CREATING A REUSABLE BAG SERVICE FOR INSTACART

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My name is Marissa Hageman and I am a current fourth year Graphic Communication major with a concentration in Graphics for Packaging. I will be graduating from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo in June of 2024.
ABSTRACT

My senior project is focused on sustainability, specifically in the sector of plastic waste. It looks into an existing brand and program, Instacart, and explores ways to increase Instacart’s sustainable efforts which can, in turn, change how grocery stores and other delivery services run their operations. For this project, a new service for Instacart is created where they can reduce, and hopefully eliminate, their contribution to excess plastic waste within the grocery industry and in our planet.
PROBLEM STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVE

Instacart, a grocery delivery service, currently delivers groceries to customers using store provided bags, which are typically made of plastic or paper. There is a hidden "option" to have no bags be used, however this must be specified in the comment section between the customer and Instacart shopper, as it is not a feature in the app, making it easy to be overlooked, forgotten about, or be unknown to customers. This also can be a hassle for the Instacart shopper as they must either bring their own bags to temporarily store groceries, which they then must unload where the customer designates, or they must carry each item individually. Customers who use Instacart may own reusable bags for when they choose to shop in person; however, when using Instacart they receive tons of paper or plastic bags, which they may not know what to do with, making their reusable bags useless and increasing use and waste of disposable bags. Given these issues, there is an opportunity to create a service that allows for Instacart to use reusable bags. By using bags that can be reused not only is waste is limited, but the extra work that Instacart shoppers put in when customers opt in to use no bags is eliminated.
TIMELINE

week 1  background research
week 2  project planning
week 3  project planning & designing the bag
week 4  ordering the bag
week 5  designing the return station & app mockups
week 6  design marketing materials & app mockups
week 7  service breakdown presentation
week 8  service breakdown presentation
week 9  showcase
week 10  presentation & process book
THE DELIVERABLES

1. breakdown presentation of how the service works + app mockups

2. the physical bag, for transporting groceries

3. mockups of bag return stations for grocery stores

4. marketing material for Instacart, featuring the service
THE PROCESS

To begin, I needed to plan how my project would look. Since Instacart is a set brand, they already have branding guidelines. I did not have too much creative freedom with the design, but I was able to go off what Instacart already had set. This included logos, colors, and a typeface family.

Carrot
Hex FF7009
RGB 255 112 9
PMS 1805 C
CMYK 0, 60, 100, 0

Cashew
Hex FAF1E5
RGB 250 241 229
PMS 9224 C (Pastel book)
CMYK 3, 5, 10, 0

Kale
Hex 003D09
RGB 0 61 41
PMS 3435 C
CMYK 88, 20, 70, 70

Caros Soft Light Regular
Caros Soft Regular
Caros Soft Medium Regular
Caros Soft Bold Regular
To create mockups for the app, I was able to take screenshots of the screens on the existing app and use applications, such as Illustrator and Photoshop, to include my added features. This process helped me to illustrate how the features I want to add would look in the interface that Instacart already uses.
making the bag

Using Instacart's branding guidelines, I was able to design how I wanted the bag to look using Adobe Illustrator. Since the bag was not created for marketability, there is a simple design to clearly show the brand name. Once the design was ready, I uploaded it to a website called Snapfish where I was able to choose a product, in this case a reusable grocery bag, input my design, and order it.
making return station mockups

To make the mockups of the return stations, I first had to search for mockups online. Once I found one that I liked, I designed the different faces and sides of the station on Adobe Illustrator. I used Instacart’s branding guidelines to base the stations, and included some eye-catching information to entice shoppers and spread the word of the service.
THE RESULTS

After completing the planning, sticking to my timeline, and completing my processes, I had the four deliverables I had set out to create in the beginning. The results of this project are the breakdown presentation of the service, the physical bag, return station mockups, and some marketing material.

the breakdown presentation

INSTACART REUSABLE BAG SERVICE

*a breakdown of how the service would look and work*
**STEP ONE**

*placing the order*

- The customer selects a store, adds their items to cart, and then proceeds to the checkout
- Before placing the order the customer inputs delivery informations
  - This includes their address, phone number, payment information, delivery instructions and time, and now the new bag instructions
- Under the “bag instructions tab,” the customer can check a box that they would like reusable bags to be used
- They can also check a box indicating that they have old reusable bags, from a previous order, and would like for them to be picked up during this order
- The order is then placed

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**STEP TWO**

*the shopper is notified*

- When the Instacart Shopper accepts an order, they will receive a notification that they are to use reusable bags
- To track the bags, the shopper will input the bag number, located on the bottom of the bag, into the app
  - If they do not have enough reusable bags in their possession, they must indicate how many they were short on and let their customer know
- They will then take the bagged groceries to the customer’s address
STEP THREE

customer receives the order

- The customer receives their order in the reusable bags from the shopper as indicated
- Once the shopper indicates on the app that they have dropped off the order, the customer is brought to a screen to verify the bags
- The screen shows the numbers from the bags that the shopper inputted
- The customer then checks the box yes, that they received the bag(s), or no that the bag(s) indicated were not received

STEP FOUR

the bags are returned

- When the order is complete, the customer will have to return the reusable bags from the order
- This can be done when placing a new order, by checking the box that they want old bags to be picked up
  - The shopper for the order will either pickup the bags off the porch of the address if contactless drop-off is selected, or from the customer if there is a face-to-face interaction
- If the customer wants to return the bags without placing an order, they must select the feature in the app where they will indicate what bags they are returning, to where, and the condition of them
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQ
How does the Instacart Shopper get the bags for the orders?

