Assignment 2: Interview and User Research

Task 1 - Initial Hypotheses and User Research Goals

User Research Goals
To determine if the features we have included in the matrix are meaningful to users, and to learn about any features that we did not include but are important. Furthermore, we would like to establish a sort of hierarchy among these features, learning which are most valuable. An added benefit would be to see if different features are more important for different user groups. Particularly, we want to know about the features we specified in our project declaration: accurate workout tracking, personalized and customizable exercise planning, progress tracking, wearable device integration and example videos. Where do these rank in terms of importance?

Initial Hypothesis
A workout-tracking app that is free and intuitive will draw in more users. Tutorials will retain newer users, and accurate and thorough tracking will retain more experienced users.

Here are some hypotheses:
- Overall, features with a high degree of customizability and accuracy will prove a key decision factor for users experienced with working out. Conversely, community features and standardized, wide-appeal content tailored for beginners will naturally draw in more entry-level users.
- Highly accurate workout tracking will be a priority mostly among experienced or long term users.
- In general, all users will demonstrate interest in both pre-planned workouts and fully customizable ones; however, we expect interest for the former will be stronger amongst beginners and interest for the latter higher among experienced users.
- We expect progress tracking to be a universally desired feature among everyone that uses a workout tracking app, both ours and others'.
- Example videos are expected to be more popular with beginner users.
- Wearable device integration will appeal mostly to experienced users who are already using technology to aid their workouts and are either looking to maintain or expand this.

Task 2 - Interview Plan

User Groups:
- Group 1: Beginner users with no workout experience
- Group 2: Users experienced with working out that are currently using other services
- Group 3: Users experienced with working out who don't use other services

Question List:
1. Why do you use, or why are you interested in using, a workout-tracking app?
2. Why do you want to start working out? How do you believe a tracking app will help you? (motivation, progress tracking, etc.) **(Group 1 only)**
3. What motivated you to start working out?
4. How important is community to you when it comes to working out? How would you feel about having that in an app?
5. How much freedom do you want when constructing your workouts and exercises?
6. What level of detail do you want in recording your data? Would a higher level of detail be worth spending more time on the app?
7. How important is the possibility of linking a smartwatch to the app? Why?
8. How often do you skip workouts due to lack of motivation? **(Groups 2 and 3)** Would notifications or reminders help you be more consistent?
9. What do you dislike about working out? How do you think an app could help with that?
10. Which features would be helpful for beginners? For example, would tutorials, plan-making assistance, or a simple interface be useful?
11. What features are most important to you, or would be essential for an app? **(Groups 2 and 3)**
12. How has using a tracking app improved your workouts? **(Group 2 only)**
13. How much time do you spend on the app during a workout? Would spending less time on it improve your experience? **(Group 2 only)**
14. Which features do other apps lack, or where do they fall short? How important are these features to you? **(Group 2 only)**
15. What features make or break an app for you (i.e., missing features that would be deal breakers)?
    - Thoughts on a Start button?
    - Value of graphs?
    - Coaching vs Stats vs Community - what's most important?

This question list consists of three main sections. The following are descriptions of each section, the questions that constitute it, and the pre-interview assumptions we made regarding what information we could get out of each research group in each section.

Section 1 (Questions 1-3): Motivation to Work Out / Interest in a Tracking App
A short introductory selection of questions meant to investigate why users are interested in working out, as well as why they believe a tracker app might be of aid. The assumption here is that a particular user's reasons to start working out will have a notable influence on the kinds of features they might desire from a workout tracking app. This in turn will allow us to fine-tune our design to be able to target a wider range of users and increase our user retention. Regarding

interest in a tracking app (question 1 and question 2's subquestion), we expect very different answers from each question group, in particular groups 1 and 3, since group 1 is choosing to begin working out with an app, while group 3 did the exact opposite.

Section 2 (Questions 4-11): Features Both New and Experienced Users Might Desire
The bulk of our question set seeks to give the interviewees ample room to elaborate on what features they consider most important in a workout tracker app. Each group's answers are expected to differ; this will provide a solid foundation for us to later discuss how we will implement our desired set of features. For example, how do we implement the different levels of complexity and customization for features needed by both beginner and advanced users? Naturally, the answers to these questions will in turn allow us to determine whether or not most of our hypotheses were correct.

Section 3 (Questions 12-15): Features Experienced Users Like/Dislike About Their Current Workout Routines
These last questions (except question 15) are specifically targeted to Group 2 and aim to discover the weaknesses of other services and the problems current users of other applications have with them. Naturally, these answers will come in very handy when we decide what features we will implement in our application and what overall design style and conventions we will follow. If we wish to get users from other apps to switch to ours , we cannot overstate how important this will be.

Task 3 - Recordings
We have grouped our interview recordings according to which of the three user groups (those specified above in Task 2) the interviewee belongs to.

