Timeline

Week 1: Identify product requirements. Define the problem, the goal

Conduct competitive research

User persona, user story, Site map

Week 2: Prototyping.

Week 3: Testing - Iterating - Testing again

PHASE II. RESEARCH & BRAINSTORM

Challenge

People in different locations want to watch something together but are unable to due to physical distance. Some people try to watch a video together using screen share, but difficulties arise due to potential lag of system which makes the experience out of sync. There's also the option of starting/pausing the video together, but the downside would be the lack of control and precision as compared to if one party at a time can control everyone's screen.

Goal

Create an intuitive and personal online platform for people located in different places to share the social experience of watching movies or videos together.

Existing Services

https://syncplay.pl/download/ (needs to be downloaded)

https://togethertube.com/

https://www.watch2gether.com **(closest resembles project goal)**

https://www.mycircle.tv/ (VoIP, can upload and watch)

https://letsgaze.com/#/

https://www.rabb.it/ (APP, can login with third-party sites)

Competitive Analysis

Watch2gether		myCircle		Gaze	
Pros	Cons	Pros	Cons	Pros	Cons
Intuitive, don't need to register account	[User control and freedom] Cannot directly click on video to pause/play. Not in sync when users try to adjust the progress bar simultaneously [Visibility of system status] Unsure of how to add videos to playlist [Minimalistic Design] Too many colors on landing page	Directly paste link or room ID Can use keywords to search videos and sorted by different websites Use tabs to switch between playlist, history, chat, guests Shows user actions in chat	[Aesthetic Design] Spacing issues between words and sections	Consistency in interface design	[User Control and Freedom] Have to invite before there's a room Constantly disconnected from server Instant demo fails to work - webcam is allowed but still says not turned on

Features

Must Have (Minimum Viable Product):

- Create room - link shared through social media / invite friends
- Join room through link/room#
- Chatbox
- Multiple parties (depending on technical limitations)

- Host controls everyone's screen (can give over control to others in the room)
- Adjustable screen size
- Video playlist
- Links from various video sites

Nice to Have:

- User accounts
- Collaboration mode (multiple parties can control)
- Different color modes(night mode, light mode etc.)
- Login to third-party services (Netflix, Prime Video)
- Upload local files
- Voice call (mute & volume options, separate from video)

Persona

Context

Audrey is on a trip in Canada by herself.

Motivation

She wants to watch a drama series on Youtube with her long distance best friend in her down time.

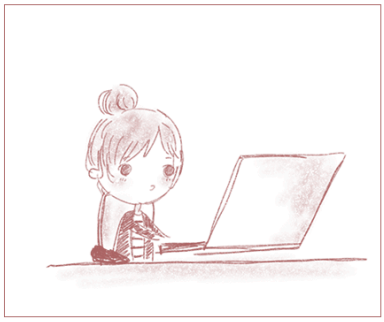
Pain Points

Audrey and her best friend are physically apart.

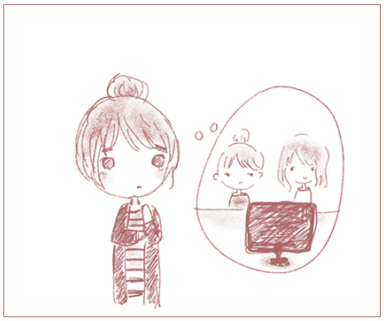
Mental model

Audrey needs a way to watch videos simultaneously with her friend. She prefers something simple and convenient to use.

Storyboard



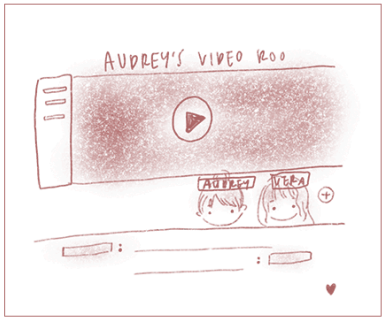
Audrey sees new video updates from her favorite Youtuber



