

Cultural Mapping

A platform to map tangible and intangible elements of thathera culture

Project 3

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Declaration

I declare that this written document represents my ideas in my own words and where others' ideas or words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources.

I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented or fabricated or falsified any idea, data, fact or source in my submission.

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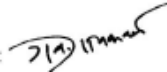
Approval Sheet

The Interaction Design Project 3 titled “Cultural Mapping : A platform to map tangible and intangible elements of thathera culture” by Ridhima Tapia (Roll Number 176330012), is approved, in partial fulfilment of the ‘Master in Design’ Degree in Interaction Design at IDC , IIT Bombay.

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Abstract

India is one of the ancient civilisations of the world and has a rich diversified cultural heritage. Unlike most other countries of the world that have homogenous communities across, India is a mixture of many cultures. With passage of time our cultural artefacts like languages, crafts, beliefs etc. are dying. Many of them are on the verge of extinction and many of the existing ones are still not known to the world outside the community. So, there is a strong need to preserve our dying culture and make our existing culture more visible to people in the country.

The long term goal of the project is to come up with a sustainable design solution to preserve, promote popularise India's diverse culture which can further be scaled to map different types of cultures. And the short term goal of the project is to explore one particular culture and design a solution to map all the cultural aspects of that community.

The community chosen for the project is the thathera community. Thatheras are the metal craftsmen who make brass utensils by hand. The aim of the project is to map the tangible and intangible aspects of thathera community and make it more visible to the world. It will not only help preserve the thathera culture but will also fetch them recognition for their work.

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1. Introduction

What is cultural mapping ?

Cultural mapping is a systematic tool to involve communities in the identification and recording of local cultural assets, with the implication that this knowledge will then be used to inform collective strategies, planning processes, or other initiatives.[1]

Types of cultural mapping :

Resource Mapping – identifying and recording tangible cultural resources usually making use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) tools and platforms.

Community Identity Mapping – exploring ‘intangible cultural resources’ – the unique stories and traditions that define a community’s identity and sense of place.[2]

Community identity mapping is the type of mapping used in the project.

Why is there a need to do cultural mapping ?

The aim and need of the project is truly inspired from ministry of culture’s project to map culture. The mission document of ministry of culture says”We always had an oral way of transferring the cultural arts but in the advanced world of Information and Technology, it is essential to design a web-portal to maintain a database of cultural assets and resources such as art forms, individual artists, artists’ community cultural organisations, cultural spaces & facility, creative cultural industries, festivals & events, heritage properties, landmark etc. spread across all over the country and enhance it with a determination to deliver what we have inherited. Properly mapped, documented and designed database can be effectively used for not only preserving the rich cultural heritage but also providing means of livelihood and ameliorating the economic conditions of the performing artistes. In the above context, Ministry of Culture has planned a National Mission on Cultural Mapping and roadmap for the same”[3].

2. Topic & Need

Broad Topic :

To make intangible resources more visible to the society via means of cultural mapping.

Community Chosen : Thatheras

'Thatheras' are the metal craftsmen who make utensils out of brass(an alloy of copper and zinc) using traditional techniques. They make utensils by using different hand techniques and then polish them with traditional material like sand and tamarind juice manually. Later they carve designs on the polished utensil by skilfully hammering a series of tiny dents into the heated metal.

This particular utensil making technique was the first ever traditional indian craft form that got inscribed in the 2014 list of UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage..

Why is there is need to map Thathera culture?

The thathera craft colony was established during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1839) the great 19th Century Sikh Monarch. He encouraged the skilled metal craftsmen from Kashmir to settle in Punjab. During that time thatheras were spread in different regions of punjab but were mostly concentrated in a village near amritsar called jandiala guru. During the partition muslim thatheras went to pakistan and settled in kujranwala (now in pakistan) and the hindu thatheras came to jandiala guru. The thatheras in kujranwala are still practicing the same craft. So today this craft of thatheras is actually knitting the boundary of the two countries together. During the time of independence there were around 400 families practicing the craft in the village jandiala guru. And today there are hardly 20-25 thathera families who are still practicing the craft. There is a huge downfall in the number of Thatheras. New generations are not following the craft. If the same trend follows, this culture of thatheras to make utensils by hand will die soon and eventually the community will also vanish. So there is a high need to protect and preserve the thathera culture.

3. Primary Research

3.1 Research protocol

Based on the assumptions made a research protocol for the field study was developed.

What do I want to know ?

- Why is the community of Thatheras dying ?
- Why are they leaving this culture of making utensils?
- What is their work culture? Who all are the stakeholders ?
- What are their concerns, strengths, beliefs ?
- What makes them unique?

Why do I want to know what i want to know?

To reach the core problem why the culture is dying.

How will I get to know what I want to know?

By conducting contextual enquiries with thathera communities in Punjab.

Questionnaire

- Since when are they doing this work ?
- What are the motivations behind continuing the work ?
- How has the type of work changed with time?
- Background about place, generations.
- Major challenges faced while working?
- How has the challenges faced changed with time?
- What do they think are the benefits of doing this work?
- Any health issues because of work?

Observations

Expressions while talking, emotions, clothes, environment.

Contextual Enquiry

In the first set, 2 thatheras from Nabha were interviewed. Out of the 2 there was only

one thathera who was still practicing the craft. The other one had left the craft and was a principal in a school.

In the second set, a contextual enquiry with 10 groups of thatheras from the village jandiala guru was conducted for a period of 1 week. Every group of thathera included of at least 2 people. Days were spent with these thatheras to better understand the process they go through

In the third set, 2 thatheras from the city Batala were interviewed. It was discovered that only nobody in the town is making utensils, only 2-3 people were doing only the repairing jobs.

In third round the target users were interviewed. These interviews were held at different centers of yuva parivartan. The Centers in Mumbai and camps held in villages Palghar, Usgaon were visited. A total of 25-30 users were interviewed in these visits. It helped a lot in understanding the user. The major key questions involved demographics, course they are undergoing? Why are they taking the course? What are the inspirations behind? What are the main challenges faced? Will they want to take any other course? Later on the users analysis was performed.



Fig.3.1(a) Pictures from contextual enquiry

3.3 Findings

Major findings after the research included all the aspects of thathera culture ie.their strengths, customs, fears, frustrations etc. The figure shows the findings of the research.

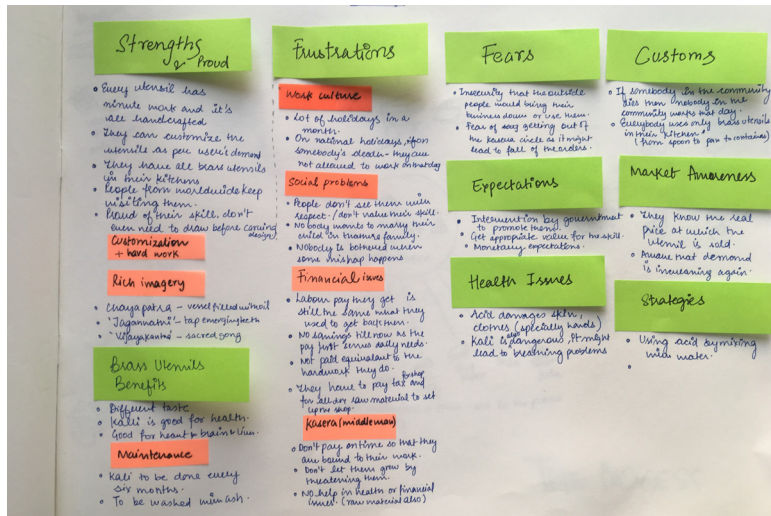


Fig.4.3(a) Findings

More findings

- The demand of brass utensils have decreased from past 15 years but now the demand has started gaining peak again.
- The main reason of Thatheras leaving their work is not only falling demand but frustrations from kaseras (the middlemen) and getting no social respect for their work.
- The Price of raw material for making has increased but the labour paid to the Thatheras is same.

