

BeerMe

Usability Testing

Background

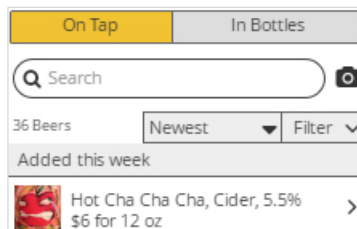
Usability tests were conducted in-person with 5 self-identified craft beer drinkers. Tests were conducted at a bar, a restaurant and in quiet office settings. Participants spent approximately one hour answering questions about their recent beer experiences, exploring an interactive prototype of BeerMe, and completing a few tasks using the BeerMe prototype. For a complete test script, see the Appendix.

Summary of Findings

What Works?

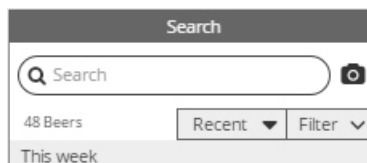
Locations Screen – Tap and Bottle Availability

People loved seeing what beer was available at bars and restaurants. They were very excited to see what was on draught, and liked the option to see bottles as well. Beer experts were excited about seeing the cost and volume of the beer, and also loved the option to sort and filter beers to their tastes.



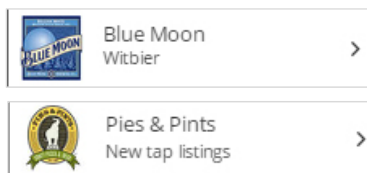
Search

Using the Search screen was quick and easy for all participants. Many instinctively clicked on sort and filter, which weren't functional on this screen of the prototype. Several participants also asked about the camera button, correctly guessing that it would allow them to take a picture of a barcode or label to search for beer.



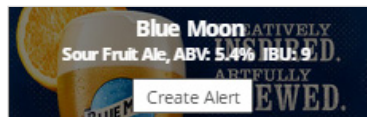
Recognizable Beers and Locations

When users recognized a beer or location in the app that they liked, they got very excited. In this prototype, most people recognized Blue Moon and Pies & Pints. Some users also recognized beer they didn't like, and were quick to point it out.



Alerts

Participants were excited to get alerts about their favorite beers, and quickly found the "Create Alert" button on the beer details screen. While they didn't initially understand how alerts work, they quickly figured it out after seeing the next screen.



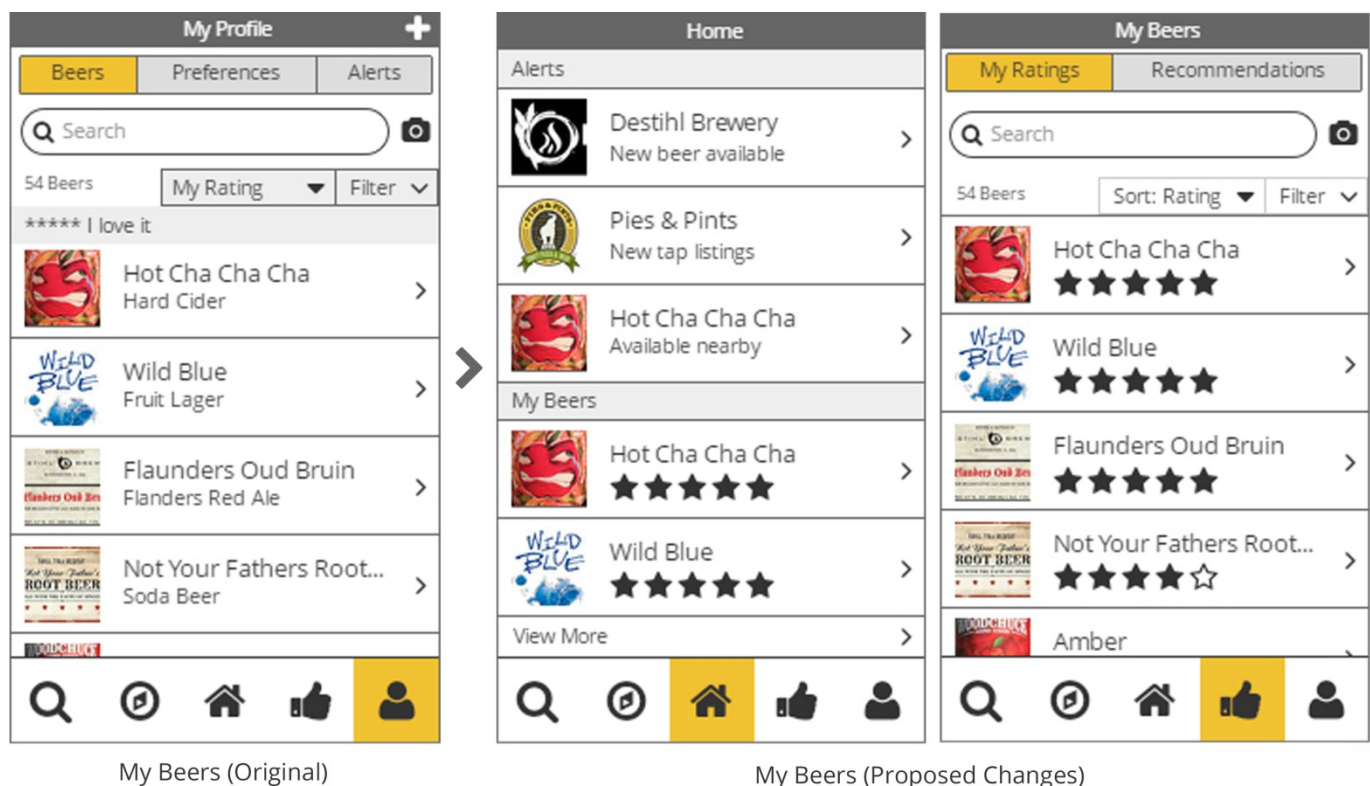
What Doesn't Work?

