

Case Study

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Part 1: User Research

Question 1 : Target Audience	Identify the target audience for the roommate/flatmate finding service. (Word limit: 100 words)
<p>Target Audience: Young students or working professionals who want to share accommodation with others. They are segmented into two categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Those who have already rented a flat and are searching for flat mates. 2) Those who are looking to share accommodation with someone who has rented an apartment. 3) Those who are looking for a flat to rent so as to share it with their inner circle of friends. 	
Question 2: Interview Questionnaire	Prepare an interview questionnaire (write down the questions here) suiting your objectives & hypothesis. (Word limit: 500 words)

Objectives & Hypotheses:

Objective of this case study is to understand the preferences, pain points and behaviour of young working professionals who are looking out for sharing accommodation in a new city

Hypotheses:

- Young working professionals are more likely to opt for a shared accommodation if it is closer to their workplace.
- New to a city they are not comfortable in staying with strangers, even if it is closer to the workplace and has all the amenities
- There is a high probability they would share the accommodation with a person whom they know or have worked with.

Interview Questions:

1. How old are you?
2. Where are you from?
3. What do you do?
4. How far is your home from your office?
5. Why did you decide to stay in this locality / flat?
 - Probing question to identify trade-off users make: Would you be OK staying far away if commuting was easier, or rent was lesser, or there were better amenities?
6. What is your budget for accommodation? How much is the rent here? How many people stay in your house?
7. Do you prefer to stay alone or in a shared accommodation? why?
8. What do you look for while searching for accommodation?
9. How do you search for shared accommodation or a flat mate?
10. How do you decide whom to stay with?
11. How has been your experience in your search?
12. What Laptop/Tablet or phone do you use?
13. Which apps do you use most often?
14. What's the internet speed/connection at your home and in your device

Question 3: Insights from User Research	Analyse the data you gathered from interviews. Draw insights out of the collected data. You can segregate your insights basis the objectives of conducting user research: users pain points, motivations, personality, goals, demographics. (Word Limit: 600 Words)
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Demographics:

- Respondents were in the age group of 23 to 31, unmarried professionals.
- Respondents were from Delhi-NCR, Chandigarh, Mumbai, Bihar living in Hyderabad & Bangalore.

User preferences w.r.t dwelling space:

- Friends, Price, Locality, Location, hygiene, were the key aspects that influenced decision making.
- Most respondents preferred to stay within 10 kms radius of office.
- Proximity to office was important to some respondents because they did not want to buy a vehicle.
- Those who stayed far away choose to do because they wanted to stay with friends.
- Most of the respondents had a budget range of Rs 8,000 to 10000 per room including maintenance.
- Those who had higher budget either preferred to stay alone or were in higher age group (27-31).
- Spacious and clean rooms in a well maintained house/apartment was a common requirement for all respondents.
- Less restrictions. Freedom to come late. No regular inspections by landlord. Allow parents to stay with them.
- Information that that users wanted to know about the dwelling unit was:
 - a. Nearby shopping malls, grocery stores, good restaurants, cinema.
 - b. Gyms
 - c. Proximity to mass transit points.
 - d. Safety
 - e. Peacefulness
 - f. Access path and surrounding areas.
 - g. Internet speed available in the apartment.
 - h. Number of rooms in the flat.
 - i. Dimensions of the room. Many preferred spacious rooms.
 - j. Many wanted furnished flats and wanted to search based on this criterion.
 - k. Green surroundings.

User preference w.r.t choosing a flat mate:

- Most respondents preferred to stay with someone they already knew.
- Motivation behind this choice was that it's easier to sort out things if you know someone.
- Fear of unknown was the main reason behind not wanting to stay with strangers.
- Those who were open to staying with others had different criteria to judge a person.
 - a. Roommate should work in good company and should be well educated.
 - b. Roommate should be from the same region (North/South/North East/ Bengalis only etc.)
 - c. Should respect our privacy or should be outgoing, fun loving, party animal.
 - d. Strictly vegetarian respondents who cooked for themselves or hired a cook wanted to know the eating habits of others and if others worked in shifts so that kitchen can be exclusively used at different hours.
 - e. Most respondents did not care about food preferences as they preferred to order from Swiggy.
 - f. None of the respondents cared about smoking, drinking and sleeping habits of their flat mates.
 - g. Friendliness of person, the way she talks and explains about the locality helps in deciding if we want to stay with them or not.