Group 1:
Group 1 Recordings

Group 2:
Group 2 Recordings

Group 3:
Group 3 Recordings

Task 4 - Changelog of the Impact on our Ideas/Assumptions:
Below is a detailed log of all the recommendations gathered from each interview. In response to submission feedback, we are also including a consolidated list of recommendations grouped by ideas collected across all interviews.

Idea 1: Workout Guidance
- Pre-workout assessments about sleep, energy, readiness, etc.
- Dynamic goal adjustments based on experience and progress
- Video tutorials for beginners
- Offer predetermined workouts for beginners
- Suggest alternatives to exercises or workouts

Idea 2: Customization
- Ability to edit workouts freely and customize them
- Offer different levels of detail in data tracking

Idea 3: Motivation and Community
- Progress tracking, with visual cues
- Notifications as reminders
- Community features for friends to update and motivate each other

Idea 4: Data
- Inclusion of both workout metrics (reps, sets, time, etc.) and body metrics (weight, calories, muscle mass, etc.)
- Visual representation of data with graphs, charts, etc.
- Smartwatch/Smart Device integration

Idea 5: Interactivity
- Dark theme
- A streamlined workflow and intuitive interface are of utmost importance

Idea 6: Pricing
- Ability to try out all features (free and premium) before paying
- One-time fee (<50€) or monthly subscription (~5€) are viable

Jacky's Interview

The interview with Jacky reshaped several of our initial assumptions. In some ways, the group 3 interviewees are who we have the most to learn from, because if we can learn what has kept them from using an app, we learn how to draw in totally new users, rather than users from another service. The primary conclusion I got out of this interview is that for an app to appeal to Jacky, it would need to serve as a coach or trainer, as opposed to a motivator or stat tracker. Features that we talked about as beneficial for him include the app suggesting alternate exercises, or giving him a recommendation for how many reps and at what weight to do an exercise. Even in terms of community, he said he'd appreciate it more if it served as an advice source, perhaps

including "question and answer" options. He did see the value in looking at graphs and stats as a way to "see his [improvements and] status" but he found the coaching features more important.

The second important takeaway is that for Jacky in his current state, using an app would interrupt the flow of his workout. Given that he only has "breaking time for thirty seconds or one minute" between exercises, it is unnecessarily time consuming and "hard to use [an] app and type the [data]." Even when I proposed the alternative of connecting a bluetooth smartwatch, he pointed out that when doing a "chest [or] back workout in the gym, [he] uses many wrist movements, [which] sometimes is really uncomfortable" when wearing a watch.

In terms of our interaction design models, he said he preferred the idea of a 'Start Workout' button, rather than being able to navigate to other screens in the middle of the workout. Other screens provide a potential distraction, and "[he] just wants to focus on [his] workout" rather than doing anything else. To me, this also ties back into his initial point about the inconvenience he finds in apps. If he accidentally clicks a button that takes him to another screen, then he'll be spending even more time on the app, and will likely find using it to be frustrating.

Ben and Henry's Interviews

Ben and Henry provided a lot of valuable information on what they do and don't like about the app they use, and how our app could expand on certain things. With both of them, I got the clear sense that they appreciate the service they use, and in periods where they aren't using it, their workouts are far less focused and comprehensive. This helps illustrate how much an app really can do for most people.

One feature that I took away from both interviews as being important to both Ben and Henry, despite not being something I had considered, is a simple pre-workout questionnaire for the user. It simply has the user reflect on a few simple things, including "how many hours of sleep [they] got, how much energy [they] feel like [they] have." This surprised me a little. It doesn't specifically describe how a given exercise went. But it can be useful for both the current workout, giving a more realistic picture of what their body is ready for, and for future workouts. Ben explained that "if you create a habit of doing it, it can be really useful looking back at past workouts to see how you did and how you were feeling."

Henry didn't seem incredibly impressed with the precision tracking we discussed later in the interview (warm-ups, drops, failures), and stated that he probably wouldn't use it. He pointed out that "logging a set with a lot less weight could look bad," even if labeled as a warm-up. He did later suggest that if a warm-up set were to be included, that it "wouldn't even say the weight, [instead] it would just say warm-up." I think this idea rectifies the problem he pointed out without removing the concept entirely. He also brought up a really interesting point about logging failures. From the coaching perspective, that is, "looking for feedback on how [he's] lifting and [his] program, then it would be helpful." From the social perspective, however, he wondered aloud "why would I log a failure" that others could see. I must admit that he made a really good point here, and reconciling the coaching and community angles of the app is

nuanced. To me, this section of our discussion reinforced that the survey would be better for evaluating why a workout went a certain way. Not every set that doesn't go the way you want is necessarily a failure, so the questions provide a more holistic picture of the workout.

