

Your best friend to make Friends: Yiami

Entrepreneurs want to create a new app that allows users to establish real relationships. The app is intended to be the tool devised to connect like-minded individuals exclusively on communalities. It aims at both creating social interactions without involving external appearances and stimulating in-person meeting. While there are several apps focusing on social relationships, the main differentiating value of the app would be to offer a single point of entry to make new friends in the real life.

In June 2022, the first thing the entrepreneurs discussed during their meetings to define the business model were the main personas they would target. Finally, they decided to consider the following persona in their business model:

- **College Students:** Freshmen, Sophomore, Foreign students, and Out-of-town students, Students who want to broaden their social circle
- **People feeling lonely:** People with few relations (*family, friends, etc.*), People who want to enlarge their network or are tired of their circle of friends or want to broad horizons
- **Peers:** People with common hobbies & passions, Workmates, «Artist & Sport» Fans
- **Commuters & Travelers:** People who want to find other travelers to chat with and meet in person

In second place, in September 2022, they hired a firm providing market analysis. This firm organised a dinner with some potential customers in October 2022 to discuss what would be the main motivations to use an app. The customers in the sample were between 20 and 45 years old, mostly professionals, even if there were some artists and some unemployed too. Some of them had master degrees, but also some of them did not finish high school or college.

Most of the respondents said they don't expect to start an emotional relationship with this app, although they might like to, and a group offers better odds than meeting one person. Frank, a German who has lived in Rome for several years but is looking to "expand his network" after a divorce, estimates that singles account for "99 per cent" of people that would use the app. When the entrepreneurs asked one twentysomething there what she hoped for from the in person meeting, she carefully answers "new friends", then adds, riotously, "and a husband!". A Computer Technology professor, mentioned during the dinner that he was sick of swiping and having online conversations with strange people that do not go anywhere, he actually wanted

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to meet real people. Some other user suggested that the app should have no profiles, no say in who we meet, but just let the app creating the groups and creating the meetings. He suggested that existing apps offer quantity, but little promise of in meaning or quality, and therefore he thinks that people using this app will keep endlessly searching for “the perfect friend” since transaction costs are limited by the app, while he believes real friendships is based on accepting the imperfections of your friends. In the end, he continues, there could be the paradox that when the app offers an infinite procession of strangers, offered out of context by a machine, would make me feel lonely. The main goal of the app for many of the attendants to the meeting should be being auditioned and auditioning. Overall, at the end of the dinner with these potential customers the entrepreneurs that the core value proposition of the app should be to create meaningful relationships with other people and to achieve this goal the app should be able to connect with other like-minded people with the scope of a long term meaningful relationship. As one of the customers said, “If you are surrounded by people, but don’t feel like you connect, that make you feel more lonely”.

Some of the customers reinforced this concept of core friendship, and even suggested that a friend on Yiami should be someone that you need to be able to walk to their house and bang on their door and that they expected making no more than five real friends in the app.

However, on the other hand, there were some of the attendants at the dinner suggesting that their main motivation was to widen their network, meeting more and more people. A girl called Valeria said that he would use the app just to share a hobby with someone, since often finds herself practicing her main hobby alone, even if having several good friends, but who do not share her hobbies. Marco, insisted that not only the people but also the context where the meeting happens is relevant, and the meeting should take in places where he feels cared for and welcome.

Even if it did not come out during the dinner, the entrepreneurs thought that users will need replication, and therefore they expect to create some functionality where the app automatically creates future meetings with the people you have already met. “To create connection you need repetition” said one of the entrepreneurs, and completing this argument “ The real problem is not meeting someone, is to have time and energy to meet someone”.

Some of the customers finally mentioned that it is tiring to hang out with strangers, calibrating what can be said and what cannot be said, to see yourself reflected in the eyes of people you don’t know. In one word, he would not use the app, because he could not be the real he. As some other woman mentioned, connection is not relevant, what really matters is intimacy which

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requires real sharing of the self, including its less desirable aspects, and she thought the app will struggle with that.

After analyzing the results of the meeting, in January 2023 they hired a developing team to build up the app. The first meetings with the development team focused on the main functional components of the app, namely:

- Search engine
- Matching and Re-matching Algorithm
- Database of filters based on passions and interests
- ID management system
- Event management system
- Conversation system
- Geolocation system

After few months, the developing team provided a beta version of the app in June 2023, that after some technical testing will be launched to the market during the autumn 2024. More specifically, the app will be first shared with some key users in the groups AndroidApp Testers and TestmyApp in the Reddit social network as well as in the Peertest.org website.

