Project Proposal for

CS 5140/6140: Human Factors in Computing

Spotlight

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Weighted Matrix

Jackson's Matrix:

Weighted Matrix				
Business Criteria\Ideas	Weight	Meaningful Connect	Spotlight	Event based posts
Uniqueness of the target community	3	3	1	1
Implementability/Feasibility	3	1	3	3
Supporting the target community to fulfill their needs	3	3	3	2
User Experience	3	1	2	3
Potential Market Size	2	1	1	2
Diverse	2	3	2	1
Profitability	2	2	1	3
Scopes of community building	2	3	3	1
TOTALS		42	41	41

Haley's Matrix:

Weighted Matrix_2				
Business Criteria\Ideas	Weight	Meaningful Connect	Spotlight	WelcomeBridge
Uniqueness of the target community	3	2	3	2
Implementability/Feasibility	3	1	3	1
Supporting the target community to fulfill their needs	3	3	3	3
User Experience	3	3	3	3
Potential Market Size	2	3	3	2
Diverse	2	2	3	3
Profitability	2	2	3	3
Scopes of community building	2	3	1	2
TOTALS		47	56	47

Munshi's Matrix:

Business Criteria\Ideas	Weight	Meaningful Connect	Spotlight	WelcomeBridge
Uniqueness of the target community	3	2	2	3
Implementability/Feasibility	3	2	2	2
Supporting the target community to fulfill their needs	3	3	2	3
User Experience	3	3	3	3
Potential Market Size	2	3	3	2
Diverse	2	2	3	3
Profitability	2	2	2	2
Scopes of community building	2	2	2	3
TOTALS		48	47	53

How we used the matrix to decide our idea:

To select our final project idea, each group member independently scored all proposed ideas across eight business criteria (e.g., uniqueness, feasibility, user experience, community support). We then created three weighted matrices to capture these individual evaluations. By averaging the totals, *Meaningful Connect* scored ~46, *Spotlight* ~48, and *WelcomeBridge* ~47.

While the numerical average already placed Spotlight slightly higher, we also considered the qualitative strengths that emerged in the matrices. Across all three evaluations, Spotlight consistently received strong scores in **user experience, scopes of community building,** and **supporting the target community to fulfill their needs**. This showed that, regardless of scorer, it was seen as both feasible and impactful.

Comparatively, *Meaningful Connect* emphasized maintaining personal ties, and *WelcomeBridge* addressed language barriers for migrants , both strong and meaningful directions. However, they were narrower in scope. Spotlight stood out because it could apply broadly across different communities, offering flexibility, transparency, and adaptability that can scale.

Therefore, the decision was not made on average alone, but also on consistency of strengths across criteria, broad applicability, and potential for innovation. This triangulation of scores and qualitative reasoning led us to select *Spotlight* as our final idea.

Narrative

How the proposed idea is Novel

Our proposal is novel because it redefines how users interact with social media algorithms. Existing platforms rely on opaque recommendation systems designed to maximize profit, often leaving users powerless over what they see. Our platform introduces a transparent and interactive model where individuals directly shape their feed. Users can clearly indicate what they want more of and what they do not, and the algorithm adapts in real time. Unlike current platforms where algorithms are hidden and manipulative, ours makes the process visible and intuitive, almost like having a conversation with the system itself. This hands-on approach transforms what is usually a mysterious black box into a tool that empowers users to design their own experience.

How the proposed idea is valuable

The platform is valuable because it prioritizes user agency and mental well-being over profit-driven content delivery. On most platforms today, likes and dislikes are not true signals of preference — they are interpreted in ways that maximize engagement, often feeding users emotionally charged or manipulative content designed to keep them scrolling. After spending hours on these feeds, only a handful of posts might make us laugh or actually teach us something, while most leave us feeling drained. Our proposal addresses this problem by making likes actually mean "I want more of this" and dislikes actually mean "I don't." In this way, users have the power to make their feed less heavy and more purposeful. The result is a safer, healthier, and more meaningful environment for connection, learning, and entertainment, where users can choose to see what truly supports their growth rather than what captures their attention in the moment.

