

USSD Survey Review

For Fiji FarmEd III, July 2018

USSD Outline

USSD is a communication protocol that allows a mobile phone to connect with computers on a telecom's network. Like SMS, USSD sessions are text only, however while SMS is a one-way communication (i.e. one message is sent from User A to the network → the network waits for User B to be available → the network sends the message to User B), USSD is a two-way session much like a phone call (i.e. User A requests a USSD session → the network agrees to the session → two-way communication is then established). Essentially USSD is to SMS what MSN Messenger is to email. It allows for quick and relatively cheap communication between a network and a mobile. For a more in-depth outline of what USSD is, see [this](#) document.

Proposed Usage

Following Malawi's successful usage of USSD to prototype an MVP for Health Assessment in February/ June and July 2018, the wide field of applications USSD provides was demonstrated. For Fiji FarmEd in July 2018, it was proposed that USSD be used as a medium to execute a survey collecting data to prove the possibility of access to the FarmEd smartphone app. The survey would ask questions regarding mobile phone/internet access and English language ability. This USSD Survey was planned to allow collection of data across of all Fiji which could corroborate the same data as it was collected in face-to-face surveys in the Sigatoka Valley region. This would hence allow PEV to demonstrate access to the Fijian farming market during VC pitches for the FarmEd app.

Main Contacts

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Event Summary

Vodafone

A meeting was organised with Zoya on 11/07/2018 at 1030. It was established that a USSD survey would be possible and that, as a socially beneficial organisation, they would try to waive as many fees as they could. They also mentioned that they could potentially partner with us to zero-rate data for our app once it is established. The survey would be executed by first sending through an SMS to any number of participants (potential participants could be filtered by demographic information like age, gender and location). This SMS would contain a USSD PULL code that the user could run, thus beginning the survey. Throughout the course of further phone calls and emails, the cost of the USSD survey for 5 questions was established to be a one-off 4000.00 FJD development & support cost and 0.07FJD per successful survey participation. It was also advised that an SMS 'blast' (a single SMS message is sent with a link to any number of people) could be performed with no development cost at 0.07 FJD per message. They cannot track, however, the number of people who respond, and so we would be charged per message sent, not per survey completion. This would also limit the respondents to only those with smartphones and data. The minutes for all phone calls/meetings with Vodafone can be found [here](#).

Digicel

A meeting was organised with Ravneet Prabhu on 11/07/2018 at 1300. After hearing our pitch and what we required, Ravneet advised that he misunderstood our email and the correct person to talk to was Amrita. Regardless, he recommended that, since a USSD code takes a lot of development (and hence a higher development cost), the best platform to move forward is to perform the survey entirely over SMS. Throughout the course of further phone calls and emails, the cost of the USSD survey for 5 questions was established to be a one-off platform setup cost of 2000.00 FJD and 0.05 FJD per message (i.e. 0.25 FJD per person for 5 questions). The option of an SMS 'Blast' was also put forward, in which a message is sent to users with a link to fill out a survey online. It is important to note that only smartphone users with data could use this link (although the link could be zero-rated). The Blast would be included under the 2000 FJD setup cost and would also be charged at 0.05 FJD per message. The minutes for all phone calls/meetings with Digicel can be found [here](#).

Outcomes

Due to the high development cost of the USSD survey, the counteractive nature of the SMS Blast, and the accessibility of similar data from the Fiji Bureau of Statistics, it was decided to not continue with the survey using either SMS or USSD.