

<side.chat>

Documentation and Design Process

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Promotional Material

The promotional website can be found at: <http://www.tallredman.xyz/sidechatLanding/>

Prototype

side.chat can be found at: www.side.chat

Side chat allows users to add links to politics-oriented content on the internet in order to cultivate a balanced discussion around the content of the link. An account is not required to browse *side.chat*, however to create a thread, comment, or rate comments a user account is required. New topics are created using the “CREATE” tab. The page accepts a link submission field and a field to add a title of your choosing. You can choose one or more predefined categories (social, power, economy, environment, war) to place their topic.

There are three ways to sort threads:

- “NEW”, which orders links by how recently they were created
- “TOP”, which sorts threads from most balanced to least balanced (as well as prioritising by newest and most commented/rated)
- “CONTROVERSIAL”, which shows threads that have become very left or right leaning

Comment threads allow you to join the discussion, as well as moderate the thread’s balance. This is done by using the sliders under each comment to rate it as being left or right leaning. Initial ratings may not take effect immediately as each thread will not start displaying its balance scores until at least 5 ratings have been made.

Summary

The problem space this prototype aims to address is the fact that a lot of the political discourse that takes place on social media exists in dedicated forums for that particular political opinion (ex. r/The_Donald vs r/HillaryClinton on reddit) which create echo chambers of people who all agree and never get exposed to opposing views.

side.chat aims to address this through two means: firstly, threads are broken down by topic, not opinion, meaning opposing views are all discussed in the same place, and secondly by promoting discussions that users have identified as balanced, rather than promoting threads that have a large number of upvotes/likes.

Process

Research and Requirements

Political Topics

We started by conducting research into a number of topics, including topics people categorise political discourse by, existing technology we could harness to develop the prototype, and visual means of demonstrating balance without any indication that one view was inherently better than the other. We crowdsourced some opinions on topics through the use of Google forms with a brief survey (<https://goo.gl/forms/t4g2lUA5mKb457683>) and from the results settled on topics: Social, Power, Economy, Environment, and War.

Prototype Technologies

Early on in the process we decided we wanted to model our prototype on a site a lot of people are already familiar with, *reddit*, and found several reddit clones we had hoped to customise to our needs. After looking at what was available, we decided that the clones we had found would not be suitable for our needs, and decided to develop the site from scratch, using the php framework Laravel to speed up our development cycle.

User Personas

Based upon observation and user interviews, we created several user personas which we utilised and referred to during our design process. The personas were oriented around different political ideologies and were used to ensure that *side.chat* could be used by a person of any political standing. The personas are found below, or can be viewed here:

<https://app.xtensio.com/folio/87e1j3zb>



"I'm not a racist, but..."

Age: 52
 Work: Small accounting firm business owner
 Family: Married with 6 children
 Location: Ipswich, QLD

Personality



Far-Right Patriotic Family-Orientated
 Hard-worker

Goals

- Elect a right-wing leader
- Do right by his family
- Go back to the way things were in the past
- Preserve White culture of Australia which he believes is the original culture

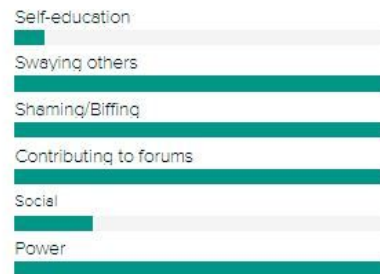
Frustrations

- Lazy youth and whinging minorities
- Government spending too much on welfare
- Lax immigration policies
- People who don't care about ethnic nationalism

Bio

Bob Dudroot grew up in a very Christian family and is of British and Irish decent. He was educated and socialised with similar children in a very white area of Ipswich. From what he knows, his ancestors were a part of the first fleet that came to Australia, and it was his family and others that are similar that built and created Australia. He is extremely family orientated and just want his family to grow up in the same great Australia that his family experienced. He feels a strong purpose to make sure others value the same things he does. He feels passionate about carrying on the Dudroot family bloodline and also coaches the under 12s Ipswich Rangers rugby union team.

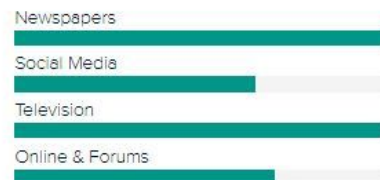
Motivations



Brands



Preferred Channels



Far-Right User



"They'll have has believing that we hate the oppressed and love the oppressors"

Age: 40
 Work: Freelance writer / contemporary artist
 Family: Single Polyamorist
 Location: Melbourne, VIC

Personality



Far-Left Anti-establishment Vegan
 Hard-worker

Goals

- Elect a left-wing leader
- Have free love for all
- Mutiny against the oppressive governmental structure
- Abort all religion and embrace free thought

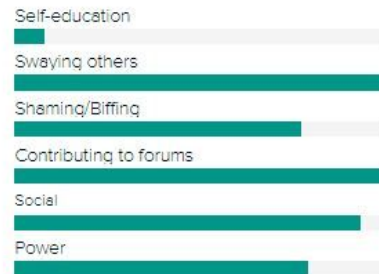
Frustrations

- Corrupt and oppressive governments
- Restrictive social constructs (e.g. monogamy)
- Capitalism and corporate greed
- People who are 'brain-washed' by society

Bio

Olivia Castro immigrated to Australia from Cuba when she was a child. She was a single child and was home-schooled by her parents who were both freelance artists and lived moving between caravan parks. While growing up with her family, she travelled around most of Australia before leaving home at 16 to live in Melbourne. There, she she established herself as a freelance writer for independent political papers, and created contemporary art that communicated her views on restrictive societal rules. All she wants is for humans to have free choice that's not confined by the politician's self-serving laws.