Process of finding a flat or flatmate:

- Respondents rely on the following channels during their search. (Listed in the order of their preference)
 - a. **Word of mouth:** Ask friends, Colleagues, Relatives, HR of company.
 - b. **Social media:** Facebook group, Company's spam list, Google
 - c. **Mobile Apps:** NestAway, NoBroker, Simply Guest, Coho, Zolo Stays, Rental property aggregator apps.
 - d. **Broker.** Search for broker through Facebook or word of mouth. Choose this option after other options fail.
- After getting leads from various sources, user reaches out to the contact who can show them the place.
- They setup an appointment and visit the house to inspect and verify information shared online.
- While driving they observe the access path, nearby locality, safety factor, surrounding areas and amenities around the dwelling unit.
- After reaching the destination, they check if the apartment or house is well maintained, rooms are spacious, quality of furniture is good. They also observe the green cover and noise level within the society and around it.
- While inspecting the dwelling unit they inquire about internet connectivity, restrictions imposed by society or landlord, terms and conditions of payment.
- Broker is hired as a last resort when social media leads don't help.

Validation of Hypothesis: Our initial hypothesis was correct.

- Most respondents do want to stay within 10 km radius of their office unless they have close friends who stay further away.
- People new to city do face the fear of unknown and issue of trust deficit while deciding to stay with strangers.
- People do prefer to stay with friends, acquaintances or colleagues from same office if they have the choice to do so.

User experience while finding a flat or flatmate:

- People new to city need someone to show them around and guide them about locality.
- “It’s difficult to judge a person unless you stay with them.”
- Lengthy and tiresome.

User Pain Points:

- Ratings and reviews of apartments are not available in Facebook to cross verify and reduce reliance on others.
- No easy way to judge compatibility with others. Cannot ask about habits, likes and dislikes verbally.
- “Interaction should not be with landlord but with the manager of the property”.
- “NoBroker” was costly; Pictures did not reflect reality.
- App did not show approach road or nearby locality.
- Payment issues in app, lack of multiple payment options, service charge kept changing.
- “Don’t want to contact broker but we have no option because the flat owner relies on a broker”
- Is owner willing to share PAN card? Can we review rental agreement? How are damages calculated?

