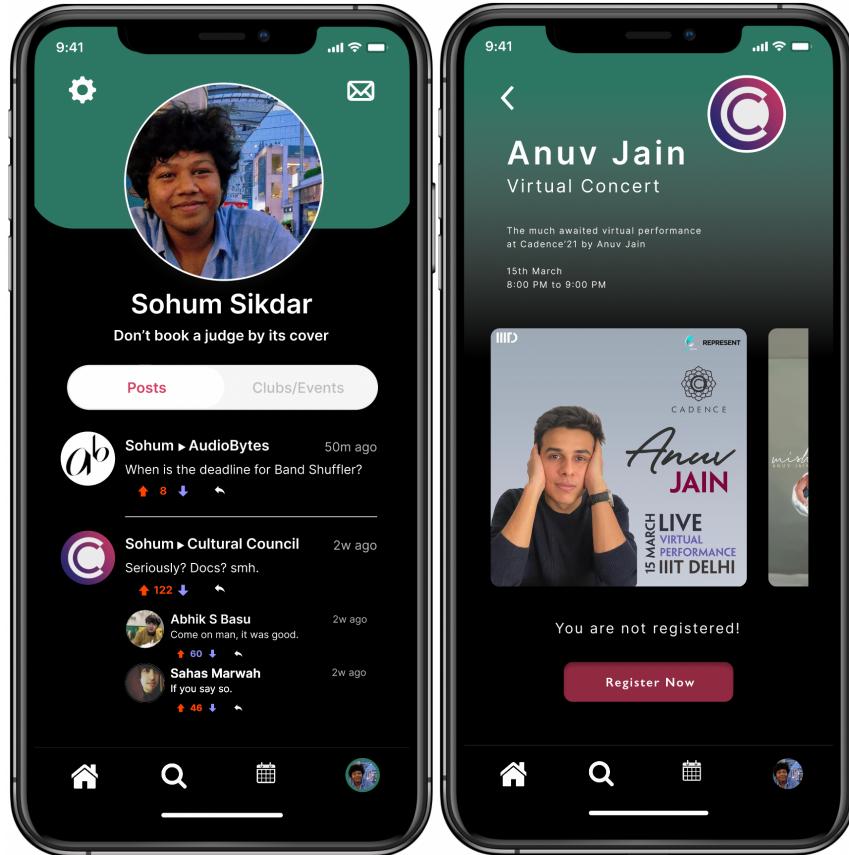


Connext IIITD



Abstract

After receiving multiple emails of events happening in college and not having any platform that organises everything we decided to make a platform of our own to help all the students in college regarding the same. Initially, we had thought of creating a simple event booking application like BookMyShow but later changed it to have more social elements to it which will be described in detail later. One of the biggest challenges that we faced while we were making this is trying to give an immersive experience. We wanted the user to feel the registration part of our application is integrated within the social media aspects and to ensure this we had to go through multiple iterations of the same and finally we were content with our final design.

Introduction

Just after a few months of being in college, even with the current semester being an online one, the number of emails we received for various events happening in college became quite overwhelming and we only knew that it would get worse once college opens physically. From the get-go, we knew that we wanted to solve this problem. We wanted to organise and put everything related to campus events and various club activities in one place, be it getting to know about an event to registering for the event, everything in one place.

The problem with emails being the only source of communication for clubs and event organisers with students is that it clutters your inbox, making it hard to differentiate between your course-related emails and extracurricular-related emails. This makes discovering new events very difficult as going through so many emails is a very tedious process.

		Bhavey Wadhwa	Daily Digest: Electroholics DSC-IIITD - Hi everyone, He...	Mar 13
		Deepali Gupta 2	A gentle reminder for today's Alumni Talk by Anwesh S...	Mar 13
		Shubham IIITD (Clas...	Graded: "MID_SEM" - Hi Sohum, Shubham IIITD just ret...	Mar 13
		Ishita Bajaj (Class...	New material: "Tutorial 9 Solutions" - Hi Sohum, Ishita ...	Mar 12
		Ishita Bajaj (Class...	New material: "Lab 7 Solutions" - Hi Sohum, Ishita Baja...	Mar 12
		Ishita Bajaj (Class...	New material: "Lab 6 Solutions" - Hi Sohum, Ishita Baja...	Mar 12
		Bhavey Wadhwa	Daily Digest: 'Introduction to Linux and Git' by DSC IIIT ...	Mar 12
		Audiobites IIITD 5	Welcome to Audiobites! - Looks like some of you have... 	Mar 12
		ACM IIIT-Delhi	ACM IIITD Codealogue - Hey Everyone! Thanks for sho...	Mar 12
		S. S. Jamuar (Class...	New announcement: "LECTURE 21 12.03.2021" - Hi So...	Mar 12
		Ishita Bajaj	Suspicious activities found during Quizzes and Midse...	Mar 12
		Bhavey Wadhwa 2	Daily Digest: ACM IIITD Codealogue - Hi everybody, Ple...	Mar 12
		Samaresh Chatterji .	New material: "MTH100_20210312_L27_VIDEO" - Hi So...	Mar 12
		Pruthivi Raj Behera.	New material: "Tutorial 9" - Hi Sohum, Pruthivi Raj Be...	Mar 12
		Samaresh Chatterji .	New material: "MTH100_20210312_L27_FRI" - Hi Sohu...	Mar 12
		Sports Coordinator	IIITD11 India vs England T20 Cricket Contest - Greetin...	Mar 12
		Chhavi Keswani (Cla...	New announcement: "Hi everyone, PFA the list of grou...	Mar 12