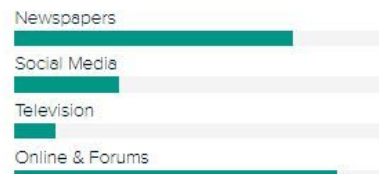
Motivations



Brands



Preferred Channels



Far-Left User

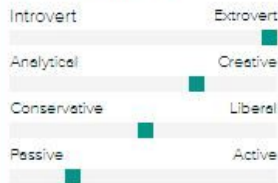
Emily-Rose Turner



"I don't really care about politics - I've never even felt it affect me"

Age: 22
Work: Fashion and Beauty Blogger
Family: In a Relationship
Location: Sydney, NSW

Personality



Politically apathetic

Instagram famous

Social

Loves Australia but wants to move to London

Goals

- Maintain her social media presence
- Have fun with her friends
- Establish herself in the fashion sphere
- Meet like-minded people

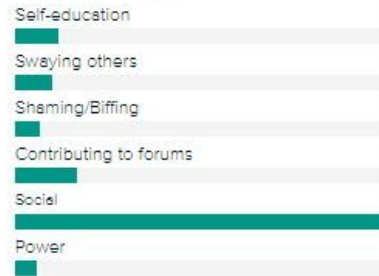
Frustrations

- People who get too hung up on political stuff - just be happy
- People who take cultural appropriation too seriously
- Trolls on social media
- Not being taken seriously

Bio

Emily-Rose has always been a city girl and grew up in a nice upper-middle-class family. Her father worked as a lawyer and her mother worked in private events planning. Emily-Rose as well as her younger sister both went to private schooling from prep to grade 12. During this time, Emily-Rose maintained a steady following on Instagram. Upon graduating high-school, she decided to study a Media and Communications Degree at university while beginning to create a YouTube channel and maintain her Instagram presence. Now graduated, she continues her interests in fashion and beauty, and is doing an marketing internship at a fashion magazine.

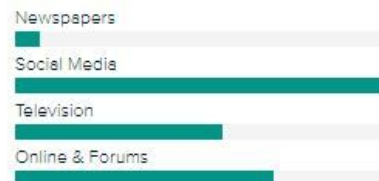
Motivations



Brands



Preferred Channels



Politically Apathetic User

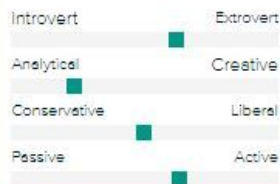
Nicholas Darley



"Look, the government is certainly not perfect, but we need a government"

Age: 45
Work: Lawyer
Family: Married with 2 children
Location: Canberra, ACT

Personality



Centrist Enigma Independent voter
Self-establishing

Goals

- Government accountability
- National, not vested interests
- Australian Made and Australian jobs
- Better policies

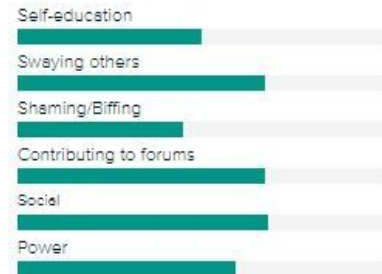
Frustrations

- Dishonest governments
- Freeloaders
- War spending
- Bad policy making

Bio

Nicholas Darley grew up in Canberra and had a fairly normal middle class Australian upbringing. His mother was a support call center phone operator and his father was a sales manager. Nicholas has never really been negatively impacted by big political issues he hears about. Although, growing up in Canberra, he has learned to have strong political views and can see where both sides are coming from. He feels passionately in weighing up the pros and cons of each issue in an objective manner. This means sometimes he identifies more with right-wingers and other times with left-wingers, and can often come off as a fence-sitter.

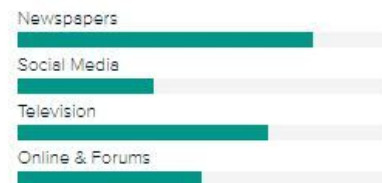
Motivations



Brands



Preferred Channels



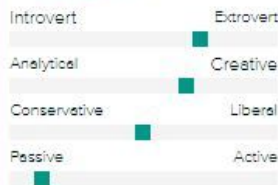
Centrist User



"Oh yeah I've heard about that policy, saw it on TV. Yeah it's pretty bad, hey?"

Age: 20
Work: Physiotherapy Student
Family: Single
Location: Brisbane, QLD

Personality



Political swinger Bit clicker

Focused on study and social life

Goals

- To seem politically aware
- To vote similar to his peers
- Good uni loans system
- Get along well with friends

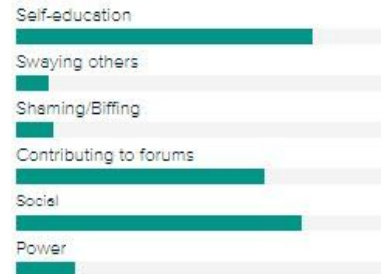
Frustrations

- Whatever people around him are angry about
- Greedy government
- Freeloaders
- Not feeling informed

Bio

Michael is a second generation Australian. His parents moved from south-east Asia with their own parents when they were younger. He grew up fairly middle class - nothing too fancy but definitely comfortable. He didn't really know what he wanted to do after high school, but he was a smart guy and was alright at biology and loved playing soccer. So, he decided to go into physiotherapy. He's always reading about the political scandals and debates that are happening around Australia through online articles, and his friends talk about them all the time too. They always make points that make sense, and he always finds himself walking away from those conversations agreeing with them.

