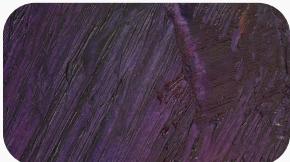


Healthier Social Media

Needfinding, POVs, HMWs, and Experience Prototypes



Meet the team (GR 19)



Wilson Lau

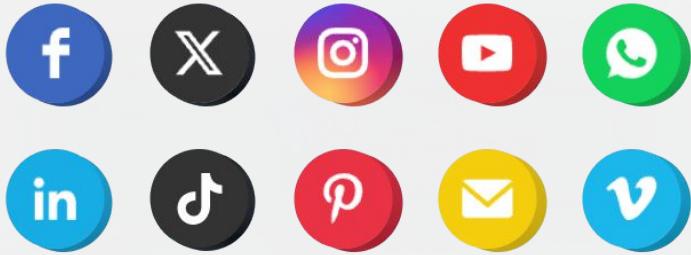


Pranav Gunhal



Karthik Jandhyala

Narrowing our problem scope



- 📊 Originally, we wanted to explore how can we create healthier social media habits.
- 🎥 We found that “healthy” meant different things for different interviewees
- taboola People are aware of the negative effects of social media, but that doesn’t change habits

Narrowed problem scope:

Designing ways to help people regain intentional control over their social media use.

We interviewed...



Bob (Extreme User)

27, freelance designer in Santa Barbara



Kiran

20, UCI Student

Based on peer feedback to diversify our perspectives, we chose Bob to be our extreme user, who quit social media after heavy use, and a female college student for gender diversity.

And asked them...



Which social media platforms do you use the most?

Does social media help you be more productive?

Has comparing yourself to someone ever felt helpful or motivating?

How do you feel about yourself before vs. after scrolling?

How have you tried to manage your social media usage? Has it worked?

What do you gain from scrolling on reels if you know it is not healthy?

Do you ever feel like you're performing or curating a certain image of yourself?

What does healthy social media usage look like for you?

Interview 1: Bob (Extreme)

- **Occupation:** Freelance designer
- **Location:** Santa Barbara, CA
- **Primary Platforms:**



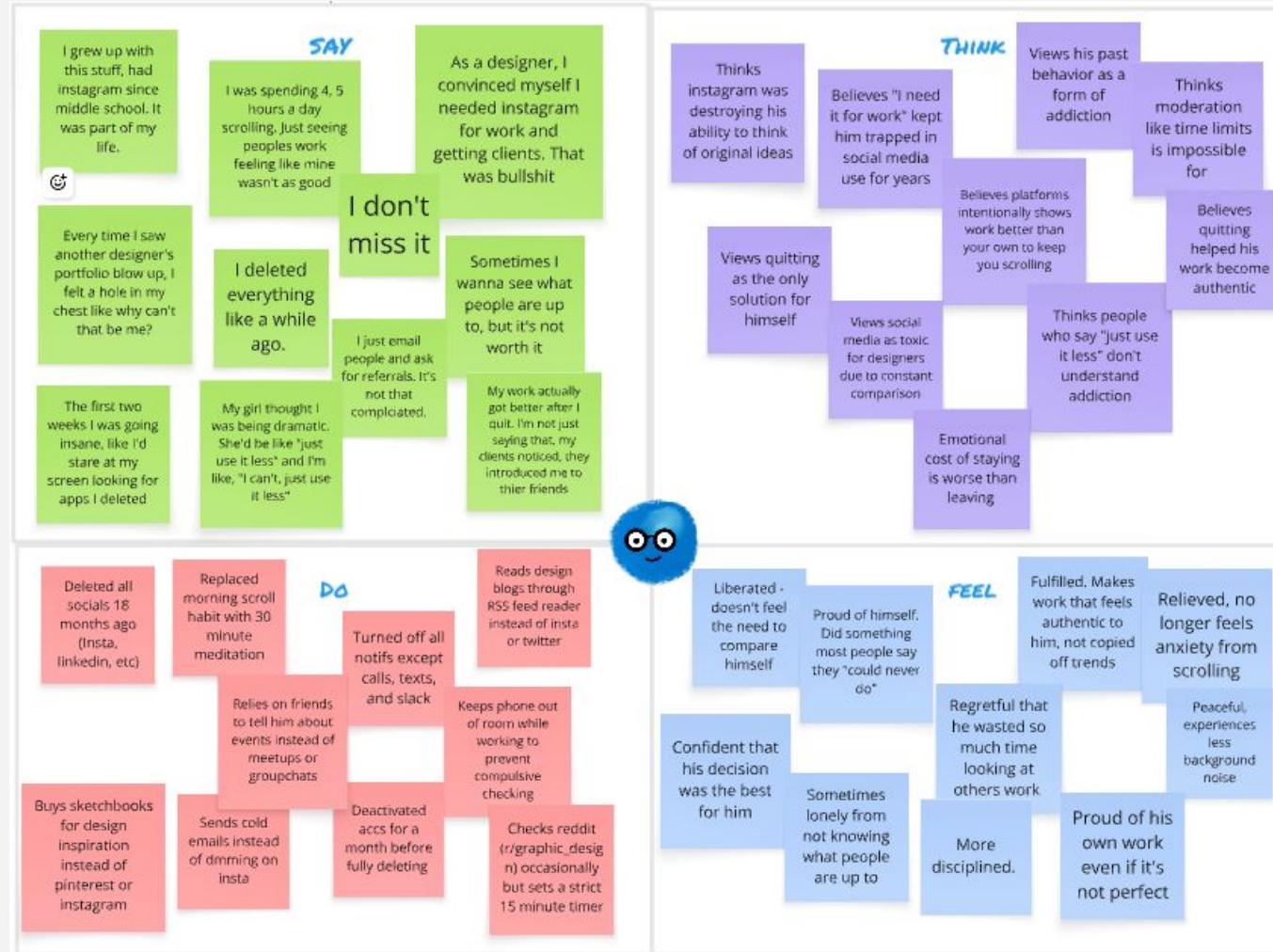
- Views quitting social media as the only solution for him
- Feels liberated after leaving social media and doing other activities to not focus on it as much as he did initially.

