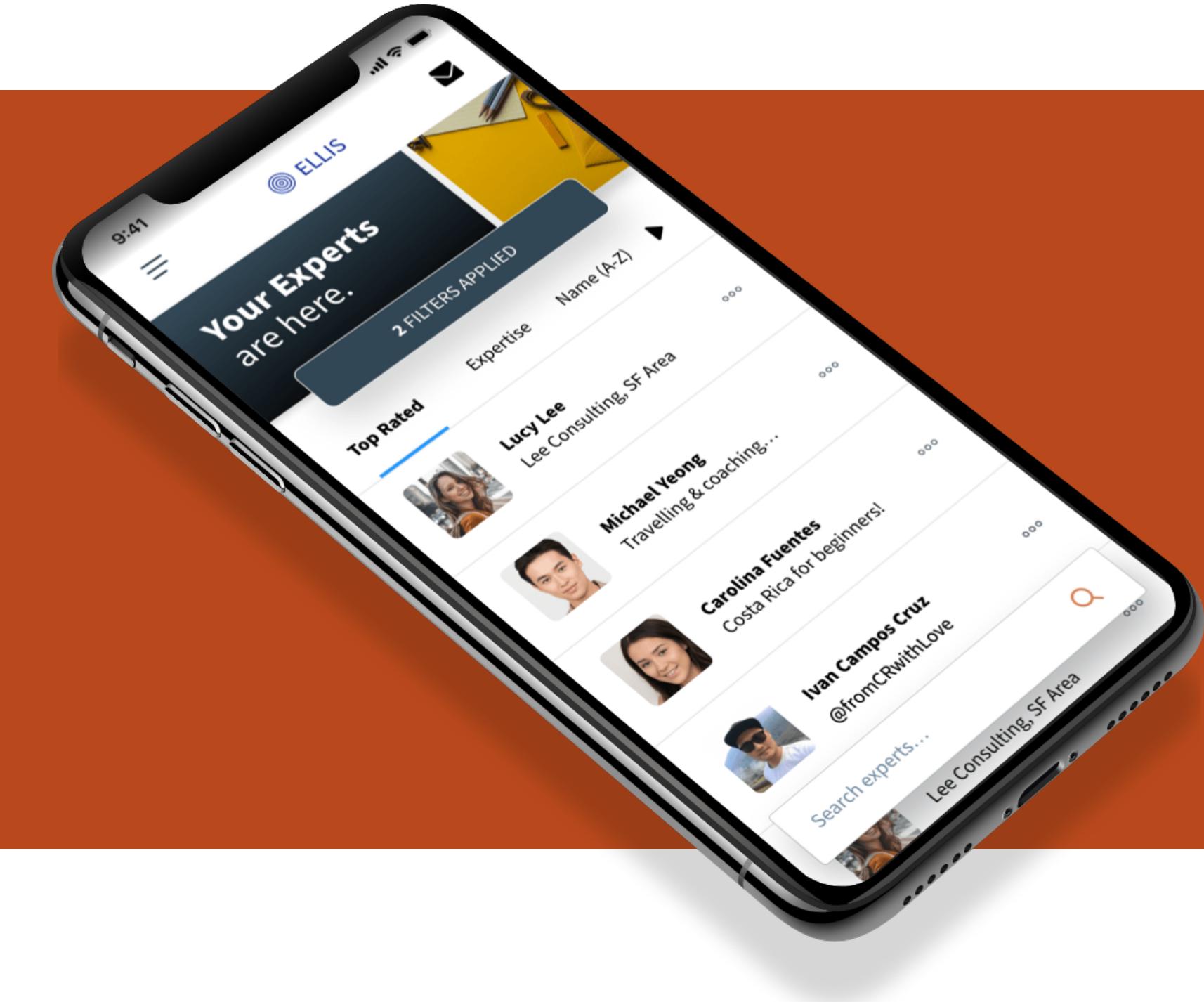




Unpack. Log in. Settle down.

Ellis lets you **connect instantly** to experts around the globe, catering **exclusively to expat needs** - from import duties to diploma recognition.





About the Project

Ellis took shape during my Career Foundry UX Design course as a student project.

One of the project suggestions for students was to create an "Expert App", which would enable users to connect instantly with experts in virtually any field.

This presented a good opportunity to put my idea about an expat-helping app into practice.

Role

UX Research, UX/UI Design

Timespan

March-September 2020

Tutor

Carlo van der Pluijm

Mentor

Sophie Lepinoy

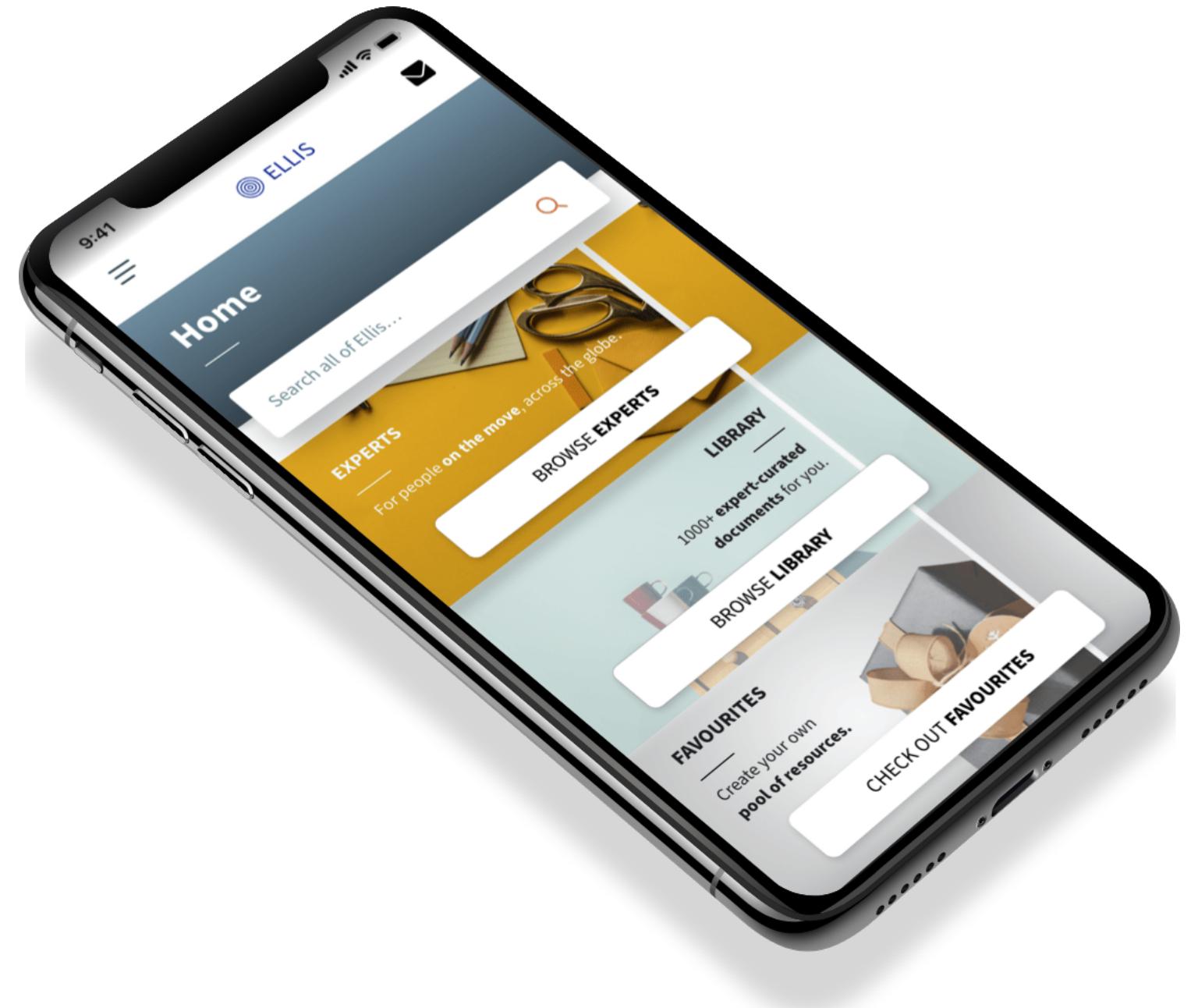
Tools

Balsamiq

Adobe XD

UsabilityHub

Google Forms





The Idea behind Ellis

271 million.