Motivations



Brands



Preferred Channels



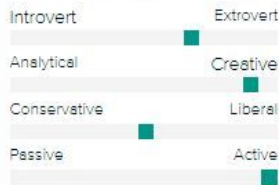
Political Swinger User



"That moment when u have dank memes"

Age: 14
Work: Highschool student
Family: Single
Location: Radelaide, SA

Personality



Memelord Sh*tposter Troll
Class clown

Goals

- Make dank memes
- Go viral
- Get the attention of his school friends
- Save Harambe

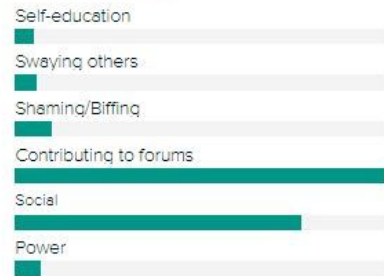
Frustrations

- People who don't get his humour
- Bullies
- When there's no internet
- When mum tells him he can't have his phone until he finishes his homework

Bio

Jack Pickle is a young boy who is right in the middle of high school life. He has an older 17 year old brother who is the rugby captain of his high school. Jack was always pretty quiet, but when he was 12 and got his first phone he made a stupid comment on Facebook and got a tonne of likes. His memelord career took off. He started getting compliments at school and his favourite past-time now is being on his computer till 3 in the morning (way past his bedtime) delving deep into the meme hole. He gets flack for it sometimes from some people in his grade, but his friends think he's super funny and hail his lordship.

Motivations



Brands



Preferred Channels



Memelord User

Spike



"1001101100100111011000011010"

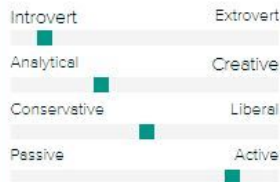
Age: ?? but probably 30

Work: ?? but probably unemployed and living with his parents

Family: ?? but probably single

Location: ?? but probably a basement somewhere

Personality



Hacker Technologically advanced

Has a particular political agenda

Goals

- Hack the mainframe
- Whistleblow
- Change political narratives

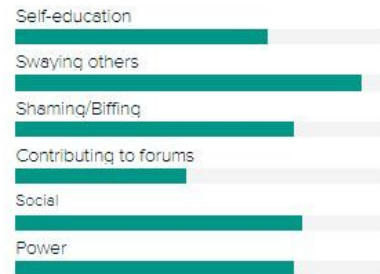
Frustrations

- Internet security
- Political silencing
- Censorship

Bio

Spike took an interest in hacking during his teenage years after watching the Matrix movies, WarGames and Tron. He could see himself as a political martyr and hero that could expose government secrets. He left school early in grade 10 and never went to university, in order to focus on his childhood dream. His ultimate goal in life is to be recruited as an Anonymous member and to live his life shrouded in mystery.

Motivations



Brands



Preferred Channels



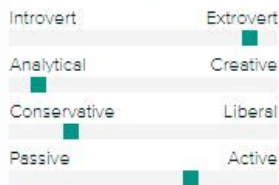
Hacker



"I don't need none of this Facegram, Tweet nonsense. Kids these days are as dumb as those gameboys they're using"

Age: 84
Work: Retired
Family: Married with 3 children
Location: Darwin, NT

Personality



Luddite Traditional Family-orientated

Goals

- Live life like it was back when she was younger
- Teach people rather than listen
- Show her grand kids that she knows how to use 'SideTalk'

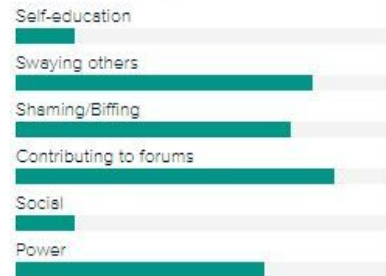
Frustrations

- Disrespectful young people
- Doesn't understand progressive thought
- Computer literacy
- When breaking news disrupts her day time TV

Bio

Ruth was born and raised in Darwin. Her parents both owned together a small grocery store business. She had a very fulfilling childhood without the use of digital and mobile technology and feels as though young people these days are spoiled and care about things that don't matter. She feels like she's been around long enough to know better, and loves to speak out and impart her strong opinions unto others.

