Restaurant Nutrition Estimator: User Archetype Documentation

Overview

Based on user research conducted on Day 4, we identified three distinct user archetypes who all want restaurant calorie estimation but cannot or will not use traditional calorie tracking apps like MyFitnessPal. These archetypes represent massive underserved markets in the nutrition app space.

Archetype 1: ED Recovery Users

"The Psychologically Safety-Conscious"

User Profile

- **Demographics**: Primarily female, history of eating disorders or disordered eating patterns
- **Pain Points**: Traditional calorie apps trigger obsessive behaviors and unhealthy relationships with food
- **Current Behavior**: Actively avoid calorie counting and food tracking apps
- **Goals**: Want food awareness without psychological harm

Exact User Quote

> "I don't know if I'm the right person to ask this. Since my eating disorder I try to avoid everything that has to do with food tracking and calorie counting etc. But I think it has potential!"

Research Context

- **71% of MyFitnessPal users develop disordered eating patterns** from obsessive calorie tracking
- Studies show "fixation on numbers, rigid diet, obsession, app dependency" are common themes even among users focused on eating disorder recovery
- Only 2 out of 6 eating disorder intervention apps allow customization to reduce triggering features

Product Implications

- **Delayed visibility approach**: Hide calorie counts during logging, show patterns weekly
- **Language matters**: Position as "restaurant memory tool" not "calorie tracker"
- **Mindful logging**: Focus on awareness without obsession
- **Recovery-friendly features**: Option to never show calorie numbers, just general patterns

Validation Insights

- Sees potential in the concept despite personal restrictions
- Values the restaurant estimation problem being solved
- Would need psychological safety features to engage
- Represents users existing apps actively drive away

Archetype 2: Insight Seekers

"The Discovery-Driven Learner"

User Profile

- **Demographics**: Primarily male, never used calorie counting, wants to lose weight
- **Pain Points**: Surprised by which foods affect diet, wants understanding without obsession
- **Current Behavior**: Relies on habit changes (like eliminating sodas) rather than tracking
- **Goals**: Insights and patterns to make better decisions

Exact User Quote

> "I've never counted calories, just decided to give up on sodas at some point and it helped to decide to try that for 21 days. Afterwards I had less cravings for sodas. But maybe I should count calories? It is sometimes very surprising what things make or break your diet. Some insights would be nice. And I do want to lose some weight"

Research Context

- Men often experience different psychological relationships with food tracking compared to women
- User reviews emphasize wanting to "get a better understanding of the different foods calorie loads so I can make better choices"
- Harvard research suggests focusing on "improving diet quality" rather than "calories notion"

Product Implications

- **Weekly insights format**: "Your highest calorie meals were Italian restaurants"
- **Surprise discovery**: Highlight unexpected high-calorie foods
- **Pattern recognition**: Show trends rather than daily shame spirals
- **Educational approach**: Help understand food choices without obsessive counting

Validation Insights

- Open to trying calorie awareness for the first time
- Values habit-based approaches over complex tracking
- Wants practical insights to guide better choices
- Represents untapped male market existing apps miss

Archetype 3: Diet Philosophy Followers

"The Rules-Based Practitioners"

User Profile

- **Demographics**: Followers of specific diet philosophies (Slow Carb, Paleo, Keto, etc.)
- **Pain Points**: Diet rules work at home but break down at restaurants
- **Current Behavior**: Follow food rules rather than calorie counting
- **Goals**: Restaurant guidance that aligns with their dietary philosophy

Research Context (Slow Carb Diet Community)

- **Source**: Reddit Slow Carb Diet community feedback
- **Philosophy**: Tim Ferriss Slow Carb Diet specifically "recommends against counting calories" but follows strict food rules
- **Rules approach**: "Stop eating white-colored carbohydrates" and "repeat the same 3-4 meals regularly"
- **Restaurant challenge**: Difficulty maintaining rules when eating out, especially at non-chain restaurants

Research Context (Academic)

- Research shows "obesity demands a more sophisticated approach than counting calories" and should focus on "dietary style"
- Studies indicate "macronutrient composition-based diets" can be effective for weight management
- Psychology research suggests "reducing calorie intake may not help" and recommends focusing on "dietary style that will encourage the control of body weight"

Product Implications

- **Rules compliance helper**: "Does this restaurant meal fit Slow Carb rules?"
- **Philosophy-specific guidance**: Adapt estimates to different dietary approaches
- **Restaurant rule interpretation**: Help translate diet rules to restaurant scenarios
- **Practical decision-making**: Focus on compliance rather than precise calorie counting

Validation Insights

- Actively anti-calorie counting but need restaurant guidance
- Want practical tools that align with existing dietary philosophy
- Represent organized communities with shared approaches
- Easy to find and market to through existing diet communities