Audrey misses watching videos together with her friend Vera back home

Audrey calls Vera to see if she's available to watch some videos together

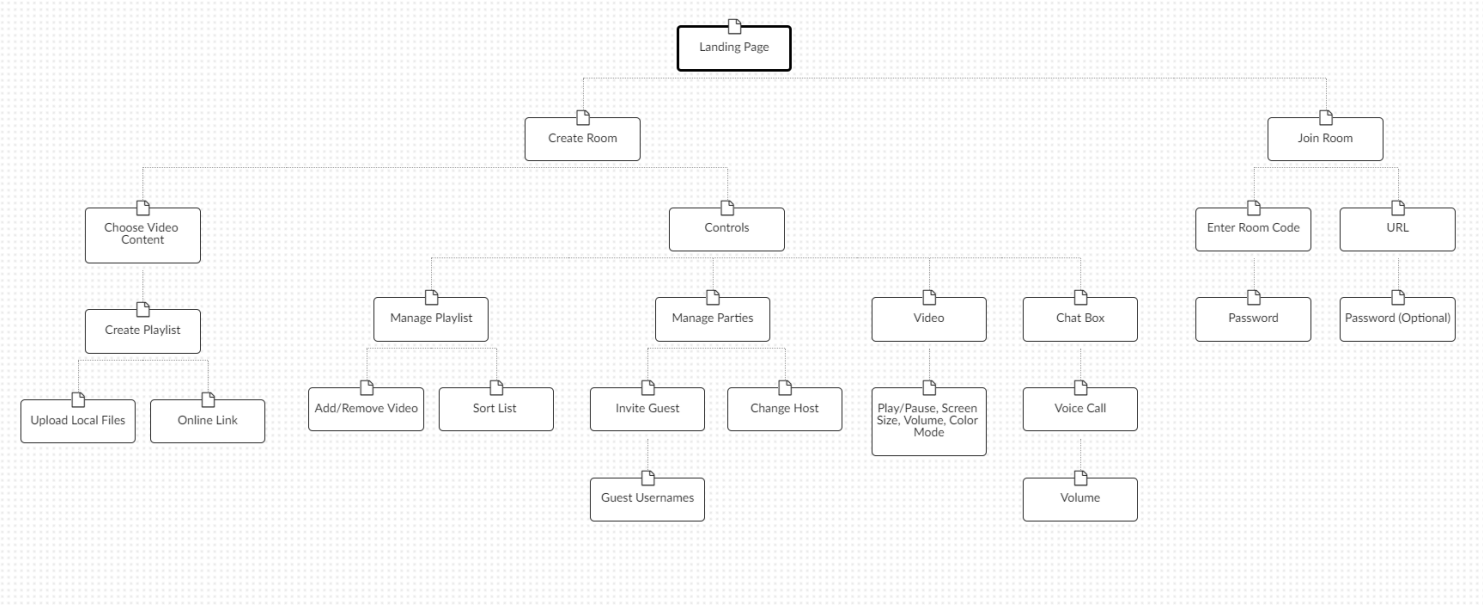
Audrey creates a private room on SYNC VUE and invites Vera



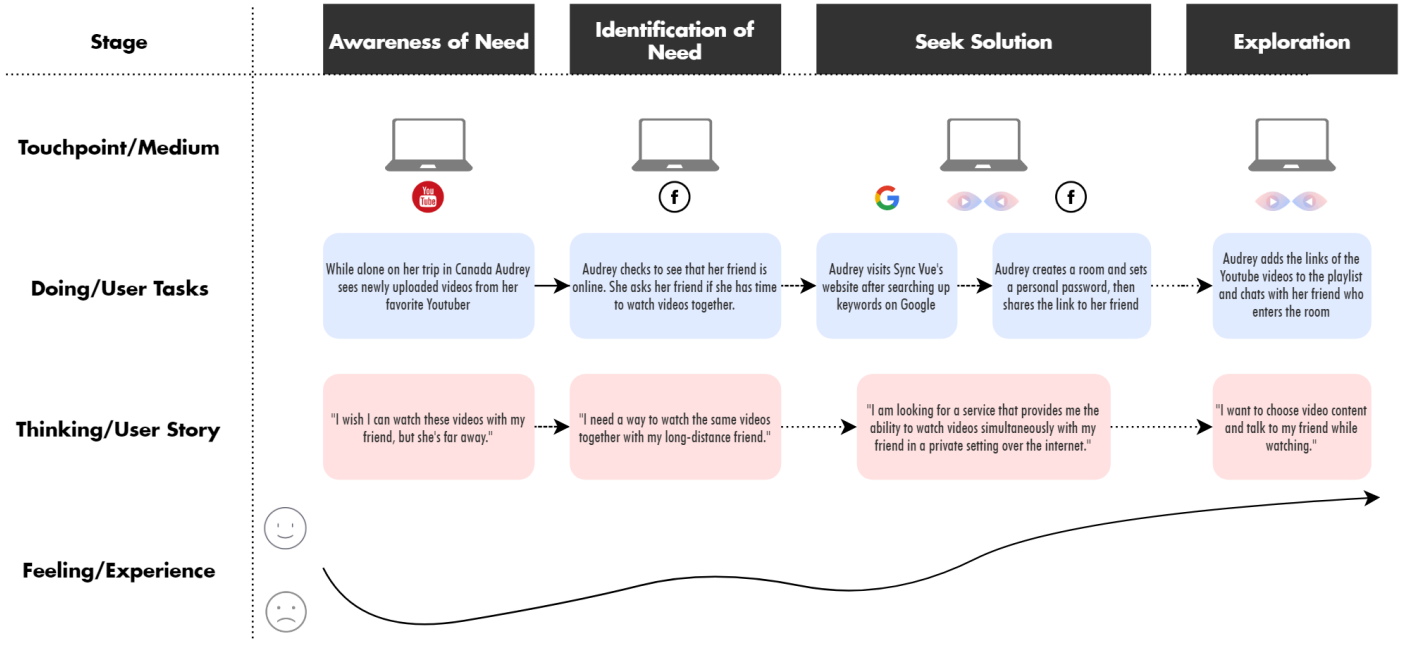
Vera joins the room and they are able to watch videos and chat together

Even though they are physically apart, Audrey and Vera can watch the same videos in sync through SYNC VUE.