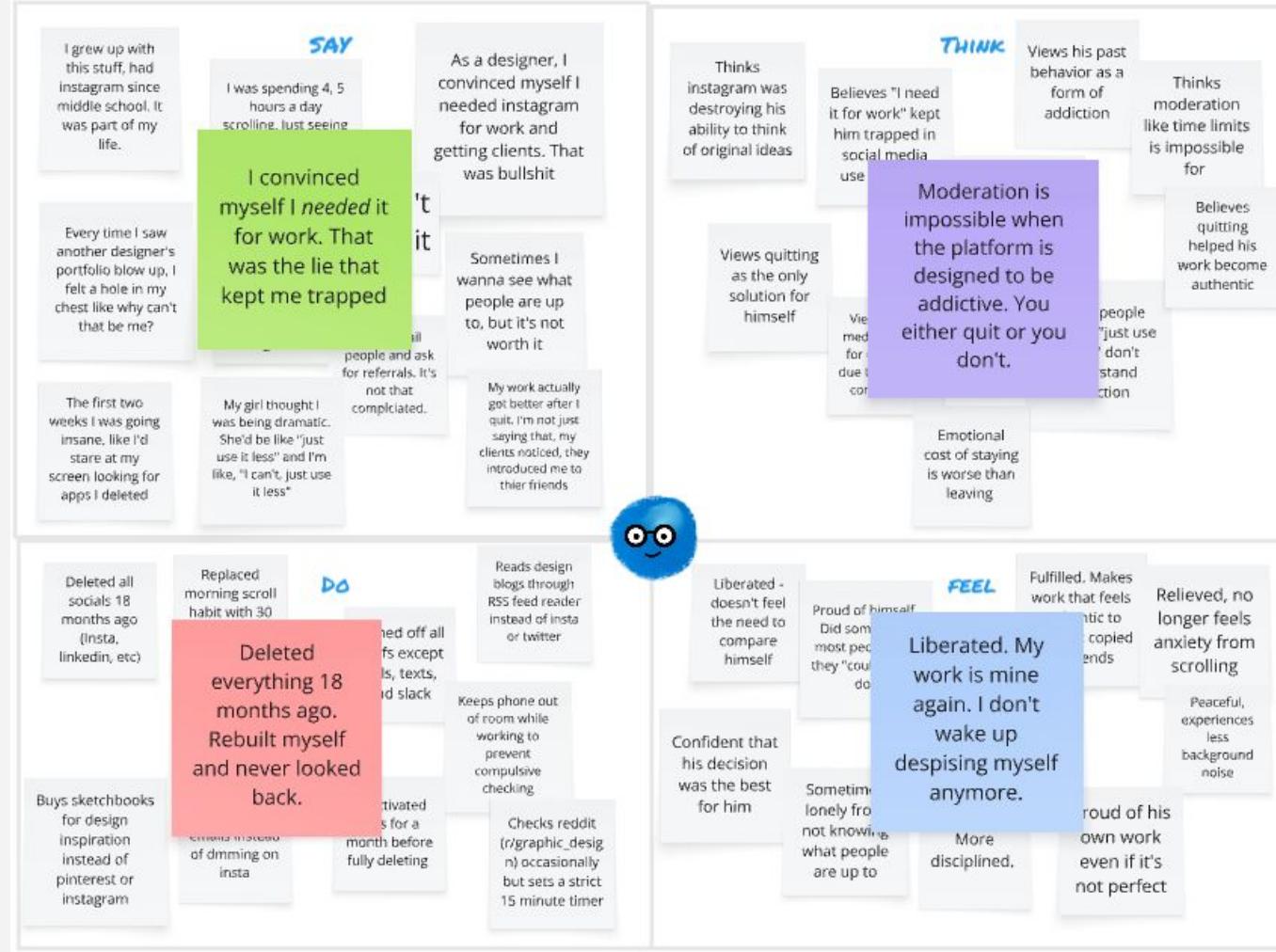
“I grew up with this stuff, and have had Instagram since middle school.”