My Beers

Participants had trouble locating this critical feature. Many thought it lived under the “thumbs up” icon, which is currently used for recommendations. When they eventually found it under My Profile, participants commented that they wouldn't have looked for it there, associating My Profile with setup or preferences, not a favorites list.

Next Steps:

- Make My Beers accessible from the home screen, perhaps with a few recently rated beers and a “view more” link to see all rated beers.
- Consider adding an icon for My Beers to the navigation. Since so many participants thought the thumbs up icon was My Beers, consider using it and also incorporating Recommendations.

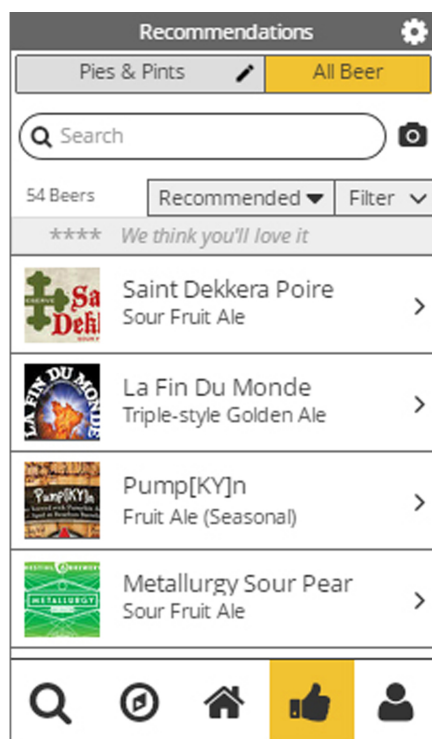


Recommendations - Icons and Suggested Rating

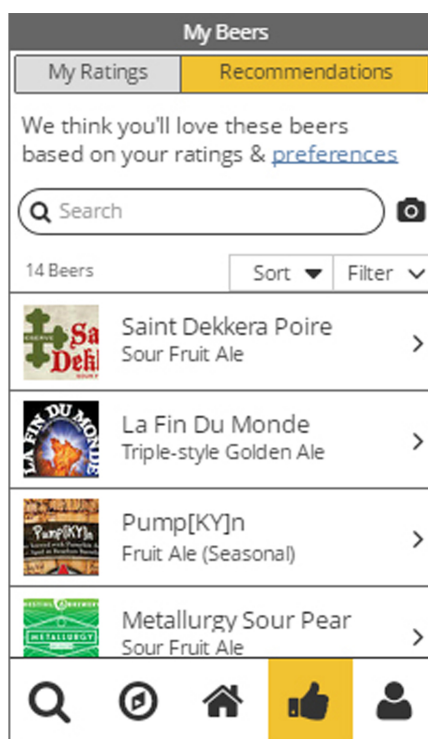
People didn't naturally associate the thumbs up icon with recommendations. Even after viewing the Recommendations screen, it took users several seconds to determine what it was. Later they would click on the thumbs up icon again while trying to access their favorite beers or beer ratings.