Site Map (hierarchy of pages/features)



User Journey Map



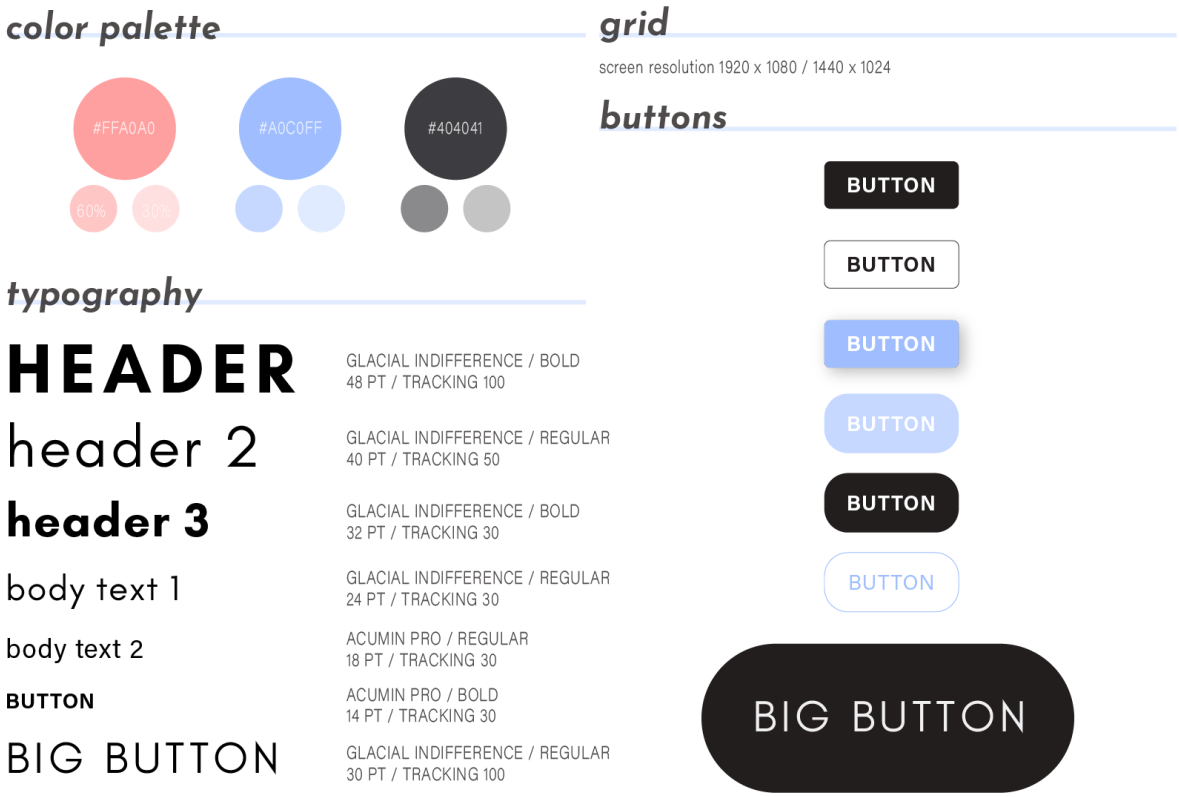
PHASE II. USER INTERFACE & PROTOTYPING

Branding

I want SYNC VUE to embody the comfort of watching videos at home. The visual brand identity should provide an intimate and relaxed impression to the user to establish a sense of personal connection between the user and the virtual experience. The brand image should communicate feelings of comfort, adopting and balancing design aspects of minimalism and vintage styles, and the overall tone will consist of pale pastel and neutral colors.