“I can’t, just, use it less.”

“My work got better.”

“Sometimes I wanna see what people are up to, but it’s not worth it.”





Details: Interview 1

- **Interview Location:** Interviewee's home in downtown Santa Barbara
- **Team Member Roles:** Pranav (Notetaker), Wilson (Interviewer)
- **Apparatus:** iPhone (questions)
Laptop (transcribing)
- **Surprises:** Interviewee has high screen time, but knows how to strike a balance + knows when to stop
- **Artifacts from interview:**



Empathy Map Insights: Bob

Insight

Constant exposure to others' achievements on social media can diminish originality and lead to unhealthy comparison

Need:

People need sources of inspiration that don't trigger competitive comparison



Empathy Map Insights: Bob

Insight

People who delete social media after heavy usage experience withdrawals over a prolonged period, not just a small inconvenience

Need:

People quitting social media need a way to cope with withdrawal symptoms and fill the time they used to spend scrolling



Interview 2: Kiran (GMeet)

- **Occupation:** Student
- **Location:** Irvine, CA
- **Primary Platforms:**



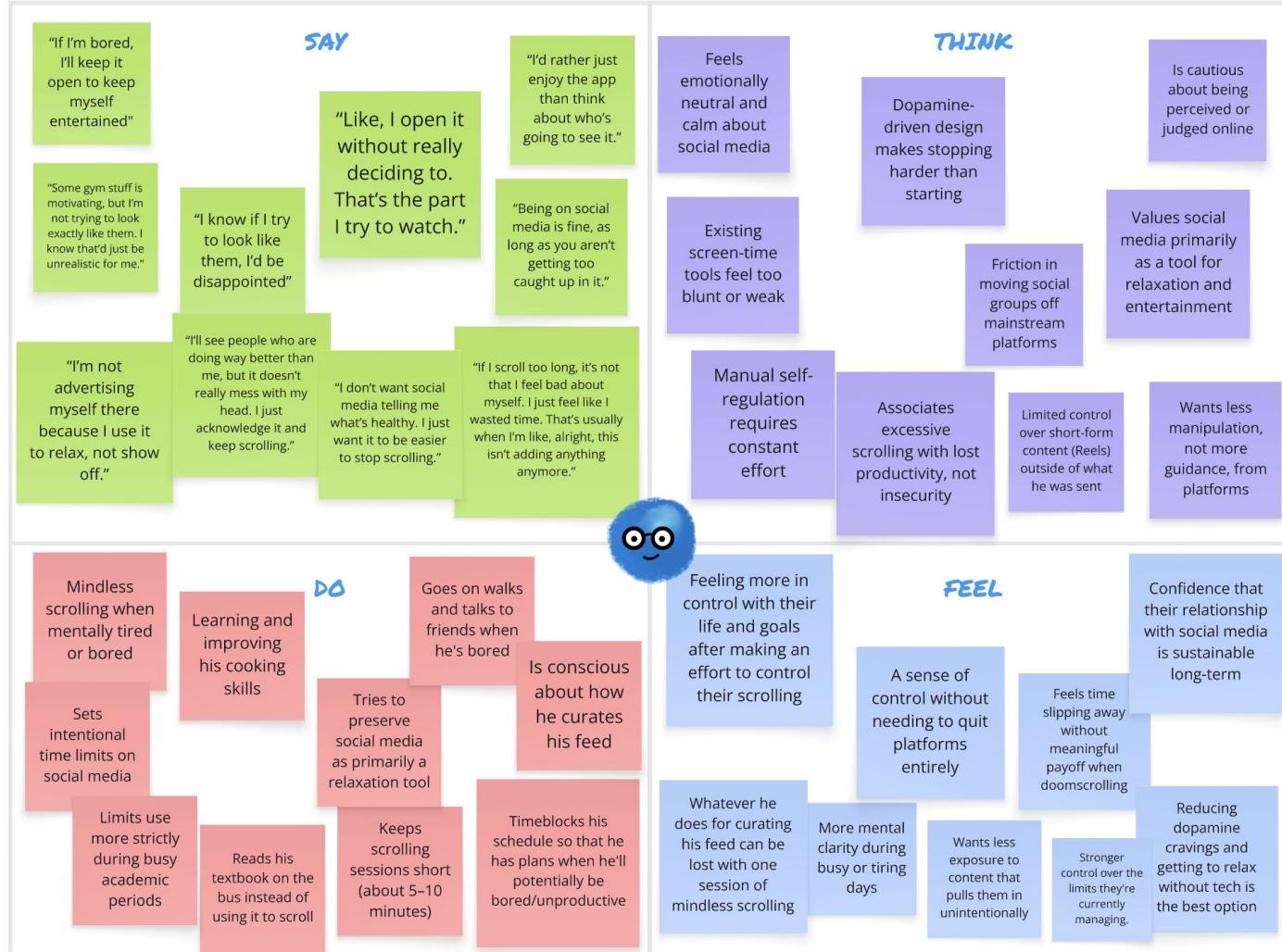
- On Instagram mostly to either pass the time, take a break after some work, or message friends.
- Actively works to not scroll for too long.

“If I’m bored, I’ll keep it open to keep myself entertained.”

“I know if I try to look them, I’d be disappointed.”

“I’m not advertising myself on there because I use it to relax, not show off.”

“Being on social media is fine, as long as you aren’t getting too caught up in it.”





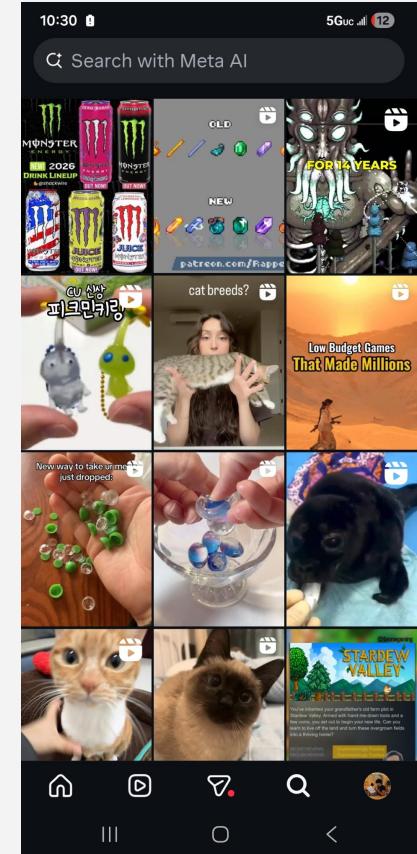
Details for Interview 2:

- **Interview Location:** Google Meet
 - **Team Member Roles:** Karthik (Interviewer), Pranav (Notetaker)
 - **Apparatus:** iPhone (Call), Laptop (Questions & Notes)
 - **Surprises:**

Interviewee is generally in control with their screen time, but they feel like that they could slip and doomscroll if not careful.

- Artifacts from interview:

(interview photo provided separately in drive)



Empathy Map Insights: Kiran

Insight

The interviewee doesn't feel insecure or emotionally harmed by social media. The conflict is instead about mindless behavior.