One look at this screenshot proves that it is a problem. Also, we can see that you receive emails for all events even if you are not interested in them. Let's say you don't like to dance, why would you want updates from the dance society? Thus giving the user the ability to filter the content to their own liking becomes a necessity. And finally, we wanted to give the user a seamless experience between going through the feed of multiple events to registering for them cause let's be honest, no one likes to fill multiple forms.

After a long week of grinding deadline after deadline, all of us at college look for something fun happening to unwind and thus we think the whole student body and even the professors if they wish to join would be the target user base.

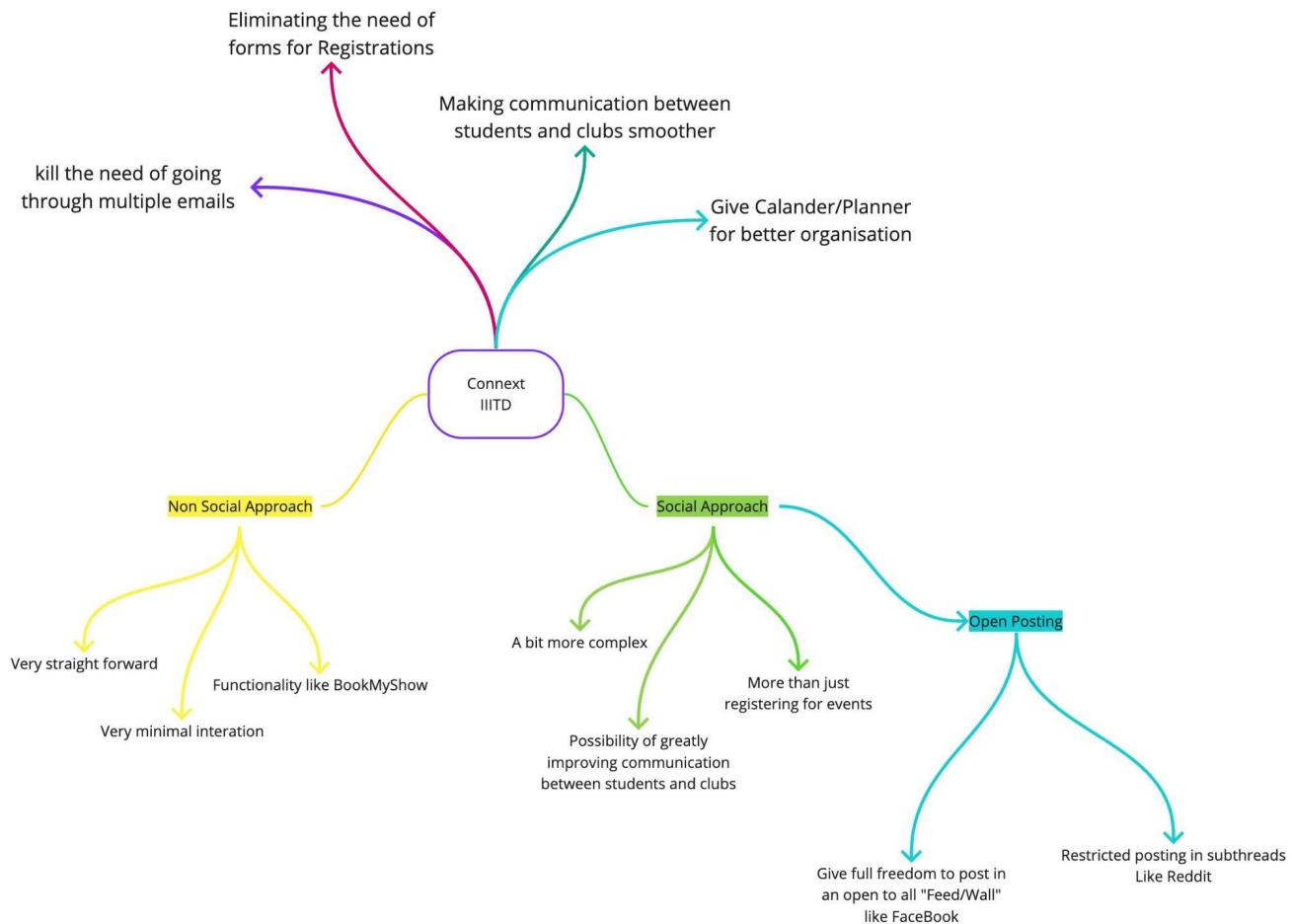
Yes, apart from emails there are other alternatives to the above-mentioned problems like social networking sites like Instagram but there are a lot of the same as well as a new set of different problems. Firstly the cluttering of inbox here becomes cluttering of your feed and secondly, not everyone is and wants to be on platforms like Instagram. This makes Connex ideal for them as they get an exclusive platform for their college events and they need not rely on other applications for the same.