That is the number of people worldwide that moved to another country in 2019, according to UN data.

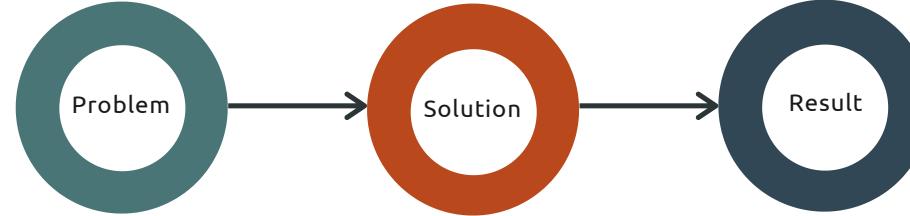
Their background, demographics, motives are all varied, but they all have one thing in common - they need timely and accurate information about the new home, coming from a credible source and presented in a logical and easily understandable way.

The 3 hypotheses above were the starting point of the **Discovery** phase, which included drafting problem statements, analysing the competition and testing the hypotheses through interviews and surveys.

DISCOVERY

Problem- Solution- Result Loops

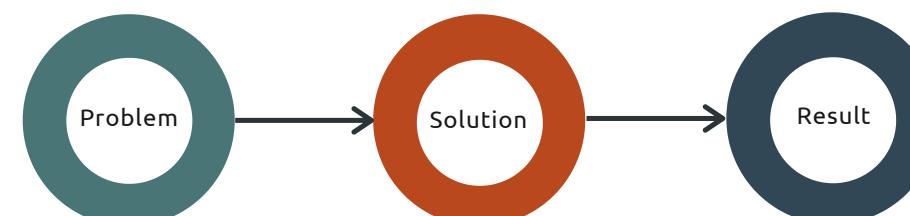
In order to get a better understanding of the problem I was trying to solve, I **designed a problem-solution-expected result loop** for the three main hypotheses.



The information people are looking for is scattered across many websites

Create a web app which connects users to experts covering all the topics related to migration and moving abroad.

Rise in the number of users.



Users have trouble understanding the information they find because of the way it is presented.

Information architecture that follows real-life steps of a person moving abroad.

Shorter time that the observed users spend clicking/tapping around the app.



People are unsure about the credibility of the sources of information.

Provide background info on experts, including track record of helping other users in comparable situations.

Rise of numbers of users contacting experts via video calls (in-app purchase)

DISCOVERY

Conducting Interviews & Surveys

The initial hypotheses were tested via **45'-long direct interviews with 4 users** and a **14-question online survey that collected answers from 18 respondents**.

RESEARCH GOALS



Define the background and interests of a potential user of our app



Test the hypotheses from my problem statement



Map the emotions, feelings and attitudes connected with changing the place and the country of residence

DISCOVERY

Collecting & Analysing Feedback

To get a better overview of the collected feedback and to prepare ground for a detailed analysis, an affinity map came in handy.



DISCOVERY

Retrospective: Discovery Phase

WHAT WENT WELL?

The participants were willing to open up and seemed to remember well their past experiences. The collected feedback mirrored to a large extent my hypotheses, and it was particularly encouraging to hear that participants are open to the idea of looking for - and paying for - expert help in the process of moving to another country.

Skills Interviewing

Processes Exploratory Research

Solution Use interviews and surveys to test any new hypothesis that might come up!

WHAT DIDN'T GO WELL?

Some of the interview questions were too broad and were close-ended (yes/no questions) - which didn't help in leading me to validate my ideas on some of the functionalities of the product.

Skills Drafting interview questions,
Interviewing

Processes Exploratory Research

Skills Gap Formulate questions to uncover interest for a product functionality

Solution Always ask open-ended questions in this phase and incite participants to think loudly about possible solutions to a problem.

WHAT CAN BE IMPROVED?

Although conceived as 30-35' interviews, they took 10-15' longer to complete.

Skills Time management

Processes Planning interviews

Solution Run a test interview with a volunteer colleague before conducting the first real interview, in order to assess how much time it takes to answer individual questions and the interview as a whole.

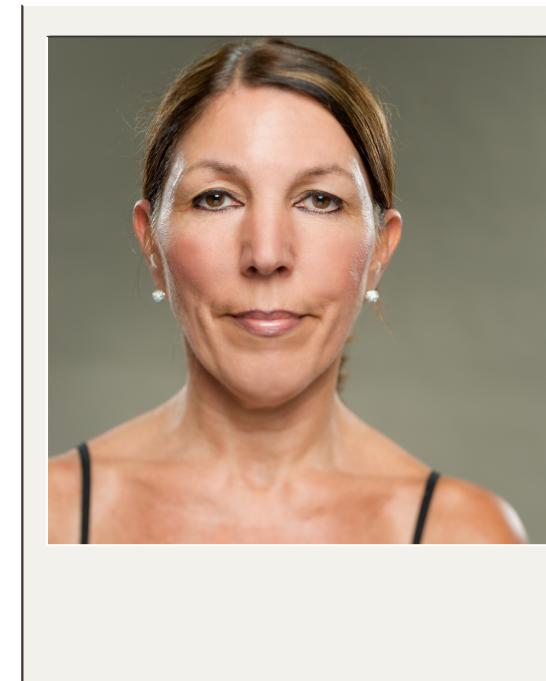
CONCEPTING



Concepting

After the interviews, feedback was thoroughly analysed and translated into the creation of **User Personas** and of their **User Flows** through the app - crucial for getting the first glimpse of the **pages that needed to be designed and their content.**

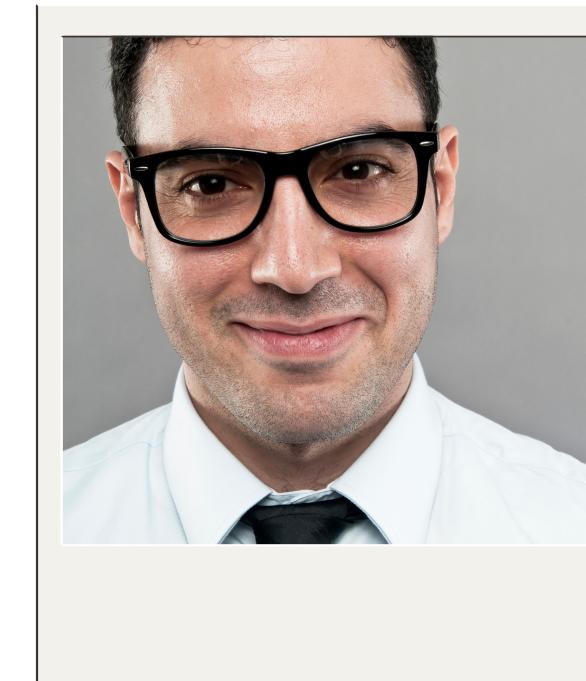
User Personas



Rebecca (40)

Product manager. Lives in Austria. Just accepted a job offer from Canada.