Motivations



Brands



Preferred Channels

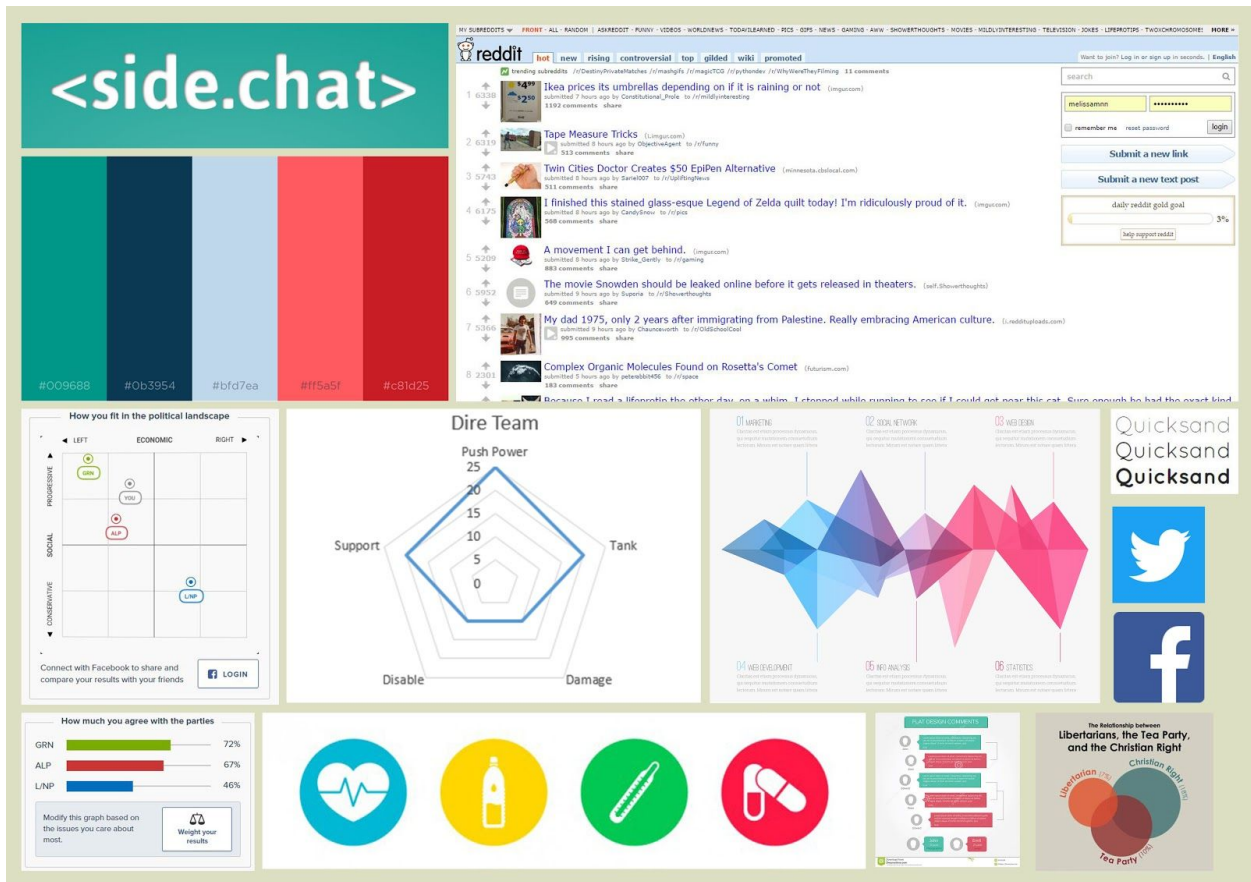


Luddite User

Design

Mood Board

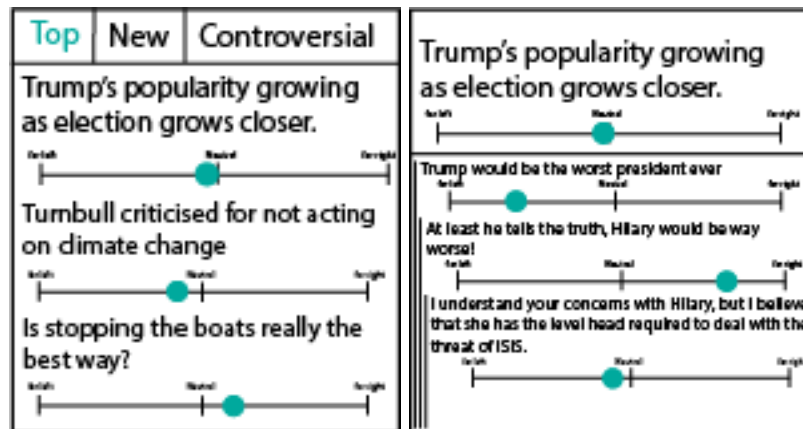
At the beginning of the design process, ideas and features were brainstormed and a moodboard was created as a reference point for further design development. This involved a collection of colours, functionalities, fonts and exiting literature.



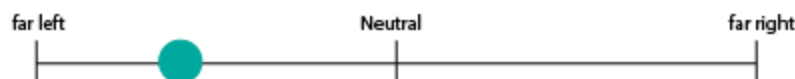
Moodboard

Wireframes

Initially paper prototypes were used to gather feedback about required functionalities and user task flows of the concept. During user testing it was found that a site map similar to that of *reddit* was the most easily adaptable and understood. By using a *reddit* as our design base, feature placement, formatting and navigation were already familiar to users and provided a neutral structure for any of our user personas. Thus, wireframes were created based upon the paper prototypes that were most successful.



Front Page and Thread Concept



Voting scale Concept



Homepage Wireframe

A Web Page

http://side.chat/login

Category 1 Category 2 Category 3 Category 4

<side.chat> TOP NEW CONTROVERSIAL Login Register

Login

E-mail Address

Password

☐ Remember me

Login Forgot your password?

