Yusra: Hi, Mushtaq. Thanks for coming today. How are you?

Mushtaq: Hi, I’m doing good. Thank you so much for having me today.

Yusra: So today I wanted to interview you for a project that I’m doing for my user interface class. I’m just going to give you a brief background on what the project is about. My team and I are creating an app catering to people who eat out. We wanted to create an app where it suggests food to you, and you can enter your dietary restrictions or food allergies. It could be something that will suggest food depending on that. It will rely on AI and your own preferences to suggest food for you.

And if you have trouble finding places to eat, this is the perfect app for you because it’ll help you learn about different food places near you and ease a lot of your frustrations with current food and ordering.

So I just have a couple of questions for you. um Are you somebody who considers yourself someone who eats out a lot?

Mushtaq: Yeah, I think I am someone who eats out a lot. But ever since I changed my environment, I feel like I don’t eat out as much. I do think this app sounds helpful for people who are away from home and need something quick.

Yusra: For yourself, how do you usually prefer eating out? There are different forms, like ordering online, going to a restaurant, calling, or picking up. What is your preference?

Mushtaq: That’s a good question. I’m very picky. Sometimes I don’t even know where I want to eat, and it’s difficult. Usually, when I eat out, it’s a mobile order, and I eat in the car unless it’s a fancy event.

Well, if I’m with friends or family, we’ll eat inside a restaurant. It depends on the occasion. If you want something quick, mobile order is best. If you want to sit and talk, eating inside is better.

Yusra: So you would say that normally you use the platform specific to wherever you’re eating to order?

Mushtaq: Yeah, yes.

Yusra: How do you usually discover new restaurants and cuisines?

Mushtaq: I’m a picky eater, so trying new places is difficult. If I really want to try something, I don’t usually go for it myself, but if my friends want to try something new, we’d probably check TikTok and find something we haven’t had. Eating the same thing gets boring.

If you really want to branch out and discover new foods, social media is a good way to see those options.

Yusra: I know that typically when you’re ordering food, there are platforms like Uber Eats or DoorDash, which we’ve both used. Have you ever had accessibility issues when using food service apps?

Mushtaq: Sometimes. When I use DoorDash, it’s not always efficient because it has to find a driver, and the time it takes to get your food can be a little too much. Other factors, like tipping, influence how fast you’ll get your food.

I feel like with almost anything, you’re going to run into issues. With DoorDash, sometimes I don’t know if "scary" is the right word, but I don’t know if I’m going to get my food on time. I don’t know if my food will be touched.

Yusra: That’s a great answer. The next question is—what difficulties do you specifically face when you actually find a new place to eat?

Mushtaq: Sometimes, on whatever app I use, whether it’s DoorDash or a restaurant’s app, checking out can be tedious. Sometimes, things aren’t smooth, like needing an extra step for payment if they don’t accept Apple Pay.

Another issue is when you order something, go to the restaurant, and they don’t even have it. You basically wasted your money. Restaurants and apps should be updated with their actual stock; otherwise, there’s no point in having it on the app.

Yusra: I totally agree. I also wanted to ask if you could recall a time when you wanted to eat out but couldn’t. What place did you try to go to, and were there any apps or websites you used?

Mushtaq: Yeah, there was one time I really wanted ice cream. I thought I was ordering it because I did a mobile order, but when I pulled up to the window, they said their ice cream machine was broken. I was really frustrated because that felt like false advertising.

There was another time where an app was really slow for a restaurant, and I didn’t want to eat there anymore because of how slow it was.

Yusra: That can be really frustrating. What factors affect your decision when trying new places to eat? Could it be location, distance, or preferences?

Mushtaq: One thing that’s really important when I eat out is if the establishment is clean. No one wants to eat on a dirty plate. If the kitchen is dirty, I wouldn’t want to eat there.

Another thing is reviews. I look at reviews to see if it’s even a place I’d want to go to. Reviews are important and reflect the food and restaurant.

Yusra: That’s really important. The platform we’re trying to create will focus on Google reviews and other sources like Yelp.

To see if this is a place you’d want to eat at, it could filter reviews based on dietary restrictions. For example, if someone only eats halal, it would let them know if the restaurant has been flagged for not being halal.

Mushtaq: Reviews are important. Right now, it’s difficult to find a platform that shows reviews without going through multiple apps.

Yusra: That’s a great answer. Another question I have is: What influences your choices when deciding whether to visit familiar places or try something new? You mentioned you’re a picky eater and don’t usually try new things, but if you were in a situation where you wanted to branch out, what would influence your decision?

Mushtaq: I definitely look at reviews and TikTok videos. A lot of people use TikTok for food reviews, and I usually watch videos like that to see people’s reactions. Online reviews are nice, but actually seeing someone react to the food helps.

I also consider if it’s even something I would want to try—like, does it sound appetizing?

Yusra: This is the last question. Can you tell me about a time you recently tried something new and had a bad experience?

Mushtaq: Recently, I wanted to try matcha at a new place. I went there hoping to get the matcha I wanted, but they didn’t have it. So I got another flavor, but it didn’t live up to the hype.

That made me realize that sometimes the internet hypes up places too much.

But overall I think what you guys are creating is great and is definitely something that I would use.

Yusra: Well that’s it for today, thank you for letting me interview you.