

Observation on the automation used by the Hocam Piknik

We visited Hocam Piknik resides in the shopping center of METU. They are using an automation system which is made by ADS Software Company. [1] The components of the system are handhelds for the waiters and the main computer for the cashiers and the manager. They let us use the handhelds and show us how they use them.

Waiters open the handheld computer by selecting their name from a menu and clicking the ok button. There is also a password text box on the screen, but they don't use it. On the main menu there is a 'yeni' button. Opening a table is done from this button. When 'yeni' button is clicked, a form which has the entries 'masa no', 'ki i no', 'çek no', 'not' is displayed. They don't use 'çek no', they don't even know what it is for. After filling these areas the order form is displayed. Order form has the following format:

/*Area where orders can be seen*/			
	Beyaz et	Çorbalar	çecekler
Kırmızı et	Kumpir	Salata	Sandviç

When waiter clicks any one of the categories, subcategories of that category are displayed in the same manner. If no sub category is defined then clicking action causes the meal to be chosen. And the chosen meals (i.e. orders) are displayed on the above of the screen one after another. By clicking the orders, their quantity can be modified by the '+' and '-' buttons on the right-hand side of the screen. After the ordering process ends, waiter clicks the 'yazdır' button. This causes the order to be transferred to the system and so to the kitchen printers. In the kitchen there are two printers; one is for 'kumpir' section of the kitchen and the other is for the 'ızgara' section of the kitchen. When customers have additional requests, waiters can add them to the addition by clicking anywhere on the screen except the buttons. Then a list of open tables is displayed. While taking orders, waiters can note the special requests of the customers by using the 'not' button. When the bill is requested, waiter presses a button to print the addition from the cashbox printer.

User's comments

During the observation, we also have the chance to get the waiters' comments on the program. Here are the comments of two different waiters:

Mustafa:

- He says that even a minor problem finds its solution with the program. Every detail is thought by the developers of the program.
- According to him, one of the most valuable feature of the program is that taking special notes for each order is possible such as a salad without salt.
- Only disadvantage that he finds in the program is the pale colors of the interface. He is bored with this screen and wants shiny colors which are more enjoyable.

Sadık:

- In contrast to Mustafa, he finds the note taking process inefficient. He is bored writing to the note box by pressing each of the required characters one by one on the screen. When we asked him for the solution; he couldn't find any. For our suggestion which is displaying the comment options in combo-boxes, his

comment was really interesting. He said that the system cannot work efficiently with that kind of a complicated interface design.

- The most serious complaint of him was about the slowness of the handheld updates. Any change performed in the main computer cannot be reflected to the handheld as soon as it should be. So sometimes, waiters have to make these changes manually from the handheld one more time.

Our comments

- Handheld computers have very simple interfaces, it can be clearly seen that the main goal of the software is 'practical usage'. There are some shortcuts in the program which eases the waiter's job much. For instance, to see the open tables, the only thing waiter must do is to click anywhere on the screen except the predefined buttons. This is better than going back and forth into the menus until finding the open tables menu. The most used function of the program must be accessed in the most practical way.
- The design of the handheld's interface is very important since the screen is very small and having a simple interface eases the jobs of the waiters.
- We cannot say anything about the program in the main computer, since cashbox employee didn't preferred to show us the program interface.

Observations on the automation used by the Black & White Café

The second restaurant we visited is the Black & White Café which resides in the shopping center of METU. The café uses an automation program which is made by “Imaj Yazilim” [2] to cope with the following issues:

- Orders from tables
- Orders to kitchen
- Collecting the revenues
- Stock Management

Their program has many other features common with the generic restaurant automations, but they use the ones just mentioned above. It is deliberately asked whether they were doing well with the program. In other words, we asked if there are any features that they wish to exist in the system. The answer was straight ahead: “The program meets our needs. As you can see, we even don’t use some features of the program just because it was designed for some complicated enterprise. If this café was a larger one, probably we would need palms for our waiters, but we don’t.”

As stated above they don’t use palms, handheld computers. At this point, we want to make an introduction for the way an order is taken and delivered to the kitchen, and then the bill is paid.

The customers give their orders to the waiters, who take the notes on the hardcopy addition assigned for the specific tables. Then, these additions are taken to the person sitting in front of the computer. Then, the orders in the addition are entered into the system which will send the same addition electronically to the monitor of the kitchen. In other words, communication with the kitchen is performed over the electronic platform. Eventually, time for payment comes. As in other systems, there are options for the types of payment. According to the customer’s wish, payment is done.

For this program, a useful property stated by the cashier of the café was that he has the chance to see how much money he will earn at the current time. That is, the revenue of the additions, which were not paid yet, can be calculated and informed the cashier by the system.

An interesting thing that we learned from the person that we talked to was that it is really very hard to keep track of stock products. Actually, it may not be the case for fixed-size products; i.e. cola, schnitzel, water, chicken, etc. However, it is difficult for tomatoes, potatoes, other vegetables, spaghetti, mayonnaise, etc. Of course we wondered the reason for this, and asked. They said that customers have various orders: some wants less sauce while some wants much. In the same mentality, some wants his/her schnitzel with an excess of spaghetti, while some wants it an excess of salad. Even in more detail; some wants his salad with no tomatoes, some wants potatoes as an extra with his/her meal. As you can see, it is hard to keep track of some kind of raw material by the automation program.

Then, we asked another question related to accounting system.

- When you need 20 kg of tomatoes, what do you do, how do you record this information?
- We buy it giving money from hand and keep record of it on our notebook. So, we perform “bakkal hesabı” for some kind of raw materials.

This program has also reporting facility as others in the market. We asked the question we wonder about a point of reporting facility which is to report the sales of a specific table between given dates.

- What benefits do you attain by learning such kind of information?
- For example, we learned that many of our customers prefer to choose the tables which are next to the wall. Many of the customers prefer not to be in open area of the saloon of the restaurant. Hence, we design our tables in such a way that no table is left in open area. Most of our tables are lying down the walls of the café.

This automation was like its friends in the market. It doesn't use handheld computers. We didn't want to extract the features of it in detail, because ample information was given in Software Observation Report.

References:

- 1 - www.adisyon.com The web site of the ADS Software Company.
- 2- www.imajnetwork.com The web site of the Imaj Yazilim.