Login Wireframe

A Web Page

http://side.chat/register

Category 1 Category 2 Category 3 Category 4

<side.chat> TOP NEW CONTROVERSIAL Login Register

Register

Name

E-mail Address

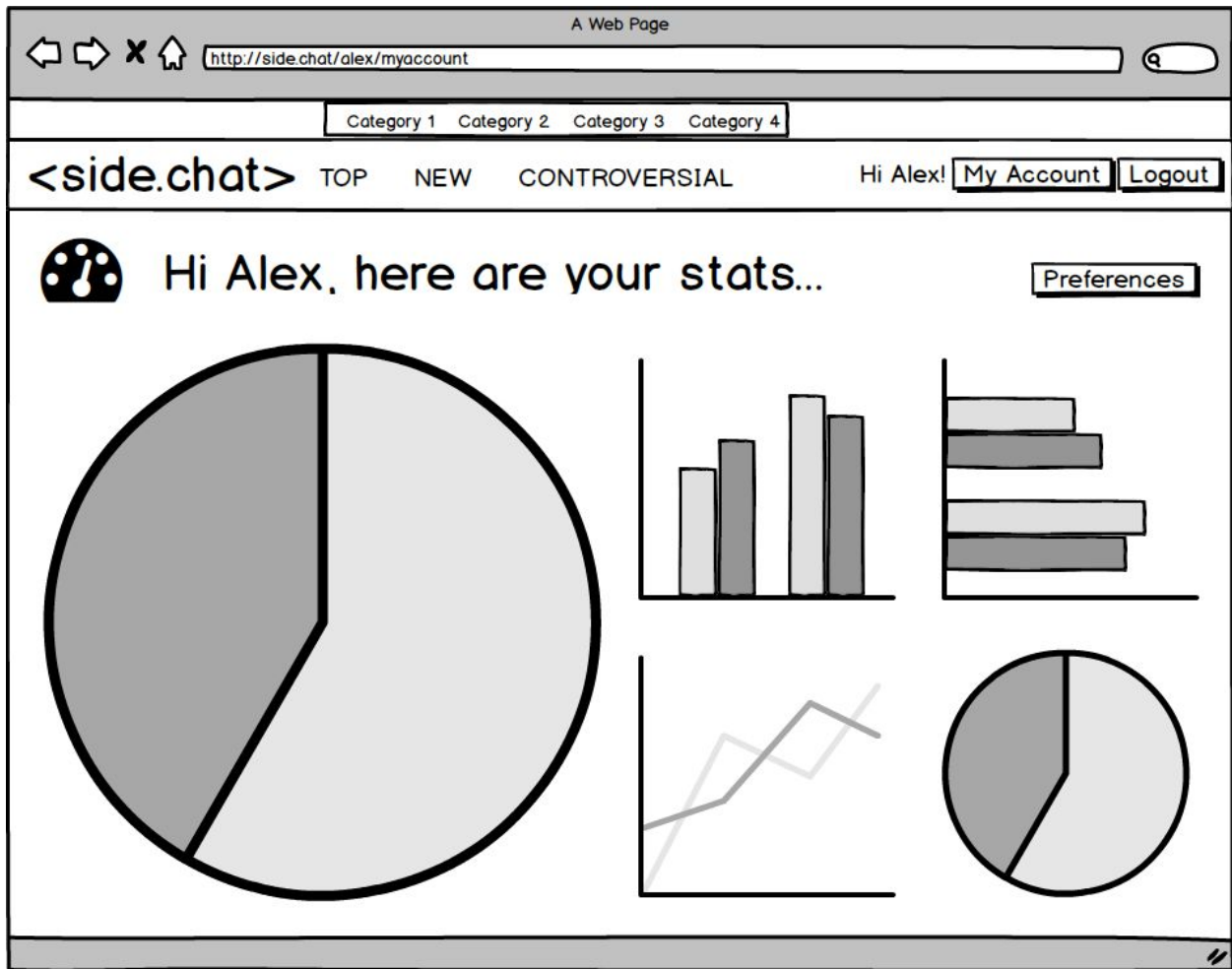
Password

Confirm Password

Register Wireframe



Logged In Homepage Wireframe



My Account Wireframe

A Web Page

http://side.chat/alex/myaccount/preferences

Q


Category 1Category 2Category 3Category 4

<side.chat>

TOPNEWCONTROVERSIAL

Hi Alex!My AccountLogout

[My Account > Preferences > ...](#)



Preferences

Preferences Group

☐ not selected

☒ selected

☐ not selected

☐ not selected

☐ not selected

☐ indeterminate

☐ disabled

☐ disabled

☐ disabled

Preferences Group

☐ not selected

☒ selected

☐ not selected

☐ indeterminate

☐ disabled

Preferences Group

☐ not selected


☒ selected

User Preferences Wireframe

A Web Page
http://side.chat/articleXYZ

Category 1
Category 2
Category 3
Category 4

<side.chat>
TOP
NEW
CONTROVERSIAL
Login
Register



Article XYZ

Info

Paragraph of comments/description that the user who posted the article has written...

blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah

Number of Comments
Share
Save

Leave a comment

Save
Cancel

Comment Info (user, timestamp etc.)
Someone's comment comment comment comment comment comment comment comment comment

Far Left
Centrist
Far Right

Save Rating
Reply

Comment Info (user, timestamp etc.)
Someone's comment comment comment comment comment comment comment comment comment

