Our project will serve prospective buyers of electronic technology. This is a very broad group of people, but within it are several communities whose problems are often overlooked because they are minorities in an economic sense, such as the poor and the technologically illiterate. Recognition of these communities will help us form key personas when we design our solution.

We want to investigate and address the fundamental problem almost all prospective buyers of electronic technology face: the overwhelming array of devices to choose from. We want to simplify the process of choosing a device. This includes, but is not limited to, choosing between a desktop, laptop, tablet, phone, ereader, or music player to suit a user’s needs.

This problem area needs to be addressed for a variety of reasons. The simplest reason is the one outlined above; there is so much variety in computing devices and most people do not have the time or knowledge to pick the best one to suit their needs. This was exemplified in some short preliminary research we did outside the Microsoft Store. For example, an older participant, Jim, told us: “I thought I knew what I wanted, but then I went in the store. There are too many different tablet laptops and desktops and I had to talk to an employee, and that didn’t help at all.” We want to prevent technology buyers from being discouraged when they want to adopt more technology into their lives. Humanity, in the last few decades, has been dividing into two worlds; one where technology is believed to soon take over every aspect of our lives, and one that is left behind. These worlds are driven apart by a multitude of factors; the wealth gap, for example, and the lack of technological literacy in the world, mainly held by those generally uneducated (such as the poor) and those born before the technological era. Without a tool to help introduce these groups into the technological world, there is no incentive to join it. Technology is rapidly evolving, and sometimes even the technologically literate have trouble keeping up with its pace. We want a way for these people to worry less on what the technology is, and more on how their needs can be better met with it. This solution also aids technology sellers in that it will inadvertently increase sales. It’s a win-win for both consumers and producers of technology.

One seemingly easy existing solution for buying tech is simply choosing a device through a category-search, such as those on Amazon or Newegg, found here: <https://www.newegg.com/Laptops-Notebooks/SubCategory/ID-32>. Some websites, such as this one: <https://www.laptopmag.com/laptop-finder> have even made this category-search easier by providing simple drop-down menus for a user before showing them potential products to buy. The fundamental problem with these category-searches is they depend on the user having quite a bit of technological knowledge. To the average user, the difference between a 1080p and a 4k screen, or a 13” and a 15” laptop feels very arbitrary. We want the tech shopping experience to be very user-friendly, focusing less on the numbers and more on the meaning behind them. The best example we found of this was the laptop finder on laptopmag.com, which had some explanation for most of the categories and sub-categories. We want to go much further than this, though, and remove most of the decision making from the user until the end of their search, focusing on what they seem to need based on a questionnaire rather than bombarding them with decisions they have to make at every step. There are other solutions, such as: <https://pcpartpicker.com/> which lets users customize a PC based on their needs, but again this is specialized and requires a lot of technological knowledge. The most user-friendly would arguably be YouTube tech reviews, such as those found here: <https://www.youtube.com/user/unboxtherapy>. These reviews are often popular to users because they come from another human, one holding the product and explaining its pros and cons as if they own the technology. These reviews are great, but suffer from the fact that they focus on only one, or in some cases a few, tech devices. This requires a user to do lots of their own preliminary research or watch lots of tech review videos, which most average users do not have the time or patience for.