Early in the process we identified young people of age 18-25 as a key user group for our product. This is because we believed that young people were more likely to spend more time on social media and therefore would be more familiar with the interface we were trying to emulate. Because social media plays a bigger part in their lives, we also thought they would be more interested in, and receptive to, the education elements of the site. The belief that young people were the primary users of social media was backed up by what we learned from our academic review [A CITATION HERE].

In our own (admittedly small) initial user survey, all of the users who self-identified as 18-24 said that they used social media ‘every day’. All respondents in that age category also all answered ‘Extremely confident’ to all questions relating to how easy to navigate they would find our social-media-esque interface.

Most of the 18-25 year-olds questioned said they believed they had only an ‘Average’ level of knowledge about social media, where the named areas of knowledge were ‘how social media sites operate’, ‘privacy’, and ‘the effect of social media on mental health’. In contrast, a greater percentage of 25-34 year-olds said they believed that they had an ‘Above average’ level of knowledge about social media (50%, compared with 25% of respondents answering ‘Above Average’ in the 18-24 age group).

The responses of the 25-34 year-olds to the question ‘how often do you use social networking or micro-blogging sites’ were also more scattered, with only 50% of users responding “Every day”. The responses in the older age groups indicated even less engagement with social media, with only 25% of responses indicating that they used social media sites every day.

There was a strong correlation with between how often respondents used social media and how confident there were with our interface, with the majority of responses from users who used social media ‘every day’ or ‘a few times a week’ indicating that they would be ‘extremely confident’ or ‘very confident’ using both prototype pages we gave them to look at. When we asked them to compare two interfaces for useability, the majority of these respondents also answered that ‘Neither interface would be difficult to navigate away from’. People who used social media less regularly were significantly more likely to answer “somewhat confident” and less likely to answer ‘Neither interface would be difficult to navigate away from’ on the same questions. This correlation could be from external factors- social media sites are so popular that it stands to reason that people who use social media sites less regularly probably use the internet less regularly as well. However, the responses seem to suggest that we are on track in creating an interface which is very understandable by people who use social media a lot, which is the group we are considering our target market.

See below a selection of written responses we had about page navigation.

“since the about page is highlighted it looks like that is the page you are already on. Scrolling down is also slightly non intuitive as there is no visible scroller”

“I'm not entirely sure how I'd see post from certain social media bots. Would I click their names? Or just scroll down to see a longer news feed?”

“Make Home in bold. To indicate that it was a return page rather than a further information page.”

“At first, thought of clicking the "Home" button on the left side. Then, thought of clicking the "Message" button. This may be personal preference but maybe a label like "Feed" or "Home Feed" or a variation? I'm used to seeing the options in the About column as a header on top of the page or as a drop down/hamburger menu on the upper left but realize as a single page application it's best to "flow" from one page to another. Perhaps instead of having "Trends For You" as a separate column, have it part of the text-box for posting? So in the text box, near the bottom by the 'Post' button, have a set of popular hashtags to include. This way, more space can be allocated to the news feed and there will only be one side panel.”

“Reinforce which page the user is on- highlight 'home' if that's where you're at. Icons are more memorable than text so I personally prefer having both, like desktop twitter does.”

“Have bolder buttons, more clear instructions on navigation, perhaps a help button to explain if you‚Äôre confused”

There were also concerns expressed about posting media, privacy and account creation. These concerns highlight the importance of making it clear what the page does (and does not!) do. We will make an attempt to address some of the concerns people had in our second prototype.

The integration of the fact box into the timeline seemed popular, and the ‘bottom-left’ option (in which the fact looks like it has been posted be a @FAKEBOOK\_FACTS user and the box is highlighted in lilac) and ‘bottom-right’ option (in which the fact looks like it has been posted be a @FAKEBOOK\_FACTS user and the box is highlighted in yellow) drew for greatest popularity, so we will make a decision about which one to implement. A few people had concerns about the ‘fact’ box not being eye-catching enough.

The tradition comment interface was more popular, with people who preferred it worrying that the non-traditional interface was too ‘chaotic’ and ‘possibly confusing’. People who liked the non-tradition interface thought it was more fun and visually appealing. More people said they thought the non-traditional interface would be harder to navigate away from than said the non-traditional interface would be harder to navigate away from.

‘Extra comments’ about the interface were:

“Only really from an aesthetic point of view, I prefer navigation bars to be at the top, but that's just personal preference.”

