

# Sai Siddartha Maram

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## Education

Ph.D., University of California, Santa Cruz, USA – Human Computer Interaction	August 2021 – May 2026
B.E. in Computer Engineering, Thapar University, Punjab, India	August 2016 – May 2020

## Work Experience

UX Research Intern, Microsoft, USA	June 2025 – September 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Conducted semi-structured interviews with Xbox researchers to identify that usability signals were being lost in unmoderated playtests. Engineered an <b>agentic UX workflow</b> (OpenAI/Power Automate) that surfaces critical gameplay moments, allowing the team to <b>scale qualitative analysis across entire playtest cohorts</b>.</li><li>Recognized that repetitive thematic coding was consuming 40% of research time. <b>Conducted co-design sessions with Xbox researchers</b> to design and develop a human-in-the-loop approach towards thematic coding; architected <b>AURA Canvas</b> (an LLM-based tool) to automate this process, freeing up <b>5 hours per study</b> for higher-level synthesis.</li><li>Conducted playtests to validate core game mechanics for <b>Halo, Call of Duty, and Perfect Dark</b> by orchestrating a <b>mixed-methods framework</b>; piloted experimental <b>LLM-moderated interviews</b> to capture qualitative rationale at scale, triangulating these insights with weighted survey data to robustly prioritize features.</li></ul>	
UX Research Intern, Microsoft, USA	June 2024 – September 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Revealed through <b>13 usability studies</b> that <b>redundant feature sets</b> across Xbox and Family Safety apps created "navigation loops" that confused parents; evidence drove the decision to <b>consolidate 3 features</b>.</li><li>Uncovered that parental control "safety flags" were often buried in monthly reports; deployed an <b>LLM-based sentiment pipeline</b> to surface high-risk interactions instantly, shifting the safety strategy from <b>reactive auditing to real-time triage</b>.</li><li>Found that parents struggle to enforce screen limits without <b>positive reinforcement mechanisms</b>; shifted the product roadmap from purely restrictive controls to <b>reward-based habit building</b> based on co-design sessions.</li></ul>	
UX Research Intern, Meta, USA	June 2022 – September 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Conducted co-design sessions to identify Gen-Z desire for <b>synchronous shared experiences</b> (e.g., listening to music together) within asynchronous feeds; validated and helped ideate social features like Spotify Connect which now serve <b>millions of users</b>.</li><li>Uncovered that users view sports content not just as entertainment, but as a <b>critical mechanism for discovering and connecting with friends</b>; utilized this insight to drive the strategy for <b>Facebook Sports Cards</b> (e.g., NFL), a live feature now actively facilitating community connections.</li></ul>	
UX Researcher, GUII Lab, USA	June 2021 – June 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Deployed <b>LLM embeddings</b> (Gemini/OpenAI) to conduct a large-scale semantic analysis of <b>Reddit discourse</b>, successfully mapping the distinct ways <b>religious communities discuss videogames</b> versus how <b>gaming communities discuss religion</b> (Published: <b>CHI Play'24, Best Paper DIS'25</b>).</li><li>Established that current game design frameworks lack a vocabulary for <b>cultural representation</b>; created a <b>design taxonomy</b> derived from 10 stakeholder interviews to help developers avoid cultural stereotypes (Published: <b>CSCW'23, CHI'22, FDG'23, ICEC'22</b>).</li><li>Identified <b>8 distinct reflection strategies</b> that students use when interacting with AI tutors, informing a new department-wide curriculum on <b>LLM-based learning</b> (Published: <b>ACM CHI '23</b>).</li></ul>	

## Skills

**Research Methods:** User Interviews, Game User Research, User Journeys, Card Sorting, Diary Studies, Thematic Analysis, Grounded Theory, Participatory Design, Co-Design, Usability Testing, Information Architecture, Surveys, Statistical Analysis

**Tools & Technologies:** Figma, NVivo, Dscount, Qualtrics, Atlas, Python (Advanced), SQL (Advanced), R, HTML, Databricks, Unity, CSS, JavaScript, ML/LLMs, MCPs