Need:

Needs support that helps them act with intention without moralizing or judgment.



Empathy Map Insights: Kiran

Insight

The situation a person is in plays a role in not just opening social media, like most people, but also if they remain doing other activities as a break from social media.

Need:

Needs a way for their existing self-regulation efforts to stick, even when they're mentally tired or bored.



POVs

What do our interviews tell us?

POV 1 (from GR1)

We met:

John, a zoo operations worker living in Southern California, who spends a significant amount of time on YouTube and TikTok, primarily using them for learning, entertainment, and passing time after work.

We were surprised to learn:

even though John is highly self-aware about social media's addictive design and believes short-form content is harmful to thinking, he still says "I cannot quit YouTube."

We wonder if this means:

that John experiences a disconnect between his values and habits, where awareness of harm and breaks are not enough to overcome the pull of video platforms like YouTube.

It would be game changing to:

help John regain a sense of control over his social media use without requiring extreme measures like quitting altogether or relying solely on willpower.

How might we...



How might we help people feel more in control of their social media use without requiring them to quit entirely?

How might we support people in deciding when to stop scrolling without relying solely on willpower?

How might we help people regain a sense of choice over when and how long they engage with video platforms?

How might we help people feel agency over their media use even when platforms are designed to keep them engaged?

How might we make healthier engagement feel achievable rather than overwhelming?

How might we integrate external goals a user may have (like reading more) to help reduce social media usage?

How might we support small, sustainable changes in media habits rather than all-or-nothing shifts?

How might we help people feel satisfied when scrolling rather than compelled to continue?

How might we reduce reliance on self-control when awareness alone isn't enough?

How might we bridge the gap between being cognizant about addictive design and changing actual usage behavior?

How might we help people reflect on their habits without framing them as failures?

POV 2

We met:

Gordon, a college student living in Santa Cruz, CA, who primarily uses YouTube and occasionally Instagram, and treats social media as a functional tool rather than a core part of his identity.

We were surprised to learn:

despite spending regular time on social media, Gordon reported little emotional impact from scrolling, and had a generally positive attitude towards comparison to others.

We wonder if this means:

that negative effects from social media are not universal, and that some users are able to compartmentalize platforms as tools or rewards without internalizing comparison or other metrics.

It would be game changing to:

support users in preserving intentional use of social media even when stress, workload, or routine changes make passive scrolling more tempting.

How might we...



How might we maintain intentional social media use during periods of high stress, so it isn't used to doomscroll?

How might we help preserve neutral or positive relationships with social media over time?

How might we allow for the segmentation of productive social media use and regular scrolling / posting for fun?

How might we avoid over correcting for harm in ways that disrupt users who are currently stable?

How might we help people keep boundaries around "reward-based" usage?

How might we support consistency in media habits without requiring strict rules or tracking?

How might we promote the idea of online platforms as a tool rather than an escape from reality through scrolling reels?

How might we reduce the social media usage time of users who are not motivated by comparison or likes?

How might we leverage comparison on social media platforms to positively motivate users?

How might we help people sustain "good enough" media habits rather than pushing for perfect usage?

How might we support awareness of the effects of social media without introducing guilt or alarm?

POV 3

We met:

Kai, a college student from Cupertino, CA, who primarily uses Instagram for messaging friends and relaxing, and who intentionally avoids doomsscrolling or comparing himself to others online.

We were surprised to learn:

Kai associated using Instagram heavily when he lacked a strong social circle, but now uses it far less as his offline relationships have stabilized.

We wonder if this means:

that the role social media plays in someone's life is temporary and situational, serving as a social bridge during periods of loneliness rather than a permanent need.

It would be game changing to:

understand the offline relationships that affect online habits and tailor social media usage to better these habits.

How might we...



How might we help people disengage from social media without making it feel like social withdrawal?

How might we support people in reevaluating social media habits that were useful in the past but now harmful?

How might we help people recognize when social media is filling a temporary emotional gap rather than a lasting need?

How might we support people who don't feel harmed by social media usage but don't want it to increase?

How might we recognize past coping mechanisms and prevent them from quietly becoming default habits?

How might we support online connection during lonely periods without encouraging long-term dependence?

How might we incentivize users to curate their feed to allow for a balanced relationship with social media?

How might we design social media for people whose habits have already improved but could regress?

