

K. WERNER, F. WERNER. **Tablets for seniors: Bridging the digital divide.** *Gerontechnology* 2012;11(2):208; doi:10.4017/gt.2012.11.02.442.00 **Purpose** Current tablets, such as the Apple iPad and similar Android based devices, offer possibilities that help novices to adopt internet skills; this includes about 70% of today's seniors above 65. The goal of the project 'MyTablet¹' was to scientific evaluate the suitability of a current tablet of the new generation of devices, in terms of user interface for older users in general and future AAL-projects in particular. The hypothesis we tested is that for seniors it is easier to learn how to use tablets since they consist of a touch-based user interface, offering less functionality, and hence less complexity, compared to commonly used operating systems. **Method** To test this hypothesis a set of usability trials was conducted. In a first trial eleven seniors (average age 71) took part. This study evaluated the general usability and acceptance of a previously selected tablet (iPad). We used a combination of obtrusive and unobtrusive observation² of the participant during the performance of different predefined tasks. The participant was further asked to say everything that came to mind in accordance with the 'thinking-aloud'⁴ principle. The comments of the users together with the performance results of the tasks and the results of a final questionnaire were used to derive the results of the trial. The second part of the study was a field trial to evaluate the long-term use of the tablet. Four older women tested the tablet for four weeks each. Two meetings were scheduled during the trial phase in case the participants had any questions regarding the use of the tablet. The participants kept a diary of their application use and problems that came up during the trial period. At the end of the four weeks a final interview, including standard questionnaires like SUMI⁴ and QUIS⁵ (Figure 1), was conducted with the participants. **Results & Discussion** The results of the study show high acceptance and satisfaction rates among the user group. Although there were difficulties as well, the users generally learned to use the device quite fast and stated that their difficulties are just a matter of getting used to it. Given the good results of the evaluation, we conclude tablets are in fact suitable as a gateway to the internet for older people and as a user interface for future AAL-projects providing the advantages of a market-ready solution and also the possibility to include AAL relevant third-party applications.

References

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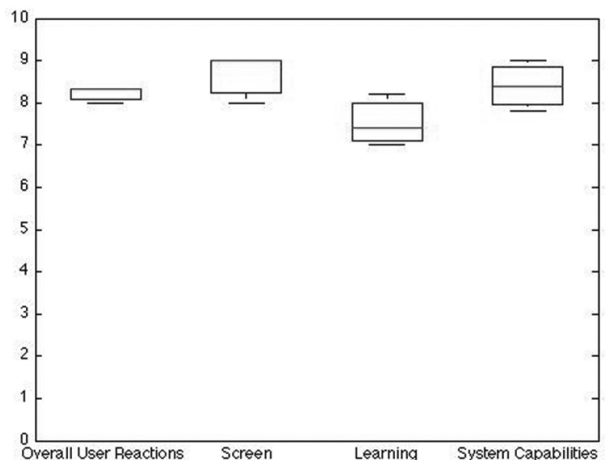


Figure 1. Evaluation of the QUIS questionnaire