Next Steps:

- Determine if Recommendations needs its own screen, or if it could be integrated into other parts of the app. For example, it could also potentially be combined with My Beers, perhaps as a separate tab. Recommendations could also be included on the Locations Details screen in a more obvious way than a filter, like a "Try something new here" button.
- If Recommendations does need to stay in the navigation bar, test other icons for comprehension.



Recommendations (Original)



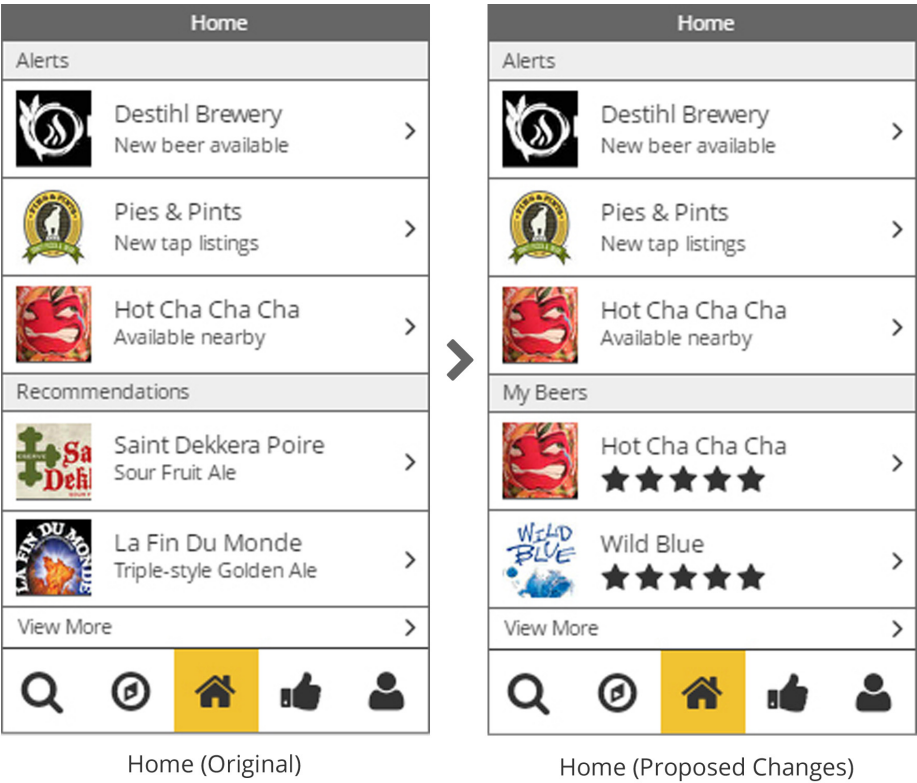
Recommendations (Proposed Changes)

Home Screen

Users spent longer than expected analyzing the content on the home screen. Some specifically said they expected other content here, including a list of recently rated beers.

Next Steps:

- Change the content to include recently rated beers, and prioritize My Beers over Recommendations.

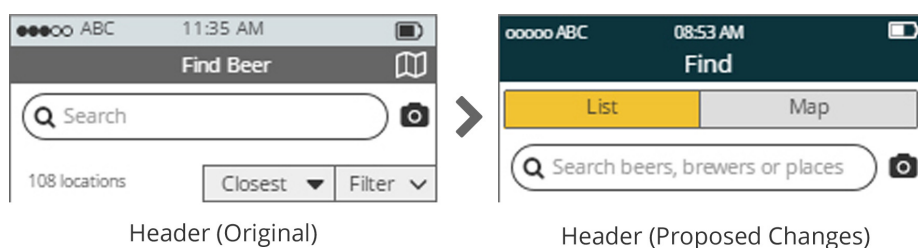


Header Menus

This entire area was ignored, except for the back button. Users didn't read the page names, but instead referred to screens in their own terms. Users also missed the actions in the top right corners on the Find Beer, Recommendations and My Beers screens.