Moodboard

Styleguide



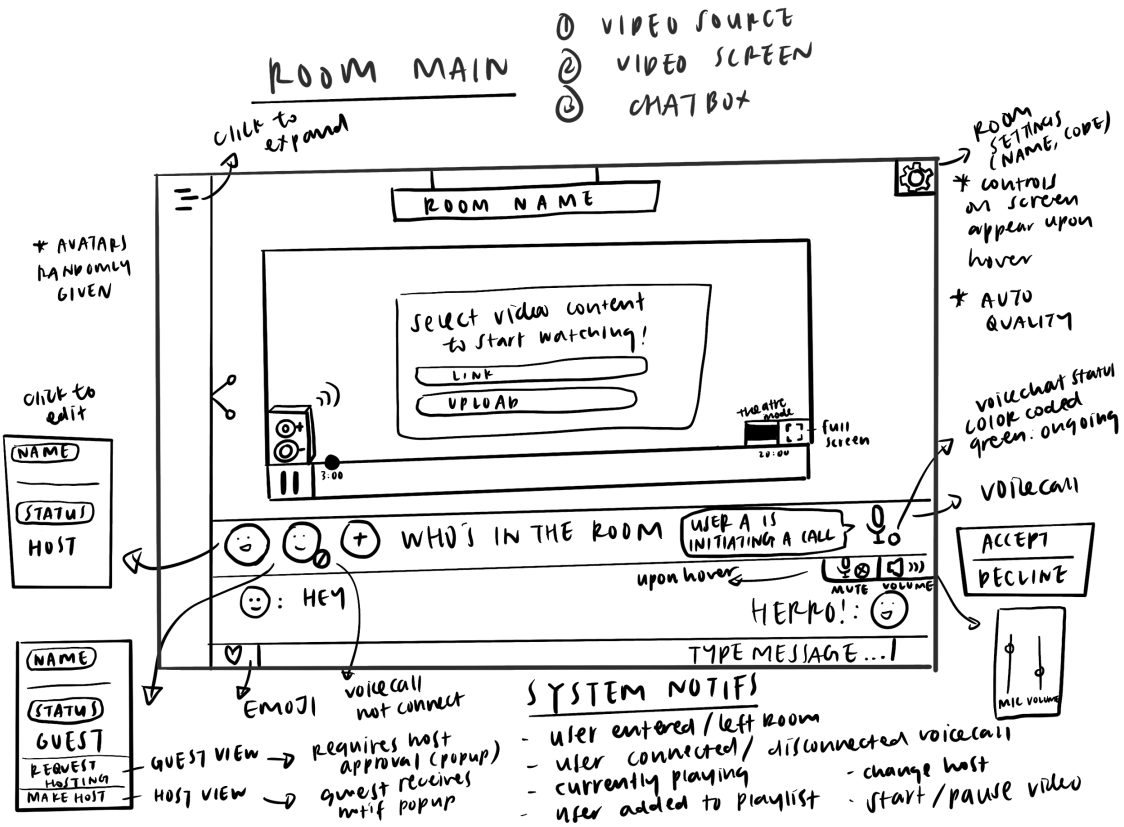
Wireframe

I. Concept Structure

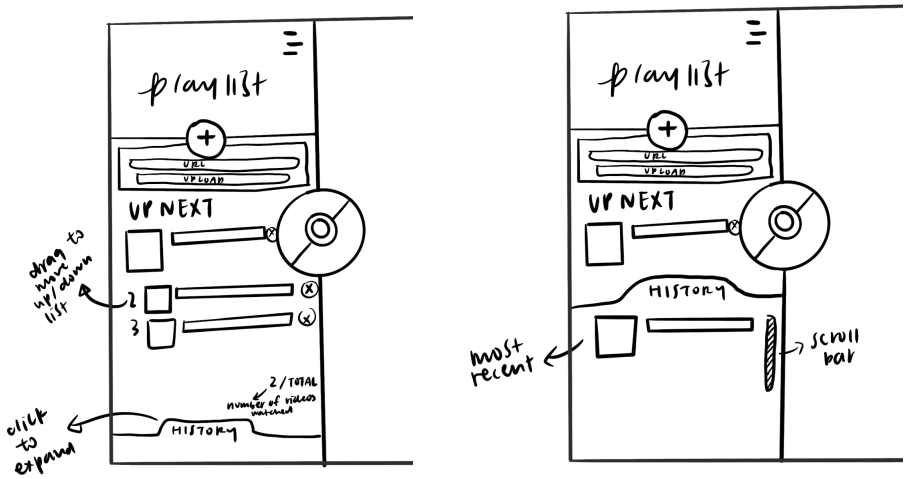
SYNC VUE embraces and upholds the idea of controlled privacy. All rooms are privately hosted and can only be shared through URL/room names. The URLs will be uniquely generated, and rooms can be directly found through entering room names with their associated 4-digit codes or customized passwords, both of which can only be shared by the host of the room through direct message or social media. The code/password is required with the room name to prevent people who may randomly search up room names. By inherently implementing full privacy in the rooms, we ensure that the rooms are shared only within a desired audience without any mysterious users, and there would not be a need to include banning or permission control settings. As for control settings within the room, only the host may edit the playlist, and control the videos, while all the guests are allowed to send invite links. However, the host may assign another guest as host and thereby hand over the control of the room.