The above findings were also validated with news articles and similar results were found. Below are some of the news articles validating the information.

Copper, brass prices move up on global cues

Select copper and brass prices moved up marginally at the non-ferrous metal market here today on stockist buying.

PTI | Updated: Jun 18, 2013, 05:25 PM IST

0 Comments



MUMBAI: Select copper and brass prices moved up marginally at the non-ferrous metal market here today on stockist buying amidst modest demand from industrial users on the back of higher London Metal Exchange cues.

Meanwhile, tin dropped on subdued offtake from alloy industries.

Fig.3.3(b) Newspaper article showing rise in prices of brass

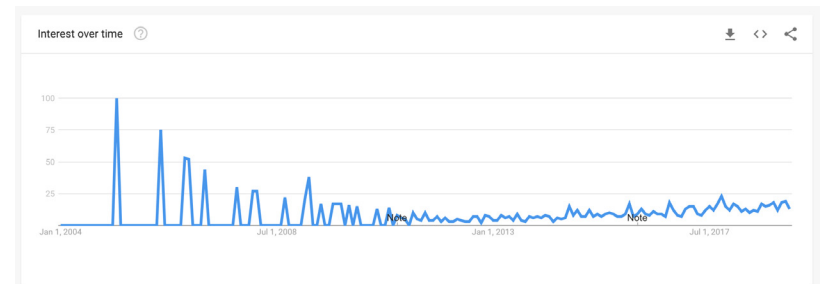


Fig.3.3(c) Newspaper article showing trend of demand of brass utensils

4. Need

The current scenario is that the demand of the brass utensils is rising but the no. of thatheras in the craft are decreasing. Future generations are not following the family legacy. In the whole village Jandiala guru there was only one boy from new generation who was continuing the family legacy by practicing the craft. There is a gap between the dwindling thatheras and rising demand and hence an opportunity to intervene.

Possible areas of Intervention

- Livelihood of Thatheras : An intervention to help thatheras earn their livelihood by teaching them techniques to modernise their work
- Market and Thatheras : Connecting the thatheras directly to the market
- Preserving Culture : Documenting the thathera culture
- Thathera culture - connecting to world

Mapping the thatheras will not only document, preserve their culture but will also help them get recognition for their work and further could connect them to fetch market as well which addresses all the above mentioned areas of intervention.

Narrowed Topic

The narrowed down topic of the project is to design a platform that maps thathera culture and makes them more visible to the society.

5. Goal & Objective

Goal

The long term goal of the project is to make Dying cultures and their crafts more visible to society through cultural mapping and the intended goal for the project is to concentrate on thathera community.

Objective

To create a platform that maps the intangible(invisible) and tangible(visible) aspects of thathera culture.

6. Secondary research

For secondary research various definitions of cultural mapping were discovered and different types of projects done under cultural mapping were explored. Below are some of the details of some of the cultural mapping projects :

Kochi cultural mapping[4] - It maps all the tangible heritage sites to their geo locations. Very helpful for locating nearby cultural artefacts. It maps the tangible cultural heritage.

Creative city network of canada[5] - This project has created a toolkit for mapping the canadian culture. The toolkit provides step by step instructions to map the culture.

Cultural Mapping- Niagara Region[6] - This document has defined cultural mapping, its types and further uses. The document was referred to understand more about cultural mapping

Written in the sand[7] - It a project on cultural mapping of san culture via documentation. The platform has nicely documented a dying community in south africa.

Ottawa valley culture[8]- Ottawa valley culture has mapped all the cultural resources nearby and it also maps the events happening around. The user is connected to both the tangible and intangible resources of the city.

Ministry of culture[9]- Mission document of ministry of culture was taken as inspiration to start the project and the document has been referred for defining the objectives and need of the project.

UNESCO[10] - The video of thathera culture uploaded by unesco was taken as reference to understand the process of utensil making better.

7. Design Ideas

Idea 1

A platform to connect the Thatheras to the government.

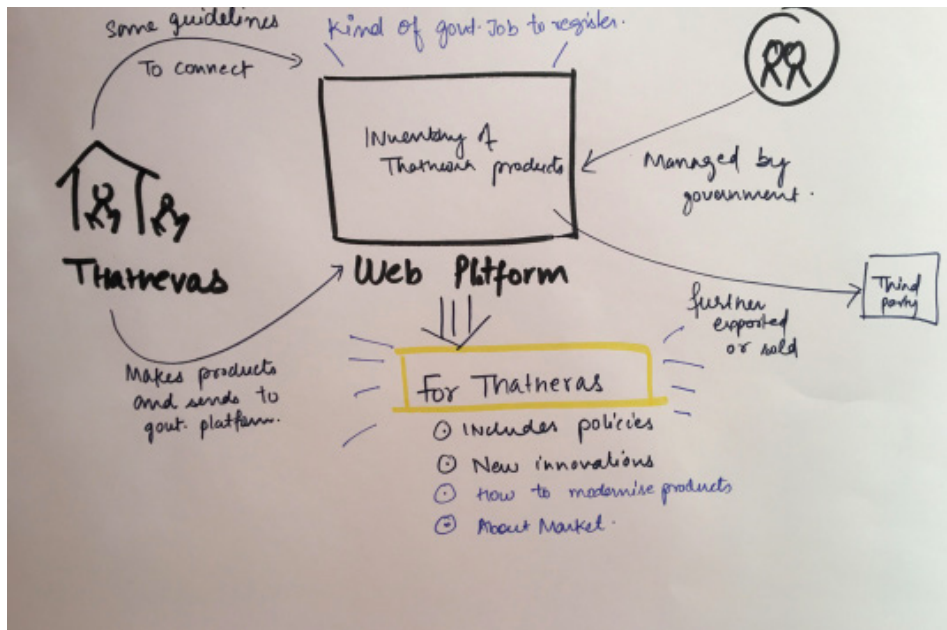


Fig.7.(a). Idea 1

It will be a government initiated platform for thatheras which will help them grow better. Make them more aware about the government policies and schemes which can help them. They will be able to upload their inventory on the platform and hence increase their market. This idea was dropped later because it was drifting from the primary goal of the project which is to map the thathera culture and make them more visible to the world. And also it was realised that monetary help from the government is must to help the thatheras grow their market.

Idea 2

A cultural mapping toolkit

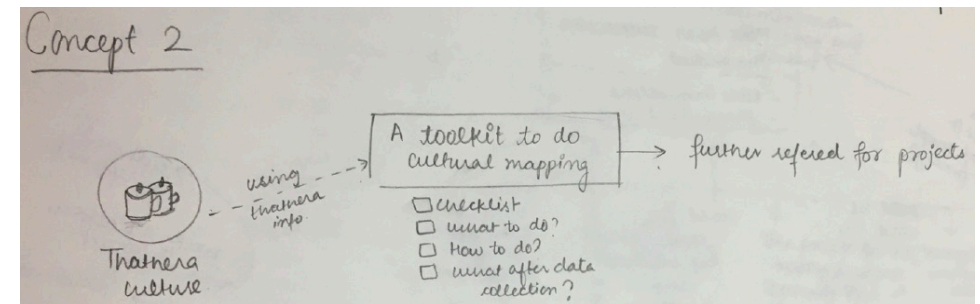


Fig.7.(b). Idea 2

A toolkit which will provide a checklist and a method on how to do cultural mapping. The thathera culture will be used a reference to create the toolkit. The idea was rejected as the field study of just one community might not help to create a scalable toolkit. To create a toolkit there is a need to capture different communities and cultures and then come up with a common toolkit.