Next steps:

- Determine if content in app headers is generally ignored, or if there's something about the visual treatment that doesn't draw the users' attention.
- Retest with a colored header, larger font and seamless utility background (like the example below) to make the header area more noticeable.
- Move any critical buttons from the header area to other parts of the screen

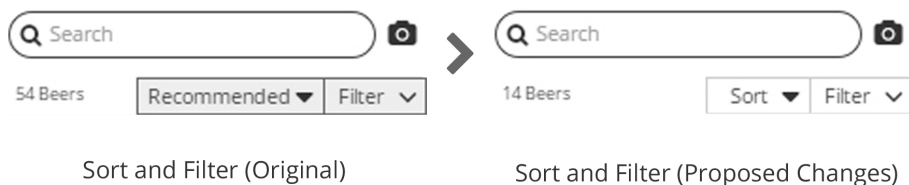


Sort & Filter

The appearance and labels used for sort and filter were confusing to some users. Some commented that they looked like tabs, and on screens which already had other tabs, the amount of options was overwhelming and took a while to understand. Several tried to click on it but since most screens didn't have an active sort, they may have just inferred this wasn't a sort or something they could interact with.

Next Steps:

- Change the appearance of sort and filter to be more distinct and have less visual weight.
- Include the word "Sort" on the sort menu
- Consider condensing sort and filter into one menu



"Others"

Much like Season 1 of the TV show *Lost*, users often thought there "others" within the app. Some noticed the suggested rating and wondered "Who rated that? Me? Other people?" Some specifically said recommendations were typically based on what "other users" who liked a beer they like rated this suggested beer (and they really didn't agree with that logic). Other users thought there was a social media aspect to the app, where they could have friends within the app or through a Facebook connection, and interact by sharing beers with each other.

Next Steps:

- Change language on loading screens and slogans that make it clearer that BeerMe is about your personal beer experience, not the ratings of "others."



Test Plan and Detailed Findings

Tasks

1. First impression
2. Explore the app
3. Find out Blue Moon's alcohol content and see what other beers it's brewer makes
4. Locate Hot Cha Cha Cha beer on tap nearby
5. Get suggestions for a bottled beer to try at Pies & Pints
6. Get notified when Saint Dekkera Poire is available from the brewer or within 25 miles
7. Rate La Fin Du Monde
8. Recall how you rated Not Your Father's Root Beer
9. Save Jungle Jim's as a favorite location

Task 1 – First Impression

Question: What are participants' first reactions to the app and its slogan on the loading screen?

Answer: Casual beer drinkers, like the Nikki persona, commented that the app seemed to do a lot of "functions" and would probably "collect information" from them. There was a certain negative connotation to an app that "knows me". More experienced beer drinkers, like the Ethan persona, already had established opinions on what a beer app would offer and skipped over the slogan entirely.

Changes: Make the slogan shorter and ensure it sells the differentiating features of BeerMe – that it provides recommendations tailored to your tastes.

Task 2 - Explore the app

Q: How do participants react to the home screen?

A: They looked through it for a few seconds and seemed to understand it was a feed of alerts and recommendations. Several had questions about how alerts and recommendations worked. They clicked on a few items from home, particularly items they recognized. Beer experts who had used other apps expected different content on the home screen – either their personal beer list or buttons that would take them to other parts of the app.

C: Make the home screen a clearer feed of updates and recent activity. Consider adding access to My Beers on the home screen, or at least recently rated beers with a "view more" link.

Q: What do participants think the app does now?

A: They now understand the main functions of the app – including nearby availability, tap and bottle listings, recommendations and a profile. They are still unclear about how recommendations and alerts work, and many wonder if there are other users in the app they can interact with.

C: Make the loading screen and slogan clearly state that BeerMe is about a personalized beer experience, with recommendations and alerts tailored to you.

Q: How easily do participants interact with the app on their own?

A: They interacted fairly easily, with a few stumbling points. Recommendations were difficult to recognize from the icon, and the participants thought it was a personal favorites or like list for beer or locations. My Beers was also hard to find under Profile.

Some participants struggled with the sort and filter, because the appearance looked more like tabs than drop down menus. The Find screen was sometimes interpreted as nearby beer, and participants weren't sure if they could search for beer or just places. Ratings could also be clearer, particularly suggested ratings and how they're calculated.