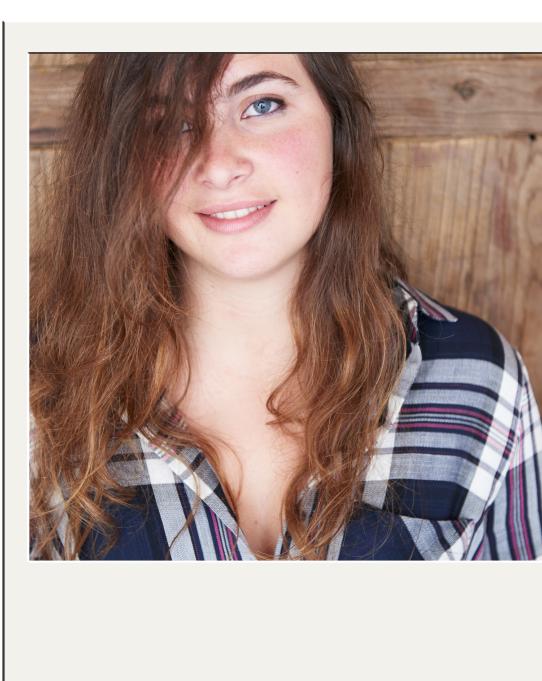
- ✓ Knows where
- ✓ Knows when
- ✓ Has a concrete plan
- ✗ Doesn't have all the info



Darko (34)

Medical Doctor. Lives in North Macedonia. Thinks about moving to Germany.

- ✓ Knows where
- ✗ Doesn't know when
- ✓ Has an initial plan
- ✗ Doesn't have all the info



Yvonne (27)

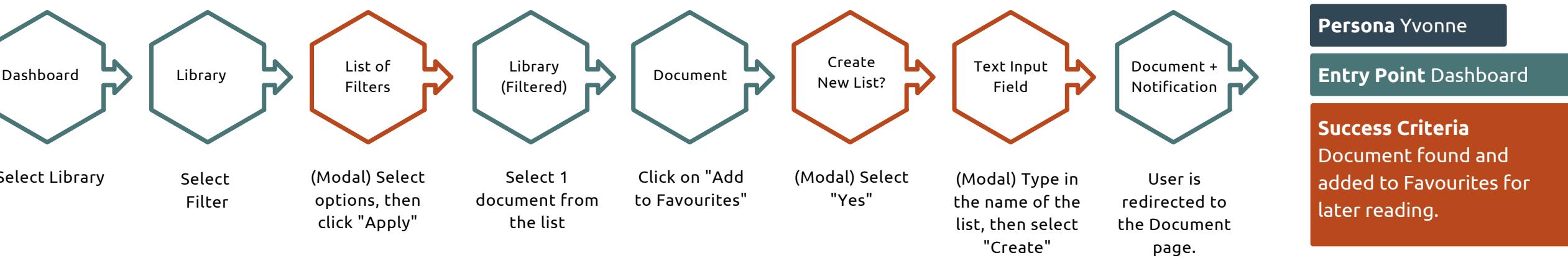
Paralegal. Married with 1 kid. Preparing to join her husband in South Korea.

- ✓ Knows where
- ✓ Knows when
- ✗ Doesn't have a concrete plan
- ✗ Doesn't have all the info

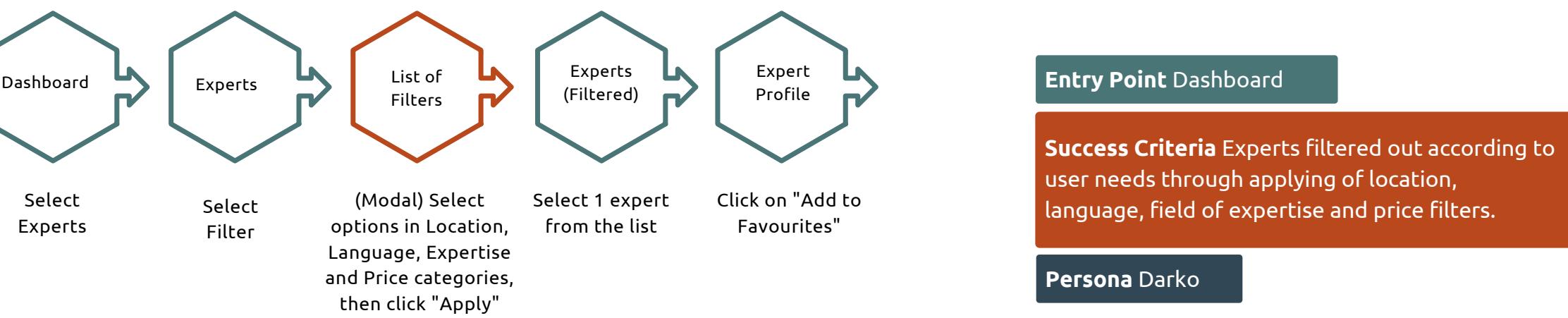
CONCEPTING

User Flows

01 ADD A DOCUMENT TO FAVOURITES



02 FILTER OUT EXPERTS



CONCEPTING

Retrospective: Concepting Phase

WHAT WENT WELL?

The process of translating feedback into the main traits of our user personas went smoothly, thanks to ample feedback we received from the interview participants on their past experiences, frustrations, goals and behaviours.

Skills Creating user personas

Processes Conception of potential user profiles

Solution Always use User Personas as a technique when the target group of users of a digital product needs to be narrowed down.

WHAT DIDN'T GO WELL?

When creating a User Persona the whole product team can associate and empathise with, it is important that it resembles an actual person - and not look like an imaginary one.

Skills Creating user personas

Processes Adding properties to a user persona

Skills Gap Making the persona look credible and realistic

Solution Use photos of people who do not look artificial on them; create credible background and demographic info (career, education, etc.) that people in the team can relate with.

WHAT CAN BE IMPROVED?

My proficiency with tools used to create user flows can be further improved, so that it takes less of my time.

Skills Drawing and sketching user flows

Skills gap Draw.io, Google Drawings, Lucidchart

Solution Practice! Extract user flows in existing apps or websites and draw them in one of the tools above.