How the proposed idea is Just-in-time

The proposal is just-in-time because it responds to growing concerns about how social media impacts society and mental health. Platforms have been criticized for creating echo chambers, fueling polarization, and even contributing to political violence. At the same time, studies increasingly show the harmful effects of endless scrolling on well-being, leaving many users disillusioned with the feeds they consume daily. Our platform arrives at the exact moment when people are asking for something different — a feed that is transparent, user-driven, and emotionally supportive. By letting users take control of their own algorithm, we address not just a technical flaw in current systems but also a cultural demand for healthier, more constructive digital spaces.

How will the idea contribute to Community building

Our platform contributes to community building by connecting people who share authentic interests rather than simply amplifying the most controversial or emotionally charged content. Users can follow others, join discussions, and discover communities centered on hobbies, learning, or shared values. Because the system emphasizes positive interactions and de-emphasizes manipulative content, the communities that emerge are more supportive and constructive. Instead of being drawn into divisive debates or outrage cycles, users can find spaces where they

feel understood, encouraged, and connected. This creates communities that are not just larger, but also healthier and more genuine.

How will the idea contribute to Community support

The platform also provides direct community support by surfacing helpful and credible voices. For example, experts or knowledgeable individuals can be more easily connected with users seeking to learn or solve problems in specific areas. A student struggling to understand a concept, or someone exploring new skills, can be introduced to people who want to share expertise. By combining personalization with credibility signals, the platform ensures that the communities it builds are also equipped to sustain and support their members. In this way, the system is not only about finding like-minded people but also about enabling mentorship, shared growth, and collective encouragement.

Concept Map

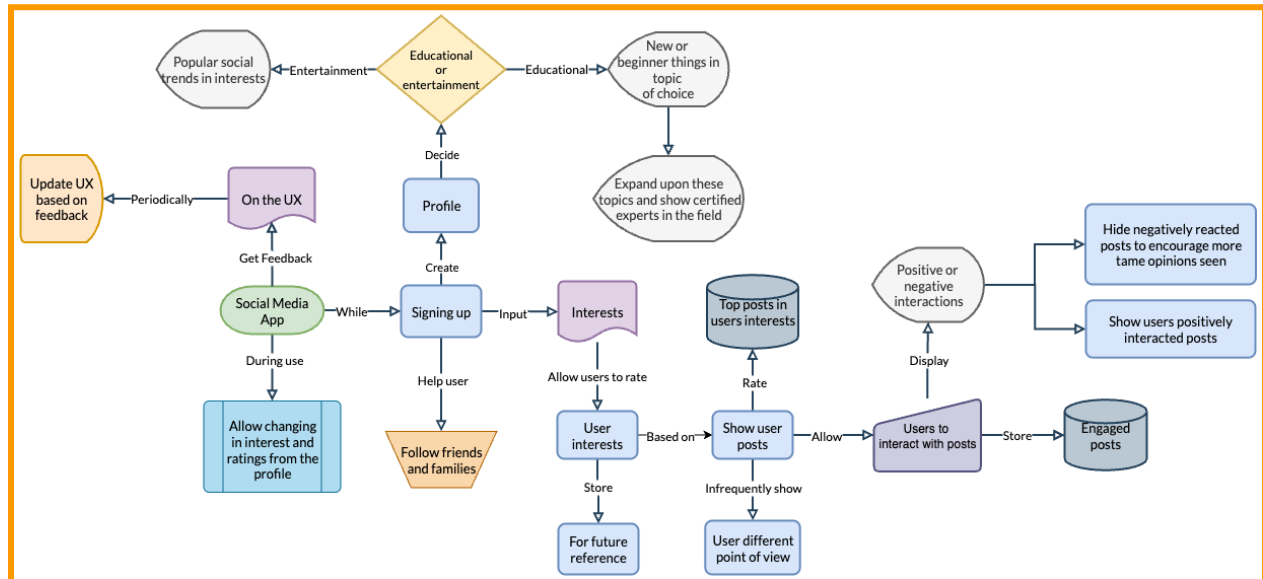Before drawing the concept map, we would like to introduce our features and the flow chart.

