Milestone 2: Contextual Inquiry

Part 1

Setting Options:
- Video Call
- In User's Dwelling

Participants Categories:
- ☐ Existing Wardrobe Management
- ☐ Wardrobe Additions
- ☐ Resell
- ☐ Virtual Try-On
- ☐ Brand Comparison

Demographic Questions:

Age:
Occupation:
Highest Level of Education:
Gender (Self Identify):
Typical Shopping Setting (online/in-store):
Annual Shopping Frequency (1-2/year, quarterly, monthly, weekly, intermittent, need-based):
Favorite Store:
Patterns of Shopping (whole outfit, single pieces at a time, etc)

Part 2: Interpretation Session

Date/Time:
FigJam Link

Part 3: Affinity Diagram

Date/Time:
FigJam Link

Part 4: Contextual Inquiry Report

Findings
- Patterns
  - Time plays an important role in shopping behaviors. Users prefer online shopping for speed and convenience, especially when time is a factor. However, when there are no time constraints, in-store shopping is preferred for sizing and quality assurance.
  - For both online and in-store shopping, shoppers admit that they consistently return to familiar brands and retailers to alleviate obstacles such as fit, style familiarity, and material quality.
  - Customer reviews are trusted by shoppers as a primary source of information related to determining the correct size, and quality. When shopping for unfamiliar brands, customer reviews are even more heavily relied on.
  - Shoppers also look for videos provided by the brand/platform as a reliable source of visualizing the outfit/item they are looking to purchase
- Pain Points
  - Overall, the biggest pain point for shoppers is determining the correct size when shopping unfamiliar brands.
  - In addition, limited size availability increases frustration and often leads to disappointment after investing time to find a desirable item.
  - Cognitive overload commonly occurs while comparing multiple products, completing looks, and remembering items from different sites.
  - The effort required to find and apply discounts often outweighs the perceived savings causing shoppers to miss out on available deals.
  - While most online platforms provide a way to track "Favorites", shoppers were frustrated that the page gets too chaotic without a way to organize items.
  - For people shopping for family/friends, there is currently no way to keep track of selected outfits for different people; everything is added to one "wishlist" or the "Favorites" page.
- Inefficiencies
  - Shop clearance items or use price filters to help maintain budget.
  - The time and workload affiliated with obtaining coupons outweighs the savings advantages. Not utilizing discount codes and promotional deals ends up costing the consumer more.
  - Mult-tab shopping increases cognitive load and reduces efficiency.
- Workarounds
  - When shopping for completed looks, users typically have multiple tabs open to build outfits across different sites.
  - When facing size uncertainties, users purchase multiple sizes of the same item.
  - Shoppers default to familiar brands and stores to reduce concerns with size, quality, and time, however, better options may exist elsewhere.

- - ○ Features like saving outfits to "Favorites" are typically only available to shoppers with accounts, making them loyal to platforms they are familiar with or have used previously.
  - Actionable Insights
    - ○ Incorporate favorites or digital closet feature that allows users to save and categorize pieces
      - ■ Favorites can be customizable to allow them to create their own categories (tops, winter clothes, shoes, accessories, etc.)
    - ○ Stylist can create favorites/digital closet for each client based on preferences, budget, and needs
    - ○ Include custom filters for price, size, style, brand and customer reviews
    - ○ Ability to attach notes to pieces to help track preferences or concerns
    - ○ Implement a cross-site item comparison tool. Provides the ability to:
      - ■ Compare items from different websites
      - ■ Provides the user the ability to find items for the best price and fit
      - ■ Compare similar items from various brands to assist with making the best styling selection
    - ○ Incorporate digital stylist/shopping assistant that:
      - ■ Provides a visual and realistic idea of what the completed outfit will look like with their current selection
      - ■ Have style swap option and suggestion to obtain the desired style
      - ■ Incorporate recommendations based off users closet, past purchases, and current selections
      - ■ Serves as a guide to complete shopping goals
    - ○ Show customer reviews and brand media for each piece
      - ■ Customer photos, sizing feedback, product quality
      - ■ Videos, photos, and information from the brand, for example: "Model is 5'3" and wearing size M"

Challenges

Of the participants we interviewed, there was a split between shopping enthusiasts and people who shop for necessity rather than enjoyment. The former group struggled less with time and more with efficiency. As they are familiar with the platforms and spend a significant amount of time on them, their main concerns were not being able to keep track of the items they liked in the way that was most helpful to them, and not being sure about sizing and quality with new brands that did not have enough customer reviews or brand media. For the latter group,time pressures were a recurring issue which led to incomplete outfit purchases, overspending due to rushed decisions, and settling for items out of convenience rather than desired items.

Unexpected Findings
- Online shopping did not lead to a reduction in fatigue, stress, and feeling overwhelmed despite the convenience.
- Experienced stylists and casual shoppers often face the same challenges when shopping both online and in-store.

- Although shoppers have access to coupons and discounts, shoppers were reluctant to use them due to the inconvenience of locating and applying them. The time and effort required outweighed their perceived savings.

Future Research Improvements
- Specific Changes
  The contextual inquiries were conducted independently by each member of the team. This allowed the team to have a larger sample size and collect data from a diverse sample. To improve our inquiries in the future, it would be beneficial to conduct a contextual inquiry session with all the team members observing the same participant. Multiple observers would be able to capture subtle behaviors, emotional reactions, and follow-up questions an individual observer may have missed.
  Future rounds of testing would benefit from an increased focus on people who enjoy shopping and styling their outfits, especially online. As our proposed product aims to address gaps in online shopping for multi-brand items with size, price and quality comparisons, with virtual try-on options, focusing on a larger group of users who engage with these functionalities will help us refine the services we provide and the interaction design.
- Additional Methods
  To further refine our contextual inquiries, we would increase our sample size and incorporate additional methods such as surveys and usability testing to collect additional data. Expanding our sample size would enable more diverse feedback from shoppers with varying experience levels, shopping habits, and brand preferences. Surveys would allow us to collect additional quantitative data on frequency of pain points and qualitative feedback on potential solutions. These additional methods would help us validate our findings and reinforce our design decisions.
- Overall Reflection
  Our contextual inquiries revealed that while online shopping provides convenience, it often leads to cognitive overload and increased stress, particularly with sizing and product comparison. We determined that both novice and experienced shoppers encounter similar challenges and pain points. These observations reinforce the need for more personalized and adaptive shopping tools and will provide guidance for our design solutions to improve and simplify the shopping experience for all users.

Structuring Your Team Website for Submission

Your team website should contain:

- A dedicated section for Milestone 02: Add everything listed below
- Raw field notes and observations – from Step 2
- Artifacts collected during the inquiry – from Step 2
- Screenshots of affinity diagrams (annotated for clarity) – from Steps 4-5
- Contextual inquiry report – from Steps 6-8

Each section should contain sufficient depth of documentation, including at least:

- 5 to 10 key observations from contextual inquiry
- 3 to 5 themes in the affinity diagram, and related subthemes
- A minimum of two artifacts (or descriptions if physical artifacts cannot be uploaded)
- A structured reflection discussing research challenges and improvements

Make sure the site is structured logically so that reviewers can quickly find:

- What research was conducted
- What insights were uncovered
- How findings will impact the project moving forward