



truman

Simulating real-time fact-checking for the newsroom

Client need

The client commissioned a simulation of a newsroom in 2025. Therefore, the initial objective was to create an environment in which journalists would interact with automated tools and be immersed in future journalistic tasks. Gathering knowledge about the usability and acceptance of such a simulated tool will potentially help the developers of today create journalism tools fitting the needs of tomorrow.

Value proposition

In order to meet the client's expectations, we built Truman, a concept application aimed at helping journalists to handle the continuously increasing overflow of information in today's mediatized society. The application merges a user-friendly interface with – simulated – artificial intelligence tools and algorithms likely to make their breakthrough in the near future. These technologies are used to transcribe videos in real time while pulling extensive background information from multiple online sources, enabling journalists to write, edit, and fact-check articles instantly.

The screenshot shows the Truman application interface. At the top, there is a hamburger menu icon on the left, the 'truman' logo in the center, and a search icon on the right. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column features a section titled 'Design and features' with a 'TRANSCRIPT' label. Below the title is a paragraph of text, followed by a list of features. At the bottom of this column is an 'Editor' section with a rich text editor toolbar and a text area containing a paragraph. The right column features a video player with a large play button in the center. Below the video player is a section titled 'Truman says:' followed by a paragraph of text. The interface is clean and modern, with a teal color scheme.

User testing

Using the talk-out-loud methodology, we examined the usability of the designed system. Nine experts currently working in the field of journalism were asked to perform a semi-structured test, going through a sequence of tasks within the prototype. Afterwards, a qualitative interview was conducted based on Nielsen & Molich's (1990) ten design heuristics. These principles cover usability-related issues reaching from the logicity of interactive operations to the aesthetics and simplicity of a system.

Conclusion

Seven out of nine tested journalists came to the conclusion that they would use Truman, or some variation of the tool, if it was available today. However, several participants remarked that they would doubt the trustworthiness and impartiality of the information retrieved by such a fully-automated AI system. Based on the journalists' feedback, we were able to deduce a list of usability problems. This list can be used to further improve the design and provides valuable insight into what future tools could potentially look like.

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Project commissioned by Eefje Op den Buysch

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