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Cross-Archetype Insights

Common Needs

1. **Restaurant estimation challenge**: All three struggle with calorie awareness when eating out

2. **Anti-obsession positioning**: None want traditional MyFitnessPal-style daily tracking

3. **Practical decision-making**: Want "good enough" guidance for real-world choices

4. **Psychological safety**: Need approach that doesn't trigger unhealthy relationships with food

Differentiation from Competitors

- **MyFitnessPal**: Serves precise trackers, drives away psychology-conscious users

- **Noom**: Psychology-focused but still daily tracking and calorie obsession

- **Lose It!**: Similar to MyFitnessPal, database-focused rather than conversational

Market Size Implications

- **ED Recovery market**: 71% of traditional app users develop disordered eating patterns - millions of potential users

- **Male insight seekers**: Largely untapped by existing apps focused on female precision trackers

- **Diet philosophy communities**: Organized groups (Slow Carb, Paleo, Keto) with active communities

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Product Development Priorities

Core Features for All Archetypes

1. **Conversational restaurant estimation**: Natural language input for restaurant descriptions

2. **Delayed visibility options**: Log now, analyze later approach

3. **Pattern insights**: Weekly/monthly trends rather than daily tracking

4. **Psychological safety**: Language and features that avoid triggering obsessive behaviors

Archetype-Specific Features

- **ED Recovery**: Option to never show calories, just general awareness

- **Insight Seekers**: Discovery-focused insights about surprising foods

- **Diet Philosophy**: Rules compliance guidance for specific dietary approaches

Marketing Positioning

- **Primary**: "Restaurant nutrition estimator for people who hate calorie apps"

- **Secondary**: "Discovery tool for food insights without obsession"

- **Differentiation**: "Anti-tracking tracking" - awareness without daily shame

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Research To-Do List

TODO: Expand ED Recovery Research

☐ Find more specific statistics on eating disorder app usage patterns

- [ ] Research Recovery Record and similar apps to understand what works/doesn't work
- [ ] Interview more people with ED history about restaurant challenges specifically
- [ ] Investigate "mindful eating" app approaches and user feedback

TODO: Male User Psychology Research

- [ ] Find research on gender differences in food tracking app usage
- [ ] Study male-focused fitness/nutrition apps and their approaches
- [ ] Research discovery-based learning preferences in nutrition contexts
- [ ] Interview more male users about restaurant decision-making challenges

TODO: Diet Philosophy Community Analysis

- [ ] Map out major diet communities (Slow Carb, Paleo, Keto, etc.) and their restaurant challenges
- [ ] Analyze Reddit, Facebook groups, and forums for common restaurant pain points
- [ ] Research how different diet philosophies handle restaurant meals
- [ ] Contact diet community leaders about restaurant estimation needs

TODO: Competitive Analysis Deepening

- [ ] Test Recovery Record and other ED-focused apps to understand psychological safety features
- [ ] Analyze male-focused nutrition apps and their approach to insights vs tracking
- [ ] Study diet-specific apps and how they handle restaurant scenarios
- [ ] Document specific feature gaps in existing solutions for each archetype

TODO: Market Validation Expansion

- [ ] Conduct structured interviews with 5+ people from each archetype
- [ ] Test specific feature concepts (delayed visibility, rules compliance, discovery insights)
- [ ] Validate pricing and value proposition for each archetype
- [ ] Research archetype size and acquisition channel preferences

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Source References

Academic Research

- **PMC8485346**: Effects of diet and fitness apps on eating disorder behaviours: qualitative study
- **PMC4847127**: Review of Smartphone Applications for the Treatment of Eating Disorders
- **PMC5639963**: Reducing Calorie Intake May Not Help You Lose Body Weight
- **PMC8017325**: Optimal Diet Strategies for Weight Loss and Weight Loss Maintenance

Market Research

- **JMIR 2021**: User Perspectives of Diet-Tracking Apps: Reviews Content Analysis
- **Harvard Health 2020**: Stop counting calories
- **Duke Psychology**: The Trouble with Tracking

Diet Philosophy Research

- **Tim Ferriss Blog**: How to Lose 100 Pounds on The Slow-Carb Diet
- **Healthline 2023**: The Slow-Carb Diet: A Review and Guide
- **Shortform Books 2020**: The Tim Ferriss Slow Carb Diet: Radical Body Changes

User Research

- **Day 4 Validation**: Direct user quotes from three distinct archetype representatives
- **Reddit Slow Carb Community**: Community feedback on anti-calorie counting philosophy
- **Personal interviews**: Structured feedback from potential users across archetypes