How might we reduce the effort required to avoid doom scrolling or comparison for people who already try to be intentional?

How might we prevent social media habits formed during loneliness from persisting unnecessarily?

How might we support people who actively resist scrolling from doing so when it becomes tempting?

Brainstorming Solutions

What can we do about our HMWs?

How might we reduce reliance on
self-control when awareness alone isn't
enough?

make a finite feed on Instagram that requires physical action to reload

Video feeds that load with a short delay

Scrolling breaks built in that force user to take a brain break

ration the amount of scrolling time on instagram

Users have to set how long a scrolling session lasts

Apps that works when there is a set pause between uses

Share scrolling habits with an external validator like a friend/sibling

use daily schedule to showcase all the other things they could be doing

reward stopping scrolling with an incentive of choice

require a physical gesture / exercise to open the app

Users have to see a graph of their usage when opening instagram

people get to type out a message to force them to re-evaluate their scrolling

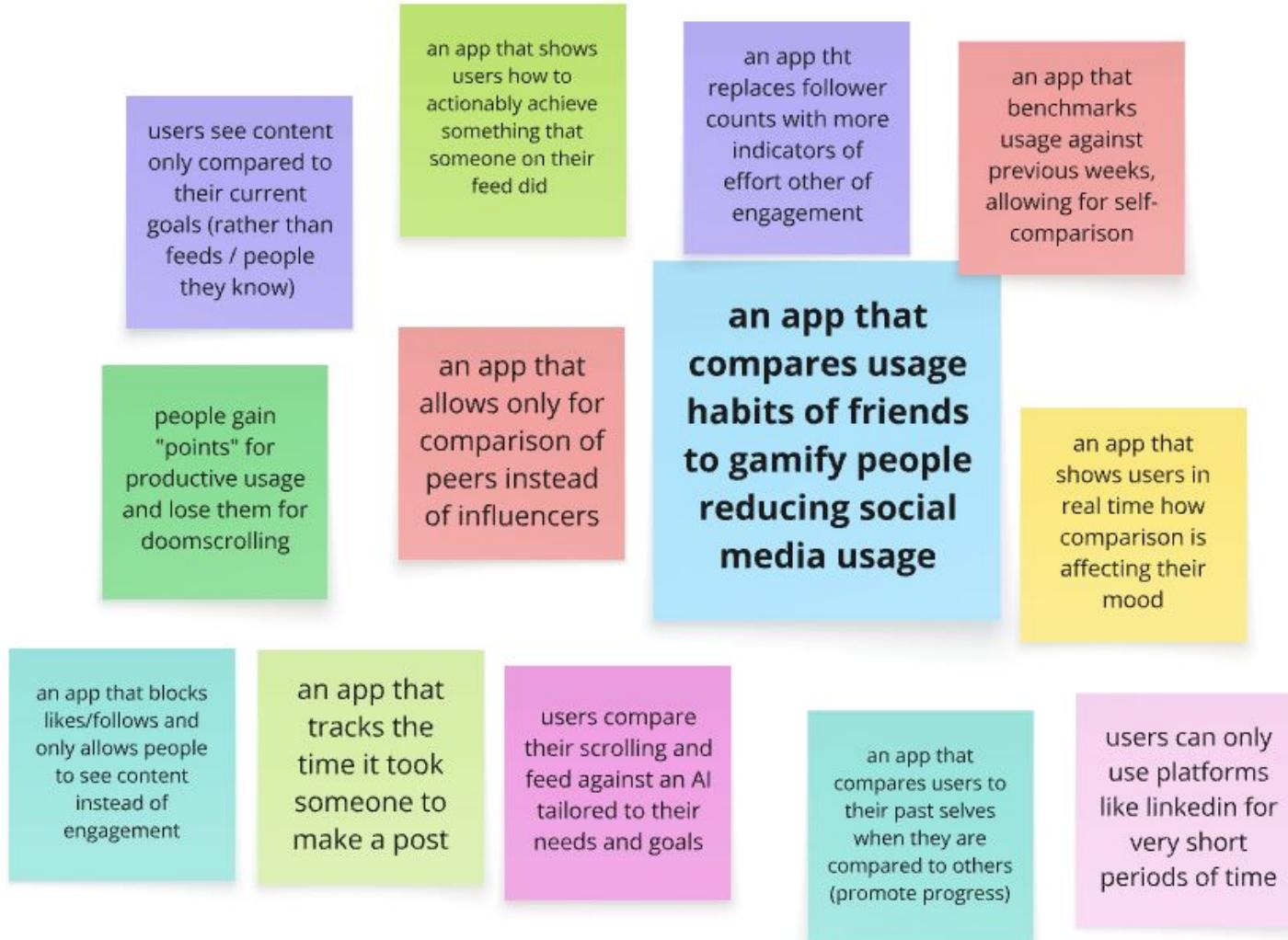
randomly crash the app to decrease the user satisfaction when scrolling