Idea 3

A cultural trip to thathera community

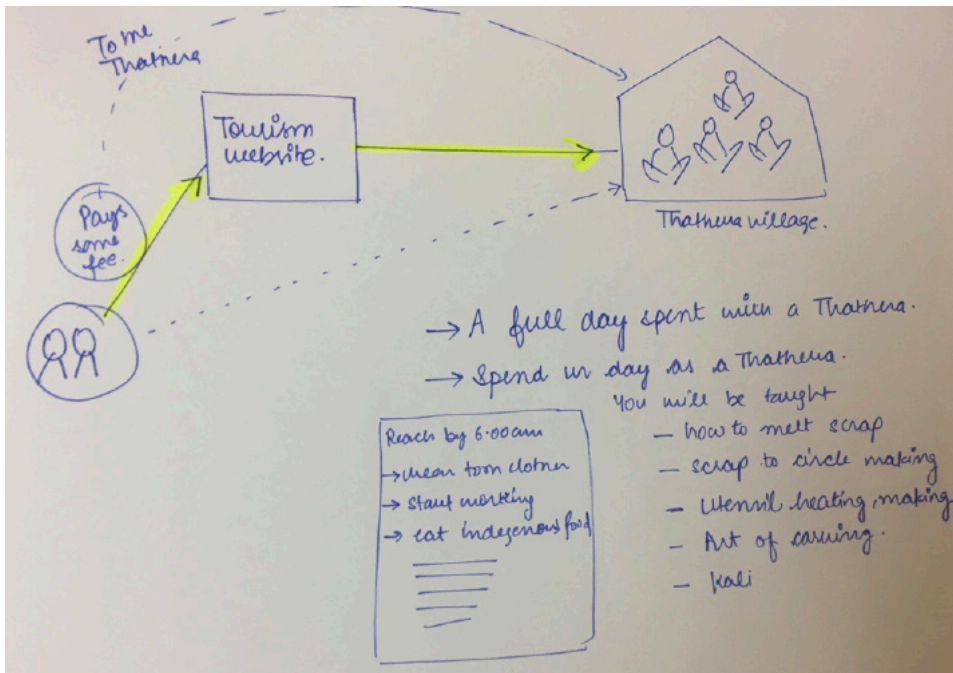


Fig.7.(c). Idea 3

To design a trip to thathera community where in the user will get to experience a whole day in a thatheras role. From waking up early going to shop and to closing the shop in the night the user will experience everything. User will perform all the tasks from buying circles from the kaseras(middlemen) and making an utensil out of it. Eat their indigenous food and experience the thathera culture to the fullest. The idea is to design the field visit and incorporate it into punjab tourism.

Idea 4

A thathera culture centric ecosystem

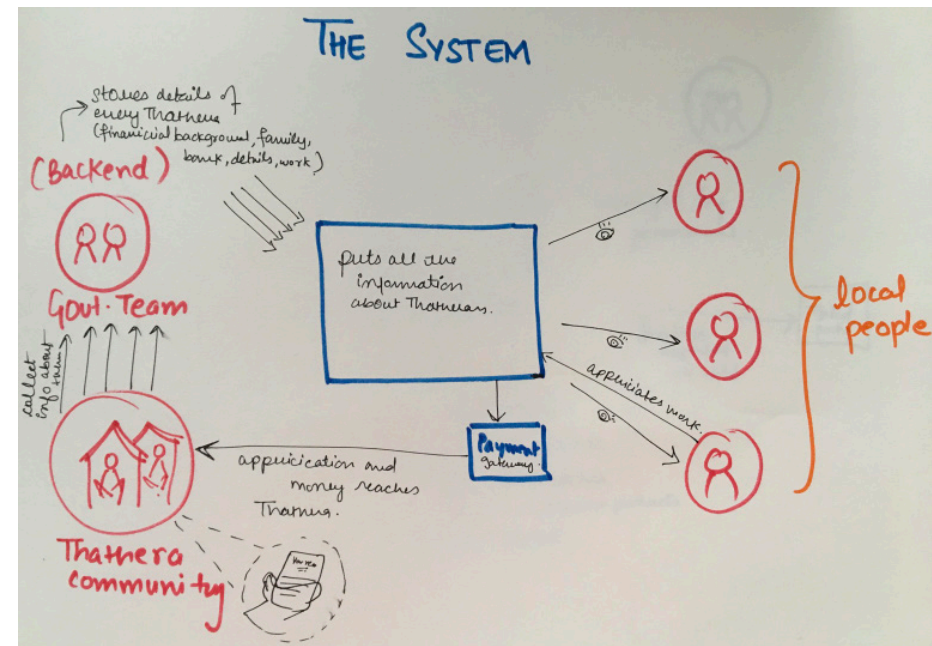


Fig.7(d). Idea 4

The 'Thathera culture' centric platform which will tell the story of the thathera culture in an engaging way. It will cover all the elements related to thathera culture namely their strengths, customs, traditions, achievements, frustrations, utensil making journey and their products. The idea is to make user feel the sense of the thathera community.

8. Final concept

For the final concept some iterations were done on idea 4. The final concept consists of two parts :

System structure : that is how will the whole system work.

Platform design : Design of the platform mapping thatheras.

8.1 System structure

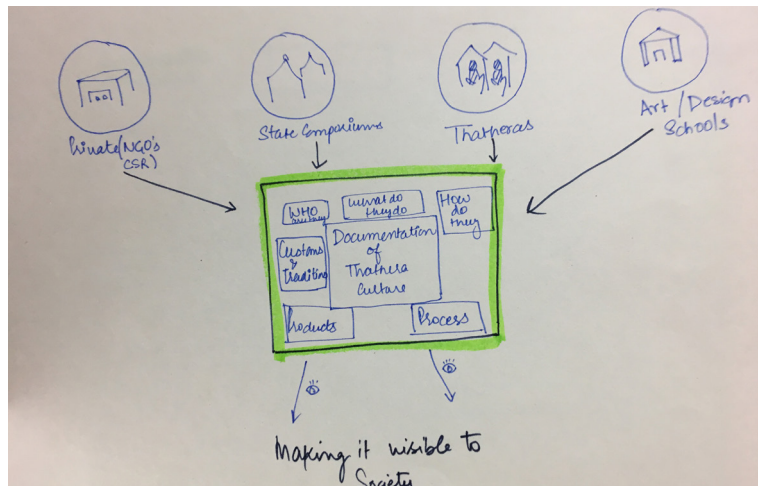


Fig.8.1.(a). Final system structure

The final iteration of the system structure is such that there will be four stakeholders namely : state emporiums, industry (CSR's), thatheras and art/design schools. These four stakeholders will help us build the platform. The initiative of the project will be done by state emporium or the industry people. And later the project will be continued with contribution of all the stakeholders.

Stakeholders

Who	How will they contribute ?	Why will they contribute?
State emporiums	With its direct contact with the craft and community, they can help generate a database of information that is authentic and empathetic	<p>Get a platform where culture is mapped</p> <p>An assurance that with the increased visibility on the community and its crafts, people get attracted to it</p> <p>This creates direct access for public to these crafts</p> <p>It reduces the role of middleman by creating the possibility of direct marketing</p>
Industry	<p>CSR funds for empowering a social cause.</p> <p>Offer possible internships to students studying these communities</p>	<p>Gets tax benefits for funding</p> <p>Gets respect for showing social concern</p>
Thathera	Map themselves on to the platform and tag their products	<p>Get recognition for their work</p> <p>Connection to the world</p>

Art/design schools	Create information bases about the communities by visiting and documenting the communities Help mapping through student projects	Recognition for information creation Possible internships with industry/NGO's
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Detailed system design

The figure below explains the flow of the system working.

