

# CONTEXTUAL INQUIRY

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## PROJECT ACCOUTER

Somedays more than others, we all have problems choosing the right type of clothing to wear. Sometimes we wear clothes that are too warm or too cold mainly because we are unable to keep up with the volatile climate outside. There is also a huge pressure to dress right for the right events. Project Accouter is going to be an app that helps you with these decisions in the morning and save some time in your morning routine.

## CONTEXTUAL INQUIRY

### Stakeholder background, general observations, and working environment:

#### a. Stakeholder groups

##### i. Who are the stakeholder groups?

*Primary Stakeholders:* The end users of the application

- The audience who own and use a smartphone
- Populace that needs help in deciding the type of clothes they want to wear every morning
- Users who decide which type of clothes to wear based on the weather and the event they are going to.
- Users can also plan in advance and buy clothes on the application based on their style choices.

*Secondary Stakeholders:*

- Fashion consultants who feed input to the application so that the algorithm can generate a suggestions.
- Application Development team or those who work in creating, designing, coding and maintaining the application and its components

*Key Stakeholders:*

- Any retail partners that are willing to use this application to promote their clothing styles.

##### ii. What is the demographic makeup of each user/stakeholder?

*Primary Stakeholders:*

- Users need to own a smartphone with internet connection
- Age: 14 to 50
- Users must also have an access to credit card in case they are willing to buy clothes online

*Secondary Stakeholders:*

- Fashion consultants should be creative and quick decision makers, preferably with some retail experience.
- Application developers should be agile in computing, coding and deploying the application with minimal glitches. They should constantly update the application with the responses and suggestions given by the user.

*Key Stakeholders:*

- The retail partner should be able to offer a large number of options with different range of fabric, style, price and colors.

## ***b. Observer experience***

### **i. How well do you know the domain?**

*The end user domain:*

We expect our users to be within the age range of 14 to 50 and our highest number of users between the ages of 18 to 35. The users in this age range have access to credit cards and are willing to take more fashion risks as supposed to the older people who have a standard style.

### **c. What did you know before:**

#### *i. How do you expect people/users to do things?*

We expect the users to probably look at the weather outside or the temperature/event they have planned for the day on their mobile phone and pick out clothes.

#### *ii. What is the “work” to be done?*

The “work” involves the user to base their decisions on weather, event or a fashion trend they would like to present themselves in and pick out clothes for the day or an event. This decision can take a few minutes in the morning or days before if they are preparing for an important event, such as an interview or a wedding.

#### *iii. What is your rough idea about how to do the work?*

Our team has drafted a rough idea where we are going to design an app which:

- a. Starts with a questionnaire which helps us access the style of a user and how they would like to present themselves.
- b. Depending on the user needs, the app simply suggests the type of clothes they need to wear or even pick out some of the information the user has fed about their wardrobe.
- c. If they are looking at an event that they are going to attend, or a piece fashion clothing they would like to own, the user can look it up with the retail partners the app has collaborated with.

### **d. What roles do people play and how do they interact with other people in the environment?**

This application is setup in such a way that only the user interacts with it. No other interactions are necessary.

### **e. What is the physical environment that supports the work?**

The user is expected to use the cellphone, their wardrobe and a dresser.

## ***Participant 1***

**Age:** 21

**Occupation:** Student, Civil Engineering Major

**Sex:** Female

**Location:** Rochester, NY

## **2. For each person interviewed,**

### **a. Who was interviewed and what stakeholder group did they fall in?**

The participant will be the end user of the application.

### **b. What was collected during CI:**

#### *i. When does the user do his/her work?*

P1 is a college student who usually spends around 20 minutes in her closet/dresser picking out her clothes for the day. Her schedule each day is different since her classes are at different times each day.

ii. *What does the work entail?*

P1 usually picks out a pair of jeans and a top. She usually prefers wearing layers since she could always remove her jacket/hoodie and carry them around if it is too hot to manage.

iii. *How do they do the work?*

- P1 uses the weather app in her phone and looks at the forecast for the day. Depending on the weather outside she decides the type of jacket she wants to carry and the type of shoes she wants to wear. Since she takes the bus to college, she walks around a lot and her shoes are her at most priority.
- She also bases her decision on what she has planned for the day. She has classes on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. She usually picks out her “nice” clothes for those days and choses to wear t-shirts and freebies on the days she works (in dining) and casual clothing on the weekend.