C: Make My Beers more accessible, either on the home screen or by combining it with recommendations. Change the icon for Recommendations if it remains accessible from the main navigation. Use in-field labels for the search on the Find screen. Make ratings clearer, particularly suggested ones. Consider adding more context to recommendations and alerts for participants who have questions about how they work.

Q: How interested do participants seem in what the app (appears) to offer?

A: They were interested in tap and bottle listings, nearby availability, creating alerts (once they understood how they worked), and the places and beers they recognized.

C: Future wireframes might benefit from using more recognizable beers and places, so participants can get more connected with the app during testing.

Q: How clear are the navigation icons?

A: The search, home and profile icons are very clear. Participants repeatedly called those screens by their names with no hesitation. The find icon was referred to as the “compass” or “eyeball” at first, and sometimes interpreted as only nearby beer. Recommendations are unclear, being interpreted as a “Like” button or a list of favorite beers or places.

C: The Recommendations icon needs additional iterations, or needs to be removed from navigation and incorporated into other screens. Several other Recommendations icons were drafted and should be re-considered and tested again if it remains in the primary navigation. Consider testing other icons for Find, such as a pinpoint or map icon.

Task 3 - Find out Blue Moon's alcohol content and see what other beers are made by the same brewery

Q: How do participants react to the Search screen?

A: They used it easily, and noticed that recent beers were listed by default. They tried to click on the sort button but that part of the prototype wasn't interactive.

C: Make Sort on the search menu interactive, since so many participants clicked on it.

Q: How do participants react to the Beer Details screen?

A: Participants liked the alert button and quickly saw it in the header. Other details in the header including ABV and style were recognized by most participants, but some ignored them and expected those details later on the information screen. Finding the brewery took a little longer than expected, and one participant didn't recognize that the beer label was used in the hero image.

C: Consider moving brewer tile right under the hero image, so it's more closely tied to the beer. Re-test and see if brewer details are more quickly recognized. Increase the contrast between the beer hero images and the style and ABV on top of it.

Q: How do participants react to the Brewer Details screen?

A: Participants weren't as interested in the brewer details as expected, but did find the list of beers pretty quickly. This could be due to the brewers used in the limited prototype, since participants reacted much more strongly when they recognized the beer or places.

C: Consider prioritizing the list of beers over other details, including the address and phone number. Also consider adding specific brewers that each participant knows to the prototype.

Task 4 - Locate Hot Cha Cha Cha beer on tap nearby

Q: How do participants react to the Find screen?

A: Most participants used the Find screen and looked for Hot Cha Cha Cha in the results, but a few also used the Search screen, went to the Hot Cha Cha Cha Beer Details screen and looked in the Available Nearby section. For the participants that used Find, they then used the search bar to look up "Hot Cha Cha Cha". A few were confused when they saw a restaurant in the results, but then clicked on the restaurant and saw Hot Cha Cha Cha on the restaurant's tap list. Participants were excited when they saw tap listings, particularly if they liked the restaurant used in the prototype.

C: A description may be needed to better communicate the scope of the search and what the results are (locations). Previous drafts of the wireframes included in-field labels for the searches, but they were removed to de-clutter the screen. On this screen, those labels should be added and re-tested.

Q: How do participants react to the filters?

A: Only beer experts used the filters, while more casual beer drinkers were satisfied with the results as-is. All participants clicked on sort, mostly out of curiosity. Beer experts were very interested in the sort and filter options, and asked several questions about the filters they couldn't click on for more details.

C: Filters and sorts should be further developed and tested with beer experts to ensure all functionality is needed and clear.

Q: Do participants use list view or map view?

A: Participants stayed on the initial view, which is the list view. They didn't seem to notice the map icon in the app header. Later when they were prompted to look for a map view, a few participants found the map icon and were excited to use it to find beer on their route home from work.

C: Make the header area more noticeable through visual design or by making it taller, or move the map button to a more noticeable area.

Q: Do participants understand the scope of the Find search (beers, brewers and locations)?

A: Some participants found the scope a bit confusing. They understood they could search for beers, but initially expected to see beers somewhere in the results and were confused by seeing locations.

S: On Find screen results tiles, include the beer, cost and whether it's tap/bottle.