Upon signing up to be an Instacart Shopper, or by already being one when the service is implemented, each person will receive 5 Instacart reusable bags. If a shopper wants more, they can be requested through the app. Once they use their bags for an order, they can be replenished by picking up old ones during an order, or contacting Instacart support.
FAQ

How will customers, and potential ones, be incentivized to use the service?

At this point, there are no incentives yet. In order to put these in place, we would have to be in contact with Instacart, determine their budget, and see how they want to proceed. However, some ideas are a certain amount or % off for using reusable bags, or a point system where using reusable bags earns points, and points can be used to get free things or discounts on future orders.

FAQ

Where will the bags be returned?

Return stations will be located in grocery stores for customers to place bags in. This is the alternative to having an Instacart shopper pick them up on a future order.
**FAQ**

*How will the bags be tracked?*

Currently, a system is in place to have each bag assigned a number. This number will be inputted into the app, by the Instacart shopper, to let Instacart and the customer know which bag will be used. The customer will then verify this number in the app once receiving the order. The number will be noted when the bag is returned so its availability is known and it can be let back into the cycle.

**FAQ**

*How will the bags maintain good condition and/or be washed?*

Unfortunately, the logistics of this have not been worked out. Originally, the idea was for each bag to be washed after each use, but this may not be feasible. Water consumption can negatively contribute to sustainability, so Instacart would need to research a way to wash the bags sustainably. At the moment, condition of the bags is noted when returned so bags can be reused without wash if in proper condition.
FLOW OF THE SERVICE

Instacart shoppers are provided with branded reusable bags. The customer places an order and selects that they want reusable bags to be used. The shopper is notified to use reusable bags and they record the number of the bags used. The customer receives their order in reusable bags and verifies that they got the correct bags. The customer returns the bags by selecting a pickup option on a future order, or by going to a return station in store. The bags are reused for future orders by Instacart shoppers; washing is considered for future.

RESULTS

from an anonymous survey

- 92.3% Found the deliverables to be aesthetically pleasing, given the guidelines set.
- 100% Found the deliverables to be coherent with Instacart’s branding guidelines.
- 46.2% Had never used Instacart or any other grocery delivery service but...
- 76.5% Rated that they would be “very likely” to use this service if they were getting their groceries delivered.
close ups of the app mockups
Store Bag Return

Which bags will you be returning?
You still have bags #356, #23, and #709.

Please indicate in the field(s) below.

Bag 1*

Bag 2

Bag 3

More Bags

Where are you returning them?

Find a store

Condition:

Clean □ Dirty □ Ruined □
Ripped □ Stained □ Other □

Save and continue

By placing your order, you agree to the Terms of Service and Privacy Policy.

Your order

Your customer has requested reusable bags.

Please use as many Instacart Reusable Bags as needed. If you do not have enough, please contact your customer and report below.

Input the number of the bag, found on the bottom, into the field(s) below.

Bag 1*

Bag 2

Bag 3

More Bags

How many bags were you short on?

□ None □ Short of

Save and continue

*indicates a required field
By accepting this order, you agree to the Terms of Service and Privacy Policy.

customer’s end

shopper’s end
the bag
the return station mockups
Americans use **5 trillion** plastic bags **a year**

**12 million** barrels of oil are used to make the plastic bags used in the US **each year**

Using **one reusable shopping** can save **100 to 700 bags per year**

**We need you to help save our planet.**

Download the instacart app today and join the initiative to end disposable bag waste.
Plastic bags photo-degrade to become **microplastics** that pollute the environment, even after **1000+ years**.

We need you to help save our planet.

Download the instacart app today and join the initiative to end disposable bag waste.

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It is virtually **impossible** for a sea turtle to distinguish the difference between jellyfish and a plastic bag.

We need you to help save our planet.

Download the instacart app today and join the initiative to end disposable bag waste.
I really enjoyed doing this project and had fun throughout the process. Setting my own deadlines and working at my own pace was helpful for this class and the setup and organization made me feel prepared. Having certain activities/assignments that were necessary for the class, and with a set due date, such as background research, really prepared me for my project and helped along the way. I did not encounter too many challenges, but the minor ones that came up were easy to resolve and I could always find a solution.

If I were to continue this project, I would love to add some more features to help make it the best it can be. This would include researching and testing ways to clean the reusable bags as well as make a usable prototype for the app to see how the features would work.

Overall, I had a great time working on this project this quarter and I am happy with how it turned out!
CREDITS


How many plastic bags are saved by using one reusable bag?. Factory Direct Promos. (2019, April 30). https://www.factorydirectpromos.com/blog/how-many-plastic-bags-are-saved-by-using-one-reusable-bag/#:~:text=You can have a big, to 7000 bags per year.