

“Evaluating a smartphone app that targets couples who are about to get married”

Workshop by David Walbelder (Project Manager of the app) at the conference “Couple Relationships in the 21st Century”

1. The App “Ehe.Wir.Heiraten” (using a wordplay – *literally*: “before/matrimony.we.marry”)

• Features



- Countdown until the wedding day (and counting the time of marriage after the date)
- Weekly released brief articles
 - Containing texts, images, videos, audios and/or quotes on various topics related to the life of a (married) couple – e.g. the couple’s communication, organization of the wedding, sexuality, spirituality, life concept,
 - Presented via push notification and picked based on the individual wedding date
- “Events”-section
 - Regional educational and recreational offers (workshops, events)
 - Events are provided and hosted by the participating dioceses – users select the dioceses they want to see events of
- Occasional push notifications from the user-selected dioceses

- The app is for free and based on the existing app “Ja, ich will” (“Yes, I will”)

2. Background of the app

- We are the “Arbeitsgemeinschaft für kath. Familienbildung” (*Working Group for catholic family education*)
 - Network place for catholic providers of family education in Germany
 - members are in large part the corresponding divisions inside the German dioceses and education institutions
 - Organizer of conferences and qualification courses – developing publications for end users and multipliers – providing information exchange on a nationwide level
 - Supported by the German conference of Catholic Bishops and the German Ministry of Family Affairs
- Idea behind the app
 - For many couples, most parts of wedding preparation are organisational and the time tends to be stressful
 - The articles bundle organisational information, provide impulses on important topics of relationship, and link to further information and support. They also encourage to think about the relationship from a non-organisational point of view; at least for a few minutes each week.



3. Development of the app

- Spring to autumn 2016: involving the members and the board in the idea and gaining the approval for the app, asking for offers of app developers/designers and deciding for one, building an editorial team for the app
- Autumn 2016 to spring 2017: researching, writing, and editing 55 articles – deciding among different design proposals – adjusting the functions of the app – programming of the app (CMS, back-end, front-end and a landing page (www.ehe-wir-heiraten.de) – developing advertising material – flow of information to the members (video-workshop on how to use the CMS for events and push-notifications, how to get and customise the advertising material, updates on status, and the schedule) – convincing the individual members to participate in the app
- June 2017: setting the articles into the CMS and launching the app

4. Experiences with the app

- Approx. 3400 users within the first eight months (advertising only within the dioceses)
- Surprisingly high media coverage
- Very positive feedback on the concept of the app from users and multipliers (several dioceses participated in the app after the first experiences)
- Initial costs of developing the app: 40,000.00€ – estimated annual costs: 4,000.00€ (average)
 - the running costs are fully covered by the participating dioceses (24 of 26 possible)
- It was and is important to have a constant flow of information and communication among the programmer, the designer, the editorial staff, the members, and the network office
- It is possible to modify the existing technical framework (code, hosting) for additional participation partners (e.g. Austrian dioceses)