The final iteration of Connex lets different clubs make their own pages and post about events that they are organising, the user can simply click on such a post to go to the registration page of the same event. Further, The user can post on the pages of different Clubs, somewhat like Reddit and how it works with the whole subreddit system and if the user ever thinks that they want to say something to the organiser privately they can always direct message whatever they'd like to say directly to the club's page which will be handled by the coordinators of the club.

Methodology

As clearly mentioned in the introduction, the problem to solve at hand was to give students and clubs a better alternative to email for communication and also a better platform to register for events. The target user base then would obviously be all the students. The stakeholders would be the different clubs as they would gain traction because of this platform.

Initial Ideation



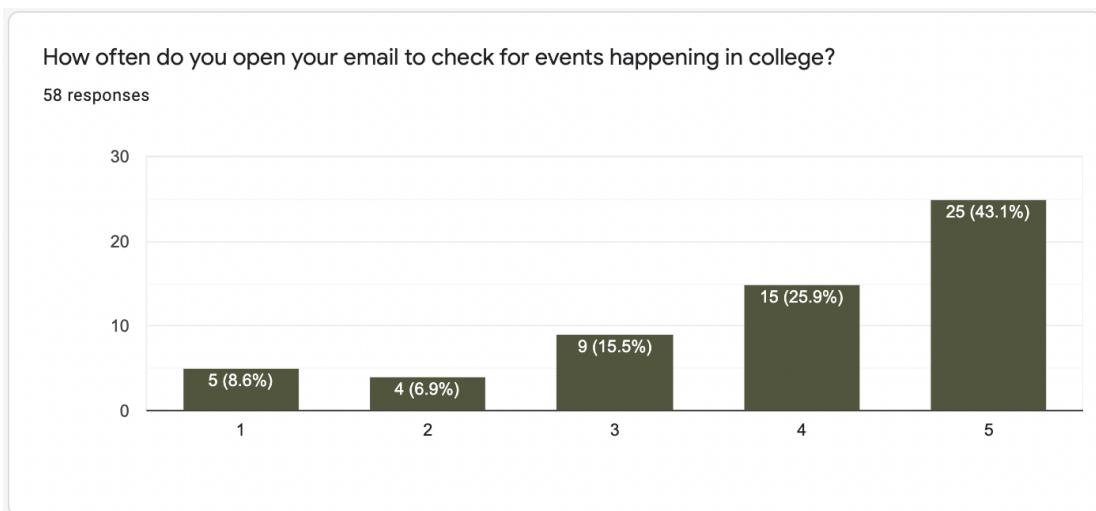
As soon as we realised the problem at hand, we knew what we had to do. We knew that we needed to design a very good event management app that eliminated the need for emails, that ensured better communication and we needed to give a seamless experience between discovering

a new event to registering for it, however, the main problem was deciding what approach we wanted to go with. Do we want a unidirectional app that shows you the upcoming events and lets you register or do we want to create something a bit more complex, something that has social elements to it and if that, how restrictive or open do we keep it because too much openness would make this app less of an event management app and more of a social networking platform and making it too restrictive would be frustrating for the user.

Gathering feedback

From the initial feedback, all we wanted is to check the relevance of our idea. Is the problem that we think is a problem or are we just tunnel-visioned. We also wanted to check which approach to take. Would they like social elements in it or would they prefer a platform like BookMyShow that is solely built to register for various events?

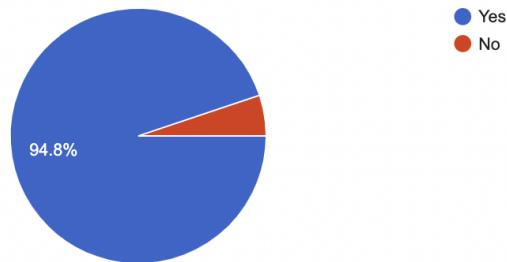
We rolled out an initial questionnaire to ask these questions to the students in college and the results were quite positive. Another important thing to note would be that this form was rolled out during Cadence which was probably the week with the maximum number of college activities of the year.



Highlighting that clubs are relying too heavily on emails

Would you care for a platform that lets you catch up with all that in one place while making it easier to communicate with organisers/club coordinators and registering for events?