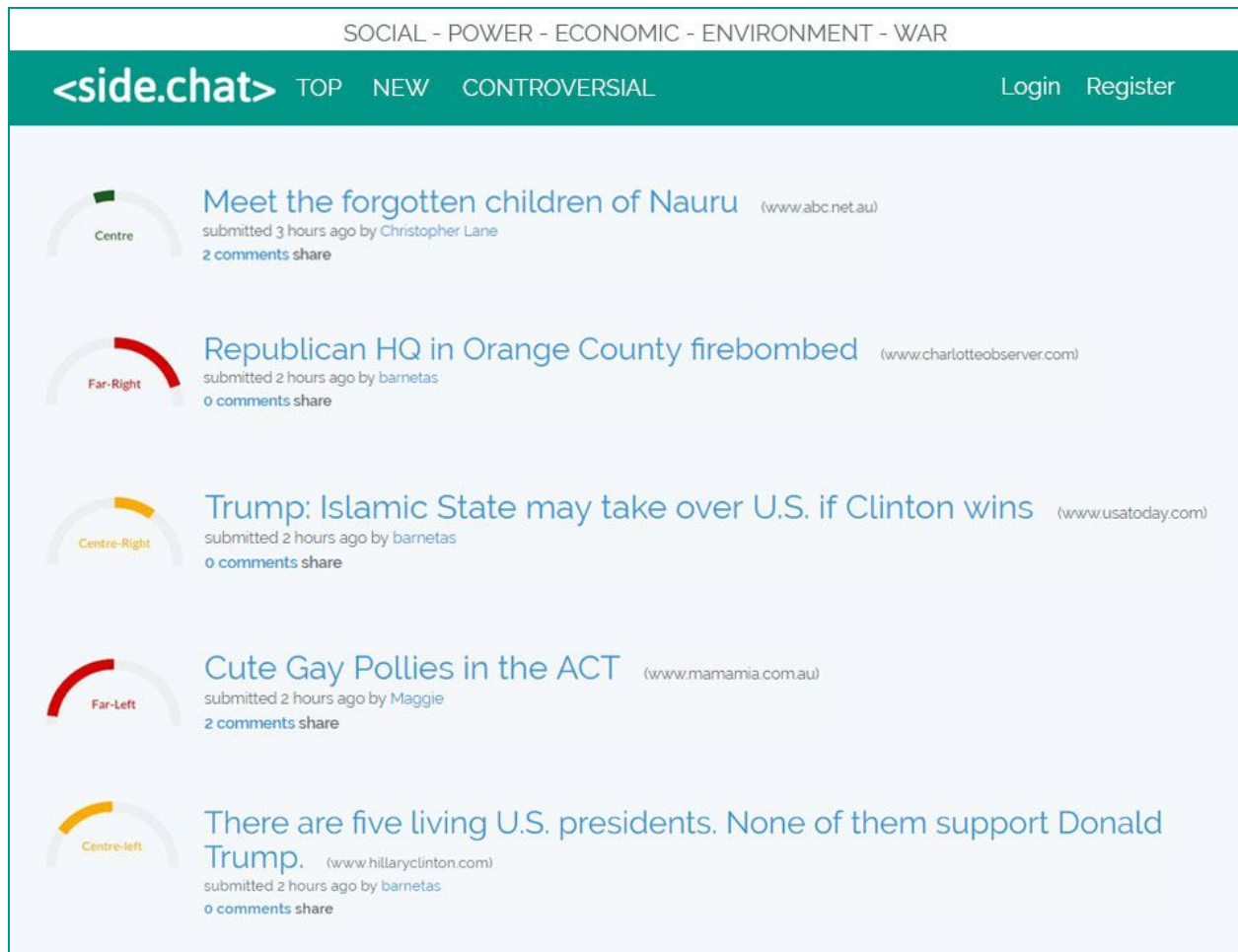
Far Left
Centrist
Far Right

Save Rating
Reply

Comment Thread Wireframe

Mockups

When the structure of the site was tested and solidified, website mockups were created.



Homepage Mockup

SOCIAL - POWER - ECONOMIC - ENVIRONMENT - WAR

<side.chat> TOP NEW CONTROVERSIAL Login Register

Login

E-Mail Address

Password

☐ Remember Me

Login

Forgot Your Password?

