User testing: .onion states icons

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Background

The network team asked our help to improve usability of .onion services, after some brainstorming of user problems and prioritization of those, we picked the '.onion states' as one of the high priority problem to solve.

The problem here was that currently the padlock icon displayed for the different https states (or http) would behave following the same rules for a .onion address. Misleading the user, for instance where our .onion address would provide a good level of security, it would display the padlock red as if its unsecure for the user.

To solve this problem we decided to create a specific visual language for .onion states. We developed a little onion icon and combined it with other elements that the user were already used with the padlock states. Each combination or color code aims to communicate the level of security the user has with that .onion site.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KHkj2DpmFMB0mjHEfehD5ztY2L0IQzKNtZqct1TXbmg/edit

Scope

The purpose of this test is to see if the message we are trying to pass with our icons is understood by the user.

Main things we would like to check:

- **Comprehension**: the user understands when the different levels of security from what has more risk to the less one.

We are *not* testing: the copy that will go inside the door hanger that opens when the user clicks on the icon.

Methodology

We are running a small-scale, short, qualitative, open-ended, qualitative user test.
- **Small-scale:** we are testing with 5 users. Read about [when it is appropriate]() and the science of [why 5 users is enough for certain user studies]() if you are curious.
- **Short**: aim for a maximum of 5 minute interview. The purpose of the interview is to get their understanding of the copy in the UI.
- **Open-ended**: users are free to answer the question in their own words. This is to allow the users to speak more freely and to communicate naturally.
- **Qualitative**: we are focusing on user attitude and comprehension (do they understand it, are they able to use it).

Step 1: Participant screening and recruitment

This test will be performed during an [event in Mumbai, India](). There was no screening of participants as the RSVP was open to the public, so we won't have any control on the demographics of our participants.

Step 2: Interview questions and instructions

This section details how to run the interview. The questions and what cues to look for are listed [here]().

Before beginning the interview, you should have the screens we will be showing the users either printed or organized to in order at your laptop **<without the questions just the images>** so you can easily navigate between them and show them to the user.

Part 1: Get the participant comfortable, tell them who you are, and tell them what we are doing. Ask for their consent for audio recording (this is very helpful for you, this way you can pay attention to the user and not too much on taking notes, and you can use the audio later for you to write down your notes etc.

Part 2: Start with the demographic questions

Part 3: Ask them the interview questions, in the order that they are listed.
The participant should only have about 30 seconds per question. We are not looking for their answer, but using their answer as an indicator. For instance, if you ask them what the settings do, and they take 15 seconds to re-read the text, 5 seconds to say, “hmm, um..” and give a short answer, tell them it’s enough. We have what we need: that we need to do more work in that area. If the participant is correct and has a lot to say on the matter, take note of how much they understand, how excited they are about it, but move on gently.

Part 4 - End: Thank the participant for participating, then give them a chance to ask you any questions before they go.

Step 3: Capturing the interview responses

Best case scenario: ask participants if they are okay with being recorded for research purposes, stating that only the UX team at Tor Project Inc. will have their recording and destroy it once we capture it in our notes. Record the interview and responses, and fill out the feedback form after each interview.

Better case scenario: have someone else with you to take notes of the the interview. Give them this document to read over as well, so that they know the questions ahead of time and what to listen for. After each interview, you can both go through the feedback form and fill it out together.

Minimum requirement: if you do not have anyone else with you to take notes and the participant does not prefer to be recorded, then take minimum notes during the interview. It’s interrupting to the interviewee to be too focus on taking notes during the interview, so do just the minimum. And right afterward each interview you should fill out the feedback form for that interviewee at that time, so you don’t forget all the information!

Step 4: Sending feedback to the UX team

Make sure all the feedback is documented and shared with the UX team for analyses.

Summary

In short:

- We want to test the user text interpretation of Tor Launcher new copy.
- To do this, we will run five, 5-minute user interviews with people that will attend a Tor Meetup in Mumbai, India. The questions are here.
- Give us any feedback on the question form! If you have any additional notes/recordings, please also send them to us.