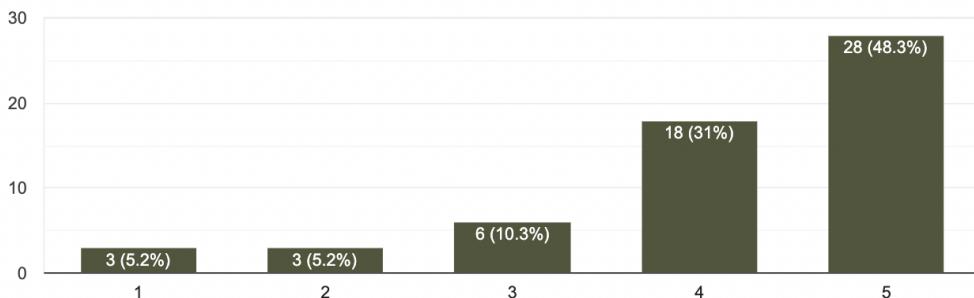
58 responses



Highlighting the need for a better alternative

Would you care for a social element to this platform that lets you make open posts on different clubs' pages? (Sort of how reddit works with its subreddit system)

58 responses

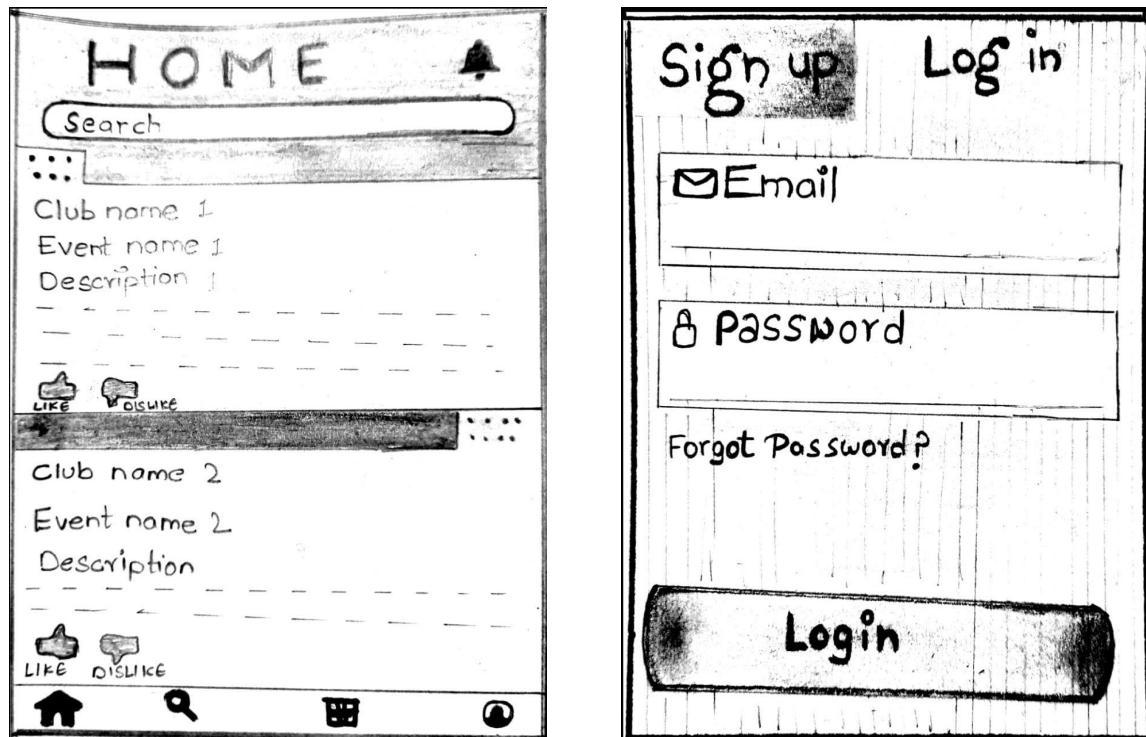


Asking for students' opinions if they would like social elements

After we gathered our initial 50 responses, we were quite pleased to know that our idea has relevance and is not something we made up just for the sake of it and it was also made very clear to us that the end-users would prefer an application with social elements.

After brainstorming for a while we also figured out how much we wanted to restrict our user while making posts. Going ahead with Reddit's formula of the subreddit system seemed like the best approach to us. Every club has its page which is handled by club moderators. This is where the clubs would be adding about their own even. Open posts by users are allowed but we restrict them by only allowing them to post on the pages of clubs hence keeping the app still more about event management and not a social networking xc.

Developing the LoFi Prototype



For our LoFi prototype, we wanted to make the first design of the profile page for any User or Club and also wanted to make a page for registering for an event as these two pages are arguably the most important. One thing that was clear to us from the get-go is that even though we wanted a seamless experience between club pages and the event pages we wanted to make the events'

pages have a different feel and not just look like a profile page button with a register button at the bottom, this carried over to the HiFi Prototype as well. Things like the Post/Event toggle also



carried over to our final prototype. It is used to either toggle between posts a user makes and their registered events or between the posts a club is making and its members. The Navigation bar also remained as it is in the final prototype with it having a home button that takes you to the home screen which is supposed to have all posts being made by and to different clubs, the search button which lets you search through the entire app for different profiles and clubs, the calendar button that opens a planner of all the events you are registered in and finally the rightmost button which takes you back to your profile. All of these except the calendar button were too trivial to not add, however, giving easy access to a calendar/planner seemed like a good idea for an event management application.

