrative of their user experience as they move through the app
  - Provides honest feedback of the usability of the app
- Interviewer*
  - Impartially reads and follows the usability protocol
  - Gets participant consent and encourages honest feedback
- Data Logger*
  - Measures and records time on task and binary metrics.
  - Records participant feedback.
- Observer(s)*
  - Silent observation
  - Takes notes on participant feedback
  - Offers suggestions at the end of protocol

*As a solo researcher, I will juggle these roles as needed.

Introduction

Say: "Hi [Participant Name], I'm Jessica and I'm going to be walking you through this session today. Before we begin, I have some information for you, and I'm going to read it to make sure that I cover everything.

You probably already have a good idea of why I asked you here, but let me go over it again briefly. I am asking people to try using an app that I am working on so I can see whether it works as intended. The session should take about an hour.

The first thing I want to make clear right away is that I am testing the app, not you. You can't do anything wrong here. In fact, this is probably the one place today where you don't have to worry about making mistakes.
As you use the app, I'm going to ask you as much as possible to try to think out loud: to say what you're looking at, what you're trying to do, and what you're thinking. This will be a big help to me.

Also, please don't worry that you're going to hurt my feelings. I'm doing this to improve the app, so I need to hear your honest reactions.

If you have any questions as we go along, just ask them. I may not be able to answer them right away, since i'm interested in how people do when they don't have someone sitting next to them to help. But if you still have any questions when we're done I'll try to answer them then. And if you need to take a break at any point, just let me know.

You may have noticed the microphone. I'm going to record what happens on the screen and our conversation. The recording will only be used to help me figure out how to improve the app, and it won't be seen by anyone except myself and my instructors. And it helps me, because I don't have to take as many notes.

If you would, I'm going to ask you to sign a consent form for me. It just says that I have your permission to record you, and that the recording will only be seen by myself and my instructors for the purposes of this project."

! Interviewer Action Items

1 **Provide the Consent Form Now**

2 While they sign it, START the SCREEN RECORDER

Pre-Test Set-Up (10 MINS)

! Send Pre-Test Survey

Say: "I'll be sending you a brief survey to gather some initial thoughts. Please take a moment to fill it out before we dive into the app."

Background Questions:

Ask: "Can you share a recent experience arranging pet care? Were there any challenges? Are you familiar with pet care apps?"

Pre-Task Questions:

Ask: "Before we begin, do you have any questions or concerns?"

Prototype Demo (20 MINS)

1. **Onboarding:**
   - Start by signing up for an account on OnLeash.
   - Share your initial thoughts about the signup/login screen.
2. **Pet Parent Home Screen:**
   - Examine the pet parent home screen. Identify essential features for managing pet care.
   - Assess the ease of navigating through the app.
3. **Pet Profile Screen:**
   - Add a pet profile for your furry friend.
   - Highlight relevant information on the pet profile screen.
   - Evaluate the process of updating pet information.
4. **Pet Sitter Home Screen:**
   - Toggle to the pet sitter home screen. Identify essential features that you would want a pet sitter to use while caring for your pet. Identify any that you would use if you were taking the role of a pet sitter.
   - Assess the ease of toggling between home views.
5. **In-App Messaging:**
   - Explore the messaging screen.
   - Discuss your thoughts on communication with the pet caregiver.
   - Share opinions on the importance of sharing media through messaging.
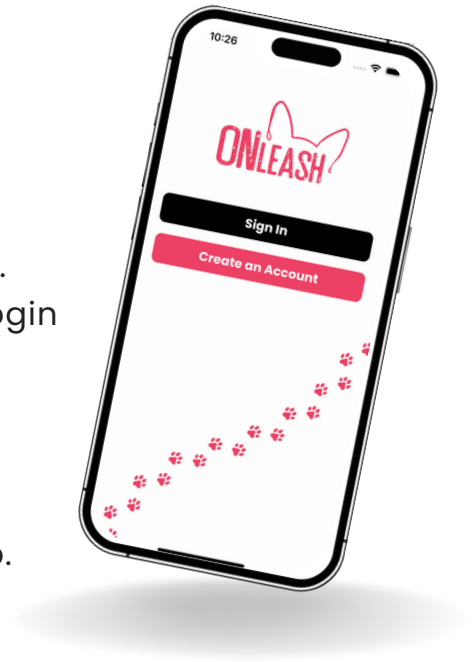
Hypotheses Validation (5 MINS)

Post-Task Questions:

Ask: "Now that you've interacted with the app, would you consider paying for this service? How confident are you in sharing detailed care routines and emergency information?"