iv. *Where are the tasks done?*

The decision on which clothes to wear usually happens when P1 is in her closet looking at her clothes before showering. She also deliberates on which jacket to wear in her room and which kind of shoes near her shoe stand which is located near the entrance of her apartment.

v. *What is the sequence of events/tasks?*

The sequence would typically be like:

- Zero in on one pair of jeans and scan for the tops that she might like.
- Once she chooses the top, she picks out the accessories she might need – for instance the right type of under garments, hats, earrings, etc.
- After which she looks up the temperature on the weather app and decides on a jacket.
- She has different shoes she wears if she has to go to work, irrespective of the weather outside. In case of snow, she wears her snow boots and switches those boots once she gets to work.

vi. *Does order matter?*

Order does matter to a certain extent, since it is hard to layer up after you have already stepped outside and you are feeling cold.

vii. *Interruptions?*

No significant interruptions hinder this process.

## **Participant 2**

**Age:** 26

**Occupation:** Working Professional, Web Development

**Sex:** Male

**Location:** Boston, MA

**a. Who was interviewed and what stakeholder group did they fall in?**

The participant will be the end user of the application.

**b. What was collected during CI:**

*i. When does the user do his/her work?*

P2 works has a tight schedule on all week days and he doesn't spend more than a minute picking out his outfit every morning.

*ii. What does the work entail?*

His work place does not require him to follow any dress code, and so he has an array of flannel button up shirts and jeans. On the weekends he wears continues wearing similar clothes, if he goes out to meet up with his friends.

*iii. How do they do the work?*

Does not base his clothing decisions on any particular factor. If it has been snowing, he prefers to wear a pair of thermals under his clothes and a winter jacket. He takes the train to work and walks for around 20 minutes to and from the train station, so he likes to wear his sports shoes to work. He wears them every day until he wears them down and has to buy a new one. He also wears a hoodie every day since he comes home late at night and its chilly irrespective of the time of the year.

*iv. Where are the tasks done?*

P1 picks out his clothes from his closet and wears them in his bathroom after showering. The shoe rack is placed near the entrance and he has a separate drawer for socks near the rack. He sits down on a chair and wears his shoes and picks his coat/jacket from his cloak closet and leaves to work.

*v. What is the sequence of events/tasks?*

The participant does not have a sequence to the decision making process as such, but he spends less than a minute looking out his window to gauge the walking conditions to the train station and then chooses his clothes.

*vi. Does the order matter?*

Yes, since he does wear thermal wear underneath his clothes, he needs to think the sequence through before wearing his clothes.

**Participant 3**

**Age:** 52

**Occupation:** Working Professional, High School Biology Teacher

**Sex:** Female

**Location:** Chennai, INDIA

**a. Who was interviewed and what stakeholder group did they fall in?**

The participant will be the end user of the application.

**b. What was collected during CI:**

*i. When does the user do his/her work?*

P3 spends around 10 minutes to pick out her clothes every morning. She also volunteers for the local orphanage so she spends around 10 minutes to choose her clothes to visit them in the evenings.

*ii. What does the work entail?*

P3 works in a school in India where the female teachers are strictly follow dress code. Most Indian teachers wear cultural clothing to school, and so P3 also wears sarees every day.

- On other days she picks out the type of clothing she wants to wear: Indian traditional clothing, Indian casual clothing, western professional clothing or western casual clothing.
- She picks out the fabric she has to wear depending on the weather and how busy her day is.
- She also takes a few minutes to decide the jewelry and hair clips she wants to wear that go with the outfit.

*iii. How do they do the work?*

- P3 chooses the clothes she wants to wear by the event/venue she is going to. She chooses to wear Indian traditional clothing by while visiting the temple or her mother. She chooses Indian casual clothing if she is going out to the grocery store. Western professional clothing is reserved for the days she goes to international conferences or meetings and the western casual wear is for when she is on a holiday or on the weekends.
- P3 also picks out the fabric of her saree depending on the weather or an event. She chooses to wear cotton sarees on a hot/sunny day, she avoids polyester infused sarees on rainy, humid days and silk sarees on festivals/weddings.
- She chooses the right type of jewelry and accessories depending on the clothes she is wearing.