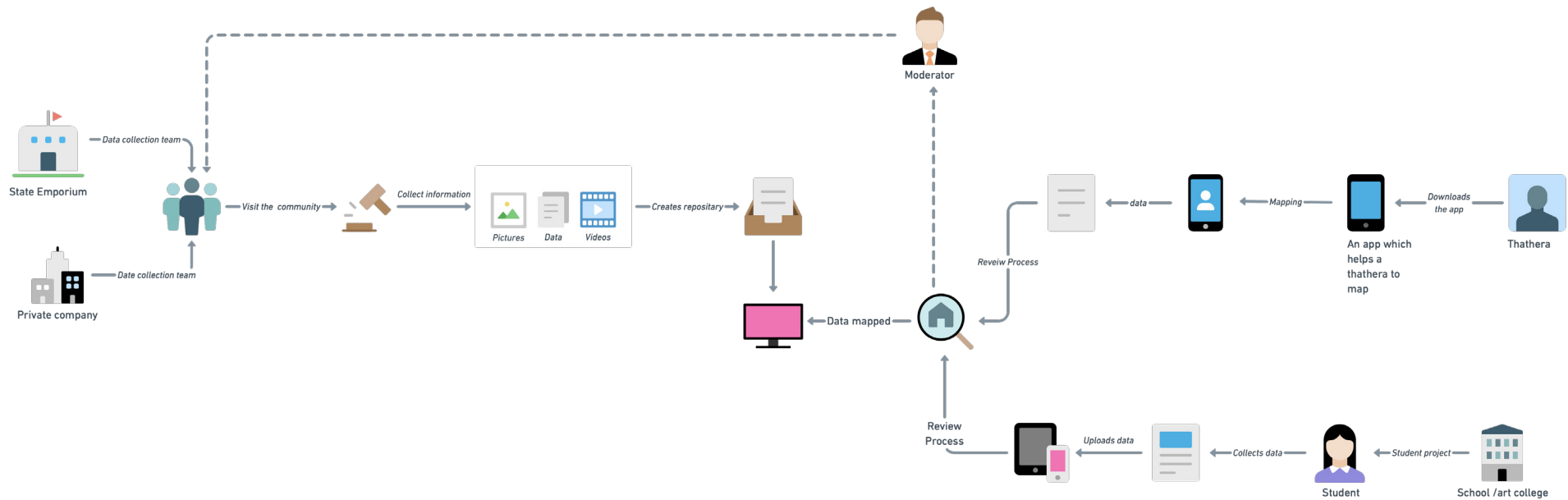


Fig.8.1.(b). Detailed system design

8.2 Platform design

Before starting the platform final design, the content of the system was finalised. Different categories/elements to be involved in the design were identified and the content for the same was finalised.

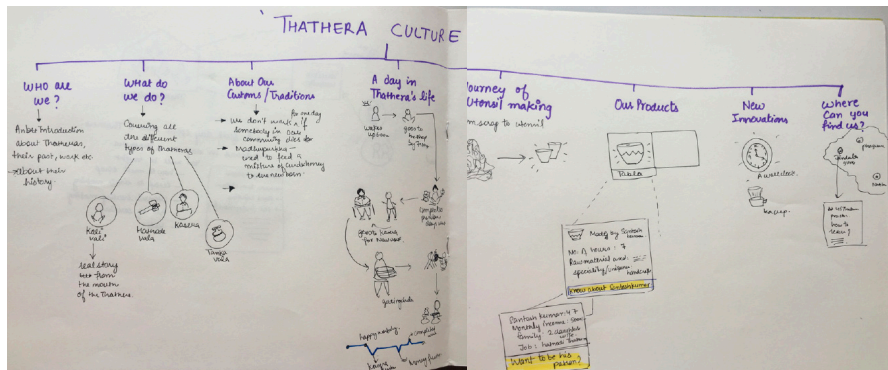


Fig.8.2.(a). Elements of final design

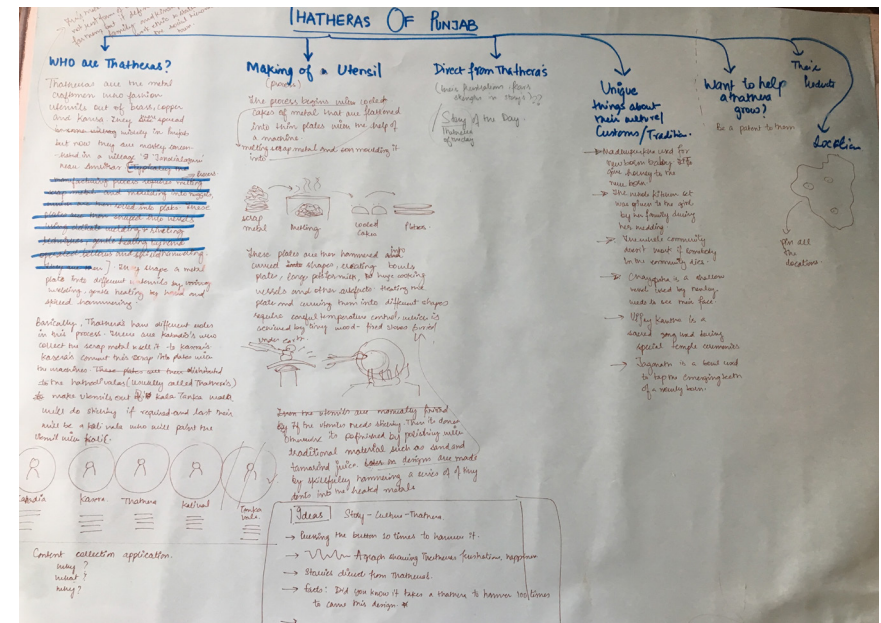


Fig.8.2.(b). Content of final design

8.2(a) Platform design iteration 1

The figure represents a rough information flow of the platform. The idea was that after coming to the platform it will take users through different roles to experience the thathera culture and the user will have the privilege to choose what role does he want to try or the user could skip the role and directly jump to check the website.