Ideas from respondents

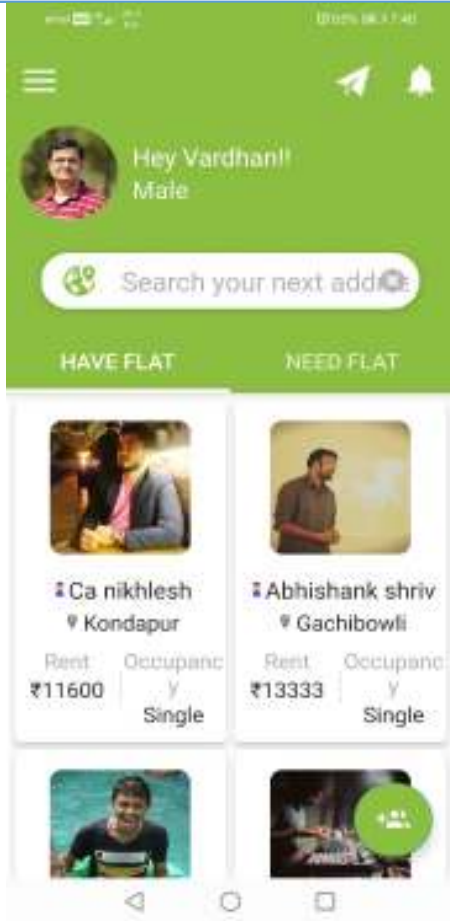
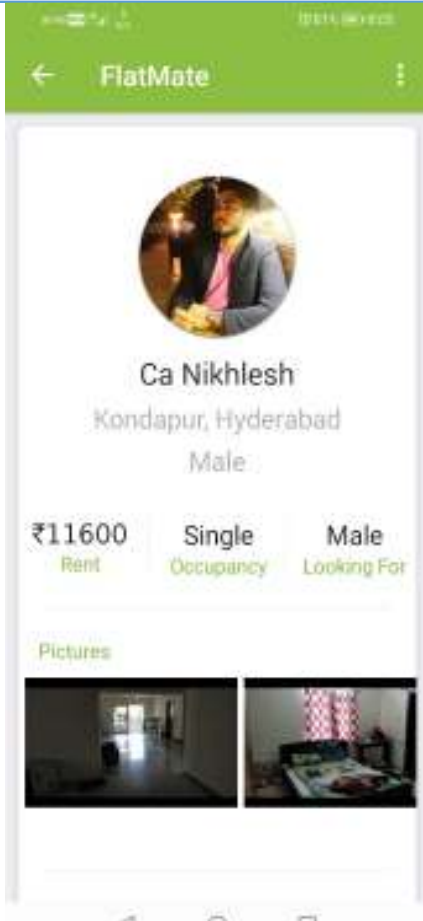
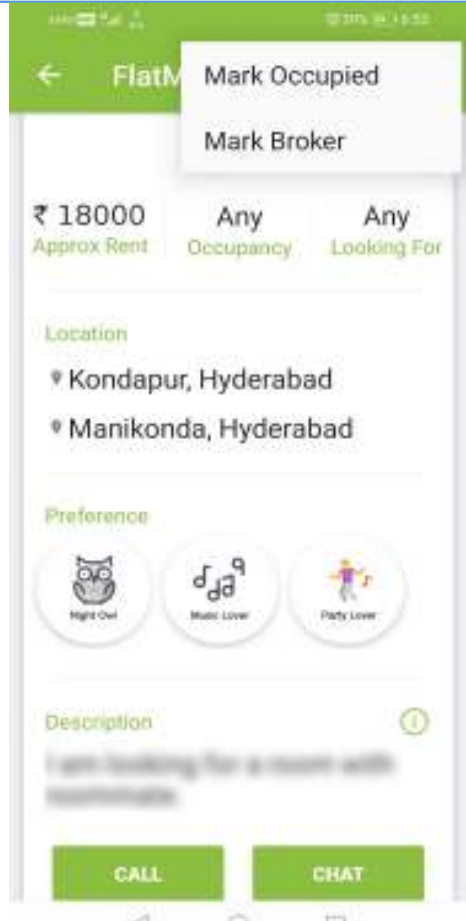
- Reviews and ratings based on various metrics needed.
- Ability to find apartments within a specified radius of office, get listing of fully furnished apartments.
- App should have online messaging or video chat feature to contact the manager or flatmate.

Technology

- Majority (95%) respondents used Android phones and windows laptop

Competitive Analysis of Existing Mobile App : FlatMate.in

We did a competitive analysis of an existing products to check if the solution was meeting the requirements and mental modal of our respondents.

