Research Plan

Study 1: Semi-Structured Interview

Background

Recipe boxes have boomed in recent years. The subscription recipe services provide individually portioned ingredients for cooking meals at home that are delivered straight to a customer's door.

Additionally, lockdown is encouraging people to cook at home even more. A recent study of 2,000 adults, commissioned by the largest supermarket chain in the UK, found that more than a fifth of Brits are now cooking every meal from scratch, compared to just one in eight before the pandemic. According to this [research](#) an average person is cooking between 17 and 21 meals per week – four times the amount they used to. Interestingly, 89% of the participants said they intended to continue cooking when the crisis is over.

Our team is interested in creating a mobile app for adults living in small and medium households (1-3 adults/adolescents per household) to manage their weekly dinner subscription, provided by a large British supermarket chain.

Goal

The pre-design research aims to define the initial direction that the product would take. At that stage our team wants to learn about how adults use existing digital tools to select recipes for their box subscription.

Questions

Needs
What is essential for choosing a weekly meal plan?
What are users' current pain points?

Behaviors
How do/did users plan their meals?
How do they interact with existing digital products and how do they feel about them?

Method & Recruiting

We will use video semi-structured interviews with 5 participants to gather in-depth qualitative data (e.i. the researcher will use the predefined questions, but is free to add to or adjust questions based on users' answers).

Participants will be adults, who live in small to medium households (1-3 adults/adolescents per household) and have used subscription recipe services at least once in the past three months.

Screening Questions

Are you over 18?
  a. Yes
  b. No (screened out)

How many adults/adolescents (including yourself) are in your household?
  a. I live in a single-person household
  b. I live in a household of 2 to 3 adults/adolescents
  c. I live in a household of 4 and more adults/adolescents (screened out)

Who plans food shopping & cooks at your house?
  a. Mostly I shop and cook
  b. Mostly another person in my household shops and cooks (screened out)
  c. Everybody takes a part in planning meals and a turn at cooking
  d. Other (e.i. nobody cooks) (screened out)

How many times have you used a subscription recipe service in the past three months?
  a. I haven't used any (screened out)
  b. I used once
  c. I used more than once

Script

Notes: *[italicized brackets] are used to document what we wish to learn from each question.*

Introduction

My name is [name]. Thank you very much for participating in this study. I am currently working on a project related to using subscription recipe services that deliver meal kits directly to a customer's house. I would love to learn more about your experience with using digital products for these recipe boxes. This interview will take about 30 minutes. If you want to leave the session or take a break at any point, please let me know. Do you have any questions before we start?

Do you mind if I record this session for note-taking purposes? The recording won't be shared with anyone outside of our team.

Part I

Warm-up Questions *[Build rapport. Start with easy questions to get to know the participant]*

- **Could you tell us more about yourself?**
- **Do you enjoy cooking at home?**
- **Do you / did you enjoy cooking using your recipe box?**
- **What's your favourite thing to make?**
- **How many meals a day did you cook using your recipe box?**

Part II

Probe into needs and behaviors

- **Did you cook at home before signing up for a recipe box service?**
  [Behavior: how does a participant choose what to eat?]

  Follow-up questions:
  ○ Did you plan your meals? *[Behavior change]*
  ○ Did you follow any recipes? *[Behavior change]*
  ○ If so, did you use cookbooks, online recipe resources and/or a recipe app?
  ○ If so, what resource/app did you use? *[Behavior change]*
  ○ Have you ever searched for a recipe using keywords in search engines? (i.e. have you ever "googled" a recipe?). *[Behavior change]*

○ Have you ever cooked from a recipe shared by someone on Instagram? *[Behavior change]*
○ What was the main source of your cooking inspiration? *[Needs]*

- **How did you get started using a recipe box service?** *[Motivation: what did a participant hope to achieve?]*

  Follow-up questions:
  ○ What was the trigger?
  ○ How was the experience?
  ○ What was the outcome?
  ○ Will you continue using this service once the lockdown is over?
  ○ If so, what motivates you to continue using it?