Information flow

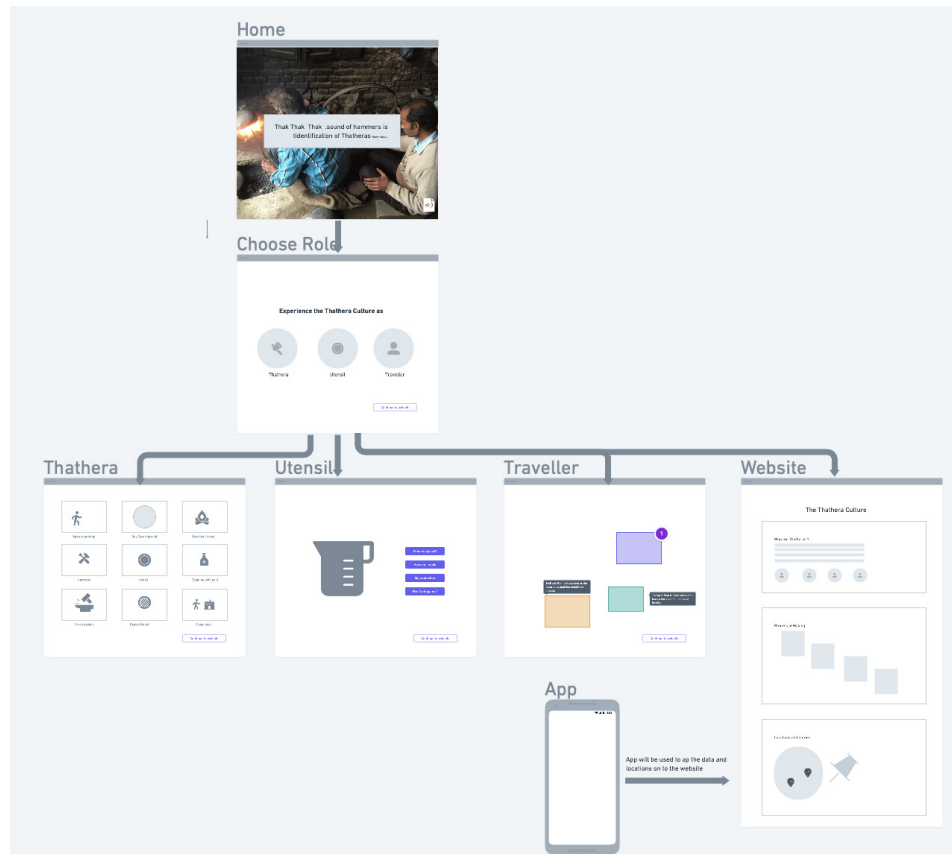


Fig.8.2.(c). Information flow of design

Thathera trip as a 'Thathera'

The Thathera will be given a task to make an utensil and he will perform it by collecting all the raw materials required. It will give an essence about how is a day in a thathera's life.

Thathera trip as an 'Utensil'

The utensil will talk about its history, its use and how its use is declining with passage of time or it is used no more. Also the utensil will try convincing user to help the utensil increase its productivity by being a patron to a thathera.

Thathera trip as a 'traveller'

The traveller will visit thathera shops and will get to know about thathera customs, traditions, frustrations etc. Each shop(Thathera) visited by the traveller will tell him a new story. This will help create more empathy in the traveller towards thatheras.

Website

The Website will present all the information about thathera culture mostly in visual form. After going through the role playing it will be easier for the user to get all the information about the culture.

Mobile App

A mobile app will be used to collect content and to map more people on the platform. The app will have proper instructions on what to click and how to click. Anybody following the it step by step will be able to map Thatheras. The idea of using a mobile app is to make content collection easier. In this case thatheras were just limited to a one state but what if they were spread all over the country then it would have been hard to map. So this mobile app will make the content collection part of the project much more

Lo-fi wireframing

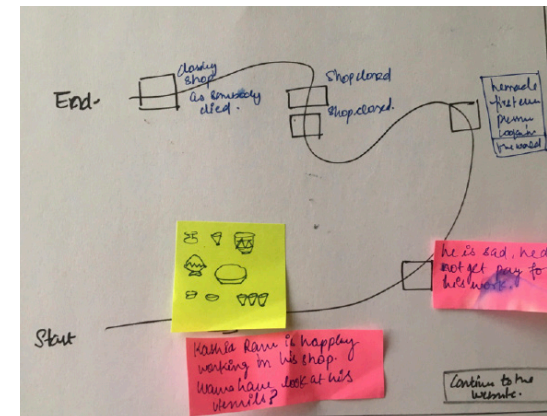
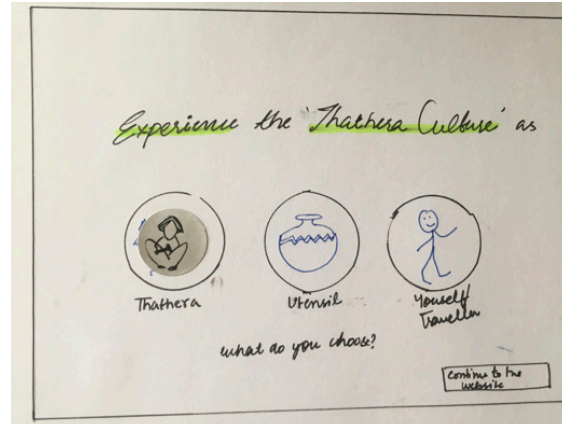
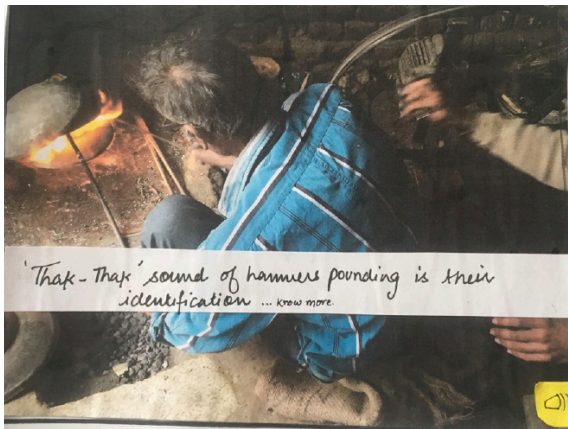
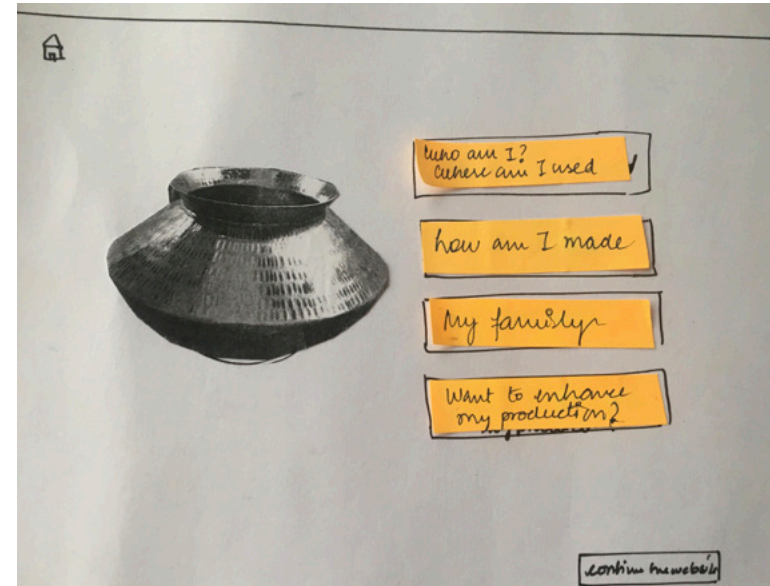
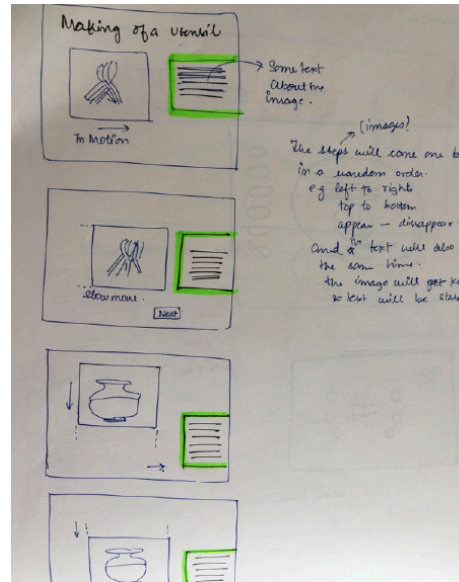