Otherwise, a lot of my takeaways were that for features to be the best they can be, picking one black or white option is not the solution. This includes features where I didn't initially think there could be much middle ground. For example, the very first thing Ben talked about was how he really appreciates "being able to see what you've done in the past… all in one place." This helps for "increasing reps and [choosing] weight" for exercises. In his service, he can look at the week's workouts, right from the workout logging screen. Then, with only one click further, you can look back through the past months' workouts. I definitely see the appeal of this, but I first thought it would have to be that or a start button for a timed workout, no in between. Hearing how important it was to Ben, and how time-consuming and challenging it was working out in the summer without it, changed my perspective on that. I think I would really like to incorporate this, perhaps removing the start button idea, but still including rest timers that can be paused and adjusted while looking elsewhere on the app. I think it's really useful to look through a workout before you do it, and to look at previous iterations of that workout while you're doing it. Another example is from the interview with Henry. We discussed how the social aspect might make people change the way they go about performing and recording their workout. If you know what you do is going to be published, maybe you'll be hesitant to write about failed sets, as was discussed earlier. You might not even do certain exercises that you don't feel strong in. We talked about how Strava allows you to control what gets published in high detail. I think if we are to implement this social aspect, having that ability to control what gets shared with great precision would be crucial.

Still, they didn't see eye to eye on every single thing, which I think made these interviews even more beneficial. Most notably, when I asked them about which they preferred of the options community, coaching, and stat-tracking, Ben said community but Henry said stat-tracking. The differences in opinion on certain aspects means that the points they agreed on and felt strongly about, are all the more important.

Evelyn, Bernardo, and Gülin's Interviews
Interestingly enough, despite these three users' largely different levels of experience, the responses did not vary as much as expected. There were quite a lot of answers in common, which in turn gave very valuable feedback and allowed us to further substantiate many of the conclusions and reshaped assumptions from the previous interviews.

The main assertion supported by these interviews is the need for customization and flexibility in the app's features. Convenience is a top priority for all users, and in order to reliably and consistently deliver this to as many users as possible in all groups, we need to provide the ability to customize the complexity of displayed information. Features with different levels of

complexity but with a similar purpose should be implemented as a single feature that allows users to select the desired degree of customization.

A feature universally deemed crucial for beginners is the inclusion of video tutorials as a way to give our product "teaching" capabilities. This does challenge our initial assumption that this feature would only be popular among Group 1 users.

Despite their differing experience, users from all three groups were very welcoming of smartwatch (and other smart device) connectivity, even beginners, which we did not expect. The opposite occurred for community/social features: we expected these to appeal primarily to beginners, but were warmly received by users from all three groups.

Bernardo from Group 2 and Gülin from Group 3 were particularly adamant about the need for detail in the statistics and feedback information displayed. They described it as part of the features being of a "near-professional" quality, expecting the app to dynamically respond to the logging of workout information and "body metrics" (weight, muscle mass, calories, heartbeat, etc.) by updating the users' goals accordingly. Large amounts of numerical data should also be automatically presented in a cleaner and more accessible way such as graphs, pie charts, etc.

Additionally, for these three interviews, discussion about the app's appearance and color schemes came up naturally in conversation. Since this was not part of the interview plan questions, we took the opportunity to get more information from the interviewees about this topic. It turns out, all three users expressed a preference for color schemes/themes with dark backgrounds and light text. Bernardo brought up a particularly good point: such colors bear a resemblance to real-life gyms and thus feel the most appropriate. Keeping this in mind will be important when brainstorming and choosing a visual style / aesthetic profile for our product later. Finally, the two experienced users were also asked if they would be willing to pay for a fitness app; both of them stated they would pay 5€ monthly and up to 50€ as a one-time fee. Neither of them would pay without first being able to try out every feature that the app offers.

Akzhan and Rustem's Interviews
Akzhan and Rustem gave a lot of valuable feedback about what beginner users want and need in a fitness app. Both of them showed that they see an app as a great tool to help them start working out, stay motivated, and track their progress. They also said that they feel overwhelmed trying to figure out where to begin, and a fitness app could provide structure and guidance to make everything easier.

One of the most important features for both was having beginner-friendly workout plans. Both interviewees were unsure about how to start working out or what exercises to do. They agreed that the app should give them routines that match their goals, like improving flexibility or building athleticism. At the same time, they both wanted some freedom to customize these

plans. For example, being able to swap out an exercise they didn't like or shorten a workout on busy days was very important to them. So there is a need for balance between strict plans and customization.

Additionally, Rustem and Akzhan also mentioned motivation and progress tracking as an essential tool that the app should utilize. They both said that they can lose motivation if they don't see results quickly, so the app should try to help them stay on track by sending reminders to work out and celebrating small achievements, like completing a week of workouts or improving flexibility. In that case, Visual progress tracking would be beneficial as the graphs can show them how their strength was improved in a certain exercise or how many days were they able to stay consistent for. This can give them a sense of accomplishment to keep them going.