Iterating on the LoFi

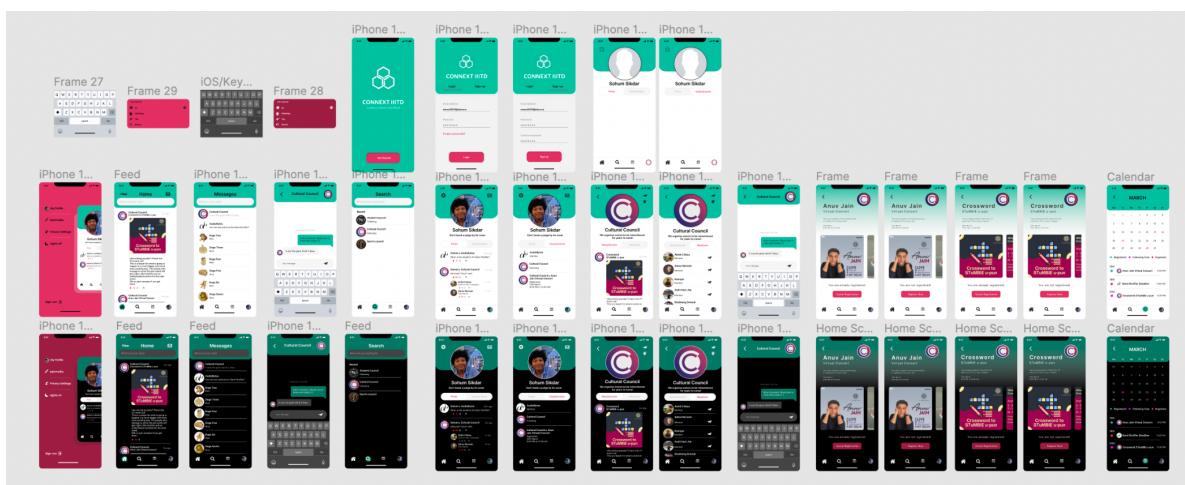
The home page in our LoFi Prototype had all posts made by all users to everyone to all pages filtered by the time of posting, the first change we wanted to make is to give the users the ability to filter the home screen content by their liking. Filter by All, which gives the rising post made by people on all clubs' pages, Following, giving the posts made on the page of all the clubs you are following filtered by time and the recent, which only filters by time.

Further, we realised that having a direct message option is very important to give users the option to ask questions from club coordinators in privacy. In the next iterations, we made message buttons on the home and profile page screen that takes you to your inbox and the message icon on club pages takes you directly to their direct message.

Developing the HiFi Prototype

The first thing we had to decide was the platform on which we were to create the prototype and for that, we chose Figma because it is firstly free to use and secondly very beginner-friendly.

After iterating through the LoFi prototype multiple times designing the HiFi became quite easy actually, all we had to do was to make sure we used the appropriate design principles while designing the HiFi while following the core structure of the LoFi.



This includes various things from using appropriate and familiar buttons so that the user is already familiar with the UI the first time they log in, to making sure text is visible. From making sure the animations fit with the transitions to making sure the buttons are easily identifiable by the user and not just a flat shape with text on it.

The HiFi Prototype

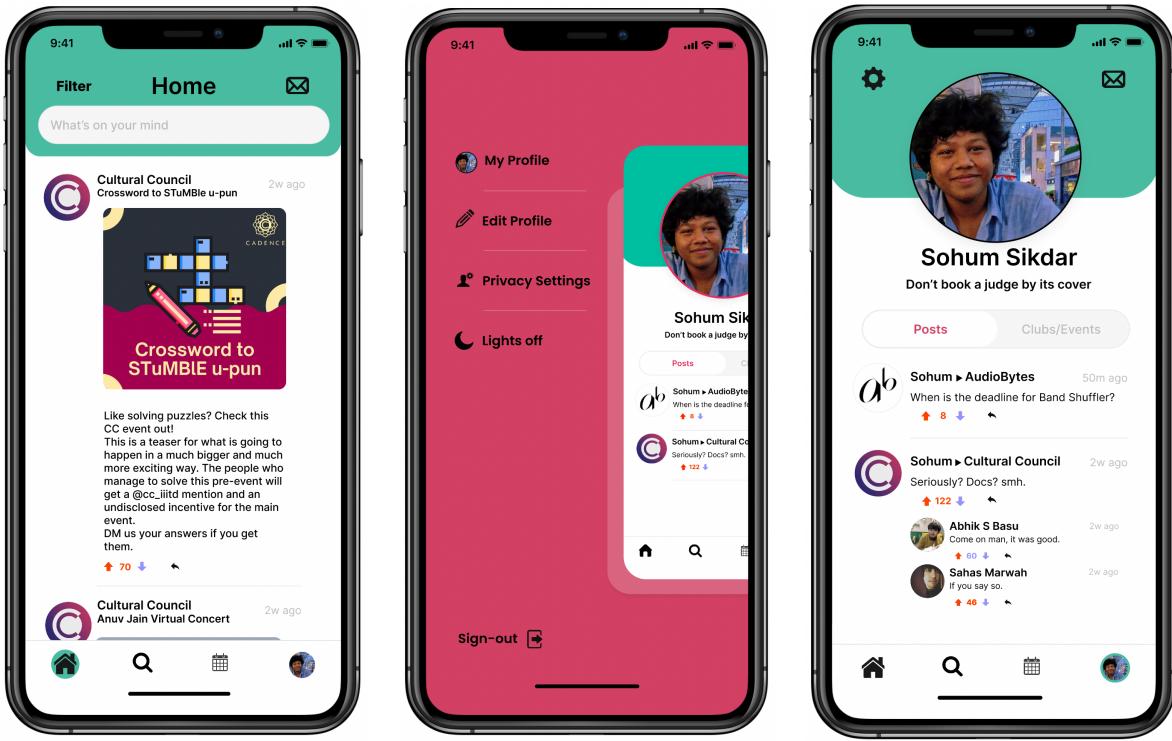
The first few iterations of the HiFi prototype were to create the core structure of the different pages, choosing the colour schemes, roughly identifying the position of different containers and mind mapping the wireframing which we might use for the app.