Fig.8.2.(d). Lo-fi wireframes

Hi-fi wireframing

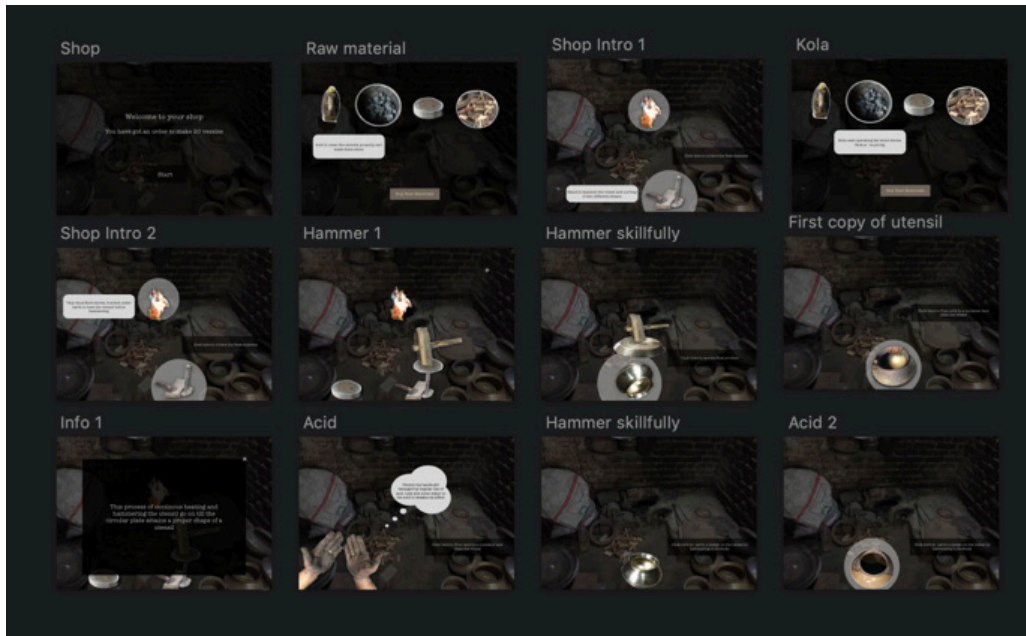


Fig.8.2.(e). Hi-fi screens for thathera role

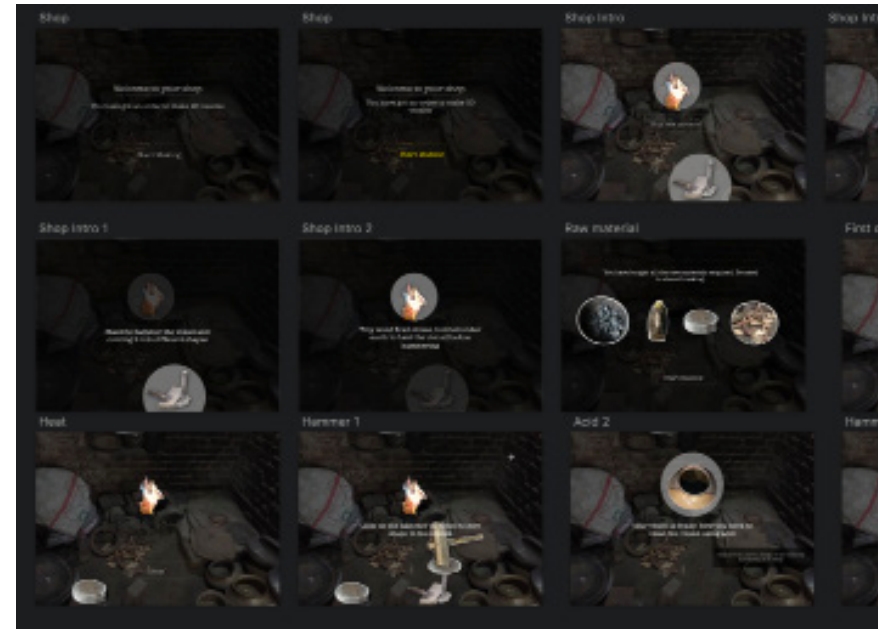


Fig.8.2.(f). Hi-fi screens for thathera role

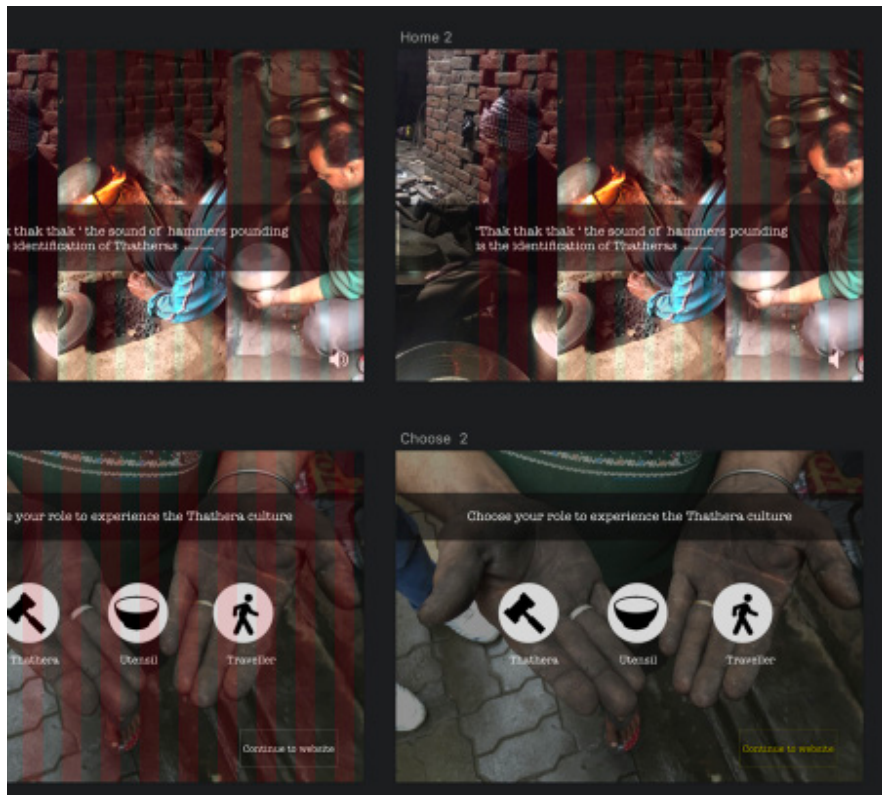
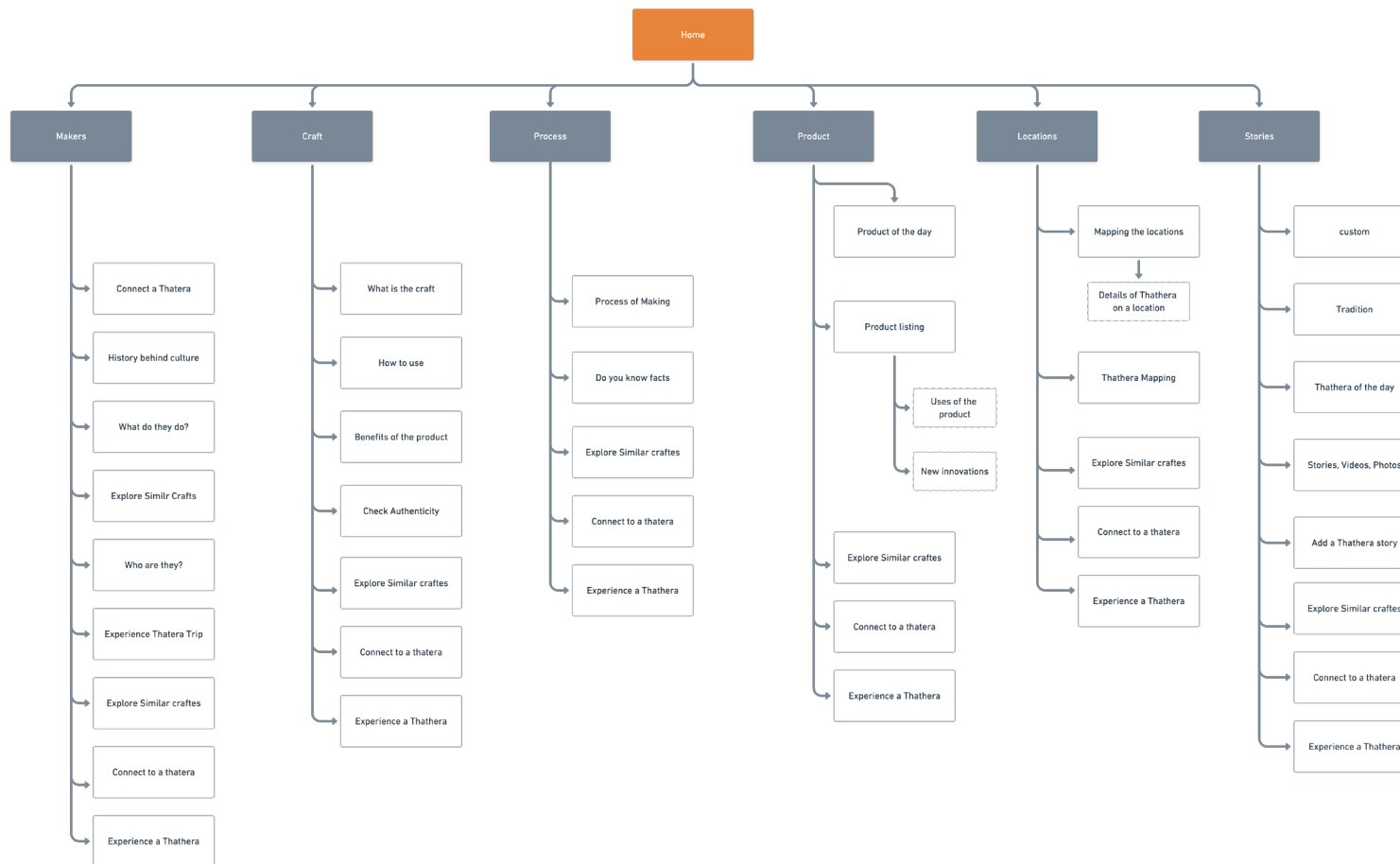