Problem	Home Screen		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) There was no way to find houses in a specified radius of their office. 2) Cannot filter flats based on user's needs. 3) Photos of apartment, its amenities not shared. 4) Photos of nearby places and access path not available. 5) Reviews of property is not available. 6) No information about restrictions. 7) No hand holding and personalized service. 8) Nothing is done to address the primary concern of "trust deficit" between two individuals. Very difficult to decide whom to contact by looking at the passport sized photos of prospective roommates. There are so many of them. 9) None of the respondents had heard of this app. 10) Only two payment options available. Razorpay & Paytm. 	 <p>The Home Screen of the FlatMate app features a green header with a menu icon, a location pin, and a notification bell. Below the header, a personalized greeting "Hey Vardhan!! Male" is displayed. A search bar with a magnifying glass icon and the text "Search your next addo" is present. Two main buttons, "HAVE FLAT" and "NEED FLAT", are shown. Below these, a grid of four user profiles is displayed, each with a photo, name, location, rent, and occupancy status. The bottom navigation bar includes icons for home, search, and profile.</p>	 <p>The User Profile screen shows a green header with a back arrow and the app name "FlatMate". The profile section includes a circular profile picture, the name "Ca Nikhlesh", location "Kondapur, Hyderabad", and gender "Male". Below this, the rent "₹11600" is listed, followed by "Single" for occupancy and "Male" for looking for. A "Pictures" section shows two images of the apartment. The bottom navigation bar includes icons for home, search, and profile.</p>	 <p>The Search Filters screen shows a green header with a back arrow and the app name "FlatMate". A dropdown menu is open, showing options "Mark Occupied" and "Mark Broker". Below the menu, the rent "₹18000" is listed, followed by "Any" for occupancy and "Any" for looking for. The "Location" section shows "Kondapur, Hyderabad" and "Manikonda, Hyderabad". The "Preference" section shows three icons: "Night Owl", "Music Lover", and "Party Lover". The "Description" section shows a blurred text. The bottom navigation bar includes icons for home, search, and profile.</p>

Competitive Analysis of Existing Mobile App : Flat&Flatmates.in

Issues	Home Page	Flat Details	Amenities
Gaps <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot filter flats bases on proximity to office. No Google Maps provided to check it. Cannot filter houses based on other criteria, such as furnished non furnished, number of bedrooms, price, empty vs occupied. No reviews or rating provided. No information about the occupant is provided. Issue of “Trust” not addressed. Positives <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Photo of apartment provided. Photos of amenities provided. Can chat with occupants. List of amenities are shown. 			

Question 4: Create a persona for the user from the user research data.

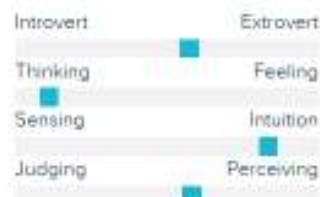
User Persona Type



"Smoking, drinking, eating habits don't matter as we stay in separate rooms and order our food online."

Age: 24
 Occupation: Software Engineer
 Marital Status: Unmarried
 Location: Hyderabad, Telangana
 Character: Type
 Income: 15 Lacs

Personality



Analytical Social Hardworking

Independent Easygoing

Goals

- Find a spacious room within his budget in a good locality which does not have too many restrictions. It should be within a specific radius of his office, peaceful, well maintained.
- Should be near to mall, gyms, grocery shop, cinemas.
- Not too comfortable staying with strangers but may consider if he likes the unit, locality, price, and flat mate.

Frustrations

- No easy way to filter furnished apartments within a given radius of his office in his budget.
- Photos of rooms don't match reality. Don't get any clue about access path to house and its surroundings from the app.
- Reviews of apartment not available online.
- Adequate information about prospective flat mate is not available online. Name of office, designation, education, where is he from are needed to make a judgement.

Bio

Nan is a data scientist working at Amazon India. He lives in a three bedroom flat with his friends from Delhi. He does not have his own vehicle and relies on transport service provided by his office. His search for house began with an inquiry within his network of friends. Once two friends decided to stay together, they availed services of a brokers to help them find a vacant flat in a area equidistant to their offices. His third flat mate used Facebook's 'flat and flatmate' group to search for shared accommodation.

Motivation

Socialize: Stay with Friends, Acquaintances

Convenience: Amenities & Locality

Save time: Distance from office

Good Experience: Hygiene factors

Cost

Brands & Technology



Preferred Channels

Referral: Friends, Relatives & Colleagues

Facebook Flat & Flatmates group

Mobile Apps

Broker

Questions 5: Create a user journey map for the given user goals:

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| <p>(a) Find a shared accommodation space that satisfies my logistical constraints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to Workplace, Recreation, Utilities • Amenities e.g. Gym, Swimming Pool, Parking • Support ecosystem e.g. Cook/Maid, furniture, laundry etc. • Cost | <p>(b) Find roommates with whom I share preferences in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food habit • Timings • Visitors |
|--|--|

User Journey Map 1

User Goals	<p>(a) Find a shared accommodation space that satisfies my logistical constraints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to Workplace, Recreation, Utilities • Amenities e.g. Gym, Swimming Pool, Parking • Support ecosystem e.g. Cook/Maid, furniture, laundry etc. • Cost 			
Phase	AWARENESS	ENGAGEMENT	VISIT & EXPLORE	DECIDE AND STAY
Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness about good localities to stay. • Figure out the best way to search. 	Join Facebook group “Flat and Flatmate” to get leads.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspect the area to check safety, hygiene factors, support system. • Get a sense of the locality, proximity to recreation, utilities. • Understand terms and payment. 	Pay and finalize the deal.