- **What service do/did you use? Is it a website or an app? Could you walk me through how you would choose meals for your next recipe box?** *[To get to know a participant's experience with an existing product]*

  Observation & follow-up questions:
  ○ Observe what features and how the participant is using them.
  ○ Ask what the participant likes or dislikes about each feature. Why?
  ○ Which features does the participant not use. Why?
  ○ What's on the participant's wishlist for the product?
  ○ If participants talk about frustrations, ask why and their current workarounds *[Unmet needs]*

- **How do you decide what to order? Why?** *[Participants' meal choices might be based on their food preferences, food allergies/intolerances, weight goals (calories and macros), etc.]*

  Follow-up questions:
  ○ Do you have specific dietary preferences?

- **Have you used other similar products/services?**

  Follow-up questions:
  ○ What was the very first product you were using?
  ○ Was it a website or an app? *[Pain points, if any]*
  ○ Why did you switch to other products? *[Pain points]*

Wrap-up

Thank you so much for sharing your experience and insights. Your answers will help our team build a better product. If you have any additional thoughts and comments, I would love to hear about them at any time. I can be reached at [name@email.com]. Hope you have a wonderful day.

Study 2: Survey

Background

In our previous study, we learned that users want to explore new recipes. They lack inspiration for different dinner ideas and confidence in the kitchen. This is a promising opportunity we may be able to target with our product. However, more data is needed to better understand the needs and whether they generalise to the larger population.

Goal

This study focuses on better understanding of users' needs related to stress-free selection of weekly meals. We also want to measure the extent to which these needs are held by the majority of home-cooks.

Research Questions

How can digital products best support users in navigating through recipes and make their selection smoothly?
Which features/functions are useful?

Method & Recruiting

- Use surveys to collect data from at least 30 users
- Test survey questions with 5 volunteers recruited from different teams
- Send surveys to a study group whose answers in our screener meet our recruiting criteria:
    1. Use recipe subscription service
    2. Have been using this service for more than 2 weeks

Survey Questions

1. **Which service are you currently using?** *[Assumption: people might have different experiences with different services]*
    a. Gousto
    b. Mindful Chef
    c. HelloFresh
    d. SimplyCook
    e. Riverford
    f. Pasta Evangelists
    g. Abel & Cole
    h. Vegetarian Express
    i. Love Yourself
    j. Allplants
    k. Other (Specify____)

2. **How do you place your order?** *[Method]*
    a. Use mobile device(s)
    b. Use desktop(s)

3. **Which of the following best describes your diet?** *[How do users filter out recipes?]*
    a. I'm vegan
    b. I'm ovo-vegetarian (I eat mostly plants in addition to eggs)
    c. I'm lacto-vegetarian (I eat mostly plants in addition to dairy products)
    d. I'm lacto-ovo vegetarian (I eat mostly plants in addition to dairy products and eggs)
    e. I'm pescetarian (I eat vegetarian diet but also eat fish)
    f. None of the above

4. **Do you avoid certain foods?** *[Other ways of filtering out recipes]*
    a. Peanuts
    b. Milk
    c. Eggs
    d. Wheat and/or gluten
    e. Soy
    f. Fish
    g. Shellfish
    h. Other (Specify____)

5. **Do you encourage yourself to eat more of certain foods?** *[More ways of sorting recipes]*

a. I'm trying to eat more vegetables
b. I'm trying to eat more fish & shellfish
c. Other (Specify____)

6. **Do you calculate your macros for weight loss/gain?** *[Assumption: people might be using service to reach their weight goals]*
   a. Yes, I count my macros (and/or calories)
   b. Occasionally, I pay attention on recipe's macros (and/or calories)
   c. I don't count my macros (and/or calories)

7. **How would you rate your cooking ability?** *[Sorting recipes by difficulty level]*
   a. I am an excellent cook and love to cook from scratch
   b. I can cook but prefer to use very simple, quick recipes
   c. I can cook a little, but I'm not very confident in my kitchen skills
   d. I can't cook

8. **Which of the following best describes you?** *[Sorting recipes by time]*
   a. I'm likely to choose quick recipes
   b. I can spend up to an hour preparing a meal
   c. Time is not an issue for me