

Task 2.1 Research Methods

Problem Statement

Our fitness enthusiasts want a way to [explore routes to do outdoor sports (such as running, cycling, hiking, skiing, swimming, etc.) that combines reliable fitness stat tracking with the ability to take part in competitive and fun challenges] because [they wish to have a more engaging and exciting way to get fit in the outdoors].

We will know this to be true when we see [many users choosing to use our app to get active and explore the great outdoors, as well as positive reviews for a growing loyal customer base].

Research method #1: User surveys

User surveys are ideal for gathering **initial insights** from the target user group considering that they are an inexpensive and reliable way to reach a **broad audience**. These surveys can provide important quantitative data (through multiple choice questions), as well as qualitative data (through open-ended questions) regarding the biggest issues on the minds of potential users relating to the potential solution, such as what aspects of the solution is most important to users, what would potentially prohibit users from adopting the solution, what potential flaws could happen, etc. The survey results will therefore help to determine the validity and usability of the solution early on in the discovery process, before anything is invested in the idea. Moreover, assuming questions are crafted properly, surveys tend to provide the most honest responses possible since respondents do not feel they are being watched or judged, thereby eliminating the risk of an interviewer unintentionally biasing responses.

Research method #2: User Interviews

Interviews can be a great way to empathize with users because they **can provide an in-depth understanding of the users' values, perceptions, experiences, thought-process, and opinions**. It is important to ask specific questions, while remaining open to exploring the participants' points of view by probing beyond the interview script with follow-up questions. This method will therefore be key in getting qualitative insight into how users would receive the app as well as to obtain a better understanding of various aspects of their everyday lives that are of interest to the app, such as what motivates them to exercise, and whether they enjoy exercising outdoors. Such context is important to understand different use cases, and thus can form the knowledge basis for personas, user stories, and job stories. When constructing interviews, it is key to properly word questions to avoid leading questions and hence reduce interview bias and skewed data.

Research method #3: Contextual Inquiries

Contextual inquiries takes user interviewing one step further to combine it with light ethnographic work; it involves observing people in their natural context and asking them questions to fill in observation gaps. Contextual inquiry is a powerful methodology, because being immersed in the world of the user will help to uncover not only **what** the problem is, but also **why** the current solution is not sufficiently solving that problem. Thus it can provide key insights during discovery. During the testing stage it can also give valuable, detailed information regarding how users interact with the app, showing in real-time how effective its navigation is and whether the app is functional out in the real world. Any points of friction that may present themselves can then be corrected accordingly.

Conclusion

It is extremely important to obtain potential users' feedback of a problem-solution during discovery in order to better understand if users have a need for the solution and to validate and discard assumptions. Data from this research is instrumental in informing the direction of the solution so that it best addresses all user pain points.

I believe the most important research method of the three outlined above is user interviews, since they will provide insights into users' behaviours and opinions. It would also be beneficial to obtain some quantitative data to back up our solution, which would be best obtained through user surveys. Although contextual inquiries may shed light on highly detailed and unique user requirements, I believe these would be better suited to a later stage in the design process.