Feature List of Spotlight Social Media Platform
1. User Onboarding & Profile Management
    a. Sign-up process with profile creation.
    b. Users specify interests (topics they want to see).
    c. Users specify content preferences (topics they don't want to see).
    d. Ability to change interests and ratings anytime from profile settings.
2. Content Feed & Algorithm
    a. Posts shown based on stored user interests.
    b. Algorithm highlights top posts in user's chosen interests.
    c. Occasional display of different points of view to broaden perspectives.
    d. Posts can be expanded with new/beginner topics in chosen fields.
    e. Posts can also surface certified experts in the field for trusted learning.
3. User Interaction & Feedback
    a. Users can like, dislike, comment, or share posts.
    b. System captures positive and negative interactions.
    c. Algorithm adapts dynamically:
    d. Increases positively interacted posts.
    e. Hides or reduces negatively reacted posts (to encourage balanced engagement).
    f. All interactions are stored for future personalization.
4. Community Features
    a. Follow friends and family to stay connected.
    b. Discover and connect with like-minded users based on shared interests.
    c. Engage in discussions with others on posts.
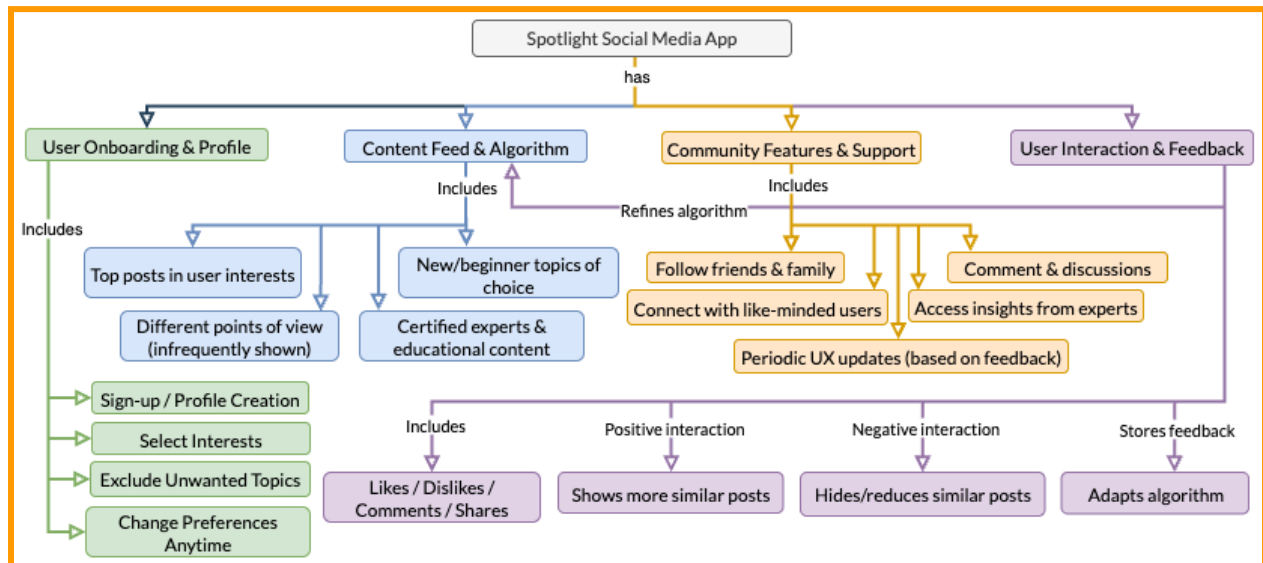   d. Build supportive communities around specific topics.

5. Adaptive & Evolving User Experience
    a. Feedback loop: Algorithm continuously adapts as user preferences evolve.
    b. Periodic UX updates based on aggregate user feedback.
    c. Platform ensures feeds remain relevant, safe, and user-focused over time.

Our flow chart:

Concept Map:

Concept Map Explanation

The concept map illustrates the core structure and features of the Spotlight Social Media App. At the center is the Spotlight, which links user onboarding, content feed, community features, and continuous feedback. Each branch expands into specific features such as interest selection,

certified expert content, and periodic UX updates. Arrows represent the relationships, with user interactions directly refining the algorithm to ensure personalized and evolving recommendations. This structure will guide the next phase of our prototype design by clearly defining both functional components and their interconnections.