User testing: Tor Launcher desktop

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Background

In 2017 the Tor Browser team took up on changing the Tor Launcher UI based on a user research paper done by Linda: “A Usability Evaluation of Tor Launcher”. This work is now on Tor Browser alpha build and will be release as stable end of January 2018. You can see the full experience and what was changed here: https://share.riseup.net/#8A5YHGt7oSNPwGj8RC13YQ

Besides re-organizing the elements of Tor Launcher configuration wizard UI, we invested a great deal on developing the copy in those screens. Our main challenge was to create a copy that could explain technical terms in a way that no matter the background of the user, if technical or not, they would be able to understand the options available for them and when to use them.

Scope

The purpose of this test is to see if our new copy is more accessible and easier to understand. So our main focus will be to test the user’s text interpretation, we want to see if the main purpose of the configuration options is understood by users.

Main things we would like to check:

- **Welcome Screen Comprehension**: the user understands when they need to do any configuration to connect to Tor.
- **Comprehension of the term ‘bridge’**: the user understands what a bridge is useful for and minimum understanding of the different options available for them at the configuration screen.
- **Comprehension of ‘proxy’ settings options**: we debated many times if we should keep the proxy settings highlighted in the wizard like that or not. Giving that the research paper showed that many users would get super confused with it and spend a great amount of time trying to figure it out when they didn't actually need any proxy settings. At the end we decided it’s still an important configuration that should be easily accessible by those who needs it. So we introduced a help prompt to try to explain what it is and when to use it. We want to test if that is helping users or not.

We are *not* testing: The scope of this test does not involves the actual test of the interface, such a test, like it was done for the research paper, would demand a controlled environment where we could simulate different censorship or network settings scenarios in order to have the user perform tasks that needs the settings on this new interface.

**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.