

Project research documentation

Team: Trust&Launch

Concept: connectYall

GitLab: <https://git.fhict.nl/I478947/m3-cb-02-trust-and-launch.git>

Author's note: this document covers the research our team did for the project, namely working on discovering issues in the real world that we could then transpose into the digital environment. It contains research methods, methodologies applied and different techniques we used for understanding our users better, as well as draw lines around the concepts that we will implement in our application.

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SUMMARY

Wishing to provide users with **better socializing solutions**, Trust&Launch agreed on choosing the second case, the digital substitute for a real-life activity.

The goal of our research for this project was to define 1) if our difficulties with socialization post COVID-19 were the case for other people too, and if so 2) identify a target audience for which we were able to 3) identify their goals and needs.

We came up with this idea based on our personal experience, as international students post COVID-19. As we are social beings, it is mandatory that we experience some form of human interaction as often as possible. Not doing so, might result in facing with depression, especially common when moving abroad. This term was defined by specialty literature as “*expat depression*”, as The Daily Sabah mentions.

Having conducted in-depth research for issues people faced in the real world, the main problem we identified is the lack of social interaction post COVID-19. We observed that due to lockdowns and restrictions, people became more isolated, and many previously common activities started to feel out of place.

Another issue that occurred to us when researching into the problem, was that people who moved abroad experienced different difficulties while trying to make new connections.

However, our aim is to build a web application accessible for everyone, to provide a meeting point for people from various backgrounds and encourage inclusivity.

Because we are all social beings that require interaction with one another, our company aimed to fill this hole in people's lives, by taking care of all safety measures to make users feel at ease.

To assist our users with their needs and provide them with a digital substitute for this social issue, we came up with the concept of a platform where people can interact with each other and make new acquaintances who share the same interests and hobbies.

connectYall is on a mission to end loneliness by encouraging individuals to engage in offline social connection on a daily basis.

PRIMARY RESEARCH

The first step in developing our product was to conduct research and clarify which issue needed our attention. Since most of our team is formed out of international students, we knew that the hardest experience, but also the one that brought a lot of fulfilment in our lives, was moving abroad for university. It was a good starting point, but we wanted to see if others encountered it too and in what way. The easiest way to see that, was by asking fellow students how was moving abroad for them; the most common answer was, as expected, the difficulty in finding friends and keeping people with whom you interacted close. And there, we had our problem, **difficulty in finding friends and people with whom you share interests with.**

To reach a larger audience, we did brainstorm sessions in which we tried to find other situations in which people might have felt socially isolated. This was done to broaden our target audience, not only aimed at international students or people who move abroad (for work). COVID-19 was the most common situation in which people felt like they had no one to talk to, this situation being even harder for anxious people. However, after the pandemic ended people still felt that something was missing, namely the social gatherings, who were not the same as before.

Having identified our problems, the team moved on with more specific research topics, user surveys, interviews, and identifying goals and needs through personas and user journeys.

The result was that sharing mutual interests was the thing that brought most people together, which is why we chose to develop an application focused at finding friends through shared interests.

Survey

The survey's scope was to identify demographics and set up a more specific target audience.

This helped us in better understanding our users' needs based on personal experiences (**Question:** "What would have helped you to overcome the isolation you were feeling [at a moment mentioned above]"), as well as establishing if an application targeted at connecting people with the same interests would help them in moments of loneliness and isolation.

More specific survey insights and results can be found in the GitLab repository, at the link: <https://git.fhict.nl/I478947/m3-cb-02-trust-and-launch.git>

User interviews

Empathizing with our audience is one of the most important steps in understanding their needs and this is what we aimed at with this session of interviews. We chose our users based on the demographics revealed in the surveys and formed the questions in such a way that they would explain to us moments when they encountered feelings of loneliness and isolation.

It helped us to have a clearer idea on what features we should focus on when developing the prototype, as well as gave us new perspective on designing the concept.

More specific interview insights and answers can be found in the GitLab repository, at the link: <https://git.fhict.nl/I478947/m3-cb-02-trust-and-launch.git>

User's goals and needs (through personas and user journey)

Having clear insights in mind, we were able to portray our ideal target user. The most revealing and organized way to do that, was by creating personas and a user journey. This provided us with sufficient material to start the ideation process.

More specific information about how we identified and approached each user's goals and needs can be found in the GitLab repository, at the link: <https://git.fhict.nl/I478947/m3-cb-02-trust-and-launch.git>

HMW & POV

How might we question helped us coming up with an actual design challenge, to create an app aimed at connecting people with the same interests and hobbies. Some HMW questions that we came up with:

1. How might we reintroduce people in the 'real world' after the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How might we design something to help people who struggle with social anxiety make friends with the same interests as them?
3. How might we design something to help people who move to a new country make friends?
4. How might we include people into a community?
5. How might we gather people with the same interests in one place?
6. How might we make people feel safe online?
7. How might we dig deeper into anxiety issues?
8. How might we make people want to open up to one another?
9. How might we evaluate the level of compatibility between 2 people?
10. How might we bring back activities that were normal before COVID-19?

The POVs:

A young adult who just moved to a new country in order to pursue higher education needs to create connections because if he ends up staying isolated, he might feel isolated and become depressive.

People who used to have an active social life before COVID-19 need to socialize through different platforms because they would rather spend time with people than alone.

We ended up coming up with solutions for the first three of the HMW, can be accessed at: <https://git.fhict.nl/I478947/m3-cb-02-trust-and-launch.git>

Feedback

After the pitch presentation at the LiveWall headquarters, we received some feedback from our teachers as well as the company's representatives.

The main point of the feedback was that our presentation was focused a bit too much on the research part, and by the time we were closing up with the concepts, we were already rushed. However, our idea is good and now we need to make sure we plan everything right so we can "make it our own".

We plan on listening to this feedback to make the best as possible from our concept.