II. Sketches

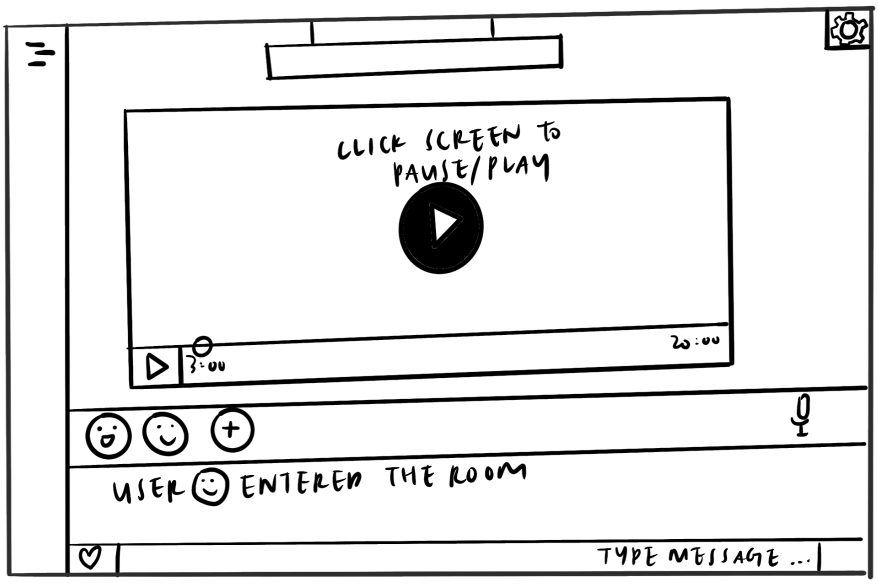
LANDING PAGE
LOGO
CREATE ROOM
JOIN ROOM
WATCH WITH
ANYONE, ANYWHERE
ROOM
STEP 1
INVITED
PICK CONTENT
STEP 2
ENJOY
STEP 3
ALL ROOMS ARE PRIVATE
ROOM NAME:
ROOM CODE:
COPY LINK:
GO TO MY ROOM→
ROOM
NAME
CODE
JOIN PARTY