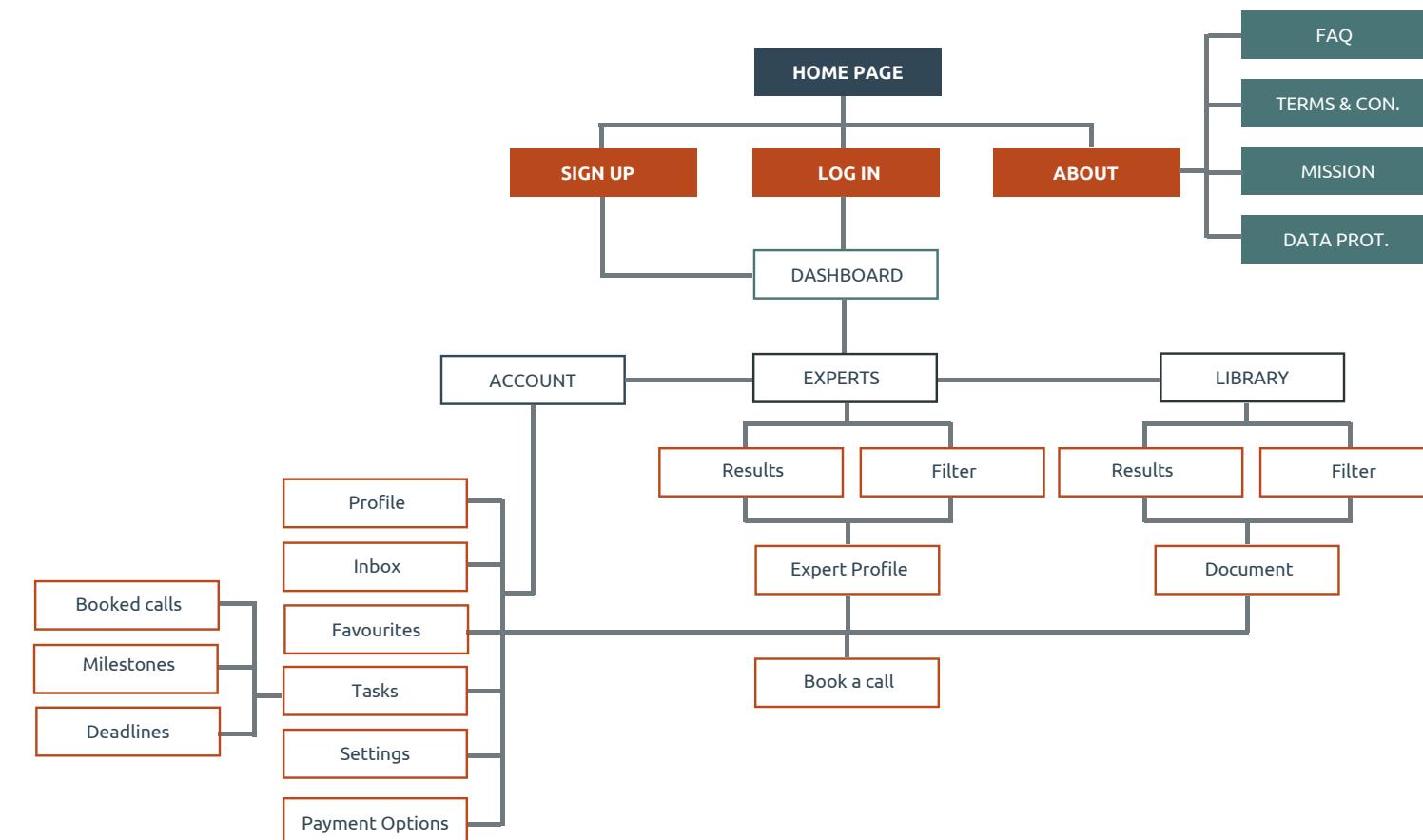


Information Architecture & Wireframing

The next project phase involved creating a sitemap - refined through a card-sorting exercise and low-, mid- and hi-fidelity wireframes, using pen&paper at first and then design tools (Balsamiq and Adobe XD) in the later stage.

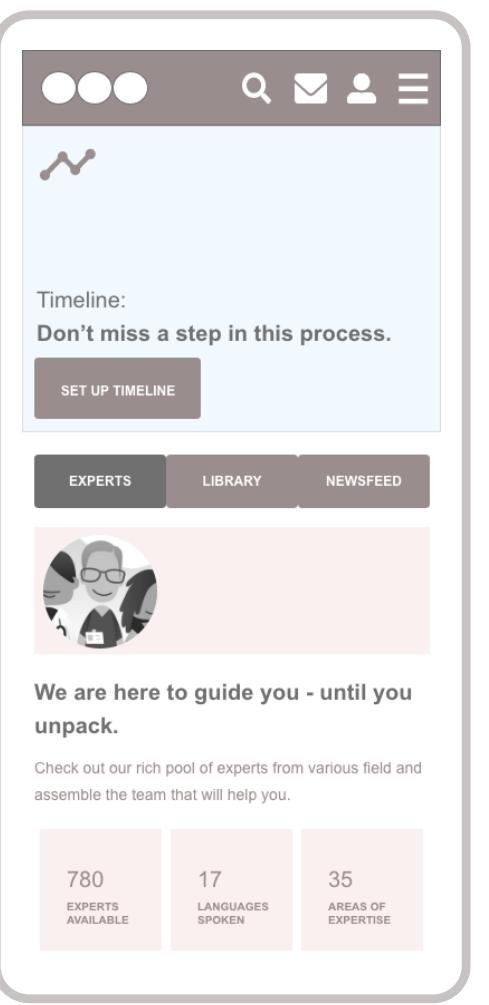
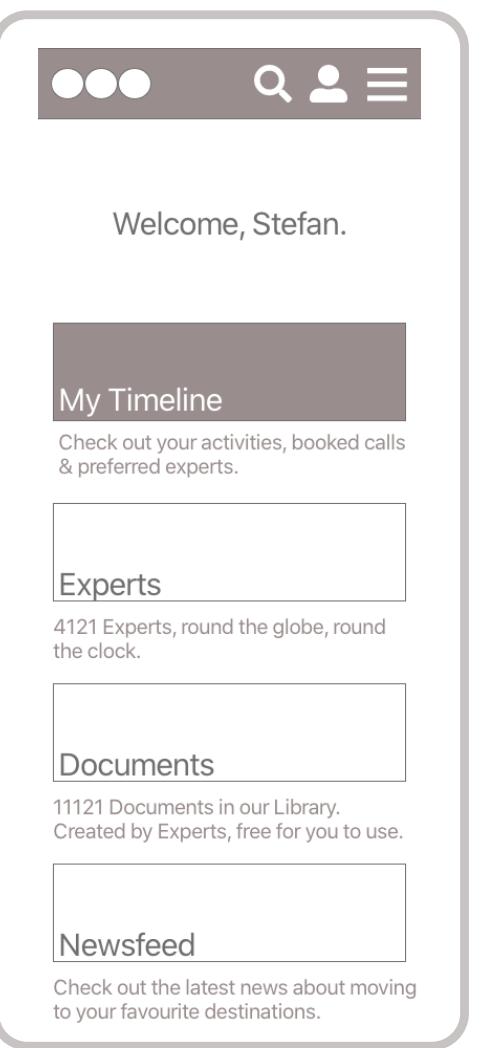
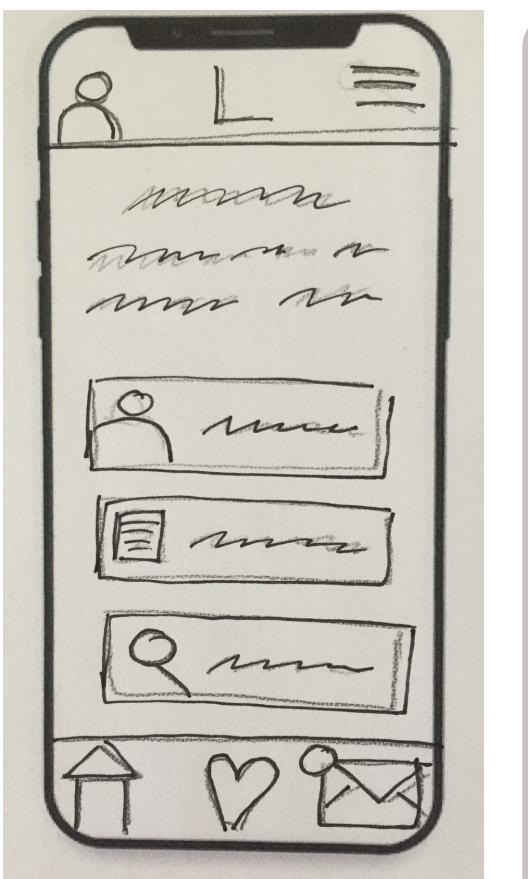
Refining the Sitemap

An open card sorting study was conducted in Optimal Workshop with 6 participants invited to sort out 19 cards, representing the initial concept of pages of the product. The feedback was used to update the sitemap.,

