CS162 Assignment 1: Project Design

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"Is life not a thousand times too short for us to bore ourselves?", Friedrich Nietzsche once said. Why then, is boredom such a commonplace? How can one be bored with a world so full of life, diversity of thought, randomness of experience, and complex interactions? Often, it can be because finding something to do can be daunting, energy-draining, and "not worth the effort". Spontan.io, a spontaneous event-planning web-app that uses location services, user preferences, and a simplistic UX design to find local events spontaneously is a direct solution to this problem.

Target Market

If we consider boredom and excess free time, our minds are brought to think of a Gen Z and Millennial audience, specifically in the range of 16 to 24 years of age. This period of our lives is most generally when we are aware of and have the capacity to do exciting things outside of our comfort zone, can be independent in our decisions, can take more risk, and when we are young enough that we don't have the responsibility of family or an all-consuming job. However, the average person seems to spend valuable time in some of these best years of their life being "bored."

This is the target market of event-planning and ticketing services, such as Eventbrite and Meetup.com, event apps that encourage people to start and engage with activities in the places they live. Both are apps which allow for the browsing of events, ticketing services, and are broadly focused on mid-market events (not as large as a sports game or concert, but not as small as a family gathering). The target market of Spontan.io will be the same, accessing mid-market events that are easily accessible at a moment's notice, but not personal enough that it's rude to show up late.

Problem Identification

The problem that the target market have with occupying their time can be a variety of things, but after surveying over 20 students, these problems seem to follow a trend (Bricken, 2020). We were able to gather information such as what people often do to stop being bored, what the greatest barrier to finding things to do in one's neighbourhood is, and how often users of other event apps struggle to find apps tailored to their preferences.

By considering an agile start-up approach, and by abstraction, a lean startup methodology in the design and validation of this product idea to solve a problem in user's lives, we were able to consider the insights of our survey as a form of customer discovery and validation. From this stage, we learn valuable insights about the idea for the product and can iterate through experiments/hypotheses and

an MVP to learn more (see fig.1). Firstly, from our surveying we found that 64% of our survey respondents on average or more often than average found themselves being bored (fig.2). Secondly, we examined user responses for the question "When you are bored, what do you do to stop being bored?", and at least 50% of the respondents suggested they would look to TV series and movies as solutions to being bored. Thirdly, we found that 68% of the respondents are excited about finding an event but then aren't as excited when the day comes to go to it, possibly leading to them never attending (fig.3).

The problems that Spontan.io is trying to solve is thus threefold:

1. People find it hard to remain disciplined, overcome laziness, and stick to a schedule when there are no stakes involved.

2. A decent proportion of the target market uses short-term dopamine rushes stimulated by TV and video games as a way of passing the time to get through boredom, rather than overcoming it.

3. The target market suffers from being excited about an event when signing up for it, but less so when the day comes to go to it.

Spontan.io: Do Something Spontaneous

App like Meetup.com and Eventbrite suffer from lack of instant gratification. Given the target market is so hooked on the power of instant gratification and they receive it so often in their daily world (Taubenfeld, 2017), appealing to this trend is a strategic decision. The problem with these apps, is you have to wait however many days you signed-up in advance for any given event. Whereas with Spontan.io, the events found are all within walking distance and 30 minutes of the present, allowing people to enjoy them immediately. The fact that Spontan.io is instant, also means it isn't capable of being affected by the planning fallacy, whereby people believe they can make it to an event but end up not going because they were over-optimistic about their available time.

Spontan.io is an app that allows you to find exciting events spontaneously and within a walkable distance. Simply click a button and the app will find events in your area that are tailored to your preferences. For example, if you were on a date, you could use this after dinner to find happy hours, last-minute concerts, dessert deals, or unique movie screenings. To log events, all Spontan.io needs to do is web-scrape events from competitors and feed them into a personalised recommendations system so that when users press the button, they are given the closest and best events for them. Spontan.io needs no schedule (problem 1), is an exciting way to overcome boredom with a different, more meaningful dopamine rush (problem 2), and it allows for instant gratification (problem 3). Further functionality could include: a tailored alert system so people know when their favourite event is on nearby, a recommended sequence of events, unique experiences hosted on the app, built-in maps to show real time journeys, and even discounted features through partnerships with companies. The possibilities are endless.

When described the idea of the app, 90.9% of users suggested they would use it. The comments speak for themselves: "I want to be more spontaneous - doing things that are unplanned. If the recommendation from the apps are good, it allows me to explore without having to have done a lot of research or planning" and "I think I would use this with my friends, as we do tend to go to the same

places over and over again. This would be a nice way of finding 'hidden gems.'" These are suggestive of the potential benefits the app would add to users' spontaneous lives. So let's build it!