Post-Test Set-Up (5 MINS)

❗ **Send Post-Test Survey**

Say: "I'll send you a post-test survey. Please take a few moments to share your experiences before we conclude."

Closing (2 MINS):

Say: "Thank you so much for your time and valuable insights. Your feedback is crucial to enhancing OnLeash. Do you have any final thoughts or questions?"

Post-Test Actions:
- Gather Additional Insights: Encourage participants to share any additional thoughts or suggestions.
- Express Gratitude: Thank the participant for their time and contribution.
- Retrieve and save Zoom Recording.

Testing Instruments

UX Research Consent Form

Purpose
Jessica Sherrington is conducting a usability study to evaluate the design of OnLeash. The results will be used to help improve the app design. This test is being performed as part of a sequence of capstone classes in the Emerging Media Program at UGA. The study will take approximately 1 hour.

Procedures
As a subject you will be asked to:
- Fill out a pre-test survey.
- Complete a series of tasks in the app while being observed and recorded.
- Complete post-test survey.

Confidentiality and Voluntary Participation
Participation in this usability study is voluntary. The descriptions and findings will be used to compile a report about the app's effectiveness. However, at no time will your full name be used. With your permission, I would like to take photos, videos, and notes to share with faculty members at the University of Georgia's New Media Institute.

You are at liberty to withdraw your consent to the experiment and discontinue participation at any time. If you have any questions please contact me at any time. You can also reach out to my instructor, Leah Moss, at leahmoss@uga.edu.

By signing below, you are indicating you understand the information on this form:

Participant Signature:

Date:

Testing Instruments

Task Table

Task No.	Task Description	Starting Screen	Timer Start	Notes
1	Sign up for OnLeash	Signup/Login	Start of task	Participant's initial thoughts
2	Explore Home Screen	Home Screen	Start of task	Feedback on essential features
3	Add Pet Profile	Home Screen	Start of task	Relevance of pet information
4	Edit Pet Information	Pet Profile	Start of task	Intuitiveness of the process
5	Messaging Scenario	Chat Screen	Start of task	Communication preferences
6	Toggle Between Home Screens	User Settings	Start of task	Importance of media sharing
7-11	Hypotheses Validation	Various screens	Start of each task	Confidence and effectiveness ratings
...	...	...	...	...

Pre-Test Survey
Google Form

1. How frequently do you arrange for someone to take care of your pet while you are away?
   - Never
   - Rarely
   - Occasionally
   - Frequently
   - Always

2. What challenges or pain points have you encountered in coordinating your pet's care when you are away? Please describe.

3. Are you familiar with any existing apps or services that assist with coordinating pet care or pet sitting? If yes, please name them and share your experience with using them.

4. How comfortable are you with using mobile apps or online platforms in your daily life?
   - Not at all comfortable
   - Slightly comfortable
   - Moderately comfortable
   - Very comfortable
   - Extremely comfortable

5. What features do you consider essential for managing your pet's care through a mobile app?

6. How important is it for you to be able to communicate with the person taking care of your pet through a mobile app?
   - Not important at all
   - Slightly important
   - Moderately important
   - Very important
   - Extremely important

7. Do you currently use any tools or methods to share photos or media related to your pet with the person taking care of them? If yes, please describe.

8. How do you typically manage your pet's schedule, including feeding times, walks, and medications, when you are away?

9. Would you consider paying for a service that streamlines and enhances the management of your pet's care?
   - Definitely not
   - Probably not
   - Neutral
   - Probably yes
   - Definitely yes

10. How confident are you that including emergency information in a pet care app would contribute to the safety and well-being of your pet?
   - Not confident at all
   - Slightly confident
   - Moderately confident
   - Very confident
   - Extremely confident

Post-Test Survey
Google Form

1. Based on your interaction with the OnLeash demo, how satisfied are you with the overall user experience?
   - Very Dissatisfied
   - Dissatisfied
   - Neutral
   - Satisfied
   - Very Satisfied

2. Which specific features of OnLeash did you find most helpful for managing your pet's care?

3. How easy or challenging was it for you to navigate through the app and perform the assigned tasks?
   - Very Challenging
   - Challenging
   - Neutral
   - Easy
   - Very Easy

4. Did you encounter any difficulties or confusion while using OnLeash? If yes, please describe.

5. How satisfied are you with the Pet Profile feature for adding and managing information about your pet?
   - Very Dissatisfied
   - Dissatisfied
   - Neutral
   - Satisfied
   - Very Satisfied

6. Share your thoughts on the messaging feature. How effective was it for communicating with the person taking care of your pet?