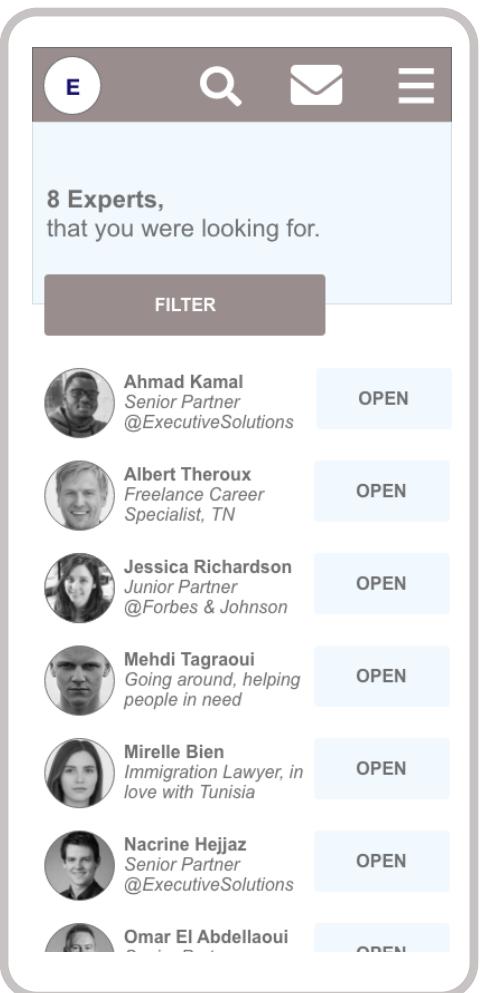
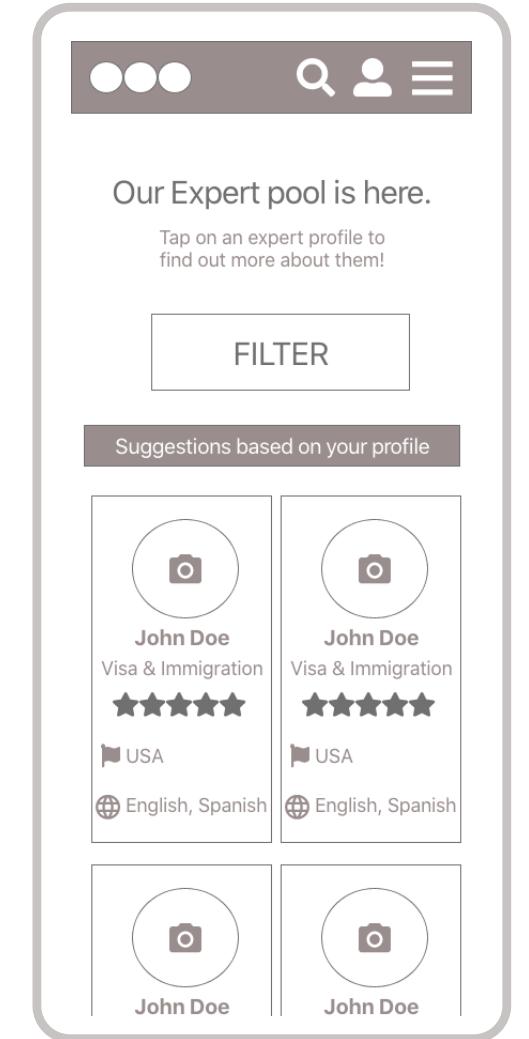
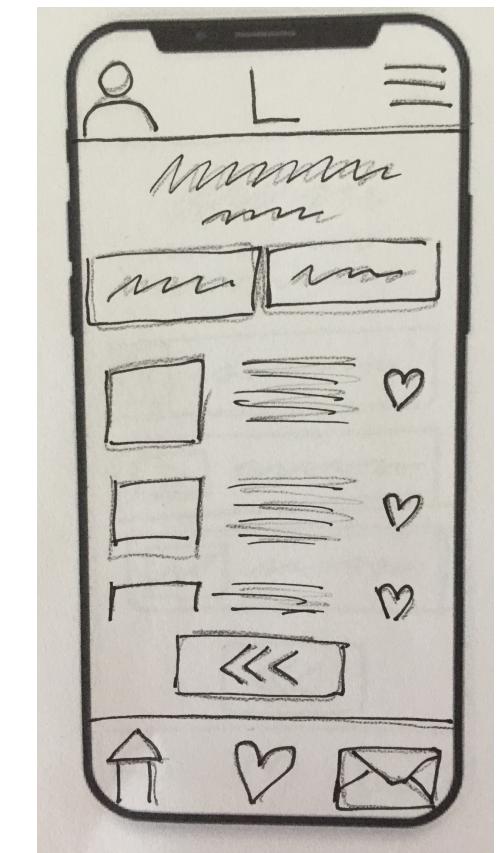


Design Evolution: Low-Fi > Mid-Fi

HOME PAGE / DASHBOARD

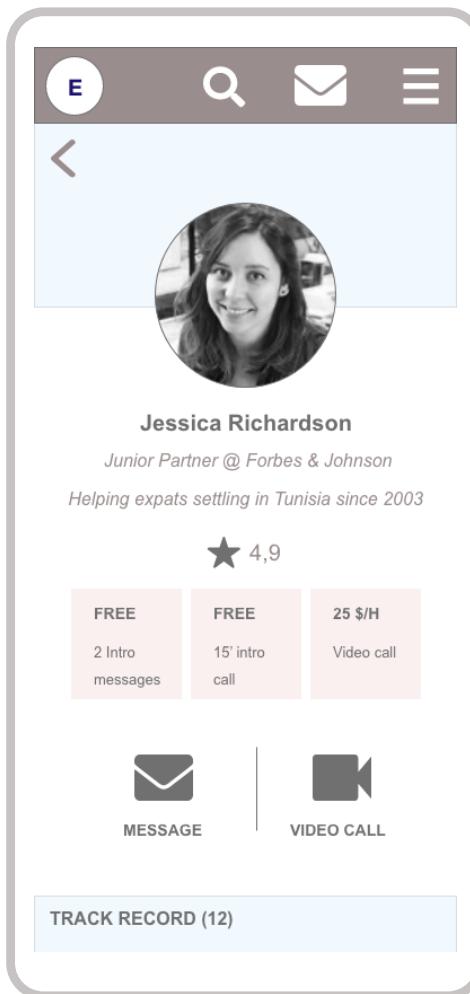
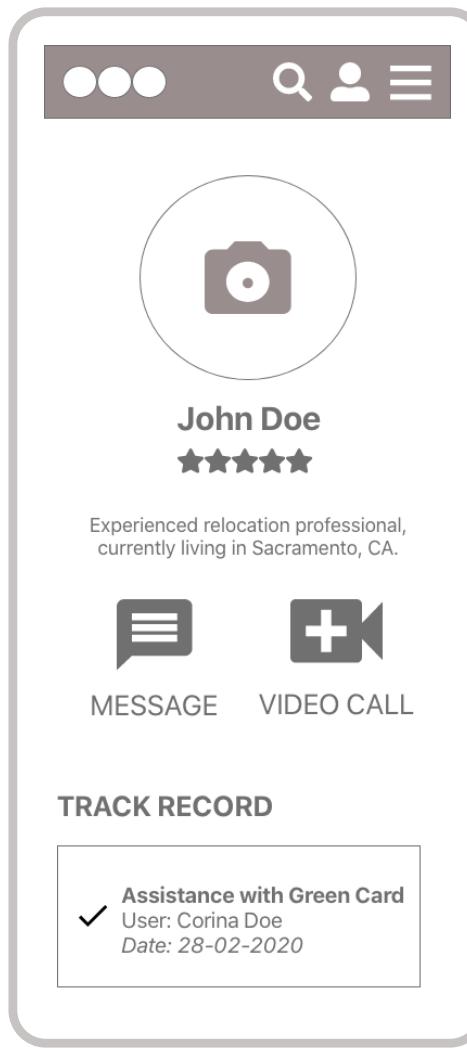
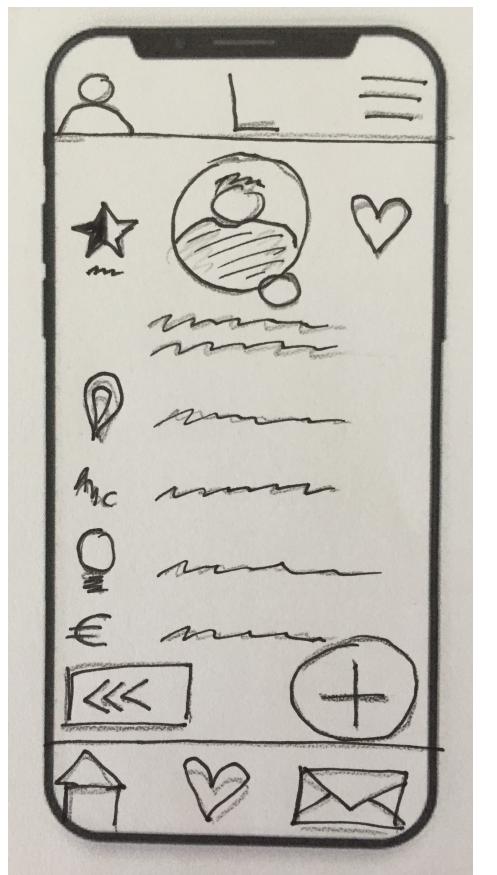


