Recreating the Cinema Experience

Green Monkeys

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Overview of the Problem

Going out to the Movies has always been a social activity, but with the advent of movie streaming services like Netflix, Amazon, and Hulu, theatres have had a rough time adapting to an increasingly individualized form of media consumption. The social nature of watching movies has been neglected, and our clients believe that there is now a space in the market to make movies social again. In the age of online streaming, there are a myriad of services providing access to thousands of movies and shows – reducing the demand for the classic ways of viewing this media. Concurrently, we are in the age of social media, where it is possible to connect with your friends in an instant. That being said, there is an undeniable chasm between the streaming and social media worlds.

Over the course of this project we will be working closely with startup company HuskyTek. This new company is looking to bridge this gap between social media and streaming services with a web application that lets users rate movies they've seen, recommend movies they liked, and invite friends to movie-watching events.

Our clients Jose Annunziato, Nate Derbinsky and Michael Weintraub are the co-founders of HuskyTek. They set the strategic direction and maintain critical business functions for the company. The ultimate objective of HuskyTek is to create a platform that lets users regain the community feel associated with the cinematic experience. Spoiled Tomatillos will be the platform that makes the movie experience social once again.

Background

Other organizations have created social webapps for sharing and reviewing movies. That being said, these webapps have approached creating a social experience differently than we plan to. They have utilized universal mediums, such as message boards and review forums. Through doing this, they have granted people access to multitudes of information and different viewpoints from around the world. While substantial, these webapps lack the more intimate experience of going to the cinema or simply chit-chatting about movies with your friends that we seek to create. The experience of reading someone's post or opinion online is more distant than having a back-and-forth conversation with someone online. Furthermore, people share their opinions differently amongst close friends than they do on forums that are open to the general public. We believe incorporating this more conversational element more strongly correlates with the "social media" experience, and that is what differentiates us from the competition. Even amongst pre-existing social movie webapps, many projects like Flixster have not gained mainstream appeal. We believe that this is due to their reduced emphasis on the social interaction that goes along with movies.

This platform will specifically target teens and young adults who are regular consumers of feature-length movies. These users will be able to access this webapp through their browser of choice on desktop or on their smartphone.

While the website is still growing and attracting users, we will aim to curate an experience unhampered by ads. In the future, the website may want to offer promotional content that is personalized to the user's interests.

"Spoiled Tomatillos" will be a fresh new product, built from the ground up to facilitate friends coming together, sharing movies they like, and organizing movie watching events together.

Scope

Spoiled Tomatillos will be a web application aimed at creating a social media network focused on feature length films. Creating the application will be a challenge and will require time and effort to complete. We believe the wants and needs of our end users take top priority. With the end users in mind, we plan to survey potential users and target audiences numerous times throughout the development process. We will present them with both big picture questions and current versions of the app to test. Furthermore, we will gauge their reactions to both suggestions other end users have presented and things that they may have not mentioned but we feel they may want. We will also aim to create an enjoyable and easy to use app. We will focus on implementing a layout, that almost anyone could use intuitively.

The currently planned core functionality of Spoiled Tomatillos will allow a user to have an account with our website, browse movies, and the ability to rate movies. Movie pages should include the synopsis, cast, awards, and may if the movie is in theatres, show when and where that movie is playing. The social aspect comes with the ability to add friends. Registered users will have access to a playlist based on their and their friends' ratings. We expect someone will have more interest in a movie if people they know recommend it. To tend to cinephiles, we will also let friends on the platform "prod" each other with movie recommendations. Since the movie recommendation feature is a large part of the core functionality, we will develop three algorithms for creating these recommendations. These are each based on average critic rating, average user rating, and "User-User Collaborative Filtering". Because the social media aspect is crucial to the success of this project, we anticipate more user interaction features in the future such as chats and movie event organization.

There are a number of difficulties or issues that we will encounter throughout the development process. Our team is composed entirely of developers, and we are competent in web application development. While proficient with the tech side of the equation, we lack the necessary business and marketing expertise. That being said, HuskyTek has experience with startups and social media platform creation. HuskyTek is a company that implements screened business ideas from recent northeastern grads and current undergraduate students. It gives students a chance to get real world experience with startups while receiving help through the university. Many undergraduate students and alumni of CCIS have pursued ventures in social media through HuskyTek. While there have been no movie-themed social media websites tested yet, the company has a lot of experience with what is required to help a social media product have its best shot at success.

Because of the many competitors in online social media, to stand out, a company needs to make it's name known to the general public. To do this, it will be important to come up with both a contingency and business plan in addition to making sure that we are marketing our product effectively. We do not have much up-front capital to work with, so creating an advertisement-driven marketing campaign is not a possibility. Instead, our marketing campaign will be based heavily on peer-to-peer referrals and reaching out to cinephile groups and other online communities that may are interested in cinema. In addition to initially breaking into the social media sphere, we believe that scaling will prove to be an issue. What will we try to incorporate later down the line to grow? Movies are a nice focus as they are particular, substantial, and encompass a variety of genres. Would we branch out into other forms of media and entertainment, such as photography or T.V? If we branch into forms of media separate from film, we may sacrifice our niche selling point.

Time does not seem to be an issue with our development process. We have not yet found any direct competition for creating a social media network for movies. All of the other webapps that focus on movies take the approach of message boards and reviews; they do not try to incorporate the social media aspect. In addition to this, as time goes on, more people are turning

to online streaming over conventional forms of movie watching. Therefore, theoretically our target audience is growing as time progresses.

While there are many reasons why this product is worth creating and will succeed, there are also reasons why it may not be worth pursuing or may fail. Our main concern is that larger pre-existing companies, such as Netflix, will simply adopt the social media experience into what they already have. They have the brand name and the momentum to simply take over our target audience. Furthermore, as we are in such an early stages of the product creation, we still do not have a strong grasp on how much demand there really is for our product. Will people actually use our product? Why would they not simply use pre-existing social media outlets to talk about movies? These are questions we will have to address in the coming months.