Task 5 - Get recommendations for a bottled beer to try at Pies & Pints

Q: Which path do participants take to complete this task (recommendation, search, find, home)?

A: Most participants started with the Find screen, clicked on the Pies & Pints tile, clicked on the bottle tab and saw recommendations sorted in the results. A few participants went to Recommendations, but took a while to notice the Pies and Pints tab. One participant expected recommendations to come from friends, and started by clicking on My Profile (thinking it was Friends).

C: Consider removing the Recommendations tab, since most participants started by looking for the location rather than for recommendations in general.

Q: How do participants react to the Recommendations screen?

A: Participants were skeptical about recommendations, and wondered if they were generalized like in other beer apps. They did not like being recommended beers that somebody else liked, or that were promoted by the brewer or app. On the screen, they noticed the divider labels (We think you'll love it), but didn't immediately understand the content.

C: Use clear copy around recommendations to show that they are built on your individual ratings and preferences. Consider removing Recommendations from navigation since users may not naturally seek them out, and instead incorporate them in location screens and other areas, like after rating similar beers.

Q: Do participants understand that recommendations are powered by preferences?

A: Some participants understood this during exploration or while on the load screen, but many forgot the more they used the app. Most wondered if recommendations were similar to other beer apps, where if they liked Blue Moon and other users who liked Blue Moon also liked Shocktop, that's what would be recommended. Only one participant realized it was tied to their preferences, and still had trouble finding where to set their preferences to get better recommendations.

C: Make it clearer through text and other design choices that recommendations are completely personal based on your ratings and preferences. For new users, an alternate home screen design guides users to set up their profiles and rate beers to start tailoring their results. In this usability test, participants were shown an app with a profile that was already set up, which may have caused some confusion.

Task 6 – Get notified when Saint Dekkera Poire is available from the brewer or within 25 miles

Q: How do participants feel about alerts (in general)?

A: Most participants were excited at the idea of getting beer alerts, particularly after they learned they could turn alerts off.

Q: Did participants previously notice the alert functionality?

A: Yes, and they seemed interested in finding out how it worked.

Q: How do participants react to creating an alert?

A: They quickly found the Create Alert button on the header of the Beer Details page. On the Create Alert screen, they took some times to absorb the different options before understanding them. They also didn't want to get alerts too often, and liked that alerts could be “weekly at most” and turned off as needed. A few participants also looked in My Profile, but took a while to find Alerts.

C: Change layout on Create Alert so less information is displayed at a time, using progressive disclosure techniques for more granular information.

Task 7 - Rate La Fin Du Monde

Q: How do participants react to the rating process?

A: They quickly found the beer using the Search screen and got to the rating. They found the star rating and comment areas and easily understood them. A few participants thought they could rate right on the Beer Details screen, and were surprised when another screen came up.

C: Consider quick ratings from the Beer Details screen, with the rating screen reserved for times when participants want to leave a comment.

Q: What do participants think advanced tasting notes is and what options does it contain?

A: Some thought “Add advanced tasting notes” was the submit button for the comment they wrote. On further investigation, they realized it was a separate action and thought it might open a pop up with more ratings like hoppiness. Most also hoped the app would guide them through tasting notes, not knowing how to do this on their own.

C: Change the appearance from a button to a set of pre-defined options, like checkboxes or sliders. Since most participants weren’t interested in this anyway, consider removing it entirely or making it less prominent on the rating screen.

Task 8 - Recall how you rated Not Your Father’s Root Beer

Q: How do participants find their beer list?

A: They had a lot of trouble finding their ratings. Several went to Recommendations thinking it was their “like list.” A few started by using the Search screen to look up this beer, and explained that they would look for the rating on the Beer Details screen. A few eventually went to My Profile and found their list, but were confused by the appearance.

C: The beer list is critical, expected functionality for a beer app. This list needs to be more recognizable and accessible from the main navigation. It should not be included under My Profile, which participants associate preferences.

Q: How do participants react to the beer list?

A: They didn’t recognize it immediately.

C: Include star rating more clearly on each beer tile, rather than just using a heading. Reduce visual weight of search, sort and filter so they don’t compete with the list.

Task 9 – Save Jungle Jim’s as a favorite location

Q: How easily can participants save a location?