EXPERTS LIST PAGE



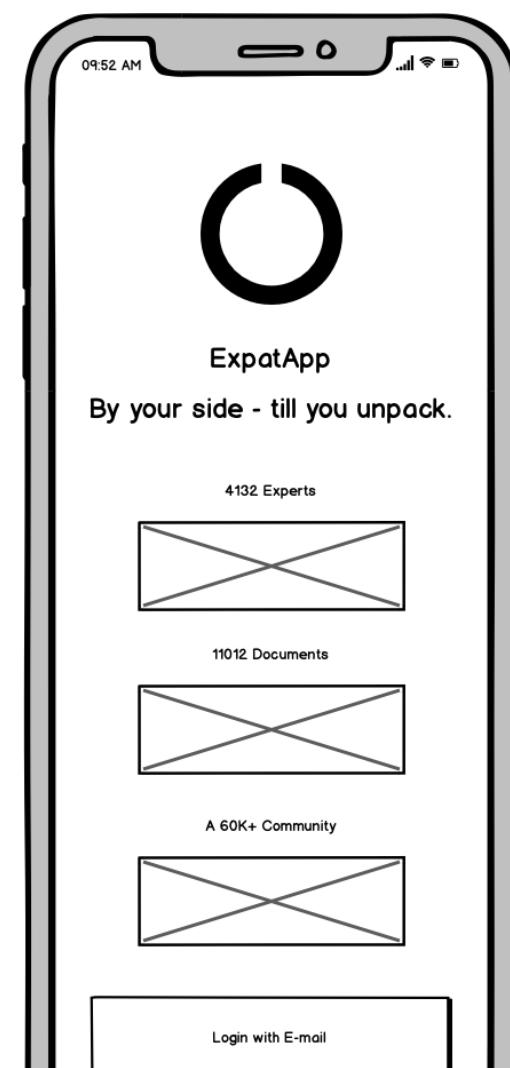
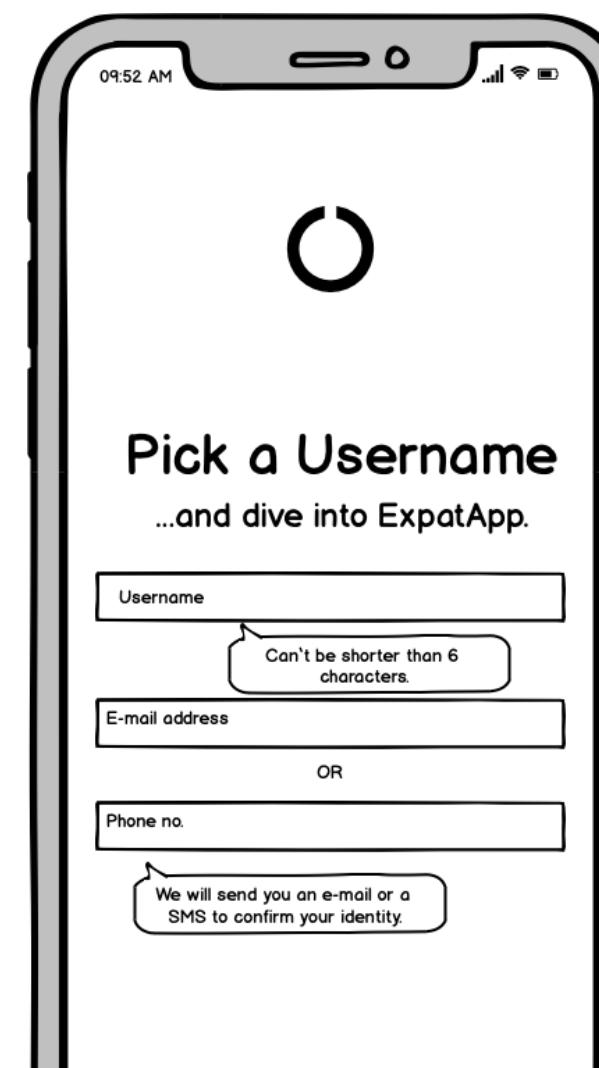
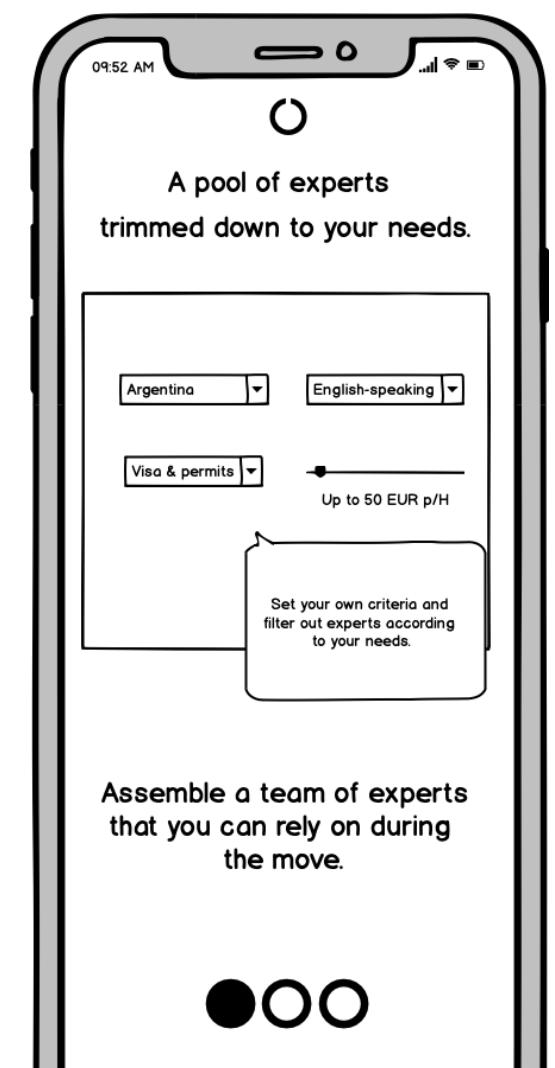
Design Evolution: Low-Fi > Mid-Fi (2)

EXPERT PROFILE



Onboarding: Balsamiq Mockups

Unlike the low-fi sketches for other pages, which I did with pen&paper, I decided to draw the first low-fi ideas for onboarding in Balsamiq, in order to get to know this tool as well.