Then for the next few iterations, we were focused on making sure the icons, buttons and containers fit perfectly, and also on figuring out the different interactions we would offer in the App like overlays and contextual menus showing up, vertical and horizontal for different pages and also the transitions between different pages.

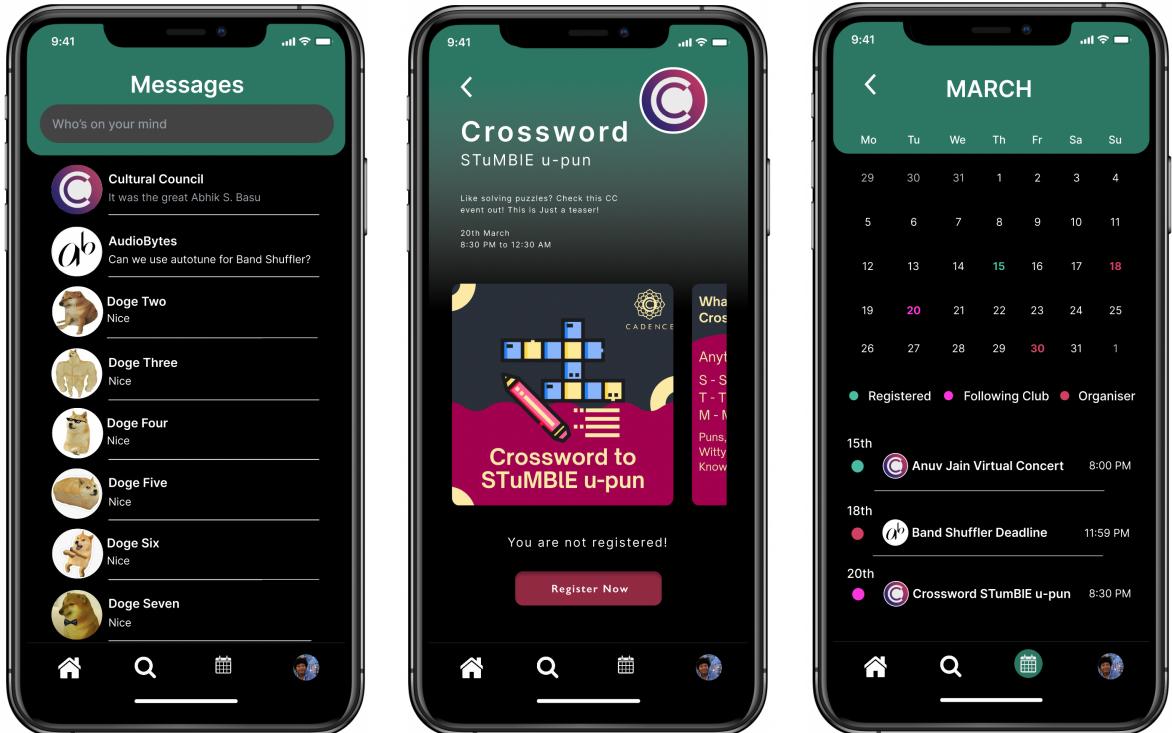
Final iterations before taking feedback were mostly about making sure the UI looks aesthetically pleasing which included a lot of colour correction and minute details like the highlight we added on the navigation bar icons when you're on its respective page.

In the end, we almost forgot to add the most important feature that any app could have but remembered at the last moment before releasing the prototype for feedback. We finally added a dark mode cause let's be honest, as computer science students we cannot look at a light interface for more than 10 seconds anymore.

The core of the prototype is the feed, the profile page of the user or club and the screen to register for an event. Further screens of search, calendar, internal applications settings have also been added.