drain battery faster when scrolling to prevent overusage

create a personification of the brain to track emotional health when scrolling

have users "earn" scrolling time through doing tasks in the real world

**How might we leverage comparison on
social media platforms to motivate users
through social media?**



How might we support online connection
during lonely periods without encouraging
long-term dependence?

an app that requires users to select a reason for usage and tracks over time

an app that tailors feeds for increasing socialization over scrolling

an app that helps people plan offline activities with online peers

an app that tracks when users display symptoms of loneliness and adapt feeds to help

an app that requires 2 people to open so people can't use it alone

an app that unlocks scrolling only after a quota of offline activity

an app that only lets people connect online based on how much offline time they spend with the person

an app that limits interactions that aren't human (messaging)

an app that rewards using it as little as possible to discourage engagement overall

an app that forces users to journal and restricts once mood improves

an app that only lets users connect with people they hang out with offline

Experience Prototypes

Testing our proposed solutions

Solution 1

Make a finite feed on Instagram that requires
physical action to reset

Assumption 1: The process of taking a break from their feed will force users to re-evaluate their actions when scrolling, thus changing habits.

Reasoning: This assumption was chosen because the solution depends on interrupting automatic scrolling behavior. People mentioned how they knew that scrolling was not productive and they wanted to reduce it. Forced pauses may allow people the opportunity to reflect on this choice and remember this.

Other assumptions:

- Users will tolerate friction in their scrolling experience.
- Users will comply with physical actions from a system.
- All users want to reduce their social media usage.

Details: Experience Prototype 1:

- **Critical assumption:** The process of taking a break from their feed will force users to re-evaluate their actions when scrolling, thus changing habits
- **Experience Prototype:**
 - **Props:** phone with Instagram installed, printed “BREAK” card, timer
 - **Actors:** 1 participant who regularly uses Instagram for casual scrolling, team member as the system
 - **Scene:**
 - Participant opens Instagram and scrolls normally.
 - After 10 reels, the participant is told that if they want to continue scrolling, they must do 10 push ups or 30 seconds of planks.
 - Participant either closes the app, or does the action and continues scrolling.
 - This repeats until the participant chooses to close the app.

Results: Experience Prototype 1



Participant doing 10 pushups between scrolling on Instagram

Data:

Participant opened instagram and scrolled through 10 reels. They did 10 pushups and continued scrolling another 10 reels. This repeated until they physically could not do the 10 pushups.

What worked:

Each time we stopped, they did re-evaluate if they wanted to continue

What didn't work:

They stopped because they couldn't do more pushups, not because they felt that they wanted to stop scrolling

Assumption: The process of taking a break from their feed will force users to re-evaluate their actions when scrolling, thus changing habits

Outcome: Mostly invalidated. While doing a physical action did allow for the participant to reconsider their actions, the actions proposed seemed to be worth the effort and they stopped because of physical exhaustion, rather than due to realizing that scrolling was not worth their time.

Solution 2

Compare the social media usage of friends to
gamify its reduction

Assumption 2: The competitive nature of comparing with friends will encourage people to reduce social media usage.

Reasoning: This assumption was chosen because the solution relies on social comparison as the motivating force, rather than solely individual self-discipline. Our interviews reveal that comparison is not inherently bad. Comparison with strangers may not be motivating enough. People might feel more compelled when their friends are also reducing usage with them.

Other assumptions:

- Users are comfortable sharing usage data with friends.
- All users respond positively to competitive incentives.
- The reward of beating friends is compelling enough to change habits.