Retrospective: Information Architecture and Wireframing

WHAT WENT WELL?

The process of pen & paper sketching went really well, since it enabled me to quickly experiment with several initial layouts.

Skills Drawing, Wireframing

Processes Creation of Low-Fi mockups

Solution Do several variations of low-fi design for each page

WHAT DIDN'T GO WELL?

This experience has taught me that Mid-Fi wireframes should be as precise and clean as possible, with correct spacing and grids applied. The usability testers are often distracted from their tasks in Mid-Fi prototypes by unfinished or asymmetric elements on the screen.

Skills Wireframing in XD

Processes Mid-Fi wireframing & prototyping

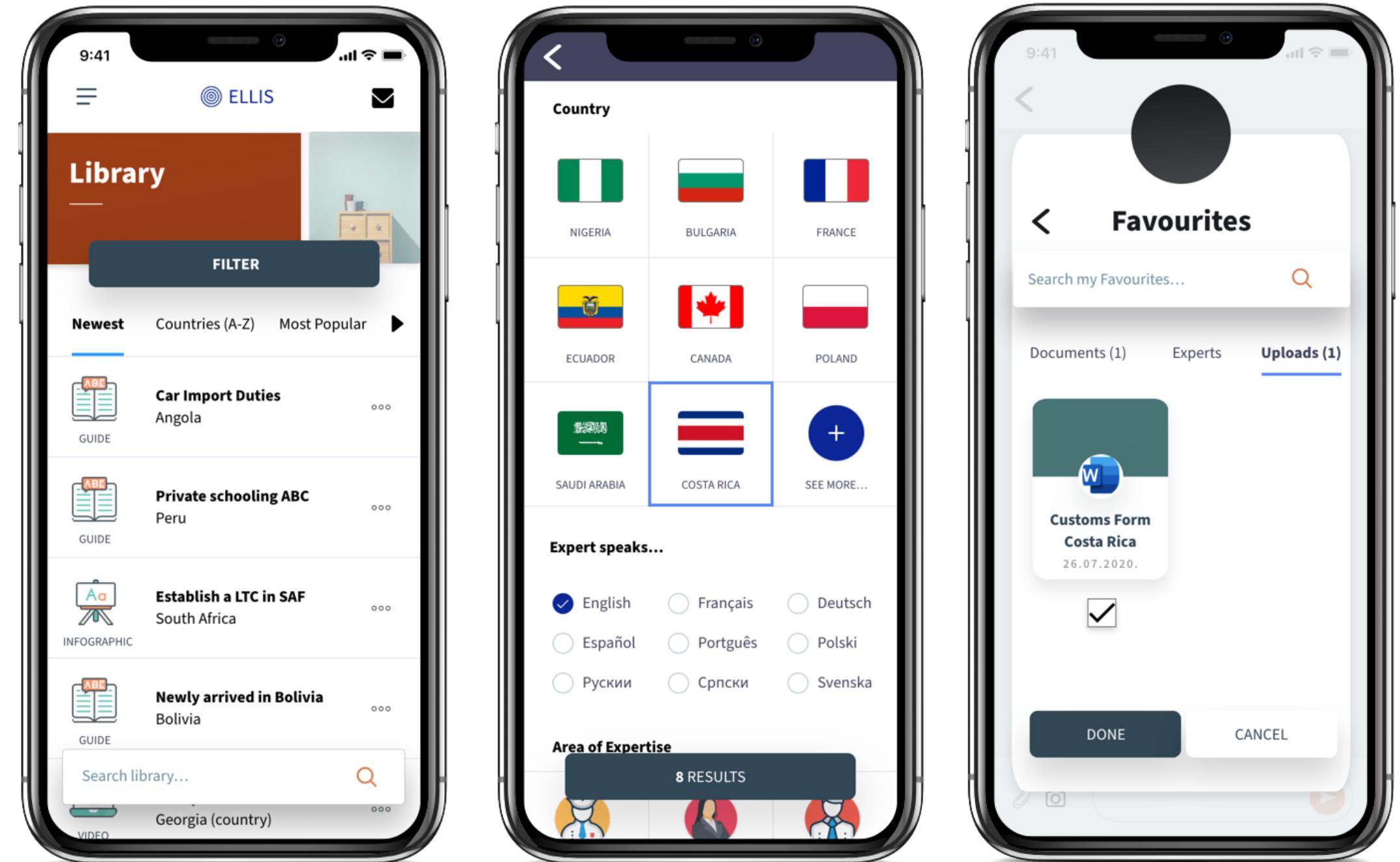
Skills Gap Polishing the Mid-Fi design

Solution Spend a bit more time in this phase in order to get the participants in usability testing more focused on the task afterwards.



Usability Testing & Design Polishing

In the next stage, the prototype was taken to usability testing. The feedback received help shape its next version; so did the **application of design principles** and the **heads-up from other fellow designers**.



Usability Testing: Planning & Conducting Tests

Methodology

Four participants were tested remotely via Zoom or Skype (i.e. the screen-sharing features of these apps), and **two** were tested in-person in a coworking space in Berlin.

The sessions consisted of an **introductory** phase, including the collection of background and demographic data, the **main part** (completion of tasks against the background of 3 scenarios) and the **follow up**, where the participants were invited to describe and rate their experience as a whole.

Participants were encouraged to think out loud and accompany every step they make in the navigation with a comment.

The **second round of testing was done with peers** - other UX/UI designers, who were invited to leave their comments on the prototype in XD.

