About:

My name is Pratik Bajaj. I am currently pursuing my Masters degree in Interaction Design at the University of Queensland. I am looking to explore and learn more about UI and UX design, User Research and Design theories. Before my masters, I have worked as an Associate Engineer and have tried my hand at various other technologies like SQL, Unix, JIRA etc.

In my spare time, I like to work on my hobbies which include playing video games, photography and trying my hand at cinematography too, sketching and playing sports namely football, squash, table tennis and swimming. Currently I am also engaged in learning more about video editing with Adobe Premiere Pro.

Project Description:

Park Finder is a user-friendly and interactive web application designed with the primary purpose of helping individuals effortlessly locate parks in their local neighborhoods and the surrounding areas. Whether you're searching for a particular park you're already familiar with or looking to explore green spaces within a specific suburb, this tool has you covered.

For those who know the name of the park they're interested in, a direct search by name provides a quick and efficient way to find it. However, if you're open to exploring the parks within a particular suburb, the app allows you to search by suburb, providing you with a comprehensive list of all the parks in that area. This feature is particularly valuable for those who want to get to know a new area, as it offers a convenient way to discover the available outdoor spaces in the vicinity.

Once you've selected a park that piques your interest, Park Finder goes the extra mile by providing you with a wealth of information. You'll have access to the park's complete address, making it easy to plan your visit. Additionally, the app offers recommendations for activities you can enjoy within the park, ensuring that you make the most of your outdoor experience. If you're interested in staying informed about park-related events, Park Finder also keeps you in the loop by providing information on any upcoming activities or gatherings scheduled to take place in the park.

In essence, Park Finder is a versatile tool that caters to a wide range of users. Whether you're someone who simply wants to enjoy the beauty of green spaces near your home or an explorer looking to uncover the hidden gems within a specific suburb, this web application is your go-to resource for all things related to parks and outdoor activities.

Design Process:

Initial Theme selection:

"In the initial phase of dataset selection and presentation, I opted for three distinct datasets: events, live events, and information related to Brisbane food trucks. The intention behind selecting these datasets was to empower users in their city exploration endeavors. We aimed to offer users the ability to discover ongoing events throughout the city and to enrich their culinary experiences by utilizing the map functionality to explore nearby food truck options in conjunction with these events.

As we progressed to team formation, our team members shared a common desire to assist people in finding various amenities, such as libraries or events. This shared objective made it easier for us to decide on a final project topic. We engaged in extensive discussions to explore various project possibilities and, with guidance from our tutors, we decided to focus our efforts on one team member's proposal. We collectively determined the datasets and functionality we would employ, ultimately centering our project on assisting users in locating event venues.

Our next step involved delineating roles and responsibilities for each team member. I voluntarily assumed the role of team leader, given our collective unfamiliarity with backend development. Two team members took on the frontend development tasks, while the remaining member undertook responsibilities related to design-oriented activities. With these roles defined, we delved into the process of selecting and extracting data from the datasets, as well as outlining our goals for the final project.

As the team leader, I was responsible for scheduling meetings, task delegation, and consolidating our research findings. This collaborative effort laid the foundation for the successful execution of our project."

<image of poster here>

(sub heading)

Reflection:

I believe that having all team members concur on a common concept was a positive aspect of our collaboration. It facilitated a smooth transition into brainstorming and working together to determine our shared objectives for the final project. However, one aspect I would reconsider is the allocation of tasks. Rather than having each member concentrate solely on either frontend or backend development, I think it would have been beneficial for everyone to engage in both aspects of the project.

Design proposal and MVP:

The subsequent phase involved the design proposal, during which we deliberated on our objectives and the specific data we would extract from the datasets for presentation. We dedicated significant time to this phase and eventually decided to utilize data related to event locations to display available spaces for hire. Extensive research was conducted on websites resembling our envisioned project. I conducted an environmental scan to assess existing websites, identifying their strengths, weaknesses, and crucial user data to convey through our website. Additionally, I developed a persona and scenario for our design proposal presentation. Another team member focused on creating low and high fidelity prototypes, as displayed below.

<Low Fi>

<High Fi>

However, we received feedback indicating that our initial ambitions were overly broad, prompting us to narrow our focus to a specific type of event space. With guidance from our tutors and team discussions, we honed in on parks as our primary focus and accordingly adjusted our datasets.

In preparation for the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) presentation and demonstration, we faced the challenging task of developing our website and establishing success criteria for the MVP. Given our altered focus, we needed to redefine our target audience and the desired functions of our web application. We found it took longer than expected to clarify our objectives and commence coding. As the deadline approached, I assumed responsibility for the back-end development, a role I found more challenging. Closer to the MVP deadline, I managed to implement the search functionality, correctly linking it to the API and displaying a list of parks. Nevertheless, we encountered various issues, and we were unable to demonstrate all the features we had initially envisioned.

Reflection:

During phases 2C and 2D of our assessments, we realized we had become overly ambitious and unrealistic in our expectations. We spent excessive time scheduling meetings and determining concepts, delaying the commencement of actual coding work. Constructive feedback guided us when we were uncertain about the project's direction, but we should have started coding earlier as a team. I, in particular, attempted to troubleshoot issues independently, missing the opportunity to seek assistance from our tutors. Better time management on my part would have prepared us for potential challenges during the final product completion phase.

Final Product and Tradeshow:

We managed to establish a significant portion of the functions we had aimed for in our final product. However, we encountered several synchronization challenges. Personally, I faced numerous difficulties with the backend that I couldn't resolve independently. In response, I began exploring various frameworks, and with the aid of online tutorials and resources, I settled on using Express.js to implement the desired functionality. Despite our efforts, there were still lingering issues to troubleshoot, and we fell short of achieving all our intended goals. In the end, we successfully created a functional website that interacted with APIs and displayed the data we desired.

Our presentation at the trade show went smoothly, and we received positive feedback from both our tutors and fellow students. They provided valuable insights into our strengths and areas where we could make improvements to enhance the web application. Below are the screenshots from our final product.

Reflection:  
Upon reflection, delving into JavaScript and PHP, especially for the first time, proved to be more challenging than expected. Taking on such a significant task individually added undue pressure. I believe that dividing the backend responsibilities among team members would have not only facilitated individual learning but also streamlined the development process. I did receive assistance from one of my teammates in integrating the backend with the frontend. Had we initially divided responsibilities, it would have made it more manageable for each team member to focus on their assigned tasks and seamlessly integrate everything into the final project, aligning with the collaborative nature of a team project.

Course reflections.

The primary objective of this course extended beyond individual learning in web development; it aimed to impart the skills of teamwork, task delegation, and collaborative effort to accomplish a common goal.

However, the process of team formation gave rise to considerable disarray, largely owing to the uneven distribution of undergraduates and postgraduates. In hindsight, it might have been more effective for the course organizers, along with the professor, to assess and assign teams based on each student's strengths rather than having students self-select. This approach could have mitigated confusion and prevented negative interactions, as some students who knew each other were separated due to the team formation criteria. Additionally, there were instances where communication with the tutors became muddled, leading to confusion regarding assessment submissions. Replies on the Ed discussion platform was sometimes delayed, particularly as deadlines approached.

The workshops themselves posed their own challenges. The pace at times felt too brisk, making it challenging to complete the tasks within the designated time frame. This occasionally left students feeling perplexed and overwhelmed during workshop sessions.