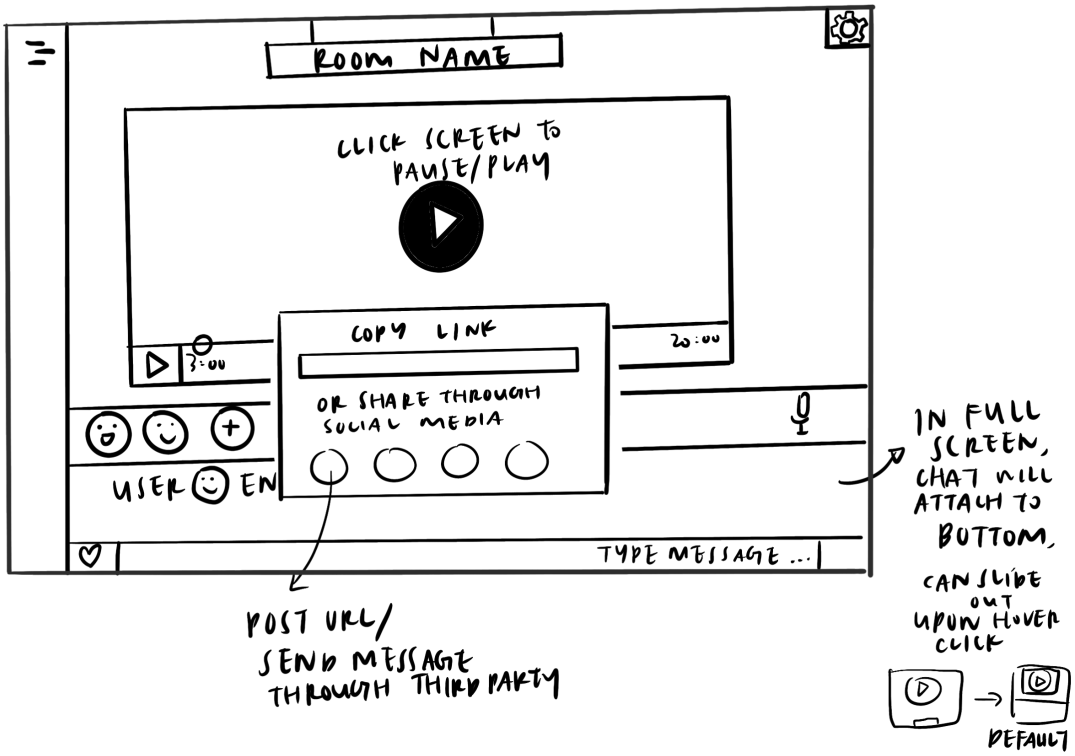


1. Video Source



2. Video Screen + 3. Chat Box



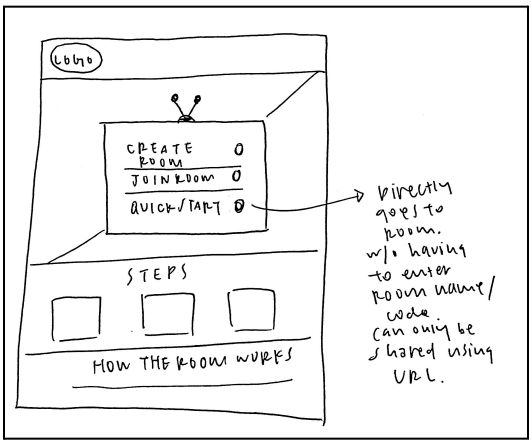


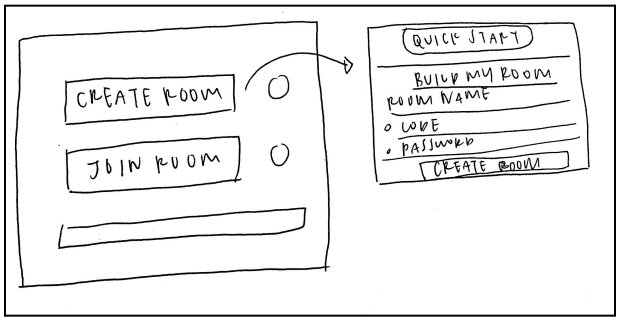
III. Digital Wireframes + User flow

Potential Changes Upon Initial Feedback

- Quick start option to create room without room name/password
- Display video first after user enters the link to confirm the video, then the user can decide whether or not to add to playlist (instead of directly adding it to the list)
- Display play/pause by user on video screen instead of chat box
- More space for the chat, move user/guest information up, right align the video screen