User Expectations	If friends have a spare room, it would reduce hassle of searching, otherwise will get ideas of the new city.	Joining Facebook group should help them find a flat mate or a flat.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online information would match reality. Surroundings areas will be accessible & will have desired amenities. Flat mate will be friendly and polite. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement and PAN number of landlord will be shared. Money would be collected via electronic payment and receipt would be given.
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Search google. Contact friends, relatives Talk or chat online 	Click a button to join Facebook group and start viewing posts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit the house physically. Repeat the process of search & visit if user does not like it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> User pays deposit and advance rental by cash to finalize the deal.
Experience	Upbeat about exploring new place and new experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good flats disappear fast. Do not get response to message quickly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tedious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landlords PAN is not given. All transaction in cash without receipt.
Touchpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online reviews & Ads Newspaper ads Word of mouth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online Advertisements. Posting in Facebook flat rental groups about our service. 	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landlords PAN is not given. All transaction in cash without receipt.

Pain-points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User is too new to the city to know which locality to choose. • Seeks a reliable source to show them around. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person who shares information about flat does not share enough about himself. • Cannot ask personal information directly. • Info about locality around the house not available. • Good ones disappear quickly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to house and surrounding was not good. • Photos dint match reality. • Terms and conditions were too restrictive, unacceptable • Area was too nosy • Apartment was too old. • Need to repeat the exercise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of how damages will be calculated not shared. • Maintenance amount is collected but maintenance is not proper. • Landlord insists on paying full months' rent even if apartment is vacated in the middle.
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase brand awareness of your product. • Provide information in a way that users new to the city can search info based on their needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimize service to find room mates. • Provide curated information with all details to build trust. • Provide reviews and ratings about apartments. • Send push notifications about recent postings or vacancies for flats which meet criteria. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show pictures of buildings & surrounding area. • Make copy of rental agreement available online. • Write blogs about area that surrounds the house with pictures with good map. • Encourage & reward existing customers to share their views in your blog. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has to be a way to share feedback. • Engagement and disengagement process should be clearly mentioned so that expectations are set.

User Journey Map 2	
User Goal	(b) Find roommates with whom I share preferences in terms of: 1) Food Habits 2) Timings 3) Visitors
User Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flatmate should be friendly, polite and considerate about the needs of others. Should be well educated, working in good companies, preferably from the same home city or region.
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk to friends or colleagues to know if there is a spare room in their home. If not... Search all posts in various Facebook flat and flatmate public group. Try to get information about the person from his profile page. Search in linked in with that name. Send a message to the person. Chat. Decide to visit the place.
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> She was not fussy about food habits but I don't eat non veg food. I don't prefer sharing kitchen with those who cook non veg food. "She just showed the room and asked me to decide without talking much. Could not relate with her." Felt awkward to ask about her likes dislikes, education qualification or designation directly. Not enough information available bout person on Facebook except photo. Still pensive.
Touchpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Touch points Channels : Web, Mobile App (Facebook)
Pain-points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Cannot judge a person unless we stay with them".

<div>Ideas</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would help if flat mate's preferences are known in advance. • Does she prefer vegetarian partners or non-smokers, people from same city or place and are they OK with we bring our friends and relatives to stay with us in our room? • It would help if we know where she works.
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Appendix A

Apart from creating user journey maps in word, we also learned how to leverage online tools for storyboarding like:

<https://uxpressia.com/>

<https://xtensio.com/>

<https://uxpro.cc/toolbox/storyboarder/>

