

# **Collaborative Design Project**

## *Progress Report*

**WEEK 2**

*Guided by:*

Prof. Ravi Poovaiah & Prof. Avinash Shinde

*Team Curlybois:*

**Arnesh Kundu    Mohak Gulati    Saumya Oberoi**

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## *Recap*

As a part of our design project we have been challenged to look to the post-covid future in search of possible design opportunities which we may tap into by creating a start-up. Thus far, the team has narrowed down their area of interest to that of journalism and news media in India, choosing to attempt to address the rampant misinformation and political and social polarization evident in the media of today.

Through mind-mapping, secondary research, and initial primary research, a base for the project has been laid in week 1. Initial primary research notably included a survey that received 106 responses, which helped us gain a basic understanding of the kinds of user groups we might design for. In this week, we continued to expand our primary research by conducting multiple interviews and identifying user groups.

## *Interviews*

Interviewees were chosen to fit a broad spectrum of relevant demographics, and interviews with these candidates followed semi-structured inquiry methods. These interviews lasted at a minimum of 15 minutes, and a maximum of 2 hours; the shortest interviews came from people who did not have much to say about news as they chose not to engage with it, our 'callous consumers' as defined in our identified user groups later on. The longest interviews were with conscious consumers of news media, who had often done their own secondary research and were eager to share insights and ideas they had been holding onto for often very long times. Here, we break down the demographics we based the identified users on:

### **1. Demographics**

When choosing the interviewees for primary research, a few key identifiers were kept in mind to ensure a diverse group. These were:

- Age bracket
- Education level
- Self-Identified political orientation

- Geographical location
- Cultural background

Amongst these, in educational level we did not go below those currently pursuing Bachelor's degrees, and did not interview minors. Certain candidates were also selected not to represent the 'average' consumer, but rather to gain valuable insights from as well-informed and active consumers of news media and information. In time for the presentation on the 2nd, we were able to conduct 6 interviews and gain insights from each one. As many more are planned for the remaining portions of primary research before conducting affinity mapping to help create final priority lists for ideation.

## **2. Questions**

Certain interview candidates had supplied responses to our initial survey, while some had not. On the basis of this, candidates were asked custom questions to avoid redundancy and to help get the conversation started in a direction that interested the interviewee. We were looking to have minimal interference in the candidate's trains of thought once they caught a thread they were interested in; as the interviewers, our role lay in bringing the conversation back to topic when it drifted, and in documenting and deriving interesting insights from the interview responses. In addition to a few of the survey questions for those who had not filled it, we asked candidates to speak about some (but not always all) of the following topics:

- Changes in news habits
- Place for news in their daily lives
- Journalistic priorities
- Ideals in news

Wonderfully, many candidates were able to take the conversation in interesting and productive avenues without much asking from our parts; some explored activism, some laid out personal journeys in media consumption, while others looked at the philosophies of news versus information and the phenomenon of sensationalization. In the coming section, we analyze some of the key insights from each interview we took.

# *Key Insights from Interviews*

## **1. User 1: CI**

- a. The user was quite apprehensive of discussing politics online as some online forums tend to be toxic and conversations often lead nowhere
- b. The user liked consuming his news through comedy, specifically through talk shows or well researched informational shows
- c. The user greatly appreciated listening to multiple views, and engaging in informative discourse among peers
- d. They also appreciated unedited live interviews and podcasts for their transparency

## **2. User 2: JS**

- a. The user would get most of their news online, from memes and posts shared by friends
- b. They would refrain from actively seeking news, only looking up particular stories that were very controversial
- c. The user doesn't concern themselves with the source of the news and decides the reliability of a source based on the content

## **3. User 3: MD**

- a. This user admires discourse that challenges their beliefs and likes to achieve ideological balance
- b. They prefer their news to be compact, with diverse viewpoints
- c. They prefer not partake in discourse online due to the lack of accountability and context
- d. They also rely on the suggestions from their well educated brother for opinion pieces

#### **4. User 4: PK**

- a. The user prefers objective news, often related to science and education
- b. They believe that the Indian News Media lacks empathy and can't strike a balance between micro-level and macro-level news.
- c. The user also regards social media with caution due to its tendency to spread misinformation and reactionary content
- d. They would like to see the media's focus shift towards solution oriented journalism rather than fear-mongering

#### **5. User 5: RC**

- a. The user makes sure to filter the information that impacts them from the information they encounter
- b. They thoroughly dislike sensationalism, temporary journalism and reactionary news
- c. The user firmly believes that information exchange is best between interested parties and that the motivations of the imparter of information tells a lot about their reliability
- d. They feel that there is a need to create a safe haven for stories and avoid censorship at all costs
- e. In this user's opinion, much of online Indian news media is the way it is as those channels have not yet been able to comprehend the permanence of the internet.

#### **6. User 6: PO**

- a. The user prioritises unbiased reportage as possible, from sources that have been backed up by some research
- b. They prefer consuming only facts, and developing opinions on their own.
- c. They read articles once or twice a day and then don't actively seek information otherwise
- d. They even Initiated a big change in media consumption habits post lockdown

# *Identified User Groups*

Through our preliminary surveys and problem understanding, we were able to look at three broad user groups:



## **1. The Callous Consumer:**

These are users who are not too concerned about news and only get to know of current events through memes and posts shared by friends. They tend to not be too political and actively make efforts to stay away from such commitments



## **2. The Shallow Consumer:**

This group of users are only concerned about popular news, often only looking at news at their face value, and not fact checking their information. They also tend to actively participate in social media activism.



## **3. The Conscious Consumer:**

They partake in conscious consumption of news, having conducted in-depth research before forming their own opinion on a subject. These users also tend to avoid participating in political discussions online for various reasons.

## *Design Considerations*

The insights from our primary research also helped us identify and establish some tentative priorities and constraints to keep in mind while attempting to address this problem. These priorities are still evolving as we further study our user base and gain insights from interviews. The constraints listed here are self-defined, in order to keep us on track with the most essential requirements of the problem we are attempting to face.

### **Priorities:**

1. Under-reporting
2. Freedom of Expression
3. Echo Chambers
4. Quality over quantity
5. Not reactionary
6. Collaborative

### **Constraints:**

1. Financial Independence
2. Accessibility
3. Dodging censorship

## *Future Steps*

Since understanding the root problem is a particularly crucial aspect of our project, our timeline runs a bit offtrack from the timeline recommended by the course structure. The following is our plan for the coming week.

### **Thursday (5/11/2020) Checkpoint Meet:**

1. Finish all the interviews
2. Consolidate interview insights through an Affinity

**Monday (9/11/2020) Presentation:**

1. Present the final problem statement
2. Show our ideation process
3. Show ideation affinity and champion ideas
4. Conduct an evaluation for the champion ideas

And for the 2 weeks following the presentation on 9th November, we will focus on the conception of our final idea.

## *References*

1. [5 Business Models for Local News to Watch in 2020](#)
2. [The Local News Business Model – Stratechery by Ben Thompson](#)
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4. [Echo chambers are dangerous – we must try to break free of our online bubbles](#)
5. [The problem of living inside echo chambers](#)
6. [How to Break Out of Your Social Media Echo Chamber](#)
7. [Do digital echo chambers exist?](#)
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10. [Imagined community](#)