“Why lilac? Supposed to be a calmer colour. Most recent comments box outline could be in bold to indicate newest or potentially unread. Messages (on left side) should have a number or an indicator that there‚Äôs a message maybe. Same with notifications.”

“I really like this idea! Personally, I stopped using social media (no FB, Instagram or Twitter) and I like that this site is a satire to it. I like that the main page is an information feed. Some questions - do I need an account to make a post or can anyone make a post? What is the difference between Messages and Notifications? Can people DM you or is everything public? Is the Explore page for exploring trendy or most liked posts or hash tags?”

“Seems unnecessary to distinguish between "notifications" and "messages". There's no indication anywhere which user is signed in. No search functionality?”

“both 'comment' interfaces look a little navigate away from in that I would be looking for a 'back', 'exit', 'close' or 'return' type navigational tool after having clicked into a comment and would be less likely to think 'start again from the home button' as I expect I would prefer my position in the timeline was saved.”

To determine the popularity of the different ‘extra features’ in section 2 of the questionnaire, we assigned all responses a score, where the strongest interest, represented by the answer ‘The most important priority’ was given a score of 4 and the lowest interest, represented by the answer ‘Not important at all’ was given a score of 1. We then summed the score for each option. The total scores for different features were as follows:

Do you think it should be a priority for 'bots' to respond to real trending and viral topics? These topics will reflect what is actually trending on twitter that day.

*Score: 37*

Do you think it should be a priority for the 'bots' to respond to news articles, and possibly to be seen mimicking the spread of 'fake' news in their behaviour?

*Score: 36*

Do you think that it should be a priority for the 'bots' to be funny? A funny bot may be more likely to discuss inane topics and share nonsense opinions than to properly respond to trending topics or current events.

*Score: 32*

Do you think it should be a priority for the website to look as professional as possible and to emulate the 'seamless' experience of real social media sites?

*Score: 40*

Do you think it should be a priority for users to be able to create an 'account' on Fakebook and therefore keep a record of all of their comments and likes if they wanted to?

*Score: 32*

Do you think it should be a priority for users' comments to appear publicly? This means that if you post something to Fakebook, your comment could appear on somebody else's timeline. Your engagement could therefore come from real people as well as bots.

*Score: 30*

The extra comment box on this section, which invited responders to suggest extra features for the site and to share their thoughts included these responses:

“It'd be interesting to have private messages from bots. I remember Yahoo having spam bots that you could have a basic conversation with.”

“A way to post media such as photos and videos.”

“I feel like if the bots are funny it would probably make me more likely to stay on the site for longer”

“A funny bot - everyone has a different sense of humour. This would have to be carefully considered.”

“It if responds to news stories, will there be a way to distinguish real and fake news?”

“Social networking and finding friends you know is a major part of why people begin social accounts”

“Would prefer to see difference between bot comments and real comments”

“I would caution about your policy and expected moderation for real users of the site and potentially the automated behaviour of the bots. 'Tay' is a good case study of needing caution in automation and public access: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tay_(bot)>”

Finally, these were the ‘Final Thoughts’ that people gave about the site.

“I think the overall idea is really good, but there is one part that bothers me. In your description, you say the aim is to get people to stay on the site longer. Social media also has quite an addictive quality to it, and while I think the aims of this site are beneficial, how does this play into overall ethics? If you accidentally create an addictive social media stream that feeds people information that keeps them on the site, could this be used by others to do what you're raising awareness for?”

“I think it's a very interesting idea. It tackles some of the concerns about social media collecting data from users”

“I think it definitely has a lot of potential, and is an interesting idea. I think emulating a familiar user interface would definitely be important.”

“An interesting concept. It could be used to help with loneliness, but there would be a concern that this also may influence the user into a group bot thinking. The psychology around this on the human mind and social adaption would need to be analyzed.”

“Presumably this is to research how bots develop. Otherwise the concept is dystopian- much like Facebook!”

“I would think about how you expect to build engagement with the site and whether you want to maintain engagement or keep it a brief experience for users. Are you planning to advertise, either paid or on existing social media? Think about how the site may still work as an experience with very few users or how to get a lot of users if you think that is an important component of the project.”

“I like it but I think that there should be a feature where you can tell clearly whether an account is a bot or a human because otherwise it could be quite confusing and would probably help to highlight some of the issues around social media blurring reality etc.”