

Activity 1

Problem Statement

Students living in Lumis accommodation rely on a single Whatsapp group chat for all communication between residents, including the purchase and sale of second-hand items. This creates friction between group chat members: sellers struggle to reach buyers as their listings get buried in unrelated messages within hours, buyers have to scroll through tens of listings they may be uninterested in or have to repeatedly post “anyone selling X?” hoping a seller will see it, and people not interested in buying or selling items view these listings as spam.

The unstructured nature of these chats, lacking standardization of listing formats, language and capabilities for filtering listings leads to missed opportunities and annoyance for all involved parties, leading to people resorting to buying new items, despite wanting to save money by buying the item used. This may lead to unnecessary spending for buyers and discarding of perfectly usable items for sellers.

Personas and Scenarios

1. **[Urgent, Goal-oriented Buyer]** Buyer looking to get the product out of needs as fast as possible with no or minimal fees

Alex is a 19 year old first year computer science student, coming from Singapore, living in Lumis accommodation for his first year of university. As he is an international student, he was only able to

bring two suitcases with him and now needs to furnish his room on a tight budget. He is juggling university settling into a new country, meaning that he has little time to search for items.

Alex moved into Lumis and has no cookware. As he is on a tight budget, he needs something fast and cheap, meaning he can't wait for shipping. He opens the Lumis Whatsapp group chat and scrolls through hundreds of messages, mostly bickering and people asking others to empty their washing machines in the laundromat. After a few minutes of scrolling, he posts "anyone selling a frying pan?" and goes back to studying.

Three hours later, he gets no response and his message is buried under more bickering and whining. Alex reluctantly orders a pan from Ebay and, in the mean time, has to subsist off uncooked instant ramen (as he has no pot to boil water) as he waits for the Ebay seller to ship the frying pan.

1. **[Compulsive Buyer]** Buyer who is browsing for items without a clear goal who compulsively buys

Maya is a 21 year old third year business management and media student from Spain, living in Lumis for her third year. She has settled in Leipzig already and has a high monthly budget of 500 euros for non essential items.

When scrolling through the Lumis resident group chat, Maya spots a seller's listing for AirPods Max: "selling this for 300 euro". Maya recognizes that this is a good deal and decides to text the seller in a few hours, once shes available to talk.

Some time later, she tries to find the listing but isn't able as it was buried under more bickering and reservations for common areas. Searching for the listing also didn't work, as there are tens of listings captioned "selling this for X euros" since there is no standardized format.

She tries to post "who was selling the airpods?", but her message goes unnoticed by the seller. Maya ends up not buying the AirPods and the seller ends up losing a buyer.

1. **[Price-Sensitive Buyer]** Buyer who has a tight budget and is sensitive to the price, looking for the cheapest available item

Petr is a 20 year old second year business management student from Russia, supporting himself through scholarship covered accommodation and 15 hours per week working at McDonald's. He has 80 euros of disposable income every month, so he tracks his expenses meticulously.

Petr needs a microwave but has only 30 euros left to spend this month. He posts "if anyone is selling a microwave, let me know" in the Lumis Whatsapp group and waits. Over the next 3 days, he waits for a seller to respond.

Finally, by day 3 he sees a photo of what seems to be a microwave, but the caption is in Arabic and translates to gibberish. The only thing he can make out is "15 euro" which he finds to be suspiciously cheap.

Eventually, he ends up overspending, paying 30 euros for a microwave found on Facebook marketplace. In addition to that, having to travel a long way to pick it up

1. **[Occasional Seller]** Seller who is occasionally selling their furniture when it is not needed, sensitive to the ease of doing so with minimal fees and without having to ship anything

Sarah is a second year exchange student, coming from the main campus of Lancaster University in England, staying in Lumis for her second year of her computer science program. Her exchange year is ending in three weeks and she needs to sell the furniture she bought when she arrived. Sarah takes pictures of her bookshelf and chair and posts 2 separate messages in the Lumis Whatsapp group chat. By evening, her messages are buried under bickering and complaining about washing machine availability.

The next day she reposts. People complain about her spamming the chat and one person responds, asking if she can deliver the bookshelf to Basecamp accommodation on the other side of the city. As she has no car and doesn't want to pay extra for shipping, she has to decline.

Due to the low visibility of her listing as it gets buried in messages whenever she reposts, she is unable to find a buyer in time and has to give away the items for free.