

# 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 socialising 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 socialisation 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 an 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.

In order 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 brainstorming sessions in which we tried to find other situations in which people might have felt socially isolated. This was done in order 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 end 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's 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

Empathising 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 organised 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** questions 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 socialise 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 in order to make the best as possible from our concept.

## **SECONDARY RESEARCH**

The scope of the secondary research was to solidify the information we obtained on field, with documented resources. We were able to find a multitude of online resources that explained how people who move abroad have a hard time finding people with the same interests as them, as well as how they can be more predisposed at forming depression, if they do not manage to form a new social life in the new country.

There is also evidence on how most people's social life was affected by the pandemic. Some people developed social anxiety when having to re-enter society; this happens when one spends time alone and lets their mind wander, creating different fictional scenarios, that can facilitate social anxiety.



# Library research

## Article 1 summary - [nia.nih.gov](https://nia.nih.gov)

According to studies, social isolation and loneliness raise the chance of developing conditions like heart disease, depression, and cognitive decline. Due of health concerns and the requirement for physical distance, the coronavirus outbreak in 2020 introduced further difficulties.

A person is more likely to experience loneliness and social isolation if they become suddenly alone because of a loved one's illness, being away from friends or family, losing their mobility, developing eyesight or hearing issues, being disabled, or not having access to transportation. Social isolation and loneliness are distinct but connected. Being alone or apart from others causes the agonizing experience of loneliness. Lack of social connections and having few people to routinely communicate with constitute social isolation. You can be socially isolated or lonely when living alone, and you can also feel lonely when you're around other people.

## Article 2 summary - AKPAÇA, G. (2020). The hushed-up dark side of living abroad: Expat depression. *Daily Sabah*

Moving to a foreign country is one of the most adventurous life choices you can make, but it also comes with a lot of pressure. Along with dealing with cultural differences and language barriers, expats frequently have to rely heavily on locals to guide them through even the most basic tasks, such as signing a lease or buying prescription medicines at the pharmacy. Over time, this can undermine one's confidence in their own abilities. Moving internationally demands a lot of energy, optimism, self-assurance, and independence, which is possibly why individuals with the courage to do so initially try to brush off the signs of depression or anxiety.

42.8% of the 5,000 expatriates surveyed in a study by Dr. Mitesh Patel, medical director of the American health insurance company Aetna, listed the lack of a support system as their main source of stress. "As our clinical experts have provided support to our members, they have found that the absence of the friend and family network compounds stress and anxiety suffered by expatriates on foreign soil," the study said. "Taken together, these findings suggest that the experience of living overseas is a difficult and demanding one

and that if things begin to degrade for individuals emotionally, a cascade of problems can be expected to accompany the emotional shift,” it added.

**Article 3 summary** - Dudys, V. (2017). Moving abroad and expat depression. *theskinny.co.uk*

The Skinny article shares the story of Victoria Dudys, who moved abroad and suffered from expat depression. According to her, living in a new country is a phenomenal experience, but with adapting to new cultures, she felt out of place and alone. Vitoria was thrilled to be starting over and remaking herself in a new country, but after about five months, she felt stuck. Life was not only becoming less exciting for her but also absolutely overwhelming and unbearable. She realised that she had made virtually no friends since she worked alone, and had an almost non-existent support system. She would wake up, cry, go to work, cry in the bathroom, cry on the bus home, and cry before going to sleep. Expat depression is incredibly common. Depression is like this little goblin that lives in the deep corners of your mind who tells you you're not good enough for friends and makes you feel insecure. When she finally decided she wanted to get past her depression she knew she would have to find someone to speak to.

**Article 4 summary** - Epps, T. (2021). Struggling with Social Anxiety as We Prepare for Re-entry Post-COVID? Anxiety Expert Shares How to Cope. *Penn Medicine*

People are experiencing social anxiety as they prepare for re-entry after COVID, according to PennMedicine news. The COVID-19 pandemic increased causes of stress for many people, as well as changes in how we connect with others — from preventing COVID-19 to spending less in-person time with loved ones and friends. While some anticipated this and look forward to a "return to normal", others enjoy the more isolated lifestyle experienced during the epidemic. Those who deal with social anxiety have found remote learning, work, and socialisation to be ideal. Re-entry, on the other hand, may be difficult for someone suffering from social anxiety, an anxiety disorder that causes extreme fear in social situations. The past two years have allowed them to avoid the everyday tasks that come along with socialising, which they may have found difficult. Some may have felt their anxiety

significantly decrease during this period of time, but it's likely their anxieties did not go away, Ammon explains. They have been paused due to the pandemic and it is likely that those social worries are beginning to return. But, people can prepare for their return to in-person activities to help manage their anxieties.