A: This was a quick and easy task for them to complete. They used the Find screen, clicked on Jungle Jim’s and then the alert button.

Q: How do participant react to the Preferences screen?

A: Most participants didn't naturally discover this. Once prompted to look for preferences, this screen took a while to find, even while inside the My Profile screen with "Preferences" clearly visible in a button bar. Participants had trouble recognizing a button bar from a sort or filter control, and thought they could click on "Beers" and change the screen to show "Places", not realizing that "Preference" and "Alerts" were two different tabs on the Profile screen. Once participants got to the preferences screen, they seemed surprised to find saved locations and beer tastes there.

C: Make button bars and sort/filter options more distinct. Remove My Beers from My Profile entirely to reduce the amount of choices. Use onboarding guides to direct new users to setup preferences, familiarizing them with the process and location.

Q: What do participants think happens when you save a favorite location?

A: They understand that it goes somewhere in their profile, and think it affects results or recommendations. But they had trouble finding where preferences are located.

C: Reduce options within My Profile, including making search, sort and filter less prominent. The button bar, particularly in My Profile, seems to be easily ignored. In other cases like the Beer Details screen, where it's used for tap and bottle options, the button bar was quickly noticed and grasped.

Other questions and observations

Q: Is finding new beer on an app still fun?

A: For beer experts it is, but for casual beer drinkers the app may not have much value. Participants laughed at the name "Hot Cha Cha Cha" and enjoyed when they recognized beer and places. However, casual beer drinkers still said they prefer the ease of just making a 6-pack at a nearby store versus a more calculated approach to buying beer.

Q: Do participants seem interested in what BeerMe offers?

A: Beer experts and those who have found at least one beer they really love were very interested in using this app. Many specifically asked "When can I download this and use it again?" But for more casual beer drinkers like the Nikki persona, the only value they saw was in locating beer on the way to their friend's house or party.

Appendix

Script

Mobile app should be open to a “neutral” page

Hi, _____. My name is Stacey, 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 we asked you here, but let me go over it again briefly. We’re asking people to try using a mobile app prototype we’re working on so we can see whether it works as intended. The session should take about 45 minutes.

The first thing I want to make clear right away is that we’re testing the mobile app, not you. You can’t do anything wrong here. So don’t have to worry about making mistakes.

As you use the mobile, I’m going to ask you to try to think out loud as much as possible: 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 us.

Also, please don’t worry that you’re going to hurt our feelings. We’re doing this to improve the mobile app, so we 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 we’re 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.

One last thing, since this is a prototype, it’s not fully-functional. You may click on a button and find it doesn’t work, but don’t worry. It’s not you, it’s the app! Just think out loud what you’re trying to do, and I may step in to move the prototype to the next step.

You may have noticed my notepad here. I’m going to take a few notes during our session so I can remember what happened today and use your feedback to make a better mobile app.

Do you have any questions so far?

OK. Before we look at the site, I’d like to ask you a couple quick questions about beer.

Can you tell me a story about the last time you had a beer?

Can you tell me a story about the last time you tried new beer?

OK, great. We’re done with the questions, and now we can move on.

So now, I’d like you to imagine yourself at [location from story] and you’re drinking a beer with some friends/family. Your friend tells you about this mobile app for beer, and you decide to check it out.

Click on the BeerMe Loading screen.

First, I'm going to ask you to look at this screen and tell me what you make of it: what strikes you about it, whose app you think it is, what you can do here, and what it's for. Just look around and do a little narrative, but don't click on anything just yet.

Allow this to continue for one minute, at most.

Thanks. Now I'm going to ask you to try doing some specific tasks. I'm going to read each one out loud and give you a printed copy.

And again, as much as possible, it will help us if you can try to think out loud as you go along.

Hand the participant the first scenario, and have them read it aloud.

Allow the user to proceed until you don't feel like it's producing any value or the user becomes very frustrated.

Repeat for each task or until time runs out.

Thanks, that was very helpful.

Now I have a couple questions for you. First, how do you feel about this mobile app?

Thanks for your input. Now, how does using this app compare to your usual beer experience?

Thanks for that information. Now let me look at my notes and see if I have any other questions for you.

Probe on any unaddressed points from task purposes, any notes marked for follow up, or any pain points.

Do you have any questions for me, now that we're done?

Give them their incentive and thank them.