Project Overview

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, pet ownership gained popularity as people seek companionship and emotional support from animals. This project aims to design a comprehensive mobile application for prospective pet owners, providing all the necessary information to make informed decisions about pet ownership. The app will serve as a platform to help users understand their readiness to adopt a pet, guide them in choosing the right pet, and provide additional resources for pet care and adoption.

Problem Statement

Potential pet owners often face uncertainty when deciding whether to get a pet. They are unaware of the factors to consider, such as expenses, required veterinary check-ups, and where to obtain a pet. New pet owners struggle with a lack of centralised information and guidance on which pet suits their lifestyle and financial capacity. This lack of clarity can lead to ill-informed decisions, resulting in improper care and even pet abandonment. The target audience for this app includes families and adults who have never owned pets before.

Research & Analysis

Research showed that users desired a single source of reliable information to guide them through the pet adoption process. Interviews with potential pet owners revealed that they were confused about the responsibilities involved in pet ownership, including financial commitments, time required for care, and grooming needs. Additionally, users wanted the flexibility to choose a pet that matched their lifestyle, with minimal effort in finding relevant information.

The research findings indicated three key concepts for the app:
- A platform offering all necessary information about pet adoption in one place.
- A tool to guide users in selecting a suitable pet based on their lifestyle and preferences.
- A feature allowing users to connect with experienced pet owners for advice and support.

Concept Development

Based on the research findings, the proposed solution is a mobile application that provides a comprehensive resource for new pet owners. The app features an eligibility test to assess whether a user is ready to adopt a pet, a recommendation system that suggests suitable pets based on a questionnaire, and a consultation option to connect with experienced pet owners.

Key features of the app include:
- A quiz-based eligibility tester that helps users determine their readiness for pet ownership.
- A personalised recommendation system that suggests the best pet for each user.
- Information on various pet breeds, including grooming needs, veterinary care, and behavioural traits.
- A platform for connecting with experienced pet owners for advice and guidance.
- Integration with local shelters for pet adoption information.

UI Design

The UI design of the app follows a simple, user-friendly layout with intuitive navigation. The key screens in the app include a login/sign-up page, a homepage with different sections for eligibility testing, consultation, and pet information, and a results page after completing the eligibility test. Users can explore pet breeds and find additional resources on pet care and nearby veterinary clinics.

The app's design incorporates elements to enhance user experience, such as a progress bar for the eligibility test, clear options on the results page, and simplified profile management with centralised editing capabilities. The design aims to reduce user confusion and provide a seamless experience.

Prototyping and Testing

The prototyping phase involved creating paper prototypes and wireframes for user testing. The initial prototypes included sketches based on the app's key concepts, which were translated into paper prototypes for testing. Four users participated in the testing phase, completing tasks while providing feedback on usability and potential errors.

During testing, users identified several areas for improvement, including the need for a progress bar in the eligibility test, clarity in the results page, and improved profile editing functionality. The testing feedback led to adjustments in the app's design, addressing these issues to enhance usability and coherence.

The prototyping phase involved creating paper prototypes and wireframes for user testing. The initial prototypes included sketches based on the app's key concepts, which were translated into paper prototypes for initial testing. Four users participated in this testing phase, completing tasks and providing feedback on usability, interface clarity, and potential errors.

Following the paper prototype testing, the feedback indicated several areas for improvement, including the need for a progress bar in the eligibility test, better clarity in the results page, and improved functionality for profile editing. Based on this feedback, the design team iterated on the app's design, making adjustments to enhance usability and overall coherence.

The next step in the prototyping process was to create digital prototypes using **Figma**. The digital prototypes allowed for more refined and detailed design elements, enabling the team to simulate the actual user interface and test various user interactions more accurately. This step also facilitated further testing with interactive elements, allowing users to navigate through the app's different features and provide more in-depth feedback.

These digital prototypes were shared with a group of users for additional testing and feedback. The interactive nature of the Figma prototypes helped to simulate real-world user experiences, providing insights into user flow, visual design, and overall app behaviour.

Based on this round of testing with Figma prototypes, further improvements were made to the app's design. This included:

- Refining the user flow to ensure smooth navigation between different sections.
- Enhancing the results page to provide clearer information and avoid redundancy.
- Improving profile editing functionality to make it more intuitive and user-friendly.
- Adding a progress bar to the eligibility test to help users gauge their progress.

These adjustments were incorporated into the final design, leading to a more polished and user-friendly application. The iterative prototyping process, from paper sketches to digital wireframes in Figma, played a critical role in refining the app's design and ensuring it met user expectations.

Solution

The final solution is a mobile application designed to guide new pet owners through the pet adoption process. It offers a comprehensive resource for information on pet breeds, an eligibility test to assess readiness, and a recommendation system for finding the best pet. The app also includes a consultation feature, allowing users to connect with experienced pet owners for advice.

Future enhancements could include additional features such as personalised pet profiles, tracking veterinary appointments and other pet care needs, and a shortened eligibility test with only essential questions. The app's ongoing development will focus on improving user experience, providing valuable information, and fostering a supportive community for pet owners.