After that, Rustem and Akzhan both mentioned that having community is also fairly important. However, this community should be supportive rather than competitive, as beginners usually struggle to keep up with advanced athletes and might feel discouraged by the level of competition they can create.

Smartwatch integration was another topic they discussed, but neither felt it was essential right now. They liked the idea of linking a smartwatch in the future for things like tracking heart rate or calories, but they also said the app should work just fine without one. This feedback shows that smartwatch compatibility can be a good addition but isn't a must-have for beginners.

Another insight was the need to keep the app simple at first, with the option to add more details as users progress. For example, Akzhan suggested starting with basic tracking, like how many workouts she's completed or how much time she's spent exercising. As she gets more comfortable, she might want to see more specific data, like how her flexibility or strength has improved. Judging from that, we can see that the app should have layers of detail, letting users choose how much information they want.

Overall, interviews with Akzhan and Rustem made it clear that beginners need an app that provides structure, guidance, and motivation. It should feel supportive, with features like progress tracking, and customizable plans. At the same time, it should also be flexible enough to keep users engaged and allow them to grow. So, implementing these things could make our app a valuable tool to help beginners who just started their fitness journey.

Mateo's interview (group 3)

For Mateo, who has experience in working out but never used a tracking app, the app support would help him memorize his achievements, incentivize him to try even harder, and easily understand the changes in his body.

For Mateo the community aspect in the app is not necessary but he would be interested to have a way to give and receive tips and motivation to and from other users.

Freedom to create the workout is important to Mateo but he also recognizes the importance of having available workout templates to apply or eventually modify. He also would like to be able to track everything and understand every detail possible.

He liked the possibility of connecting a smartwatch to the app since it would lead to a seamless use and less time spent on it.

For him the motivation aspect is very important, he thinks that showing your previous achievements, how many times you've missed the workout, some reminders, new possible routines could help him be more consistent.

As an experienced lifter he thinks that for beginners exercise tutorials, an integrated weight tracker, and some "app tutorial" would be helpful.

Some essential features for him are having a good variety of workouts and exercises, an intuitive interface, and data graphs. He thinks that in app coaching and stats are also very important. Also for him an integrated weight and diet tracker would be helpful.

Overall this interview has highlighted some important features our app should have:

- Motivation aid: the app should motivate the user by showing his past achievements, inspire him to stay consistent and improve by some reminders, showing alternative routines and help him understand the body changes.
- Flexibility and completeness: the app should be flexible in the workout creating aspect and should have a big library of exercises.
- Coaching: the app should provide exercise tutorials for beginners and who wants to try a new exercise or technique.
- Data: the app should provide the possibility to analyze the workout data in the preferred way: simplified or detailed
- Community: the app should have a platform to exchange tips between beginner and experienced user
- Additional features: it would be interesting to have a weight and food tracker integrated in the app

Wisam's interview (group 2)

Wisam, who is working out and using a tracking app, likes to utilize the app to stay organized and see useful statistics.

He works out mainly to stay competitive in sports and being healthy, and thinks that the community part of the app is very important to share struggles, achievements and help each other.

For him the freedom aspect is very important, especially the freedom to edit reps, weights and to substitute exercises (ex. From cable machine to dumbbell).

He would like to have a high level of detail in data tracking but without too much clutter, and a great variety of data (ex. Heart rate variation), even at the cost of spending more time on the app.

He thinks that the possibility of linking a smartwatch to the app is very important at it would lead to more variety of data collection (from the added sensors ex. Heart rate and stress).

For him community notifications and motivational quotes could help him stay more motivated and consistent with the workout consistency.

He does not like when there are too many people in the gym, and the app could help him be more efficient by telling how crowded the gym is when he would like to workout.

As an experienced lifter he thinks that for beginners, exercise tutorials are essential to understand the correct exercise technique.

The most essential features for him are good tracking and the possibility to create full workout plans. As he got workout plans from the app he's already using and adapted for his liking.

He thinks that other apps fall short in not having a "progressive overload" feature where it recommends when and how much to increase the weight or reps used in an exercise.

Graphs are not important for him as also other ways of displaying the data could be used.

He thinks that coaching is the most important part of an app, having clear exercise instructions and tutorials.

Some important features our app should have, with insight from this interview:

- Community: a user should be able to communicate with friends and share struggles, achievements and help.
- Freedom: the user can switch exercises to equivalent ones freely and edit the workouts.
- Data variety: the user should have highly detailed and varied data, by making the most of smartwatches sensors
- Motivation: the app should motivate the user by reminders, motivational quotes and community interaction.

- Coaching: the app should have video tutorials available, the possibility to make full workout plans and help with progressive overload by suggesting when and how increase the weight or the reps.