Details: Experience Prototype 2:

- **Critical assumption:** The competitive nature of comparing with friends will encourage people to reduce social media usage
- **Experience Prototype:**
 - **Props:** Index cards with usage metrics (time, # reels), a leaderboard (whiteboard), Stickers to represent “wins”,
 - **Actors:** 2-3 participants who already know each other (friends or classmates), team member that updates scores and rankings
 - **Scene:**
 - Each participant is given a usage card representing their “starting usage.”
 - The cards are then updated by looking at screen time usage and time spent on Instagram
 - The points are then added to a leaderboard, and the best user is given a sticker
 - Participants are then allowed time to change their habits, and the leaderboard is updated.

Results: Experience Prototype 2

Social Media Leaderboard		
Aryan	45min	10 min
Brandon	35min	20 min
Jack	0 ★ 11am	6 min ★ 12pm



No consent for photos given; their screen times are shown here instead.

Data:

We found 3 roommates, and compared their social media usage times for the last hour and made a leaderboard. We then came back and saw how their habits changed an hour later.

What worked:

2 / 3 participants improved their usage
A went from 45 min to 10 min
B went from 35 min to 20 min

What didn't work:

1 participant did not use their phone before (class), so their usage increased from 0 min to 6 min.

Assumption: The competitive nature of comparing with friends will encourage people to reduce social media usage.

Outcome: Validated. The competitive nature of the competition encouraged our participants to decrease their social media usage, and they used offline incentives as the prize between them. The competition directly decreased usage for those that used social media more the hour before and kept usage low for those that did increase their usage as well.

Solution 3

An app that lets people connect with people online based on how much offline connection they have had that day

Assumption 3: The incentive of online screen time will encourage people to be more social.

Reasoning: This assumption was chosen because the solution depends on treating online screen time as a reward, and we are able to choose the motivation. The goal is to increase offline interaction. If people insist on using social media, then they should be able to

Other assumptions:

- Users are comfortable sharing usage data with friends
- All users respond positively to competitive incentives
- The reward of beating friends is compelling enough to change habits

Details for Experience Prototype 3:

- **Critical assumption:** The incentive of online screen time will encourage people to be more social
- **Experience Prototype:**
 - **Props:** Printed cards for screen time usage, offline interaction prompt cards (i.e., “talk to someone for 2 minutes,” “eat with someone,” “call a friend”), timer
Actors: 1 participant per session, team member acting as the system that verifies completion and grants screen time
 - **Scene:**
 - Participant chooses whether to complete a random offline interaction or forego the interaction and receive no screen time
 - Once an interaction is completed, the facilitator grants the corresponding screen-time voucher.
 - Participant can use or store uses the screen time accordingly

Results: Experience Prototype 3



Data:

Participant chose a task – talk to a friend for 2 min, and earned 2 min of scroll time. After this, the task was to schedule dinner with a friend. They did this and got 5 min of scrolling time.

What worked:

They liked the incentives and were willing to do them to get scrolling time.

What didn't work:

They thought some of the incentives weren't always practical. This worked the second time because they were planning to get lunch with someone anyways.

Assumption: The incentive of online screen time will encourage people to be more social.

Outcome: Validated. The participant wanted more time, and the tasks seemed practical to them in the moment, so they took the effort to do and schedule more offline activities to offset the time they spent online. However, they mentioned that they would not always do this and the tasks were just convenient in the moment because they were in public.

Choosing a solution

Comparing our solutions

Solution 1: Finite feed with physical actions to continue scrolling

This worked to a certain extent because it allowed the participant to actually reconsider scrolling after every 10 reels, but it had no practical impact on their behavior. They stopped because they couldn't do the task anymore, not because they wanted to / the pausing helped them realize they didn't want to scroll anymore.

Solution 2: Compare the social media usage of friends to gamify its reduction

This worked very well, and we saw a clear reduction in usage from the participants because they were being compared to their friends. Even the user who increased usage said they increased it by a smaller amount than they would have otherwise due to the competition. The incentive of comparison clearly reduced scrolling on Instagram, and participants enjoyed reducing screen time in this way.

Solution 3: Let people connect online based on offline connection

This solution worked, as the user was willing to perform the tasks. However, this was highly situational and would not have work as well if the user were alone or did not already want to do some of the things they were asked to do. Thus, even though it worked in this situation, it seems unlikely to work for people who are alone or are unable to perform a specific task.

Our solution:

Compare the social media usage of friends to
gamify its reduction

Next Steps:

Develop features of the application and
perform user testing on prototypes

Thank You!