Iteration #1



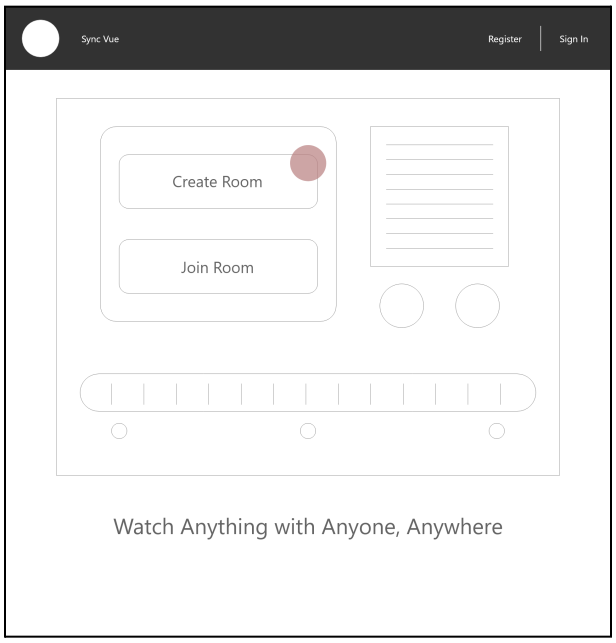


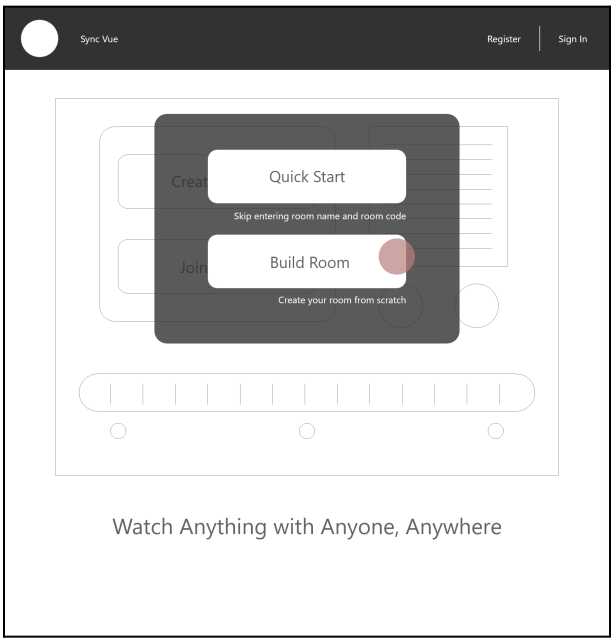
(Option 1) **(Option 2)**

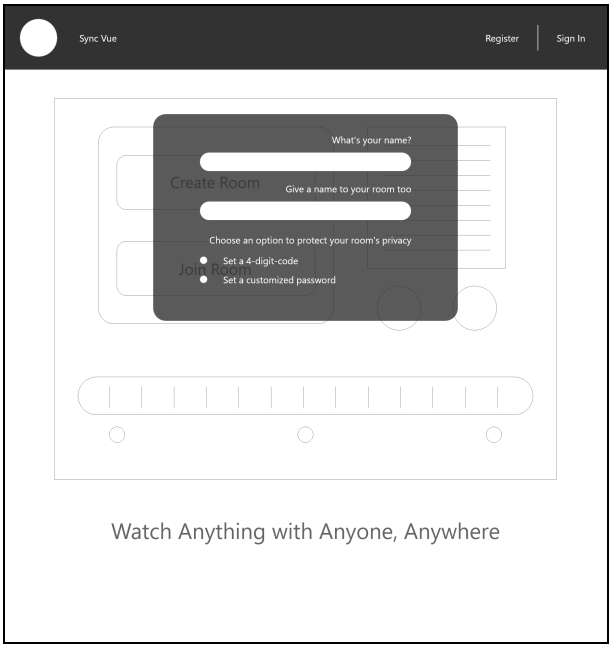
Option 1: Add a “Quick Start” button on the landing page as a third option. However, users may be unsure of the difference between “Create Room” and “Quick Start”. They may also experience confusion as to whether “Quick Start” refers to creating a room or joining a room.

Option 2: Add a “Quick Start” button to the pop-up page after user clicks on “Create Room” to offer an alternative to building a room with comprehensive details. The “Quick Start” option would allow users to skip the step of entering room name and room code (wording needs to be made more clear).

For the digital wireframe, I went with Option 2.