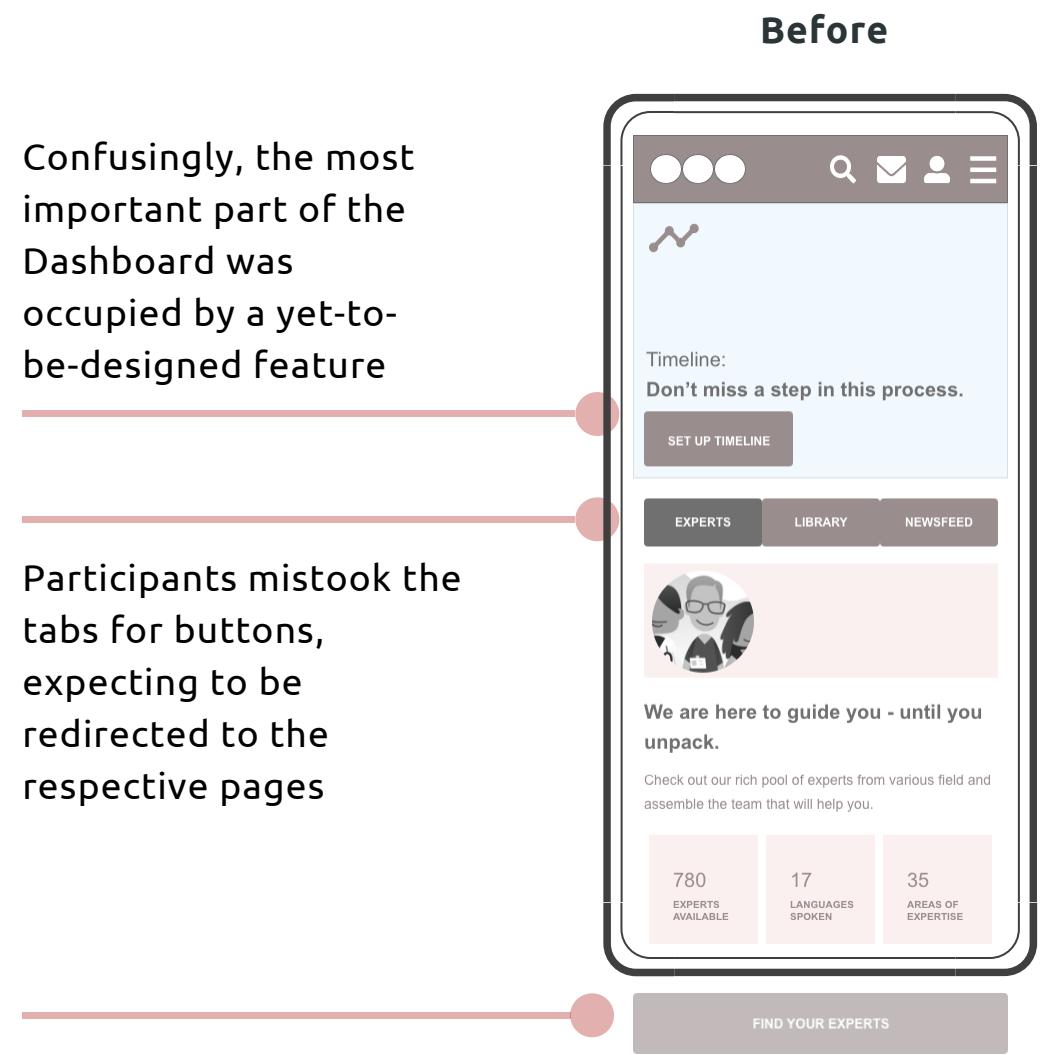
BRINGING REBECCA INTO LIFE



Most of our participants were carefully selected to reflect the background, behaviours and attitudes of our Primary Persona - Rebecca.

On the other hand, in order to avoid sampling bias, one of the participants didn't have any experience of moving abroad and/or looking for expert help in this process.

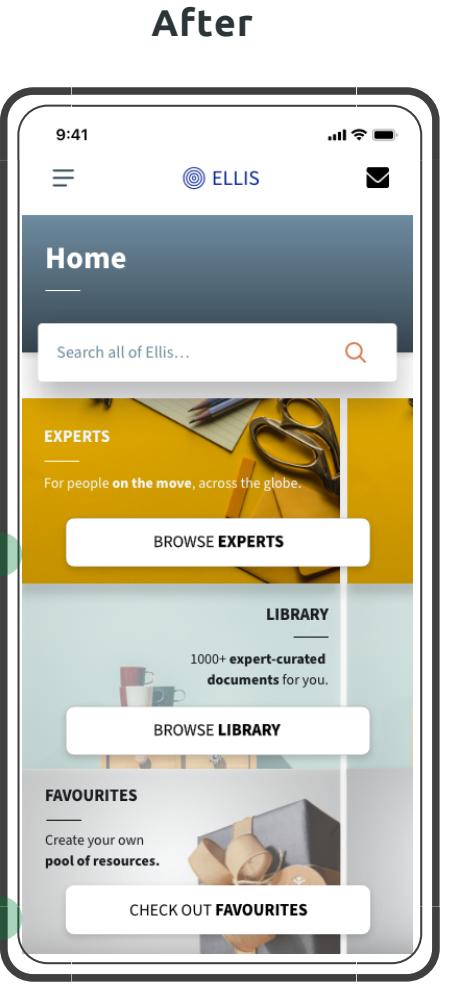
Implementing Feedback from Usability Testing



Each functionality is assigned a distinctive background image, to ease navigation

All CTA's are immediately visible and take the user to the indicated functionality

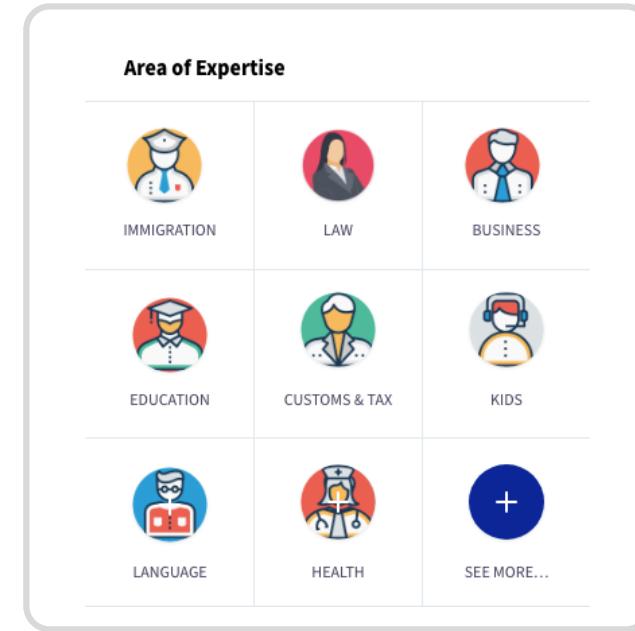
Responding to users' observations, Favourites gained its place in the Dashboard/Home page.



Applying Usability Heuristics

Match between System and Real World

To increase the bond and emphasise with users, bureaucratic language is avoided at all costs and friendly and engaging interface solutions are applied.



Implementing Feedback from Usability Testing

Before

A majority of participants overlooked the Filter button and opted to browse the experts themselves.

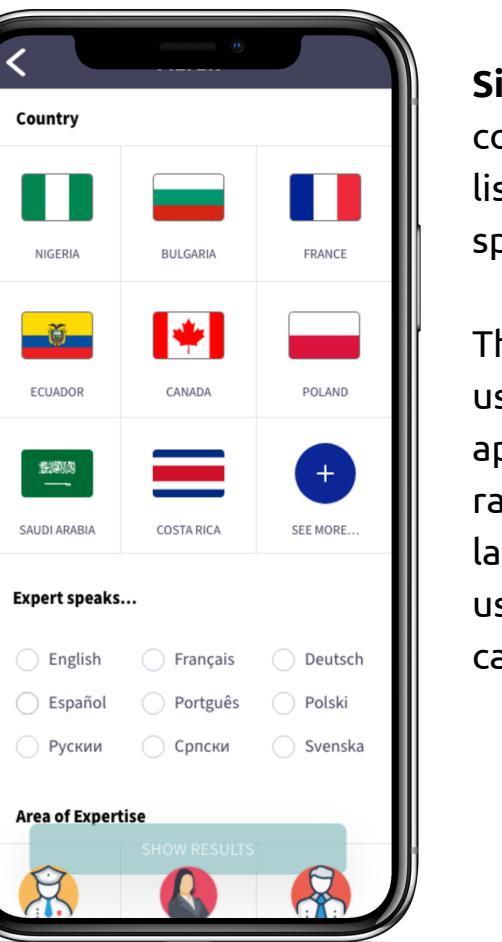
On the other hand, the four tabs contain categories similar to the ones in filter, making the filter obsolete.

The browsing was confusing because of a long list of countries and because it was not clear how the experts were sorted out on display.

After

Users can either browse through the experts themselves, or use filters.

Applying Gestalt Principles



Similarity The flags represent the countries user is interested in, the list with buttons below languages spoken by the expert.

The different type of feedback for user's action (tap on flag > frame appears for countries, tap on the radio button > option selected for languages) makes it easier for the user to mentally divide these two categories.

Retrospective: Usability Testing & Design Polishing

WHAT WENT WELL?

I was very pleased with the feedback received from other UX/UI designers, since it helped me further upgrade the UI elements and allowed me to get insights from professionals working in the industry.

Skills Usability Testing, Hi-Fi wireframing

Processes Usability Testing, Fine-tuning of the UI design

Solution Reach out to peers in every single design stage

WHAT CAN BE IMPROVED?

The product requires additional exploration on some of its functionalities (payment, integration with other apps, communication with other users and not just experts).

Skills UX/UI design

Processes User Research, Wireframing, Prototyping

Solution Jot down design solutions for these functionalities and run another round of testing with (target group) participants and peers in order to improve the design.

Polished prototype ([Link](#))