Figures
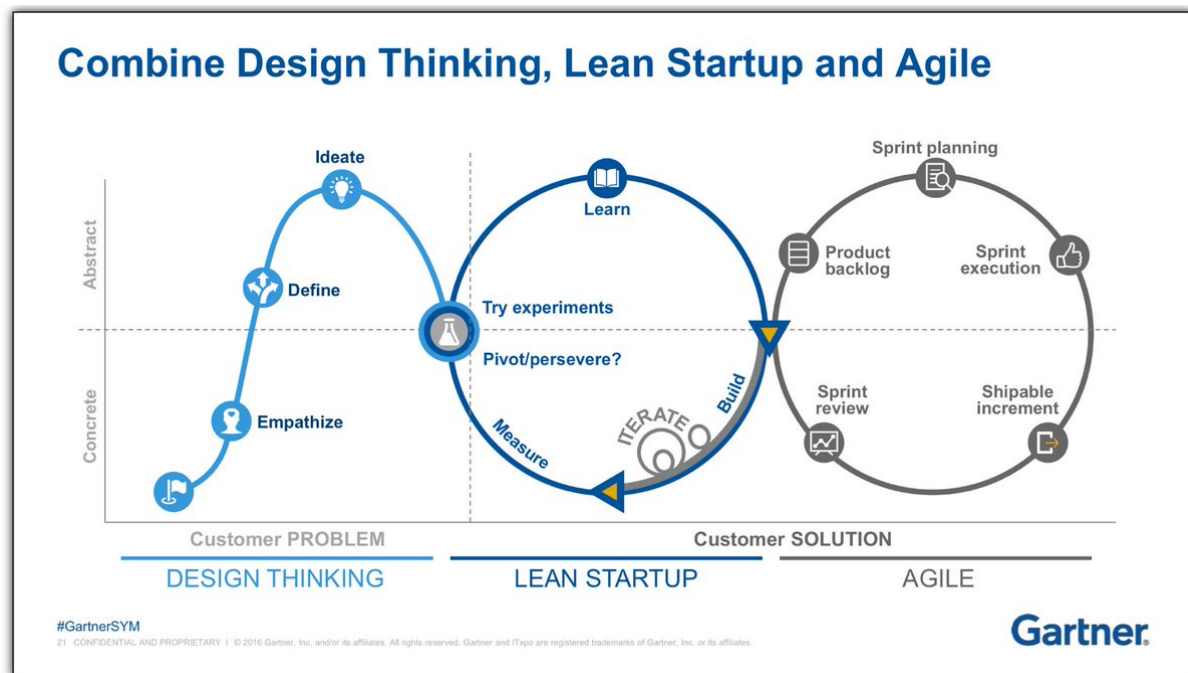
Source: Gartner.

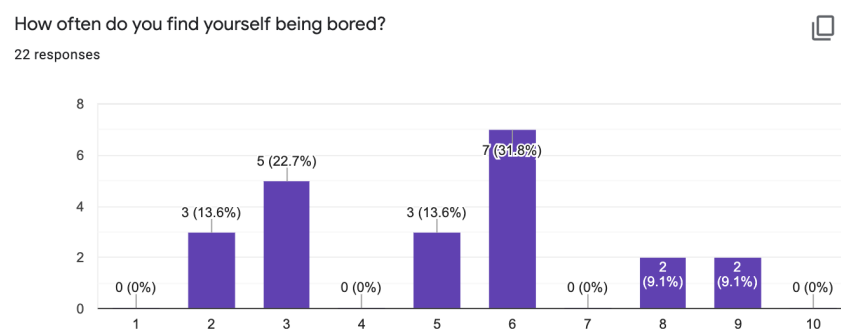*Figure 1. An agile methodological approach to ideation and start-up founding.*

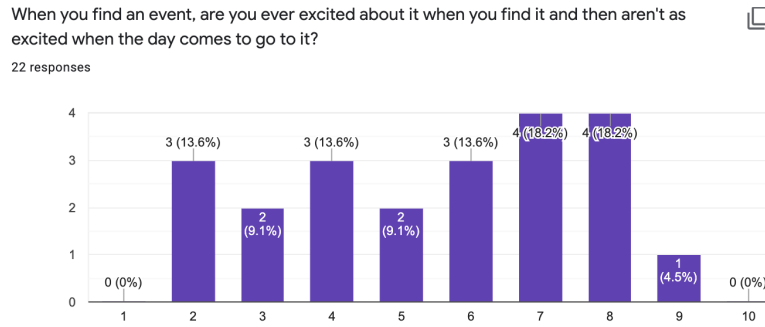*Figure 2. A question in the survey to understand levels of boredom in the target market.*

Figure 3. A question in the survey that questions the varying motivations of the target market to go to events they sign up for.

References

Bricken, A. (2020a). Project Design Survey. Retrieved from https://forms.gle/hQKjGoUoe52htjUi9

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Taubenfeld, E. (2017). The Culture Of Impatience And Instant Gratification. Retrieved from https://studybreaks.com/culture/instant-gratification/