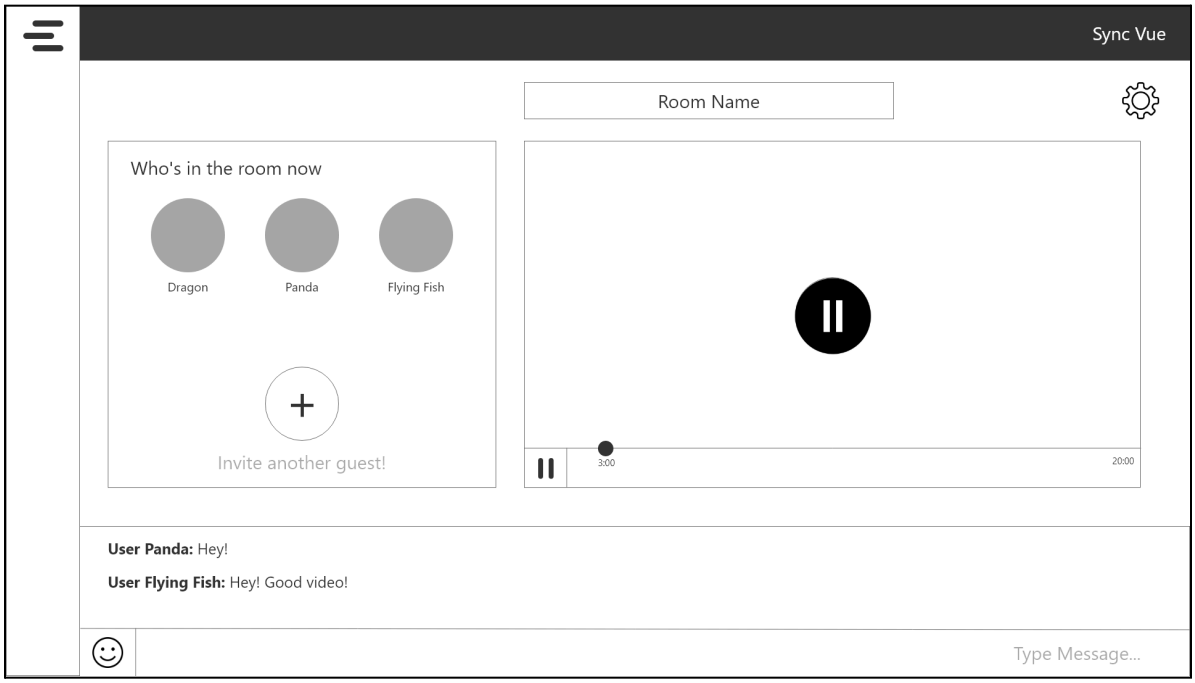






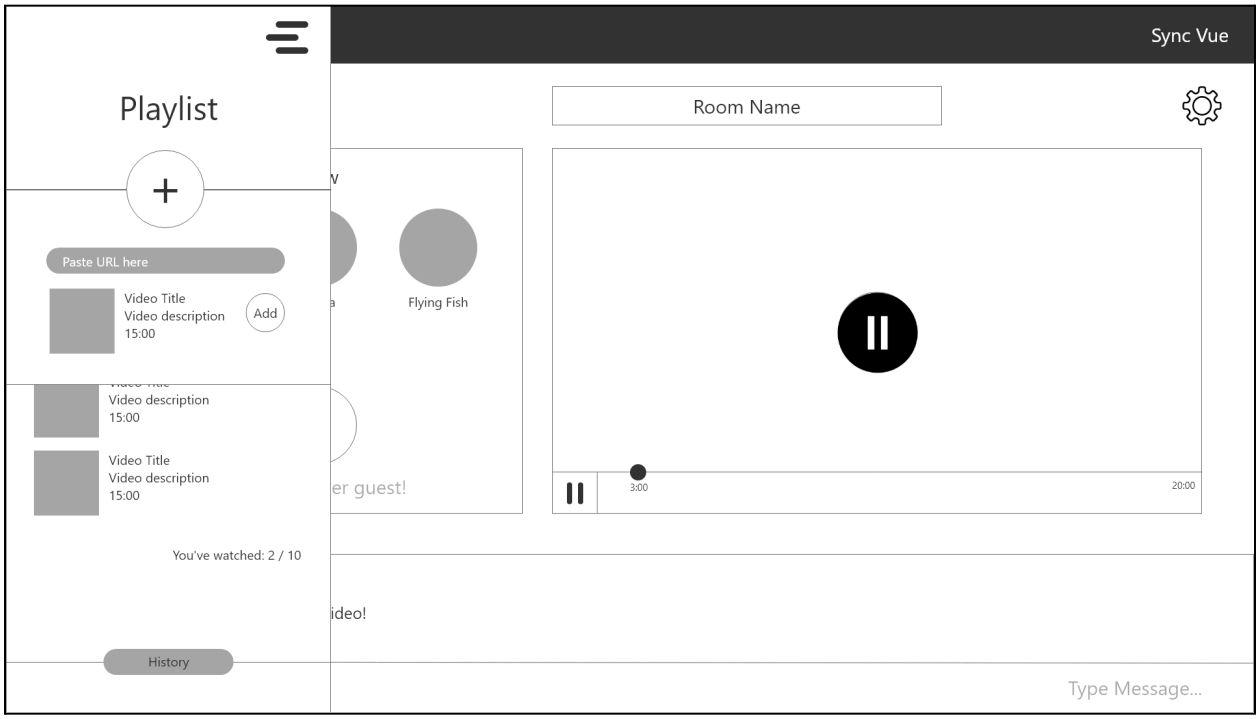
Iteration #2

I sized down the video screen and right aligned it in order to move the user/guest information to the left of the video, which expands the bottom part of the page to give more room to the chat box. I also removed the voice call feature to simplify the chat process for the MVP.



Iteration #3

I removed the “upload from local files” feature to make adding videos more intuitive. I also added a thumbnail preview of the video for the user to confirm the link before adding it to the playlist.

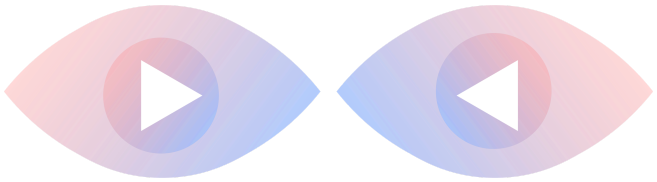


Link to Interactive Wireframe Demo

Clicking “Panda” is **Guest view mode** where the guest can “Request Host” (request to be host)

Clicking “Flying fish” is **Host view mode** where the host can “Make Host” (make the guest to be host)

Logo



High Fidelity Mock-up

Link to Interactive Prototype

Room for Improvement

For future iterations, I would add a Settings feature to include potential features such as changing the passcode, customizing the room URL, switching to different color themes, and different control modes (such as collaboration mode where multiple parties can have full control over the room). For error prevention, I would also include a guidelines portion on the homepage to fully explain the different capabilities of the two roles - host and guest, as well as how to manage the playlist and switching the orders of videos. Currently the idea is that the order of videos can be rearranged by dragging, which is an intuitive motion but requires more signifiers. Users may also be unsure of how to add the video because they would have to click the same add button at the top, so another add button may be needed. The MVP displays a minimalist video screen design, including only a play/pause button, a scrubber, and a screen size adjustment. To serve as a more comprehensive video player, it would include volume adjustment, video quality, and playback speed. I also hope to add a theater screen size mode to test out different layouts of the guest list and chat box. I would also add user accounts so that rooms may be saved for future usage and allow for a smoother and faster experience.

Key Takeaways

Through this project, I learned that it's important to limit the number of features for a MVP prototype, because trying to squeeze in too many features at once may result in the product looking cluttered. I also learned that creating a project from scratch may seem overwhelming at first, but breaking the process down to individual steps and setting deadlines for each step allows for continual and effective progress. By dissecting the process and focusing on one section at a time, I developed a more extensive understanding of concepts such as site map and user journey map. However, due to my limitations on user research, I did not have sufficient interview data to support my design except for minimal feedback regarding the interface design. If I were to do this project again, I would incorporate more of user research and user testing throughout the process to evaluate my design decisions and make better design choices.