

Assignment 1: Venture Value Proposition

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Introduction

In the past decade, the demand of mental health services increases significantly. According to a survey conducted by Headspace, a national Australia youth mental health service provider, the number of young people accessing mental health services from Headspace centers increases from 38,567 in 2013 to 88,557 in 2018. The survey also found that young people on average waited more than 10 days for intake session and more than 25 days for first therapy session (Headspace, 2019). These findings suggested that the supply of mental health service for young people is highly insufficient. In order to address this problem, I am going to present my product which aims to reduce the gap between the increasing demand and insufficient supply of mental health services for young people.

My product is a conversational agent operated by the artificial intelligence, which can communicate with treatment seekers through a mobile app or a software installed on a desktop computer to provide them immediate and accurate results of mental health assessment and self-help treatment for their diagnosed mental health problems. Depending on the severity and nature of my customer's diagnosed mental health problem, my product can recommend and refer customers to mental health social workers, clinical psychologists or psychiatrists. My target customers are teenagers and young adults who search for services and resources to assess and treat their mental health problems.

Unlike other hotline services like SA Mental Health Triage Service, my product does not require human operators to conduct the initial assessment and triage, it therefore has lower operation cost. My product also does not require treatment seekers to share their mental health condition and other sensitive information to a real person while receiving assessment and treatment.

Unlike other renowned conversational agents like Apple Siri, Google Assistant, Amazon Alexa and Microsoft Cortana, my product is developed specifically for delivering appropriate responses and advice to people with mental health problems, so to ensure that it will not cause harm to my target customers.

To leverage the powerful and user-friendly functionalities provided by Google, my product will make use of Google API to direct my customers to the results of Google search and Google map when providing suggestions of mental health service providers.

My product also provides personalized advice and recommendations in response to customers' follow-up enquires. For example, my product can provide helpful advice to customers' concerns of speaking language and cultural background of mental health practitioners.

In the following sections, I am going to discuss about the current pain and gain of my target customers experienced when seeking for mental health services. I will also discuss why my product could be a good fit to our target customers. My following discussions are supported

by research findings published in peer-reviewed journals or self-issued report; and my findings of interviewing 4 young adults (2 males and 2 females, aged between 18 to 28 years old) who had experience in seeking for mental health services.

Customer gain

My target customers could conveniently make use of Internet searching tools like Google search or Google map to seek for mental health services. From my interviews, I found my interviewees in general appreciated how Google map presents the search results (Figure 1). With this presentation layout, users could conveniently locate the mental health service providers that are closed to where they live. They can also conveniently read other customers' reviews and get to know what services each service provider may provide from their basic information.

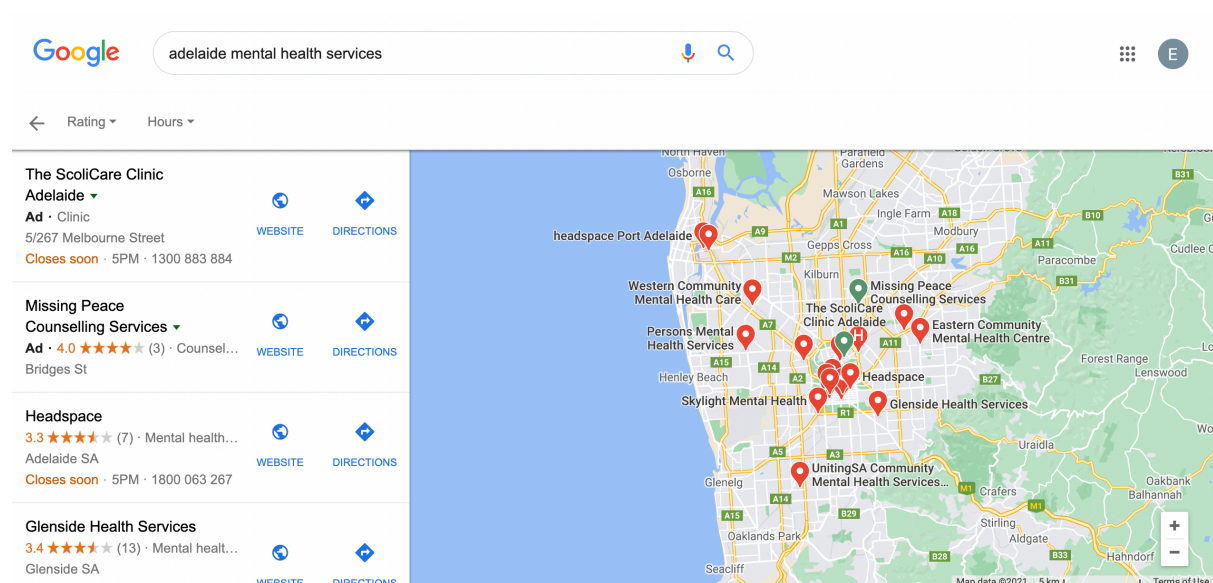


Figure 1. Screen capture of Google Map search results for mental health services in Adelaide

My target customer could obtain useful recommendations and advice for mental health services from their friends and peers. My interviewees shared that they also asked their friends for recommendations of mental health services in their existing chat groups in messenger app like WhatsApp, WeChat and Signal. Some interviewees valued their friends and peers' recommendations more compared to the results they found in other Internet searching tools, especially for non-local treatment seekers who may want to find mental health partitioners with a particular nationality and cultural background.