Login Mockup

SOCIAL - POWER - ECONOMIC - ENVIRONMENT - WAR

<side.chat> TOP NEW CONTROVERSIAL Login Register

Register

Name

E-Mail Address

Password

Confirm Password

Register

Register User Mockup

SOCIAL - POWER - ECONOMIC - ENVIRONMENT - WAR

<side.chat>
TOP
NEW
CONTROVERSIAL

Hi Alex!
My Account
Logout

Centre

Meet the forgotten children of Nauru

(www.abc.net.au)
submitted 3 hours ago by Christopher Lane
2 comments share

Far-Right

Republican HQ in Orange County firebombed

(www.charlotteobserver.com)
submitted 2 hours ago by barnetas
0 comments share

Centre-Right

Trump: Islamic State may take over U.S. if Clinton wins

(www.usatoday.com)
submitted 2 hours ago by barnetas
0 comments share

Far-Left

Cute Gay Pollies in the ACT

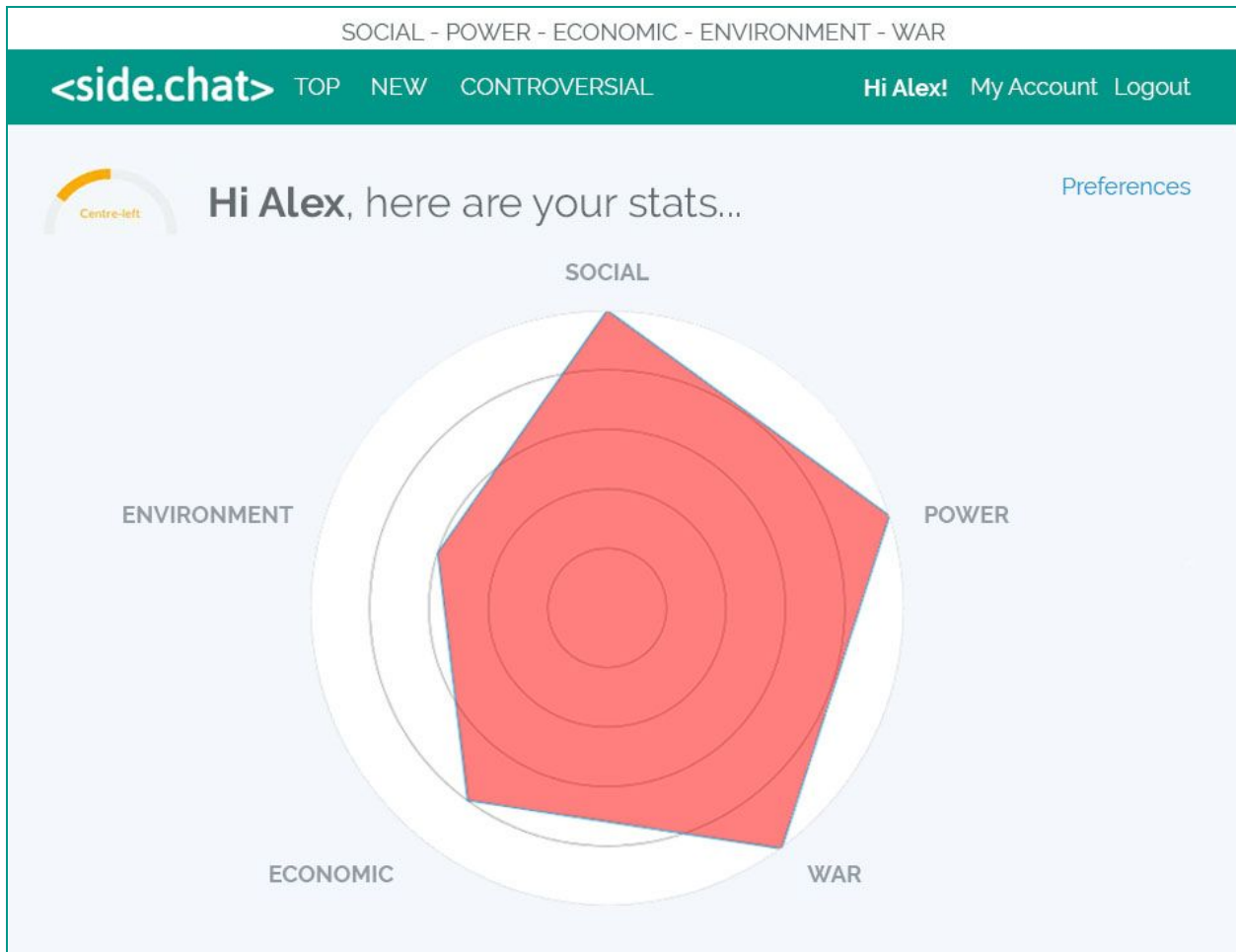
(www.mamamia.com.au)
submitted 2 hours ago by Maggie
2 comments share

Centre-left

There are five living U.S. presidents. None of them support Donald Trump.

(www.hillaryclinton.com)
submitted 2 hours ago by barnetas
0 comments share


Logged In Homepage Mockup



User Statistics Mockup

SOCIAL - POWER - ECONOMIC - ENVIRONMENT - WAR

<side.chat> TOP NEW CONTROVERSIAL Hi Alex! My Account Logout

 Preferences

Preferences Group 1

☐ Option

☐ Option

☐ Option

☐ Option

☐ Option

Preferences Group 2

☐ Option

☐ Option

☐ Option

☐ Option

Preferences Group 3

☐ Option


☐ Option

☐ Option

User Preferences Mockup

SOCIAL - POWER - ECONOMIC - ENVIRONMENT - WAR

<side.chat> TOP NEW CONTROVERSIAL Hi Alex! My Account Logout



There are five living U.S. presidents. None of them support Donald Trump.

(www.hillaryclinton.com)

submitted 2 hours ago by barnetas

This is the user who posted the link's description of the article. They can say whatever they want here....

[200 comments](#) [share](#) [save](#)

Leave a comment

save cancel

Chris Lane submitted 17091 days ago

This is a comment

Far Left Centrist Far Right

Save Rating Reply

Chris Lane submitted 17091 days ago

This is a comment

Far Left Centrist Far Right

Save Rating Reply

Chris Lane submitted 17091 days ago

This is a comment

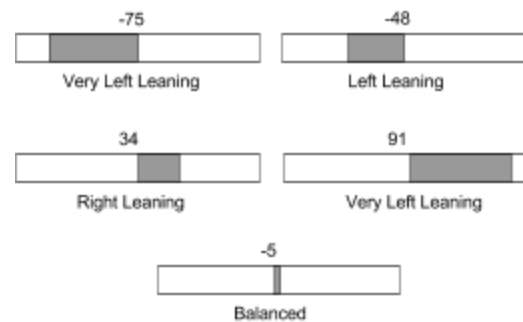
Comment Thread Mockup

Representing Data

The primary purpose of the site was to demonstrate to users the degree of balance of each thread in an efficient way, and we needed to come up with a strong visual means of showing balance between left and right without showing any bias to one side or the other.