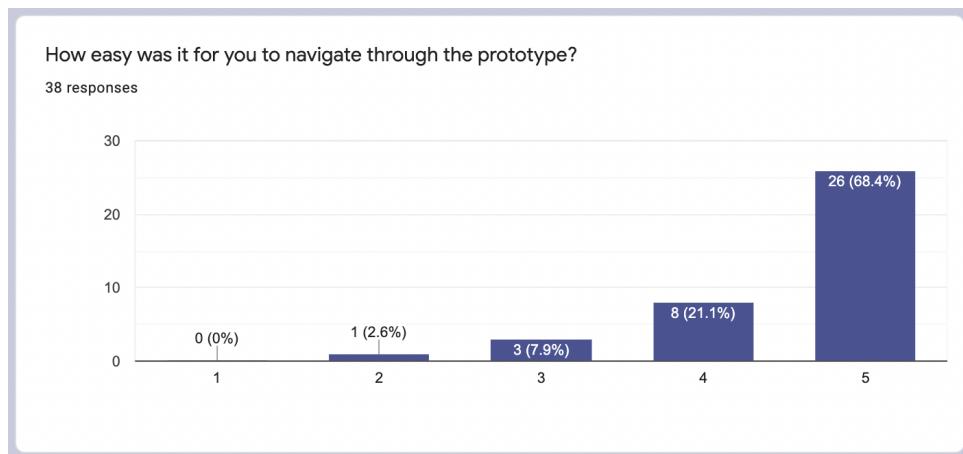
And now. Lights off.



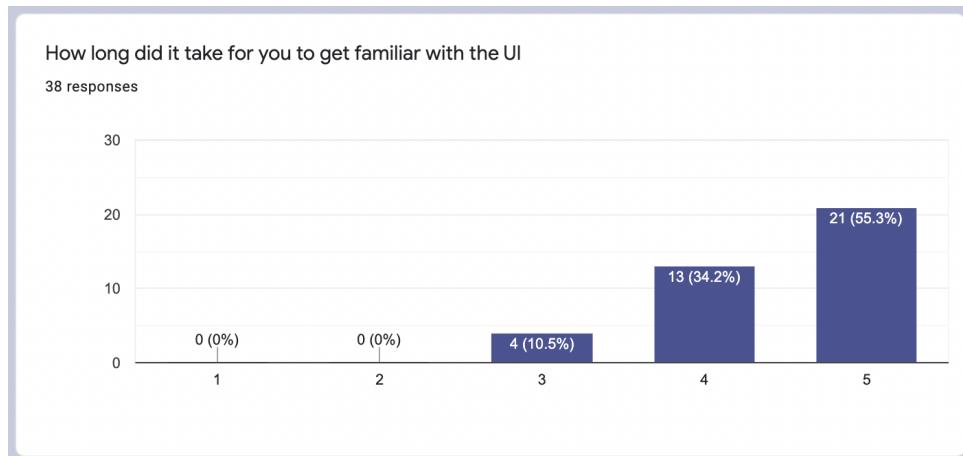
HiFi Prototype Feedback

From this set of Feedback questions, our main objective was to gain some insight into the user's perspective about our design, functionality, ease of use and getting to know of the bugs which we might have missed.

From the first 35 responses that we had gotten, the response was quite positive. The consensus of the feedback was that the users were easily able to navigate through the UI, found the design aesthetically pleasing, and could see our prototype turn into a legitimate and functional application



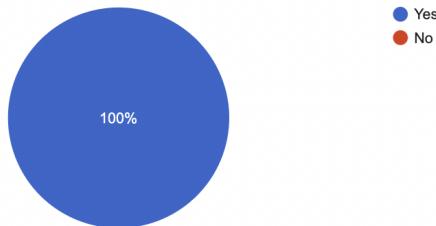
5 being the Easiest and 1 being the hardest



5 being instantly and 1 being still not familiar with the UI even after fiddling with it for a while

Was the UI Aesthetically pleasing and can you see this prototype turn into a functional application?

38 responses



Highlighting that the UI was aesthetically pleasing & users could see it turn into a real functional application

Amidst all the positive feedback, came a glaring issue that we overlooked. The wireframing had multiple bugs which took us to pages we did not intend to go to and also another issue was that only the text portions of buttons were clickable and not the entire button

The click boxes were kinda small. Like instead of being able to click the whole box I had to click the small text in between. The click boxes for back button etc etc could have been bigger

1 response

Options/Buttons are not working properly

1 response

On clicking the settings option (gear icon), I landed up on the search section:-\

1 response

Evaluation and Final Iterations

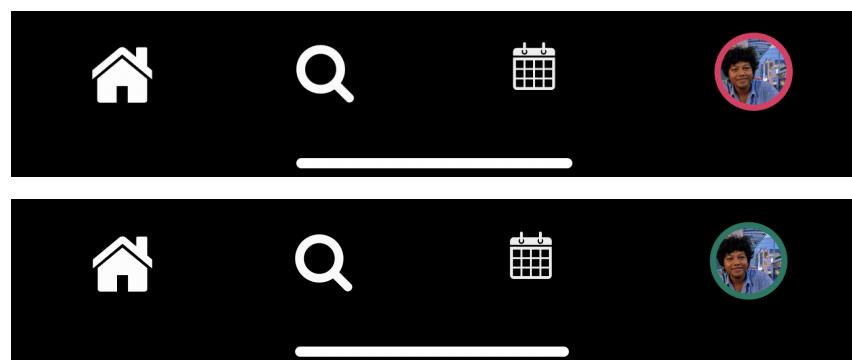
After reviewing the responses from the previous feedback form, our first job was to fix wireframing and button issue, after that we had realised that we did not have a “Follow” button for clubs, so we even had to add that bringing us to the current state of the prototype which hopefully does not have major bugs. After which we sent the final prototypes to a select few users to gather their opinion.