Customer pain

Long service wait time is a serious problem. As mentioned, it could take more than 10 days for a youth treatment seeker to wait for an intake session and more than 25 days to wait for a therapy session (Headspace, 2019). Treatment seekers could continue to suffer from the distress experienced from their mental health problems if they do nothing to cope with their mental health problems while waiting for assessment and treatment.

There could be safety risks in using existing conversational agents for searching mental health services. People who suffer from severe mental health problems could have suicidal attempts and ideations. If those people do not receive appropriate responses when talking to a conversational agent, the consequence could be fatal. Existing conversational agents like Apple Siri, Google Assistant, Amazon Alexa and Microsoft Cortana could provide responses and recommendations to users who are seeking for mental health services. However, Kocaballi et al. (2020) found that collectively more than 50% of responses made by these conversational agents were not appropriate in response to safety-critical conversation. Therefore, there could be safety risks for using conversational agents that are not designed specifically for communicating and helping people with the mental health problems.

Gain created by my product

My product offers young people an alternative channel to tackle with their mental health problems and could therefore partially satisfy the huge demand of youth mental health services. As using my product does not involve in revealing mental health condition and other sensitive information to real people, young people may still use my product even they may have stigmatization of their mental health problems (Kaushik, Kostaki & Kyriakopoulos, 2016). Moreover, tech-based mental health services are increasingly popular among young people nowadays. In United States, a study found that 447 of 2789 teenager respondents had experience in using tech-based mental health resources to cope with depression, anxiety and stress problems (Toscos et al., 2019). Therefore, tech-based mental health services have a market potential for young people.

My product makes use of Google API to deliver powerful searching performance. Based on the results of my interviews, my target customers are satisfied with searching for mental service services using Google search and Google map. According to this finding, my product makes use of Google API to search and present suitable mental health services to my customers, so that they could have a similar satisfactory experience in using my product for searching for mental health services.

My product provides my customers personalized advice and recommendations mimicking how young people communicate with their friends and peers about their mental health problems. Based on the results of my interviews, my target customers may need more personalized recommendations from their friends and peers for additional concerns that are not addressed by the results of general searching tools. My product is able to save and match profiles of a large pool of customers and mental health practitioners. With this capability, my product can provide helpful and personalized suggestions to my customers for their follow-up concerns.

Pain minimized by my product

With my product, my customers will no longer need to wait for a long time for a mental health assessment because my product is able to provide my customers an immediate and reliable assessment for their mental health problems. Such reliability is developed and maintained by advanced machine learning algorithm and high-quality clinical data. Its diagnosis accuracy rate will also be audited from time to time by psychiatrists and clinical psychologists.

My product provides my customers self-help treatment for their diagnosed mental health problems, which could reduce the psychological distress of my customers during service wait time. Numerous research studies have shown that tech-based psychological treatment could be effective for various kinds of mental health problems, including depression (Ebert et al., 2015; Josephine et al., 2017), anxiety disorders (Ebert et al., 2015) and insomnia (Zachariae et al., 2016). It suggests that with the use of tech-based treatment, my product could alleviate, or even cure cases of mental health problems. It could therefore help to satisfy part of the unmet demand of mental health services nowadays young people facing.

My product puts the safety of my target customers in top priority. Before it is released to the market, it will be independently audited by psychiatrists and clinical psychologists to ensure that my product will not produce responses that could harm my customers, especially for people with suicidal risks. Unlike other renowned conversational agents like Apple Siri, Google Assistant, Amazon Alexa and Microsoft Cortana (Kocaballi et al., 2020), using my product for assessing and treating mental health problems should be completely safe.

Conclusion

While the demand for mental health services for young people is highly significant and service wait time is increasingly prominent nowadays, my product offers a tech-based solution to provide teenagers and young adults immediate mental health assessment and self-help treatment. My product offers an alternative channel for young people to tackle with their mental health problems without revealing their mental health condition and sensitive information to real people. It can also act as a user-friendly searching tool for mental health services or provide personalized advice and recommendations like what other friends and peers would do. With my product, young mental health treatment seekers will no longer need to wait for more than a week, or even a month for an assessment and treatment. With a high safety standard audited by psychiatrists and clinical psychologists, my product is the only conversational agent that can provide young people a reliable, helpful and risk-free support to cope with their mental health problems.

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