*iv. Where are the tasks done?*

- P3 uses her closet that is filled with over a 100 sarees in different fabrics collected from when she first started working in the 1980s. She has them folded and arranged on the shelves of a cupboard which are arranged according to fabric type. She follows a sequence when it comes to wearing her sarees to school.
- After picking out the saree, she uses the dresser to find her jewelry that would be appropriate.
- Since she walks around a lot and stands all day, she wears her comfort-cushion with memory foam sandals to work.

*v. What is the sequence of events/tasks?*

The participant does not have a sequence. Unlike the other two participants, the place where P3 lives does not have harsh climates and she is not required to look at the weather outside to choose her clothing. It is out of more care for the clothing itself and/or her comfortability that she sometimes avoids certain materials on certain days.

**c. What are your results:**

*i. Did your findings match your expectations?*

- P1 - Yes, since I am a student with similar schedule, I was able to gauge the needs of this participant. The participant however had more interest in dressing fashionably and spent 30 to 40 minutes on make-up and hair

styling which also essentially come under the bracket of “getting ready”. Her clothing preference also involves a lot of the latest trends that she likes. Her usual style is just to wear jeans and printed t-shirt/top.

- P2 – One of the expectations I had was that a working professional would have a lot of events to attend and they might alter their clothing styles for each event. P2 was comfortable with the style of clothes he wore and he stuck to it irrespective of where he is going, unless the place dictated a dress code.
- P3 – I had no expectations for P3, she gave me so much information on how she decides her clothes quickly and effectively. She also told me that it becomes easier with practice and it is about how I carry myself and not just about the clothes.

ii. Which model did you use? (master/apprentice, partnership, etc.)

This interview was conducted individually and in person, with a voice recorder.

iii. What tools do they use regularly?

- P1 uses her dresser, closet and her cellphone before she can make a decision on what she wants to wear.
- P2 does uses only his closet to make this decision.
- P3 uses her closet and dresser to make this decision. She does not rely on a calendar app to remember events that she is attending. She does plan days in advance for some important events.

iv. Are there tools they must be used, or occasionally used to solve specific problems?

Yes, the weather and calendar app can help the users pick out the appropriate clothes since those play a crucial decision in the kind of clothes you wear.

v. How do they use them?

These apps help them choose the type of clothing, for instance, if it is snowing the users has to carry a whole ensemble on them to protect them from the cold.

vi. How do the observed individuals fit your profile?

- P1 – is an expected user profile, she is a college student who spends around 20 to 30 minutes in picking out her outfit every day. Project Accouter would help her aid in picking out her clothes.
- P2 – falls under the expected user profile, falls into the domain who are most likely to use our app (ages 20 to 35, a working professional). He might use Accouter for some events but isn't likely to use it on a daily basis.
- P3 – is a 52 year old woman who also bases her clothing options on various factors. She also has a lot of options to choose from in her closet and she ultimately uses up about 20 minutes each day to get ready due to the nature of the dress she wears.

vii. What kind of information is shared?

The user is expected to share information to the app about the clothes they have in their closet, any trends/clothing styles they gyrate towards every time they

shop and their willingness to buy clothes online. They are also expected to share the entries in their calendar on the app.

- viii. What is the nature of the interactions?  
They are expected to spend a couple of minutes every day on their smartphones where the app is able to pick out an ensemble that would be advisable to wear on that particular day. They could also read the reasoning behind the choices it displays.
- ix. What are the non-digital artifacts?  
This application is mainly depended on non-digital artifacts such as the clothes, accessories, bags, hats, shoes, etc., that they already own.
- x. What are the social and cultural contexts that the work is performed in?  
The users are from and live in different countries. One of the users I interviewed is living in India where she has to own clothes of cultural significance. One of the biggest struggle with this application is that the clothing trends are not uniform around the world. Sometimes the users want their clothes to reflect their sense of style irrespective of the trends that are popular in their country or around the world. Catering to different needs is going to be laborious for the application development team and the fashion consultants.