Fig.8.2.(g). Hi-fi screens for home pages

This idea of choosing a role after entering the website was discarded later on after testing it with some people. The feedback received was that they weren't clear what do they focus on and also the process of utensil of utensil making seemed very easy to them. Later the idea was reworked and the final iteration of the platform was made.

8.2(b) Platform design final iteration

Information architecture



Lo - fi wireframing

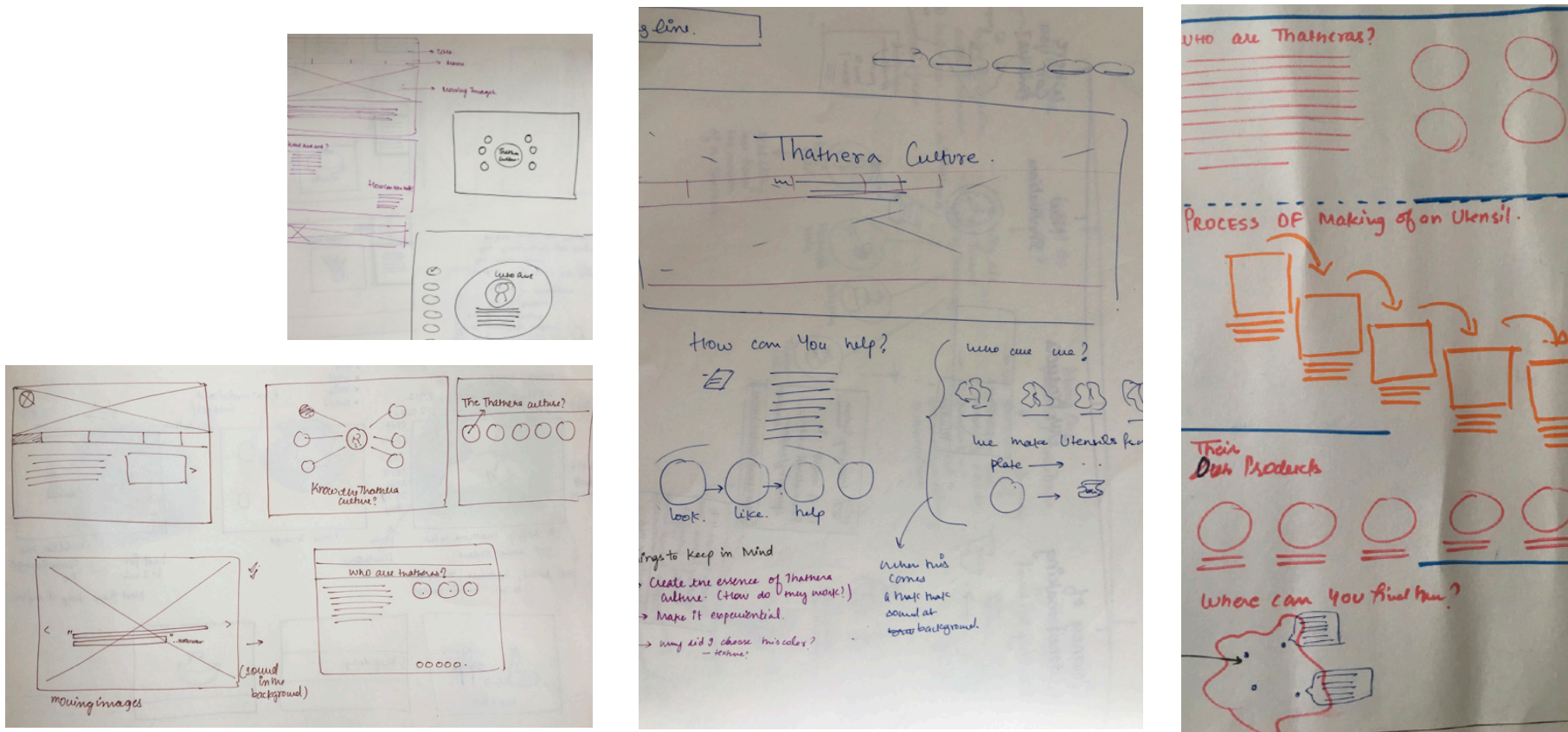


Fig.8.2(h). Lo-fi wireframing for final design



Fig.8.2(i). Grey framing for final design

Hi- fi wireframing

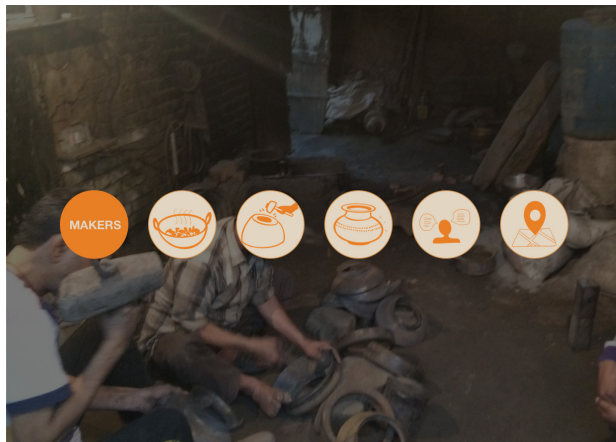


Fig.8.2.(j) Thathera home screen

Fig.8.2.(k) form for story collection

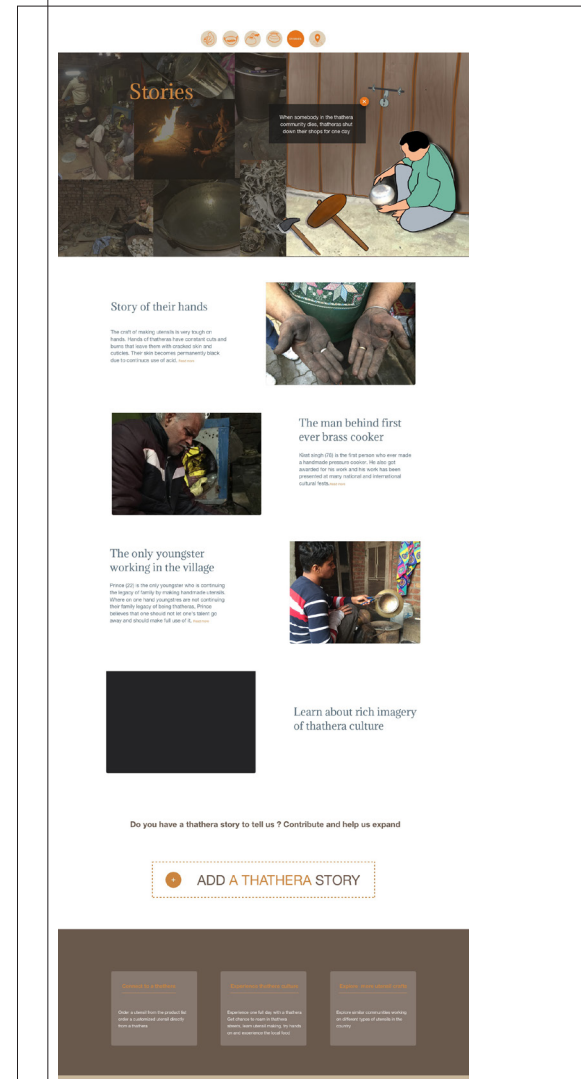


Fig.8.2.(l) Stories page

Products

Thatheras only use brass utensils in their kitchens

Gagger
It is a huge brass vessel used to cook water. In ancient times, brass used to fit water from the well in the gagger.

Praal
Praal is a small brass vessel used to make dough for micheappan.

Gang
Gang is a product which is used to produce sound in temples. It is made by hammering using the good steel & wooden hammer.

Thaali
Thaali is a large brass vessel that needs to be large enough for two people to eat from the same thali.

KADDAHI
Kaddahi is a vessel which can be used for cooking meals.

Lota
Lota can be used to store water. Keeping water in this vessel gives a better taste. Next day, it has a lot of health benefits.

Pateela
Praal is a vessel which can be used for various purposes like heating water, heating milk or making tea.

A full set of brass kitchen utensils is gifted to their daughters on her wedding day

Ordered to a Thathera
Order a utensil from the product list and a customized utensil directly from a Thathera.

Experience Thathera culture
Experience one full day with a Thathera. Get chance to learn Thathera skills, learn utensil making by hands on and experience the local food.

Explore more about crafts
Explore similar communities working on different types of utensils in the country.

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Fig.8.2.(m) Products page

Process

The Thathera community is further divided into three types of people - Kabadia, Kasera and Thathera (usually called Thathera). The work from scrap to final products is divided in between these three stages. Generally, the handiwork workers are skilled in fabrication, they are the people who perform the actual work of creating utensils.

Kabadia
Kabadia collects scrap from other's spaces and sell it to Kasera.

Kasera
Kasera buy the scrap from kabadia and melt it to form brass nuggets called circles.

Thathera
Thathera buy circles from kasera and craft utensils out of those pieces.

01 Melting scrap
Brass and copper scrap is collected and melted in a large underground furnace. The molten metal is lifted into iron moulds and allowed to cool.

Kabadia collects the scrap and sell it to kasera. Kasera melts this scrap to form brass nuggets

02 Forming plates
The metal nuggets are then unrolled and rolled into flat plates using a mechanized roller. The plates are heated and rolled repeatedly.

Kasera convert brass nuggets into circle with the help of rolling machine and sell these circles to thathera

03 Forming utensils
The Thathera buy metal plates from rolling mills and hammer them into curved shapes. Different types of hammering is done as per the shape to be achieved. Ford, hand and steel supports are taken while hammering. Various shapes are welded together to form pots, the seams are joined through careful use of hammer. Small carbon steels are used for tempering the vessels during the manufacturing process. The flame is adjusted using hand operated bellows so that just the right amount of heat reaches the metal. The final product is result of careful hammering.

The thatheras buy the circles from kaseras and craft beautiful utensils out of it. This art of hammering the utensil requires skill and patience and it takes around 4 hours for a thathera to reach a rough shape of the utensil.

04 Cleaning