Initially, we discussed and experimented with prototypes that demonstrated political leanings through color coding. This proved ineffective, as political colouring is not universal (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_colour), and some users could have unintended interpretations.

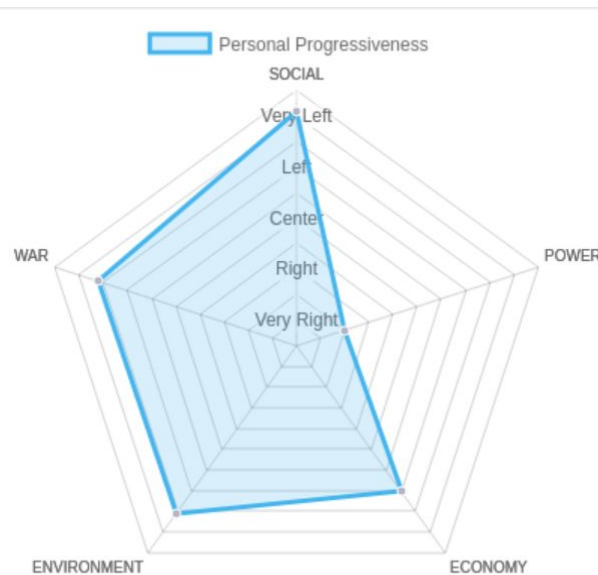
It was also difficult to represent the political leanings through numerical values and graphs. Initial mockups to represent the discussion utilised a bar graph with a corresponding value ranging from -100 (left) to 100 (right). Feedback from user testing indicated this had the unintended consequence of insinuating left-leaning discussions were 'negative' and right leaning discussions were 'positive'.



Our final design utilized a semi-circle gauge chart. This specific chart was chosen as the middle is raised, indicating value for discussions rated closest to the center. To further reinforce this message, a score out of 10 was given to each discussion. Balanced discussions would have a high score, and biased discussions of either side would have low scores. This removed the issues encountered by using negative values.

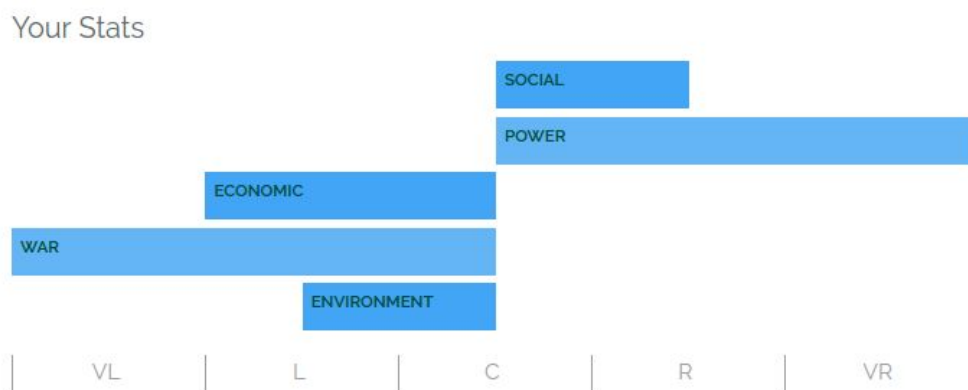


Our initial design for representing a user's political leanings was a radar graph. This was chosen as it had an eye catching design. After developing a prototype and testing it with users we soon realised it had an unintended message of 'encouraging' left leaning ideology. Users interpreted that the larger the blue shape, the 'better' their score was, but this went against our design intentions for balance across the political spectrum; we didn't want to preference either conservatism or progressiveness as better.



Original User Stats Chart (Radar Graph)

We changed from the Radar graph to a bar graph, and user feedback aligned with our intended representation of the user data.



Current User Stats Chart (Bar Graph)

Construction

The next phase of the process was development of the prototype. We first set up the Laravel development environment and created our directories, set up a template for our site and created a database to hold user accounts, discussions, comment threads. We set up user authentication using the Laravel framework and created a page where users could submit links to create threads. Next, we integrated the UI components we had created for the site, including the gauge charts to indicate thread balance and the sliders for users to vote on comment balance. The creation of nested comment threads with the ability to reply to comments and algorithms for thread sorting were the final step before pushing the site live.

Many features of our prototype used and were adapted from third-party developer tools. A full list can be found below:

Feature	Adapted From
Development environment, database, user authentication	<i>Laravel Framework</i> found at https://laravel.com/
Gauge charts	<i>Minimal, Animated SVG Gauge Charts</i> found at http://codepen.io/hpoydar/pen/MyqORZ
User Bias Scale	<i>Animated Bar Graphs</i> found at https://codepen.io/alex_rodrigues/pen/ogYZdr
Site Design	<i>Bootstrap by Twitter</i> found at http://getbootstrap.com/

Team Roles

Each of the *side.chat* team member's roles and contributions are noted below:

Member	Contributions
Alex Barnett	Team leader, concept creator, front and back end development
Chris Lane	Front and back end development, UX element creation
Melissa Nguyen	UI/UX Designer, personas, wireframes, mockups
Luke Hartwig	Research and testing, promotional site development