After testing the app, the plan is to hire a salesforce of at least 4 ambassadors to sell the app in 4 of the largest university campuses in Europe: Milan, Paris, Utrecht and Munich. Recruitment: The first step in the Ambassador plan will be identifying those bright sparks, those students who are influencers in their own right, and bringing them onboard. These ambassadors are then immersed in the Yiami world through a two weeks course in Rome. This ensures that when they speak, they speak the Yiami language. Later, the magic unfolds, since Ambassadors, with their training, create ripples of brand awareness, be it through events, social media campaigns, or even casual discussions. To ensure the program's success, continuous monitoring is vital. This provides insights into strategies that work, areas of improvement, and more. Finally, recognizing and rewarding these ambassadors' passion is crucial. Not only does it motivate them, but it also reinforces their bond with Yiami.

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1. Please describe what type of innovation is Yiami: Is it disruptive or sustaining innovation? If disruptive, please describe which type. Is it radical or incremental innovation?

Yiami can be considered as a sustaining innovation. Disruptive innovations imply either a low price value proposition that competes with similar value propositions at higher prices, or being the first company to target a completely new market (in class we described it as a blue ocean market). Since, there are already apps to make friends or organizing events, we cannot say this is a disruptive innovation.

Yiami is an incremental innovation. The reason is that Yiami is not supporting the value proposition on a completely new and unknown technology. Yiami is using very similar technologies to some other apps (some geolocation technology, some AI for matching and pattern recognition, ...but nothing out of the state of the art of the technology).

2. Please briefly explain if in your opinion the entrepreneurs applied correctly design thinking methodologies, or they missed some stage or misinterpreted the methodology. Please build the house of quality, considering the three main customer requirements that you think emerged during the focus group dinner and using the main components defined by the developing team. Help the firm to prioritize which of these components will be present in the first version of the product. Assign both the weights of the customer requirements as you wish (please remind that 5 points is very relevant to explain the purchasing/downloading decision of the app, 3 points is not so relevant for this decision, 1 point is a customer requirement with little incidence on the purchasing/downloading decision). Regarding the components, remind that 5 points means that the component is highly related to the fulfillment of a customer requirement, 3 points is a component with some incidence on the fulfillment of the customer requirement, while 1 point is a component with little incidence on the customer requirement.

The procedure implemented by the entrepreneurs was the following:

Definition of personas -> Observing customers -> Defining the functionality -> Technical Testing -> Launch

The definition of personas was too early, first they should have observed the customers.

There was not an analysis of the customer needs (What, How, Why) or the customer journey.

There was not Ideation, they basically defined some functionality, which actually had weak connections with the customer requirements.

The prototype was not tested with target users but with other developers.

CUSTOMER REQUIREMENTS	WEIGHT	Search Engine	Matching and Re-matching Algorithm	Database of filters based on passions and interests	ID management system	Event management system	Geolocation system	Conversation system
Chatting with friends	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	5
Finding compatible friends	3	5	5	5	3	1	5	1
Creating events offline	5	1	3	5	1	5	3	1
SCORE		21	31	41	17	29	31	13

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According to the House of Quality method entrepreneurs should focus the investments on the design of Matching and Re-matching Algorithm, and Geolocation system.

3. Please describe which stage of the Moore model described in Crossing the Chasm is relevant for the current stage of the product. Have they selected properly the niche to enter the market, please explain your answer?

Yiami is in the Innovators Stage, since the App is not finished yet and they are actually not selling it. Therefore Yiami founders should target individuals who like to test new products, and can ignore missing elements. Because they enjoy technology so much, they correspond to customers high reservation prices (low willingness to pay).

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4. They are using ambassadors. Please, according to what discussed on product launch in class, describe what would be the main points of the training plan for the ambassadors, considering them as salespeople?

The training plan should comprise most of the following aspects:

- Market landscape overview, including current alternatives and competitors of Yiami.
- Briefed on target user and buyer personas of Yiami.
- Trained in presenting and articulating key value propositions and product differentiators of Yiami
- Basic product usage of Yiami
- Prepared to give demos of Yiami, including which key features and capabilities to demonstrate along with any required training supplies or materials
- Briefed on common questions and potential objections from prospective users of Yiami and how to respond to them.