The vessels are then cleaned and polished by hand. First diluted acid is poured into the utensil and the utensil is cleaned either by hands or by feet depending upon the size and shape of the utensil. Acid removes all the dirt and turns the utensil into typical brass colour. Later, the utensil is polished with tanned jaco to give it shine. And finally the utensils are buffed with steel using a unique process after which one could see...

Fig.8.2.(n) Process of making utensils

Craft

Where to use ?

These best brass utensils have a unique, antique and elegant design. The utensils can be used in kitchen for cooking and eating and can also be used as a home decor piece because of their royal looking property.

Earlier the maintenance of these best brass utensils was considered to be a tedious task, as with time these best brass utensils lost their shine and lustre. However with the invention of washing products like Pishambari and other similarly formulated products the maintenance of best brass utensils now no more remains a difficult chore.

Why should we use brass utensils?

Back then people just used the brass utensils for all household works mostly in kitchen. Brass utensils not only has a spiritual and mythological importance but it is also very important to maintain ones health. Brass comprises of 70% copper and 30% zinc. The zinc content present in these best brass utensils helps in building immunity and copper increases metabolic rate & detoxifies the body, helps increase haemoglobin, improves the secretion of bile and the peristaltic movements of the gut to aid digestion as well. Brass has certain antioxidant properties that help in maintaining haemoglobin, hypertension, strengthen bones, and build up the immunity. These best brass utensils will help you keep your water cool and pure and deliver you brass infused water.

How to check authenticity of brass utensil?

Brass may be identified by its yellowish color, but this may lead to misidentification. Its density, or compactness identifies whether the utensil is authentic or not. You can check the authenticity of the utensil by hammering it. The original one will produce a heavy sound with a vibration but the fake one will sound like a hollow thing.

Ordered to a Thathera
Order a utensil from the product list and a customized utensil directly from a Thathera.

Experience Thathera culture
Experience one full day with a Thathera. Get chance to learn Thathera skills, learn utensil making, try hands on and experience the local food.

Explore more about crafts
Explore similar communities working on different types of utensils in the country.

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Fig.8.2.(o) About the craft

9. Evaluation Plan

What to evaluate ?

Scalability of the platform - Weather the design solution is scalable or not. Can the final design be used to perform mapping for different cultures or communities as well?

System structure - Weather the working of the system is feasible or not?

Platform design -

Weather the users are able to get the sense of the thathera culture?

Do they find it interesting ?

Do they have any new knowledge about thatheras after visiting the platform?

How to evaluate ?

System structure

Expert evaluation will be done to test the system working. The system structure will be shown to authorities from any state emporium (preferably punjab state emporium), teacher from a design/art school and a thathera. They will be asked whether they think the design is feasible or not. If not then what are the areas that can be worked on.

Scalability of the platform

The framework of the designed solution will be used to map some other craft or culture eg. music, festival, community etc

Platform design

Will be tested with 5-6 users who are cultural enthusiasts.

users will be provided with the link of the platform.

After going through the platform users will be asked the following question :

What do they think the platform is for?

What were they looking for in the platform?

Do they gain any new knowledge after visiting the platform?

Do they find the platform interesting?

Which feature of the platform struck them the most?

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