For the evaluation process, we cannot be more thankful to Abhik S. Basu and Aadit Kant Jha who are both students at IIIT Delhi and were with us at every step of the way.

The evaluation criteria were

- Appropriate use of Icons
- Aesthetics and Colour Scheme
- Functional Wireframing
- Visibility, readability and Clarity

Both of them thought that the Icons we had used did fit the design and even the Wireframing was fine after we had fixed the issues we were having with Buttons and the dysfunctional wireframing. However, regarding Aesthetics and Colour scheme we got very valuable feedback that changing the highlight colour of the navigation bar from a shade of red to a shade of green would look much better.



After testing out the suggestion we decided to go ahead with it as it made the highlight look like it belongs there rather than just sticking out like a sore thumb. Another critical thing pointed out to us by Abhik was the home feed felt too congested and that messed with the clarity, we fixed this immediately by increasing the space between the containers and then adding fine separating lines between the containers and this greatly improved the overall visibility of the Home Feed. We continued the process till the time we as well as both of them were happy with the final iteration and this brings us to the current prototype that we have.

Analysis and Future Work

After going through about 1-2 phases of Ideation, 1-2 phases of LoFi, and 7-8 phases of HiFi we realised that good design takes a lot of time to implement, it's not something that can be implemented in one go, it takes multiple iterations, making minute changes every time and for that constant feedback is a necessity. A developer giving a solution to a problem that is not even considered as a problem by the users is then not a solution, it is just a redundant piece of software. In our case, the first and probably the most valuable feedback was us getting to know that the problem we are proposing a solution to is actually a problem that a lot of people have faced and without this validation there would have been no point in going further. Another reason why constant feedback is necessary is that as developers we tend to ignore the flaws of our design and no matter how hard we look at it we'll never be able to figure out flaws with our own design because of emotional attachment to our work, however, the end-user will always be objective. From all the feedback we also realised that even though people like aesthetics, they almost always prefer a simplistic design with minimum clutter, we ourselves had to go through almost 3-4 iterations to fix the clutter.

Apart from design the users also want good functionality out of your app. A beautifully designed piece of software will never compensate for the lack of functionality and sometimes there can also be too much functionality and you need to restrict the openness of your platform for a better experience of your platform. We could have very easily given the users the ability to make open

posts but that would change the whole point of the application and thus restricting the user and in quantitative terms reduce the functionality here was a better design choice.

The drawbacks of our proposed solution are the same as any other computer/mobile based solution to any other problem. It is that it requires a certain amount of privilege to have access to smartphones and a good internet connection, however, this becomes less and less of an issue as time passes as the prices of phones have only gone down and Mobile data in India is one of the cheapest it is out there in the entire world.

The Future of Connnext can be very huge. Campus events are not a thing that happen only in IIIT Delhi, every college in the world could probably use a better event management app. To scale this beyond IIIT Delhi and make this financially viable product by adopting the financial strategies of various social networking websites would be our first goal.

Conclusion

After a tiring week at college, all of us deserve something chill to unwind to and just have fun and what better way to do so than take part in events happening in your own college with your own friends. Connnext is the one-stop solution for managing their college life and participating in college events. Our application can notify users regarding the scheduled time of events and ensures no one misses any event they really wanted to attend.

It makes the registration process seamless and helps to interact with our teammates during an event thus enriching team skills. Users can easily give their feedback regarding the recent events and suggest which new event and artist they would like to have on the campus.

We would like to implement the service in college and will improve it based on the real-time feedback of our users. As time goes and when our service needs more capital to grow, we have proposed a revenue model in which the respective clubs would fund our service and we can also charge a very nominal commission from small artists whom we are giving a platform to showcase their talent.

It is indeed not incorrect to say that Connnext IIITD is Campus Events Simplified.

References and Acknowledgements

Firstly we would like to thank Rajiv Sir for giving us the opportunity to do a project that has actually made us learn something substantial and something that'll be useful in the real world than something abstract that we might never even use. We would also like to thank our TAs for the constant feedback that allowed us to constantly improve our project and finally we would like to thank everyone who took out the time to fill feedback forms, the people who gave surveys and gave detailed evaluations and the people who allowed us to use their names and photos to make this project the best that it could be.

We would also like to thank the owners of these links/resources which were very helpful to us while making the entire project

- <https://www.instagram.com/p/CL7HM1TD1gX/>
- https://www.instagram.com/cc_iitd/
- <https://www.instagram.com/audiobytesiitd/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3q3FV65ZrUs&t=779s>

Link to Prototype

<https://www.figma.com/proto/un8iRuftj3twJymVkmfiNb/Connext?node-id=8%3A2&viewport=395%2C359%2C0.3080085515975952&scaling=scale-down&page-id=0%3A1>