7. Considering the task and reminder feature, how useful do you find it for managing your pet's schedule?
   - Not Useful at All
   - Slightly Useful
   - Moderately Useful
   - Very Useful
   - Extremely Useful

8. Were you able to easily share detailed care routines and medical information through the Pet Profiles feature?
   - Yes, with ease
   - Yes, but with some difficulty
   - No, encountered challenges
   - Did not attempt

9. Do you believe OnLeash can effectively help caregivers meet the unique needs of pets with strict routines, medical conditions, and special needs?
   - Definitely Not
   - Probably Not
   - Neutral
   - Probably Yes
   - Definitely Yes

10. Would you consider using OnLeash for coordinating your pet's care in the future?
    - Definitely Not
    - Probably Not
    - Neutral
    - Probably Yes
    - Definitely Yes

System Usability Scale (SUS) Questionnaire

Instructions:

Please provide your level of agreement with the following statements by selecting the appropriate option.

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree

1. I think that I would like to use OnLeash frequently.

   1 2 3 4 5

2. I found OnLeash unnecessarily complex.

   1 2 3 4 5

3. I thought OnLeash was easy to use.

   1 2 3 4 5

4. I think that I would need the support of a technical person to be able to use OnLeash.

   1 2 3 4 5

5. I found the various functions in OnLeash were well integrated.

   1 2 3 4 5

6. I thought there was too much inconsistency in OnLeash.

   1 2 3 4 5

7. I would imagine that most people would learn to use OnLeash very quickly.

   1 2 3 4 5

8. I found OnLeash very awkward to use.

   1 2 3 4 5

9. I felt very confident using OnLeash.

   1 2 3 4 5

10. I needed to learn a lot of things before I could get going with OnLeash.

   1 2 3 4 5

Analysis

Post-Testing Analysis:
- Method: Conduct a thorough review of recorded sessions, noting participant interactions and verbal feedback.
- Task Analysis: Evaluate completion rates, time on task, and error rates for each task in the task table.
- Observational Data: Extract insights from participants' facial expressions, gestures, and comments during the testing process.

Metrics for Task Analysis:
- Completion Rates: Percentage of participants successfully completing each task.
- Time on Task: Average time taken by participants to complete each task.
- Error Rates: Frequency and severity of errors made during task completion.

Metrics for Survey Analysis:
- Likert Scale Questions: Analyze average scores for Likert Scale questions measuring user satisfaction and preferences.
- Semantic Differential Scale Questions: Evaluate participant sentiments and perceptions using semantic differential scales.
- Open-Ended Questions: Conduct thematic analysis of qualitative responses for deeper insights.

Metrics for SUS:
- SUS Scores: Calculate the System Usability Scale (SUS) score for an overall usability assessment.

Categorizing Major and Minor Issues:
- Major Issues: Critical problems hindering task completion, requiring immediate attention for usability improvements.
- Minor Issues: Less critical problems that might affect user experience but may not be showstoppers. Consider for future enhancements.

Data Visualizations:
- Task Completion Rates Graph: Visual representation of completion rates for each task.
- Time on Task Chart: Graphical display of average time taken for task completion.
- SUS Score Radar Chart: Radar chart illustrating SUS scores across different usability aspects.
- Word Cloud for Open-Ended Responses: Visual representation of frequently mentioned words in open-ended responses.

Characterizing Results to the Population:
- Communication: Present findings through a comprehensive report, detailing key observations, major and minor issues, and areas of improvement.
- Recommendations: Suggest actionable recommendations based on user feedback and testing outcomes.
- Generalization: Note the limitations and context of the study, providing insights into the representativeness of the results to the broader population.

Communicating Results:
- Presentation: Create a visually appealing presentation summarizing key findings, backed by relevant charts and graphs.
- Documentation: Provide a detailed report containing a breakdown of tasks, survey responses, and usability scores.
- Discussion: Include a discussion section addressing implications of findings and potential refinements for the OnLeash app.

Conclusion

This user experience research plan for OnLeash embodies a meticulous approach to understanding and refining the app's usability. Through a combination of participant testing, survey instruments, and data analysis, I seek to unravel insights into user interactions and satisfaction levels. The combination of metrics, ranging from task completion rates to SUS scores, aims to provide a holistic view of the app's performance.

As I begin the research journey, my ultimate goal is to glean actionable feedback, identify areas of enhancement, and iteratively refine OnLeash to meet the diverse needs of pet owners and caregivers. With a user-centric focus, this research plan aspires to contribute to the evolution of OnLeash into a seamlessly integrated and user-friendly platform for pet care coordination.